THE BRIGT HOPES AND DESOLUTED DREAM OF ETHIOPIAN WOMEN

A study of circular migration to Middle East and the Gulf States

By

Dusit Abdi Ali

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Supervisors: Eren Zink and Kristina Helgesson Kjellin
Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology
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AACALASAB, Addis Ababa City Administration Labor and Social Affairs Bureau
ILO, International Labour Organization
IOM, International Organization for Migration
MoFA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia
MoLSA, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia
NGOs, Non-Governmental Organizations
PEAs, Private Employment Agencies
UN, United Nations
UNDESA, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division
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ABSTRACT

Migration and re-migration of economically and socially marginalized Ethiopian women and girls has become a phenomenon. Based on interviews with 12 Ethiopian migrant women returned from the Middle East and the Gulf States, the primary aim of this thesis is to describe and study Ethiopian women migrants’ circular migration to the Middle East. I will mainly focus on how social dynamics in the family, gender relations and economic circumstances are intricate. The process of women’s migration and how the expectations of the family can be gender differentiated are discussed. Further, the migrant women’s power relation when class and ethnicity determine their position is discussed. Relations with the sending family and the issues related to the women who return, as well as problems affecting them at home and in the destination countries, are looked at. Various and complex issues of migration and the women’s roles are discussed with reference to the women’s experiences. Migration provides women with opportunities for social and economic mobility but can also subject them to ethnic discrimination, exploitation, and abuse. The movement is generally seen as voluntary labor migration and it has placed them in a vulnerable position both at home and abroad. Their migration is interconnected to the economic need but also the responsibilities they have towards their family and kin.

Key words – women labor migration, network, status of women, remittance and circular migration.
INTRODUCTION

I am in the middle of the hustles and the bustles of Africa’s largest open market district of Merkato. I am here to interview Emebet, one of my twelve informants in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Emebet is a well known waitress, in a family restaurant. She has been working here since she came back from the Middle East three years ago. She likes her workplace and delightedly pointed out that she is very well liked by the restaurant owner, the customers as well as by her peers.

I had to wait until the lunch hour was over before we could start with the interview. This gave me time to observe the service over a cup of sweetened tea making note of the interaction between the customers and the waiters. Once the lunch rush was over, we went to the owner’s office and started our conversation. Emebet was comfortable with my questions and also with my presence and allowed the conversation to be recorded. She openly discussed her experience of migration, her return and re-migration plan. Migration has given Emebet an affirmed self-confidence, determination and a strong network. She describes her migration as follows:

Migration gave me an opportunity, because of working in the Middle East I got the possibility of earning a lot more than what I use to earn at home; it gave me power and I started to believe in myself. But it comes with big price, lots of hardship and misery. When the focus is on search of better life, one accepts suffering and mistreatment, which is what we all did in the Middle East for the hope of a better life. One may wonder, is it all worth it? Well, it is difficult to answer as it gives both opportunity and lifetime scars. Each and every one of us believes and hopes that the next migration will be more successful and make our life better; we will be the lucky ones. Our hope is that we will be able to accomplish our dreams and aspirations with our Middle East journeys; unfortunately, I think we put a lot of faith on migration in general.

For Emebet, as for so many women, migration offers assurance and hope for prosperity and independency. However it also offers broken promises. As my title implies, there is a general perception of inspirational expectations, hopes and dreams about migration to the Middle East and Gulf States in Ethiopia. The reality for many women is that few achieve their dreams and for many more it can turn into a nightmare.

The relationship between migration and poverty is complex. Migration can help to reduce poverty and poverty itself is often the cause for migration (IOM 2004:2). Economic push factors cause mass out-migration. According to my informants such as Emebet and to other Ethiopians, out-migration is seen as the way of accomplishing a better livelihood. An official at Addis Ababa City Administration Labor and Social Affairs Bureau explained that each year
thousands of women and men leave their homes to go the Middle East and the Gulf States (interview AACALASAB 2016, De Regt and Tafesse 2015:4).

Today’s increasingly interconnected world with modern transportation has made it easier, cheaper and faster for people to move, therefore international migration has become a reality that touches nearly all corners of the globe (UNDESA 2016). Khalid Koser writes there are more migrants today than ever before, and their number is certain to increase for the foreseeable future (2007:16). International organization for migration describes also that migration patterns and dynamics have grown in complexity and the share of women among immigrants flow has also increased (IOM 2004:1). More women are migrating independently, for example from Ethiopia to find work as domestic workers in the Gulf States and Yemen (Castles et al. 2014:187). The International Labor Organization report indicates that 73.4 per cent (or around 8.5 million) of all migrant domestic workers are women (IOL 2015:15). As a result, migration is becoming more feminized. This feminization of migration primarily reflects increasing inflows women working as care workers and domestic servants (Castles et al. 2014, 179).

Feminization of migration

Numerous studies indicate (Ghosh 2009, Fernandez 2010, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, Castles, De Hass and Miler 2014) that the “feminization” of economic migration is evident through an increasing numbers of women migrating independently from men and with a concentration towards domestic work. The authors have further pointed out that domestic work is the most common occupation for women migrants around the world, especially in the Middle East and the increasing demand for domestic labor across the globe has made feminization of migration a world-wide phenomenon in particular with women migrating from Asia and Africa. Generally, the socio-economic situations forces women to both leave or move within their countries and which is also the case for millions of women in Ethiopia. Thus, Ethiopia has become “one of the main sending countries, to Middle Eastern countries” such as Lebanon and Saudi Arabia (interview MoLSA 2016, De Regt 2010: 242).

Purpose and aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to analyze and describe the circular migration of Ethiopian women to the Middle East. I will in particular focus on how social dynamics in the family, gender relations and financial circumstances are intertwined and affect their decision making regarding migration. Additionally I will look at the role of the social networking both within
the migration process and at home. I will discuss the gap between a migrant’s expectations and their actual experiences both at the migration destination and after their return.

Even though out-migration and return migration related problems such as lack of opportunity and dependency are common to all parts of Ethiopia. This study will focus on twelve women returnee in Addis Ababa and their experience of working in the Middle East and the Gulf States. In general Ethiopia has limited employment options; high unemployment and widespread poverty. Formal sector employments public or private are limited for women with only secondary education or less. The women often also bear burden of providing for families (Fernandez 2011:441). I would like to reflect on the causes that force women in Ethiopia to migrate and what causes them return and re-migrate. The effort is to examine the different set of driving conditions, such as the women’s and their families’ anticipation of migration and what it means to the individuals. This thesis will explore the following questions:

- What are the major societal factors contributing to return and re-migration?
- How do remittances structure and re-structure the women’s position in their families?
- What is the role and power of social network for migration?

My reason for choosing this topic is because Ethiopian women face deep-rooted economic and social inequality both at home and abroad. I wish to highlight how women readjust, define and maintain roles and responsibilities as migration and after returning. I look at the way changes in gender relations have been brought about by migration. But I also want to find out how migration affects power relations between the genders and how these manifest themselves in a culturally conservative society such as Ethiopia.

**Structure of the thesis**

In the next chapter I present the background and the methodological approach used in the field, as well as an explanation of the fieldwork. Furthermore, the reader will be introduced to informants and limitations in the field. In the third chapter I present a summarizing presentation of previous research within migration and anthropology. The theoretical framework will be presented followed by a brief reflection on female migration in anthropological studies. I thereafter discuss what an intersectional framework entails. Chapter four illustrates migration in Ethiopia as well as decision-making mechanisms and strategies among women. In chapter five I will present my main finding regarding the experiences of
migration among my informants, where I will illustrate how the women's migration affects traditional gender ideas. Moreover, how the women deal with their return and their potential plan to re-migrate will be discussed. In the concluding chapter I offer an analysis of the main findings of the fieldwork and present answers to the research questions.
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Ethiopia and Migration

Ethiopia is one of the oldest independent countries in Africa and one of the oldest in the world, located in the Horn of Africa. Unique among African countries, the ancient Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from colonial rule with the exception of a short-lived Italian occupation from 1936 - 41. Migration at the time was unique to few influential, mostly young men from the royal and upper class, not to the mass. In 1974 the Monarchy was overthrown and Ethiopia became a socialist state. During the Derg regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974 -1991), however, migration out of Ethiopia was restricted. This regime was in turn, overthrown in 1991 by the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). This governments’ removal of previous governments’ restriction of migration opened the doors to increased emigration to the US, Europe and the Middle East (Fransen and Kuschminder 2009: 5f, Fernandez 2011: 439).

The 1994 constitution established as an ethnic federalist state with nine regional states based on the predominant ethnic groups, with the exception of two chartered cities (federal territories), Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa (Fransen and Kuschminder 2009:6). The population of Ethiopia is about 102,374.044 (July 2016 est.). With population growth rates of 2.5% in 2014 (World Bank 2016), Ethiopia, along with diverse cultures and ethnic groups the country is the second largest in Africa. According to World Bank Poverty Assessment report (2015) despite progress toward eliminating extreme poverty, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world, due to both rapid population growth and low starting base. The country still has relatively low rates of educational enrollment and access for women and girls. There is also a major gap between urban and rural area this has forced mass migration both inside and outside of the country. In Ethiopia, migration has become an important strategy to cope with the multiple crises of recurrent famines, conflicts with neighboring states, political repression, and high unemployment that many Ethiopians have experienced over the past few decades (Fernandez 2010:250). As it emerges from other scholars such as Kebedes’ (2001:8) study and my informants’ information points out that most migrant women from Ethiopia seek employment abroad not only to earn their own living, but to help out their families as well.

The above historical and geographical context gives an overview of how poverty and population raise are the main obstacles in Ethiopia. Thus migration has become the solution
for men as well as for women, and it has a strong incentive to seek work in the Middle East and the Gulf states. Migration fills the economic gap for the migrant and the people they left behind. It is the most used approach to accomplish better living standard both for domestic migration (rural-urban) and out-migration to countries in the Middle East. As Hochschild pointed out migration "has become a private solution to a public problem" (2003:18). This is very obvious in relation to the increasing female migration and to the circular migration movements in Ethiopia.

**The fieldwork**

My fieldwork topic started coincidentally when I spoke to a friend who returned from a visit to Addis Ababa. She mentioned the new phenomena of the explosive labor migration of women and young girls to the Middle East. How this is challenging the middle and the upper-class families’ demand for nannies and maids in Ethiopia. Since most of the women and the girls prefer to work abroad. Due to this, their services have become more expensive as they are few who would like to stay and work in the country.

I immediately thought about the women who are returning from these migrations; what are their thoughts? What do they do and how do they resettle back in their communities? Migration is a contemporary topic and it contains all interesting elements such as identity, status, gender and transnational resettlement, and is also a subject I can personally relate to. Despite our different experiences one of the shared aspects which united me with my informants are apart from our common gender, nationality, it was in fact migration. I have myself migrated to Sweden from Ethiopia. I was curious how these women and girls integrate after the hardship they have been through, their new experience of independence and how they see their return.

Initially, I wanted to go to the Gurage zone, south of the capital city and my main focus was to study the returnee women and the communities that they returned to, but after a discussion with my supervisor regarding the field site and the subject been broad. He advised me to minimize the subject geographically. I followed his advice and I decided to study women labor migrants’ returned from the Middle East and the Gulf States and their resettlement in Addis Ababa. As it turned out, Addis Ababa was a perfect place for this fieldwork. Being a gateway, it is the last destination before their migration and the first destination when they return. To minimize the topic of migration and return my study does not include Ethiopian domestic workers migrated through illegal means to the Middle East.
and the Gulf states. I decided to focus only on those women who traveled legally from Ethiopia to the Middle East and the Gulf States and returned legally to Ethiopia.

In all these years, I have maintained my transnational connection to my home country. However, I have only been in Addis Ababa for a few days or for a week every time I flew back to Ethiopia. I am not that familiar with all the districts in the capital and having the city as my field was exciting and challenging.

The capital Addis Ababa was officially founded in 1886 by Emperor Menelik II. Addis Ababa has an estimated population of ca. 3.6 million in the city proper and a metro population of more than 4.6 million (World Population review 2017). The city is populated by people from different regions of Ethiopia, which has made it into one of a destination for internal migration.

Being back in Addis Ababa was not that difficult as I thought it would be, even though it has grown and expanded so fast. The city is getting more chaotic in many aspects and at the same time it is very safe to get around the city. The traffic is a major problem but it is quite interesting to observe the movements of pedestrians and cars in the city but also to see how the people were approaching the light rail which is quite a new phenomenon in the country was notable. The returnees I interviewed were reflecting about the train a lot, only one of them has had a firsthand experience with such a transportation system in Dubai (Dubai Metro). Whereas, most of the informants have experiencing for the first time the train ride at home. They were very pleased and proud to see the train; seeing it as a sign of progress.

Primarily, I had one informant through my relatives to whom I managed to have a brief contact ahead of my arrival in Addis Ababa. After getting in touch with her on my arrival, she tried to arrange meetings with her returnee acquaintances. After many days of waiting, I finally arranged a meeting with my first contact and two of her acquaintances.

I also tried to get information regarding returnee migrants’ statistics and records from the authorities. According to the International Organization for Migration Addis Ababa office (IOM) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ethiopia (MoLSA), they both do not gather information on return citizens unless they are in official repatriation schemes or they are mass deportees (interview IOM, MoLSA 2016). Spontaneous individual returnees outside the official arrangements are not recorded. Officially these individual returnees are seen as voluntary returnees no matter what their circumstances are.
I was discouraged in the beginning of my fieldwork, as I had difficulty to get informants. But by going out every day and observing people’s determination for their survival and dealing with different hurdles in their daily life, it became easier for me to handle my problems and to get a different perspective on my fieldwork. The remarkable part is that all the informants and rest of inhabitants they all manage the different shortcomings such as water, electricity shortage, telecommunication problems and other difficulty, which seem in many ways unmanageable. I was thinking about how these women who were in a different environment for years felt being back to their old problems. With that said there were many positive aspects of people’s lives in the community, as they were helpful in many ways to me as well as to each other. I manage to travel around in the city with no difficulty and I traveled around as I pleased. And I was able to speak to people I got in contact with on the streets and in the neighborhoods.

I soon realized that I needed my hometown Dire Dawa as a reference for who I am. In general people from Dire Dawa are seen as friendly and generous, which has made it very easy for me and resulted in me getting a welcoming treatment.

I was quite positive about my subject choice before my arrival; but once on site, I got anxious about how my topic would be received and how the fieldwork would progress. At the same time I had the notion that I am from Ethiopia; I speak the language, I know the cultural codes and I understand what migration means, so getting information from these ladies should not be that difficult. However it was harder than I had anticipated, although everyone was nice and cooperative. Charlotte Aull Davies explains that it is important to recognize that shared social status and shared gender does not guarantee understanding or make possible a presumption of equality and openness in person (2008:111). I agree with Davies that even though my informants and I share nationality, gender and migration experience that did not assure me to access their stories especially at the beginning of our communication. I forgot to take into consideration aspects of socio-economic background and my position as an insider and an outsider at the same time.

**Data collection**

The empirical data is collected by following and conducting in-depth interviews with twelve female labor migrants. The interviews were conducted daytime except two which started late afternoon and finished in the evening. All of my informants went to the Middle East and the Gulf States by being employed through one of 406 licensed Private employment
agencies (PEA); two were invited by friends and relatives. All except two of them had paid the average of 7000 - 8000 Birr (Ethiopian currency) or circa 400 - 550 USD for their migration expenses. All had obtained visas under a sponsorship system known as Khafala. The system of short-term, contract migrant labor recruitment that is unique to the Middle Eastern and the Gulf countries usually the employer, who is responsible for their employment and legal status (Fernandez 2010:251).

My interviews with the women were semi-structured and it lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours, with most being around 45 minutes. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it is possible to gather a lot of information in a short time, and it gives a possibility to talk to the person again. Russell H. Bernard pointes that how the semi-structured interview provides professionalism and it shows that one is prepared (2011:158).

The interviews were performed on an individual basis; only on one occasion did I meet three women at the same time however, the questions were posed one by one. Dictaphone was used to record only on three occasions with the permission of the women. Recorded interviews have ranged from one-to-two hours in length. All interviews were conducted in Amharic, using the same 15 specific open-ended questions in the given sequence to all, except the little variations of follow-up questions that fitted to the individual response. This made it possible to cover a list of topics regarding migration, return, and re-migration.

The downside could be that it may resemble a survey but it was compensated by several hours of informal conversations and participant observation. Participant observation is the basic method of anthropological research. It involves getting close to people; it provides the researcher with experiential and effective knowledge as well as enables one to collect qualitative data (Bernard 2011: 276 f). My participant observation allowed me to put their stories in perspective and write it correspondingly. Jeffrey Juris writes " […] to grasp the concrete logic generating specific practices; one has to become an active participant…” (2008:20). I was communicating and I was engaged in our different conversations with the women. I was also following them at their workplace and at their homes whenever the possibility arose. That has given me insight into their relationship with their families and colleagues.

My conversation with different informants has given me a different insight to contrast my previous understanding of their return. Being aware of my role as an interviewee and being responsive to my informants, I was using different approach to increase understanding
of our interactions. I was presenting my questions somewhat in different ways to different individuals that helped bridge our differences. Davis describes how the process of working with informants thus becomes one of a mutual search for understanding bridges, or mediates between the social worlds of informant and ethnographer. "In order for ethnographers to interpret this interaction sensitively, they must develop a reflexive understanding of their relationship with their informants" (Davis 2008:89).

The interviews were performed in a narrative character, meaning the interviews were based on the informants telling me about their stories, their own experiences of migration, being a returnee and their future aspirations. According to De Regt life stories leave space for agency they show the choices women have made how they under serious constraints develop their network and the ways in which their migration and employment also may have offered new opportunities (2007:4). These stories were very interesting in different perspectives as they offer insight in relation to migration and to the women’s background, their thoughts and ambitions.

I usually spent about eight hours a day in the field, sometimes more sometimes less depending on my informants’ availability. Nevertheless, I was in the field every day. Most of the time I was alone but on two occasions my cousin has accompanied me as I met this informant through her. Some informants showed a great interest in the subject even though it was difficult in the beginning of our encounter. But after several meetings and a few discussions they showed a great commitment and dedication. They were willing to help and were very welcoming when I visited them in their homes and workplaces.

To a great extent, it was more than just about the research subject; it was about the women’s lives and thoughts. They showed their interest by placing different questions to me regarding transnational migration and women’s position in society. As a result of their questions, we discussed not only the economic aspects of migration but also socio-cultural aspects of it at home and in Diaspora. Like with any interview situations some informants gave very detailed descriptions, while others made more concise depictions of their experiences from home and from abroad, as well as their future plans.

In addition to the female migrants, there were many others whom I discussed with and who contributed in various ways to my understanding of transnational migration. I contacted governmental and Non-Government Organizations that were engaged in migration and migrants cause. This gave me a more diverse perspective and also the overall situation as well
as new information to converse and discuss with my informants. Besides the female return migrants, I also spoke informally to one employer from Dubai and two male returnees from Yemen and Saudi Arabia, to get their views and experiences and wider understanding of transnational migration. They offered their opinion on the different approach people generally have of male and female migrants and returnees. They shared their points of view concerning women traveling to this region for work as opposed to men.

**In the field**

Transnational migration is an issue which is quite sensitive in many aspects as it involves the legal and illegal means of movement; it is very much up-to-date in Ethiopia and around the world. It is common to hear the discourse of migration crisis from the mainstream international as well as local media, and from the public’s day to day discussion. There are lots of articles in the Ethiopian daily paper one example is Addis Zemen presenting an article such as "Enough with migration! By working in our own country change can be achieved" (16 March 2016, my translation and emphasis). The article is about the danger related to migration and encourages people to stay and try to improve their lives at home. Other sources are books in addition to books there are sitcoms featuring in Ethiopian media regarding migration and situations associated with migrants.

The general public also has a strong opinion about migration and the returnee women. Generally people were more than happy to share their thoughts or opinions on the topic but less willing to share their or their relatives’ return experiences, both positive and negative. I think one of the reasons is that the women are cautious not to be judged by others for their failed accomplishments at migration. They feel that they have experienced so much negative things that they do not want to go through it again. Or it could be that they are not willing to discuss personal issues such as migration, experience and moral values that most people connect to migration, as well as economic situations with strangers as myself who is a student and not a journalist nor an NGO worker.

Having Ethiopian family and acquaintances on site was crucial for my fieldwork. They assisted me to get into contact with potential informants and they played a key role in my fieldwork. They became my assistants, guides and trust builders as informants trusted me because of them and they enabled access to the field and provided relevant information for the purpose of this thesis. I was allowed to be at some of my informants’ work places that gave me opportunities to develop their trust further. Bernard writes how presence builds trust; trust
lowers reactivity (2011:285). My virtually every day presence lowered their awareness; it has given me the opportunity to make observations in relaxed conditions at their work, but also off duty and at their home environment.

A lot of Ethiopians have traveled for various reasons to the Middle East and they all know someone, who knows someone, who is a returnee. Having that in mind, I continued asking people around me to introduce me to more returnees and I managed to get in touch with more women. I also realized that the informants I met through my relatives were more confident to tell me their story than the ones I met through other people. They on the other hand were cautious as they did not know me well and also some of them did not see the purpose of me coming all the way to Addis Ababa just to write about them for my study.

As I started meeting different people with diverse positions, I also become aware of how using different identities is helpful. Being Ethiopian has helped me in a lot of ways but not in all situations. Certainly being Ethiopian from Sweden has helped me especially with the different authorities and NGOs. My immigrant background and being a woman has also helped me with the communication the women. I was approached in a positive manner and treated as one of them. On the other hand, when some of them were referring and responding to my questions with "I do not have to tell you, you know how it is living abroad as a migrant…" it made it a bit difficult as this limited their account.

Overall my position as both an insider and an outsider has been mostly very useful. At times I was puzzled over the "one of us" approach and I wondered if they would give me the same kind of response if I had been a man or of another nationality. I would think that they would have given a slightly different approach to our communication and consequently, the outcome would be somewhat different. They were thinking as an Ethiopian female migrant I must have gone through the same process as them, and recognize how their migration experience is. However, if a man or a foreigner asks them they would not assume that they have the same experience. They would explain their migration encounter differently depending on the points they want to make. For instance, they may not discuss and describe their relation to their children and to their mothers to a male interviewer. They may focus on work related subject with a foreigner and they may give different information, modified according to their value.

In general, I got mixed reactions for my research, most being positive. They saw it as important and a good gesture to take up migrant women’s cause, while some of them were very hesitant. When participants were informed about the research objectives almost all of
them identically asked why I was interested in this and how my research would be of significance for them. I stressed that I will use the information only for my upcoming master thesis and all interviews were conducted on agreed consent. On one occasion I had a meeting with a woman who thought I was a journalist and she was delighted to share her life story. Unfortunately, she got disappointed and changed her mind when I notified her as I was informing everyone before starting the interview that I am a master student and the information is going to be used only for my thesis.

**Limitations in the field**

Timekeeping was one of the biggest problems and it holds one back from intended plan. My informants did not see my fieldwork and my visit as time-limited. I knew though, the approach people in general have to time keeping in Ethiopia but I was hopeful. Building trust and a relationship with the informants was also at time challenging. I was full of expectations and may be a bit too optimistic about my meetings with the informants. I had an understanding for their hesitation, but at the same time as I had limited time I was focused on getting interviews. It was difficult at times to balance all the feelings and considerations.

Getting in touch with government head officers and NGOs was very difficult and it was time consuming. The problem was that on most occasions their secretaries and other servicemen and women were difficult to communicate with; they did not understand my query and thus rejected my requests. But by using different channels such as through professors from Addis Ababa University and through former colleagues who moved to Addis from Stockholm, I managed to get in touch with different authorities that turned out to be positive in many cases. They took their time and I got information and guidance, even though one or two were not that effective in their responses.

One of the other problems I had was that only three out of twelve informants agreed to be recorded and I simply accepted their wish. After having a discussion with my informants as how their names should be mentioned, we agreed to change the names of my informants’. Pseudonyms are used for all participants presented in the thesis. I also left out some details which are not relevant to the information presented. As for language knowledge it was not a problem to understand my informants, just minor misunderstandings such as new words or phrases they use that I am not familiar with. The interviews are transcribed in English, and my field notes were written in English and Swedish. Translation from Amharic to English/Swedish was challenging and sometimes it was difficult to find the exact words and
expressions to translate. I have tried the best of my ability to depict their stories accurately as possible.

When they persisted in saying "you know how it is as a migrant yourself", I was worried not only of the risk of not gaining access to their experience and their decisions for return but also for how my own subjective migration experience would affect the representation of my informants. There was also a time when I felt this is an interesting part of their story and I wanted to investigate more, for in instants when they spoke of sensitive subjects such as earning good money or their problems with their employers and employers’ relatives as well as subjects related with jealousy. I was unable to get deeper as not to hurt their feelings or position them in an unpleasant situation. One of my informants, Meseret was the one who hastily mentioned the subject briefly in the group interview. The other two informants had a different opinion and they felt uncomfortable. I also did not want to lose their trust, besides I was not sure either if I can handle subjects connected to sexual abuse, prostitution or mental health.

The power relation between me and my informants caused an imbalance, especially in the first few interviews. Coming from abroad as an interviewer positioned me as the outsider with a higher position. Subsequently, it got better; sometimes even they were the ones who had the power as I was dependent on their stories.

My study builds on the women’s stories, their position in society, their migration, their return and their plan for re-migration. I was not able to see their experience at their migration destinations. With my study, I try to capture these women’s journey geographically, emotionally and socially. Furthermore, I endeavor to present the complexity of women migration, their return and their wishes to re-migrate.

The significance of having someone working abroad is life-changing, both economically and socially for the women’s families. Parents who get remittances obtain recognition and reputation in their communities. Even though I had a great deal of understanding of how remittances and gifts generate networks or how parents and the elderly are supported by their children, these stories affect the presumption I had and the relation I thought I would have to these women before the fieldwork. I admire the women for their courage and hold great respect for the determination, persistence and remarkable responsibility they have towards their families and their communities. These stories give
different perspectives and understandings of what migration means and what returning back to the community means after such an absence for the individuals involved.

**Backgrounds of the informants**

Of the twelve informants four of the women I spoke to were married with children, one of them was divorced with a son, one engaged and the rest were single. Most of them had gone to secondary school, except for two of the women who had elementary school education only. All of my informants would be classified as having a working class background. Most of them were employed or students prior migration, and upon return, five of them were employed in service. Two were entrepreneurs (small business owners) and five were unemployed at the time of the interview. My study focuses on temporary migration returnees, namely those who have worked abroad on a short-term basis, obliged to a contract of two or more years. Seven out of twelve did not have the possibility to stay in the host country, therefore they returned when their visa was about to expire and before they were deported. Three of them came back for family reasons the rest did not want to stay for personal reasons at the time of repatriation.

Of all twelve informants I have chosen to present eight of them more than others, because of their detailed descriptions of themselves and their experiences. All following names are pseudonym and I have used it for all informants throughout the thesees to avoid misinterpretation. I have introduced Emebet in the first section of the thesis; in addition throughout the thesis the reader will be able to follow Selam’s, Elsa’s Meyrem’s, Meseret’s, Rahel’s, Hirut’s, and Amina’s account. They all describe why they migrated, their experience being abroad and their feelings being back home, but also their strategies for the future re-migration. The rest of the informants Mulu, Seble, Tigist and Sara will also support the discussion of the thesis.

As I have described earlier Emebet one of my informants, I spent more time with her at work and off duty because of her welcoming attitude, her willingness to talk about migration experiences and her present life. I met her at a family member’s restaurant on my second day in Addis Ababa and at the time I did not know that she was a returnee. I went to the restaurant mostly for lunch and we had a formal conversation. On my second week when the owner (my cousin) of the restaurant returned from his vacation, I got the opportunity of explaining why I am in Addis Ababa and my desperate search for informants. He suggested I should talk to Emebet as she is the perfect candidate for my quest. Emebet happens to be a
great example of a returnee migrant but also of circular migration, as she has migrated twice to Saudi Arabia and to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) working as a domestic helper. She has experienced the "good side" of migration in Dubai for a few months after her three years contract ended. She was working as an independent live-out worker or freelancer (she was living outside of the employers’ house in a room she rented together with other girls). De Regt explains freelancer which can often indicate that they are undocumented (2010:242). Emebet has also experienced the unpleasant and the downside of migration in Saudi Arabia. She summed up her experience “as useful but awful experience”.

Emebet is 26 years old, a divorcee and a mother of a 2 year old son. She described her migration reason as being economic. Her journey was made possible as her sister was the one who arranged her sponsorship in Dubai. She is very proud of being back at home and having a son and being able to take care of him. She got married to her partner after her return but got divorced recently. We discussed about divorcee women’s position in the community and she talked about how changes have occurred in traditionally conservative communities such as her own. "Today divorce is more accepted in our communities, it is not as bad as it used to be". She further described that she now is on her own after the divorce, how she struggles as the sole breadwinner and her role as a mother. She further discussed how having a child has changed her life but also the responsibility that comes along with it. Not having enough savings on her return has been difficult both socially and economically.

Emebet pointed out many times in our interview and casual conversations that the time in Dubai was "good and productive". She was earning good money and had "freedom" for mobility compared to her Saudi experience. She was saved from a horrible situation in Saudi and she considers herself lucky to be alive. According to Emebet her employer did not like her, she saw her as being a threat to her marriage. One day a simple argument developed into a big conflict and the lady of the house tried to strangle her with her head scarves, which she was forced to wear. After the incident, the police was called and Emebet was locked in a Saudi prison before she was deported. Her Saudi Arabia experience became a nightmare, compared to what she had hoped for. Comparing to the Saudi incident, her Dubai experience was more pleasant. She also affirmed that she was unlucky that she got sick in Dubai and as the result of her illness she was forced to return back to Ethiopia:

Being back is great, I am home with my family and friends who treat me as a human. Abroad, the money is good but not the social life. I must say Dubai was okay we had our church and our traditional
women’s association. We were not at home in no means at all, and all is not good in Dubai either but better than Saudi at least for my part.

Emebet confirms the dilemma of many women I have interviewed. It is interesting how she bounces between describing being abroad as horrible and being at home as positive. But in another extended informal conversation, she mentioned her desire for re-migration, not necessarily to the Middle East but to other countries such as the UK or Belgium. She described her network in these countries and a possible arrangements and how they are willing to help her. But first, as she expressed it, not to put the entire burden on her relatives, she needed to work and save part of her re-migration expenses. This confirms the point made by Ehrenreich and Hochschild and other authors as their studies show that most migration takes place through personal contacts with networks composed of friends and relatives (2003:19).

Another example of a network migrant is Selam 35 years old; she got help through her boss’s business partners’ relatives. Before migration, she was working in diverse professions and the last working place was in a hardware store and her boss was an importer from Turkey. She established contact with a Turkish entrepreneur. She asked for sponsorship to work and study, he and his family promised that and offered her sponsorship. She was told that she can do whatever she wants. With that in mind, she moved to Istanbul, Turkey in 2004. Some women know that they are accepting a domestic work contract but for many the conditions of their recruitment and the extent of the abuse, and bondage they will suffer only become evident after they arrived in the receiving country. Selam was expecting that she was going to Turkey to work part-time and study part-time became an empty promise:

When I moved to Turkey my intent was to study and work. Before I left Addis Ababa they promised me that I could do so. But all my dreams regarding getting education crashed the moment they took my passport and treated me as a slave. I was so shocked and it was too late when I realized I was lured.

Selam is an excellent example of circular migration. She is the person I have spent most time with at her home compared to the other informants. Even though Selam knew my relatives for many years, we never met. At our meetings while, drinking Ethiopian coffee I interviewed her and we discussed life in Diaspora, migration, what returning home means and why re-migration is important for her. She described overtly her adventure, hurdles she faced, her aspirations, dreams and hopes but also the disappointment during migration and after returning home.
Selam returned from Turkey after more than seven years. As lots of women she migrated to improve her life and to be able to help her mother and grandmother who took care of her when she was growing up. A few years ago Selam returned home and got married, stayed for a few months and then returned back to Turkey. She returned for a year and after giving birth to her son, she took the hardest and difficult decision to go back and leave her son behind. She expressed proudly her gratitude to her mother: "Luckily my mom was willing to take care of him and she did a great job, he is a wonderful boy".

Selam was visiting her family in Addis Ababa every year for a few weeks, sometimes for a few days. By the time of her final return, her son was 7 years old. At her return with the money saved, she was able to build a house for her mother and she managed to rent a house for her own family. As she described it, it was difficult to share the house with her mother after all these years of being on her own:

My mother is a lovely lady but living with her at this age and time is impossible, I need my independence and a life with my husband and my son. She's kind, but we both have different ways of approaching life and the community. You know different generation.

Selam’s return was a success at first, all went well and she opened a men’s cloth boutique, but after two years her selling went down and the tax went up. "I came back in 2014 with a lot of enthusiasm and hope. I thought that I could make a difference here at home, instead, all went wrong, and this country is impossible". She lost her money because of different reasons associated with her entrepreneurship adventure and change of small business tax regulations in Ethiopia. She got a penalty from the tax office and her business did not develop as she expected and intended afterward bankruptcy was inevitable:

Now that I have lost all I own there is no reason to continue and work here, I do not want to lose the little I have left. I will return back to Turkey and work there. I know I can earn more and help my family and myself. This is the only option I have to get myself out from this problem I am in.

Like many other women Selam faced disappointment both at the migration destination and at home. The women anticipated improvement and they tried to achieve their goals, but the reality of their position is difficult. At both ends, women are mostly confronted with difficulties and crushed dreams.

The third informant is Meseret, 28 years old I met her through Mulu, my initial contact and informant I had prior arriving to Addis Ababa. Meseret’s journey to Middle East started when she was in her 20’s. As the first born of her family she left to improve her family’s life.
At the time her parents were alive. She traveled after finishing high school, leaving behind her three sisters and her parents. Almost 6 months ago she returned after 8 years of working in the Middle East and the Gulf states. She is single and lives with her three sisters. At the time of the interview she was very busy as the family was preparing for one of her sister's wedding.

Meseret was very opinionated; she took place comparing to Mulu and Seble the two informants I had with her. She was telling me contrary to the two ladies that she was very happy to have migrated and returned. She mentioned that she had saved money and that gave her many opportunities. Later, when she sort of felt comfortable with me and my questions she pointed more and more at how she was one of the lucky ones, that" migration is not for everybody, it is difficult and very harsh". She described how girls and women are locked up in small rooms and are sexually, mentally and physically abused. She mentioned the difficulty she faced regarding the cultural and social barriers; and how the language hindrance was the main obstacle. She emphasized that the beginning of her time in Beirut was frustrating as she did not speak the language and they did not speak her language. But when she tried to communicate in broken Arabic with the house lady and family, they started to give her more chances as they saw that she was making an effort to learn their language in order to understand them. She further acknowledged how her efforts to do her best, and after learning the language, life became much easier:

I was so determined to understand the language. When I arrived in Beirut I did not know any word in Arabic, I never heard the language before. Language is a key, it helps a lot. I managed to understand and to communicate in Arabic in two months (very proud, she was showing with her body language that she made it). I was so focused; now I am fluent, I have to after all these years and hard work.

Meseret differs in relation to the other women I spoke to as she was more open and not afraid to talk about her language and economic achievement, but also as she referred to "the dark side" of migration, such as human trafficking and prostitution. She was the first who acknowledged the problem. At first both Mulu and Seble protested against her claim of the general opinion among the middle easterners about Ethiopian women. But she was very upfront and stood for her opinion, unfortunately, neither I nor the other informants wanted to discuss these subjects further. I did not want to put the two ladies in awkward situation as they were not happy that she brought up the subject and I was not prepared for such subject matter.

Meseret further described the economic advantage of her migration: "I was paid in Beirut 100 USD and in Dubai 165 USD. The money is good, it is more than what I use to earn at home but the working hours are long and the conditions are harsh, as I said I was lucky". When
asked why she returned home she explained that her working permit visa was ended and she returned voluntarily before they deported her. If the women deported they lose in many cases their belonging as they go to prison before deportation. If the opportunities arise she will go back to the Gulf States. "Being home is great, I love it, but the economical aspect is not promising as migration is. That is why I reconsider to re-migrate”.

My final informants are Hirut and Amina, both are the youngest of all with elementary and some high school education. Hirut’s interview was unlike all other formants, our face to face conversation only occurred once. Most of the conversation was done on a taxi ride for about 50 minutes. As for most of the women, her migration is connected to both a private agency (PEA) and her kin. Her initial migration was through a PEA agent to Kuwait and she returned home a few days before her visa was about to expire. Four months after her return, she was now planning to re-migrate though her network to the United Arab Emirates. During the interview she was engaged in our conversation and willing to tell her story.

Amina’s story is somewhat different. She stayed only half of her contract time as opposed to the other informants who have worked until their visa ended. Her return was as harsh as her migration; her expectations and dreams did not occur, neither at the destination country nor at home. When her working life in Saudi got difficult she decided to repatriate. The reason for wanting to present Amina and her story is that migration creates a rift between the expectations of the family and the reality of the migrants. The misunderstanding of the harsh reality of migration of all parts happens both in the sending and in the receiving communities. Her story is not unique; it rather reflects and gives a confirmation to many young women working abroad. It also reflects on the complexity of migration and how migration has different effects on people’s lives.

Amina was shy but very mature, secure and confident regarding her life. She was working in a hotel kitchen at the time of the interview. She told me that in her spare time she sells candy, tissues and various small items. Her biggest dream is to start up her own small retail shop. It was very touching to interview such a young person after interviewing others who are older and more experienced than she is, but she has a similar life story and responsibilities as they have. They all had the same determination to make it in life and change their and their families living condition. She and the other informants’ life journeys echo many of the female migrants around the world. It also demonstrates how migration is diverse, as Silvia Pedraza (1991) explains. Even though the presumption is that most international migrants are
economically motivated young males, the reality of migration is that it is dominated by women and young girls (ibid., 303f).
TEORETICAL APPROACH

In order to analyze my findings, I will use an intersectional framework to illuminate the experiences of women migrants. Examining the intersection of race, class and gender helps to distinguish the multiple hierarchies that the women live with and power relationships between for instance female employees and female employers, or between women and men in families or in workplaces. In addition, aspects of remittance economic roles in family and in society will be examined. I will start this section with looking closer at previous research on migration.

Prior research within migration

Researchers within migration studies, anthropology, and other disciplines have been studying migration and its consequence for a long time. Numerous important studies have been presented, for instance, Russell King in (2013), evaluates and reviews the different typologies and methods of migration and provides useful information and reflection on different methodological classifications. To understand the various types of migration a presentation of typologies of migration is valuable. This study helps to identify similarities and differences when it comes to migration. Moreover, to understand the motivations and how the different type of migrations are shaped. These typologies assist as well to identify the similarity and diversity of migration. One of the typologies is "circular migration". According to IOM (2011) circular migration is the temporary and typically repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host county, for the purpose of employment. The interviews with different informants indicates that circular migration is the most common type of migration for the many Ethiopian domestic workers migrating to the Middle East and Gulf States because of the visa system which is in place.

"The Age of Migration…” by Stephen Castles, De Haas, Hein and Miller, Mark J. (2014), illustrates the historical perspective of migration and how it has produced important economic, social and cultural transformation in most parts of the world. They present globalization and feminization of migration and recognize the process of the short time labor contract and the benefits of human movements. The authors explains how a labor contracts creates cheap labor which can be easily controlled and exploited (Castles et al. 2014:274) This is very important as I look at women’s contract labor migration to the Middle East and the Gulf States. Most of the female migrant domestic workers in this region are engaged in sponsorship system (Khafala), employers most often being the main sponsors. This short-term
system ties immigrants, who often work as live-in maids, to their employers for the duration of their stay. Such contracts put women under difficult circumstances at destination countries and under employers’ domination.

Anthropologists have recognized the migration more widely. Many important works have contributed with useful ethnographic data and have in general concentrated on studying gender relations over the past years for instant "Anthropology, Migration, and Comparative Consciousness" (2009) by Caroline B. Brettell discusses the important of comparison study to ensue of analysis of global in scope, cross-national, international, or regional. On themes of network, gender, ethnicity and identity Brettell (2003), explains how the social construction of networks and the relationship between gender and migration is linked and interconnected. This is useful when studying Ethiopian women migrants’ relations to their network in that the women are so dependent on for their migration and their return. Network is the most important element of migration; it facilitates their migration, re-migration and return to home communities.

Lisa Åkesson (2011) looks at migration, return and development with an anthropological study of Cape Verdan returnee and the effect of remittances. Several migration studies have brought women migration in to light within the field of gender and migration such as Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992), who was studying the sexual division of labor and decision making and procedures of migration in the family/household. Silvia Pedraza (1991) explains how paying attention to the relationship between women's social position and migration will help fill a void regarding our knowledge of women as immigrants and contribute to a greater understanding of the lives of women (1991:304). Patricia Pessar and Sarah J. Mahler (2006), have illustrated with a feminist perspective, how providing a gender focal point of migration improves migration studies. Their argument presents gender as an integral part of the migration process and in theories of migration. The authors write "analyses using gender have and can make difference to understanding how people decide to migrate, why they migrate…” (2006:29). Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003), describe feminizations of migration, economic exchange and globalization of domestic activities. The authors explain the consequences of migration from South to North and the effects of migration. How women in developed countries can live with their family and devote to their careers, while domestic workers and nannies from third world make money by living apart from their family (ibid., 2).
Bridget Andersons’ (2000), research on migrant domestic workers in the European Union is also important in order to understand women’s positions and relation to each other. Anderson’s analyses the ways female employers raise their own status through the deprivation of their domestic workers (2000:2,113). She explores social relations and connections in relation to hierarchies of gender, race, class, and nationality in a society. Anderson’s analysis shows that there can be real conflicts of interest between different groups and classes of women. This is an important aspect as both employers and employees are women, but with different class status. This shows the division of labor in relation to dependency and power exercised by employers over the worker.

Different research papers have also been presented by individual scholars and organizations on the issue of Ethiopian women to the Middle East Khaled A. Beydoun (2006), Marina De Regt (2009, 2010) and Bina Fernandez (2011). Most of these researchers emphasize how routes of migration are facilitated by using legal or illegal employment agencies for recruitment. The effects of the Khafala contract system, for instance, create control and reduced these women to assets to be used and abused by their employers. Also, the socio-cultural aspects of migration such as how the women are perceived at destination countries are discussed. These researchers’ papers explain the importance of social status, the power relation between domestic workers and their employees, the hierarchy of different women, their positions as a domestic worker. For example, De Regt explains these workers’ recruitment by middle- and upper-class Yemeni women signifies the importance of power differentials based on class and ethnicity between women in the South (2015:239).

The social network and the limited economic resources have effects on the returnee’s reintegration. The consequence of preparedness by return migration is discussed and explained by Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004). Further, De Regt and Medreshaw Tafesse (2015), look at the large scale forced Ethiopian migrant deportees from Saudi Arabia, and how this unprepared collective forced return affected them. Their finding shows how the initial expectations of the forced returnee migrants are and the reality of their return. They explain the important of resource mobilization (2015:13f).

**Theoretical perspectives on migration**

Theories can assist us to understand the complexity and flexibility of migration; they offer valuable insights and can help us understand the social and cultural changes that result leaving one context and entering another (Brettell and Hollifield 2008:5). Given the widely
noted breadth and complexity of the topic, the different theories concerning migration are extensive and complex. Much of the early work on migration within policy making and anthropology was influenced by modernization theory and a bipolar framework for analysis that separated, and opposed sending and receiving area and the push factors of out-migration from the pull factors of in-migration (Ruben et al.2009:911, see Brettel 2008:118). King argues "... migration is too diverse and multifaceted to be explained in a single theory" (2013:11). He further states that early theorizations were rather "rigid and disconnected from each other", while more recent attempts to blend deductive with inductive reasoning have led to a variety of middle-range theorizations which resonate more closely with the realities of migration today (ibid.).

Studies of migration have been and continue to be, an important area of anthropological study and theory (Barnard and Spencer 2002). Many anthropologists have focused on the individual and the household as the primary unit of analysis (Brettell and Hollifield 2008:10) When people from Africa, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean increasingly begin to move in significant numbers, it becomes a research arena for anthropologists who pay attention to migration. In addition, Brettell writes for anthropology, a discipline sensitive to place but also it is comparative in its perspective, anthropological questions have focused less on broad scope of migration flow than on the articulation between the place whence a migrant originates and the place or places to which he or she goes. "This includes exploration on how people in local places respond to global processes [...] " (2008:114).

As Brettell indicates it is very important to understand how women respond in the local place to the global labor demand and how the social networks assume an important role in migration processes. In my interviews, it is clear how the women negotiate, make decisions, where and how they migrate is all connected to their family, kinship and friendship based network. Also, the way the women in Ethiopia respond to the global domestic labor demand takes place in a set of global arrangements. The women have created a social network to deal with the cultural changes and to keep the community connected to both, the homeland and to the migration destination. Changes such as the women’s independence in the economic area have created a need for negotiations of cultural norms. As men are no longer the sole breadwinner, women are responsible for the main source of income. They ensure the family survival by increasing and diversifying the household income through remittances. Migration
patterns shift and change according to the individual’s connections and economic positions. The individuals’ reciprocal exchanges as well have a great impact on social network.

Anthropological inquiry looks at cultural and social aspects of migration as well as the process of migration itself. Anthropologists have examined in different cross-cultural contexts role social networks in the process of migration. "Transmigrants maintain familial, social, economic, religious, and political ties with their country of origin even though they emigrate to a new country…” (Fouron and Glick-Schiller, 2001:543). One of the most important implications of this definition is that immigrants continue to have strong social and economic links to origin countries despite the fact that they migrated to another country. According to Cassarino from a transnational perspective, return migration is part and parcel of a circular system of social and economic relationships. Moreover, the author explains how influential such links can be for the identities of migrants. As active agents, migrants conduct in social fields that exceed across international borders (2004:262ff). Alejandro Portes explains how transnational activities are implemented by "regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders" (Portes cited in Cassarino 2004:261). The transnational theory is suitable for studying the international Diasporas and citizenship of migrants, as they move back and forth across international borders. The perspective is also useful to reflect on women’s circular structure of migration and the networks they create.

Looking at network analysis gives a better insight and understanding of these individual linkages, and to examine their migration as part of a web formed by new and old social contacts. Cassarino explains:

Network theory views returnees as migrants who maintain strong linkages with their former places of settlement in other countries which stem from patterns of interpersonal relationships. The formation and maintenance of networks require long-standing interpersonal relationships, as well as the regular exchange of mutually valuable items between actors (2004:265f).

The theory provides an idea of the impact and the complexity of how social and economic processes are interrelated to global migration. Brettell explains how networks are related to migration in several destinations and how that is connected to where people chose to migrate and the advantage of having kin and friends:

Migration networks must be conceived as facilitating rather than encapsulating, as permeable, expanding, and fluid rather than as correlating with a metaphor of a rigid and bounded structure (ibid., 2008:124)
As Brettell points out a migration network is flexible and changeable in their arrangements. The flexible natures of networks have made migration possible for many transnational migrants, to arrange their migration through different types of links and reciprocity. Castles et al. (2014) explains how migrants create and maintain social ties with other migrants as well with family and friends back home and this can lead to the emergence of social networks, which tends to facilitate migration (ibid.,39f).

Most of the women interviewed with a plan to re-migrate have a tie to someone at the migration destination and will get assistance from their network. The women tend to focus on where their networks are helpful and effective. This brings us to Castles’ assertion that creating migrant networks reduces the cost for kin and friends, as well as generates migration (Castles et al 2014:40, see Berettell 2008:124). However, there is a weakness in this theory. All migration does not create networks; however, according to my findings networks have a great role for these women’s re-migration, even in a few cases for the initial migration as well. A network creates social capital which is valuable in facilitating members but the reverse is also relevant as Portes argues "it can reject outsiders across communities and generate social distancing". Social distancing is mostly triggers, when members disagree or limitation of support to a given individual occurs. Individuals who don’t reciprocating also cause estrangement and distancing in the network (Portes cited in Castles et al 2014:46).

The women’s network main role is to provide social capital, economic advantage and collective tie of kin and acquaintance. Brettell describes networks and households facilitate and enable migration as a self-sustaining social process (2008:125). Most of my informants’ illustrations support this point that they are getting assistance either economically or by sponsorship from their network, already settled migrants who help them to cut costs from private employment agencies (PEA) and other costs related to their migration. They often function as "bridgeheads” by reducing the risk and cost of migration and settlement (Castel et al. 2014:40). Informants like Emebet depend on their network, both for the guidance and sponsorship for their migration. It creates the circular arrangement, those who are sponsored now will help the others to sponsor in on another occasions. One example is Emebet’s sister who was helped by their cousin, she in turn helped Emebet. These returnees create a circular network connected to their destination and home country. In my informants’ case, it creates re-migration of the women to the same or to a different destination country. The significance of networks of kin and friends to the process of migration is clear and the role of the network
is reciprocity. Everyone is connected to obligations they have towards each other in and through migration and the economic system.

**Anthropology, women, feminism, and intersectionality**

Even though in early ethnographic accounts women have always been present, they were primarily associated with kinship and marriage. In anthropological writing, their positions were given different interpretations and presentations by male and female researchers in a very different way. "The male ethnographer spoke of the women as profane, economically unimportant and excluded in rituals. The female researchers, on the other hand, described the women’s central role […] " (Moore 2000:1).

Henrietta Moore further explains (2000) how in the early 1970s the problem of how women were represented in anthropological writing was confronted by the new "anthropology of women". They were a predecessor to the feminist anthropology and among the first to oppose the neglect and misrepresentation of women’s activities. The problem was identified as inherent bias of Western cultural assumptions, which is predominantly a male representation. "Feminist anthropology is not about ‘adding’ women into the discipline, but is instead about confronting the conceptual and analytical inadequacies of disciplinary theory " (ibid., 4).

Pointing out that female and male researcher involved in different relationships to the material they studied. Kirby argued, "In the epistemological and psychical structures of male and Western domination, ‘the other’ is a woman, and woman is ‘other’ (Kirby cited in Babcock 1993:60). The discussion at the time continued whether a female anthropologist studying women will give a special advantage, but the privileges of the female ethnographers mostly westerners, cast doubt on the purpose of non-bias of anthropology (Moore 2000:4ff)

In general, the feminist research does not challenge a standard of all anthropology, only some pattern. The research involves evaluating material in terms of its importance in relation to women and argues against the oppression of women, yet it is more than the study of women. It is a study of gender, of the interrelations between women and men, and of the role of gender in structuring human societies (Moore 2000:6). They deconstructed the bias structure by focusing on women; they were further redefining and reworking anthropological theory with women’s perspective. Feminist anthropology has formulated structured theoretical questions in terms of how economics, kinship, and ritual are experienced through gender. Further, Moore points that the attributes, activities and appropriate behavior associated with women are always culturally and historically specific (ibid., 7).
Anthropology and women migration

To raise the importance of women in labor migration one needs to focus on women and analyze the data with a gender context and applying a gender perspective. Despite the fact that women have dominated migration, until the 1980s they were rarely the subject of anthropological research. Judith Butler writes that feminist theory has sought with success to bring female specificity into visibility and to rewrite the history of culture in terms which acknowledge the presence, the influence, and the oppression of women (1988:523). In line with Butler, Pessar and Mahler have pointed out how women are brought from the periphery to the focal point of migration studies and as "primary subject in inquiry" (2006:28).

Historically, women often have been ignored in the study or they were described as dependent and passive followers of the initiating male migrant or to reunite with their migrant husband (De Regt 2010, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, Anderson 2000, Passar and Maher 2006). Today women outnumber men in some international migration such as from the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Similarly, in recent years, in Ethiopia women's migration has grown faster than male migration (interview MoFA, MoLSA Addis Ababa 2016).

Feminist anthropology has contributed with an understanding of gender central to anthropological analyses. They were also concerned about the analytical status of the sociological category women when applied universally and questioned the assumption about the "universal subordination of women" and they shifted the focus from "sameness" to critical thinking of the concept of "difference" among women (Moore 2000:7ff). Butler appropriately argues that the universalizing category of "women" is problematic and denotes a common identity for all women (Butler 1990:1f). Her study suggests taking a critical standpoint concerning the category women; it should be problematized and a reflexive exercise should be applied upon it. Similarly, Moore points out that the assumption of a universal category "woman" requires analysis, the attributes and activities associated with women are specific both culturally and historically (ibid., 2000:11). This definition raises other issues about how we understand the reference to women in general.

Further, black feminists and social scientists in order to deconstruct the categories of both ‘women’ and ‘blacks’ they developed an analysis of the intersectionality of various social divisions, focusing on gender, race and class. The development of an intersectional perspective on gender and race is rooted in the work of scholars studying women of color. The term "intersectionality" was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she

Bridget Anderson explains that immigration status is not the only reason that migrant women are in domestic work, the treatment of migrant domestic workers and the demand for them is a symptom of a society that is both racist and patriarchal (Anderson 2000:196). Moreover, her research presents power relations, the reality of diversity and of women’s different positions.

From a gender perspective domestic work is interesting in the way that both, employer and employee are generally female; such a situation challenges the notion of sisterhood. The Ethiopian women are employed by other women in the Middle East. They all share womanhood but their different attributes such as class and ethnicity have an individualistic perspective. Social divisions also exist in the women’s daily lives in terms of inclusion, exclusion, and discrimination. The racial stereotypes play a role both in the selection of, and in the abuse of domestic workers. Certainly, stereotypes help manufacture a sense of difference between the female employer and her domestic worker; "other " women are presumed suited to such service work (Anderson 2003:108, De Regt 2009:560).

Butler’s point is obvious with domestic workers related to their female employees. The universal category of oppressed women is not applicable in the domestic case workers as women are discriminated and being exploited by other women. Although both, the Middle Eastern and Ethiopian women, may share a hegemonic formation of patriarchy and male domination, however the cultural contexts in which they live in are different. The differentiation among women’s socioeconomic status as well as race and ethnicity, are other factors that affect perspectives and experience. To talk about universal norms is not possible as the universal women category shows the lack of awareness.

According to an intersectional perspective every individual holds a position in different systems of social stratification simultaneously (Berg 2010:279). Therefore, certain individuals, such as a female employer, may well be a member of an oppressed group and also a member of a group that oppresses others. As seen, the women in the Middle Eastern region are individuals who are simultaneously experiencing disadvantage and privilege through the combined statuses of gender and class. Therefore, the category of women has a multiplicity of a cultural, social and political intersection. Race, class, and gender insinuate an
environment of domination, as a result woman must be taken into different account and reflect upon due to the power differentials which exist between them.

Feminist anthropology’s analytical model with the domestic-public sphere explores women’s status in relation to different spheres of activity and examines if wage earning serves to enhance the power and status of migrant women within their households (Brettell 2008:127). As the result of their migration, the women earn their own money and get economic independence and in many cases also mobility. Some cultural values and social patterns have undergone changes.

In each society, there is a set of beliefs about how one should live, which is part of the culture of that specific society. In many countries in the Middle East and the Gulf states women’s right and mobility is limited in many ways. For instance, they cannot travel without their father, husband or brother accompanying them or without consent of their guardian. While migrant women are more mobile, nevertheless their class and economic position make the Middle Eastern women more powerful than the migrant women working in their homes. Anderson explains that domestic work is deeply embedded in status relationships, often involving women of different ethnicities, nationalities and classes. Mainly privileged women of one class, both in developed and developing countries often use the labor of other women to achieve their objective at the expense of the lower working class women (Anderson 2000, De Regt 2009). "The women do what well-off women are no longer able or willing to do because of the work’s low status" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003:3)

The women establish different positions as superior and inferior by building boundaries to rise above their common gender and shared experiences as women. Anderson points as how an employer of a migrant domestic worker asserts herself over her worker to maintain her superiority, but more than that, she asserts her difference and that she is a different type of woman (2000:143). This shows the Middle Eastern women’s discrimination towards migrant women as they see themselves for instance as better mothers and wives, since they stay at home with their children and their families, while migrant women are away from their children and families. This is perceived as neglect by these employers but also at home in the women’s own communities. The employers do not reflect on that they have better economic opportunities to do so. They also see the other women as inferior because of their ethnicity and their race as Anderson explains it. "A socially constructed inferior identity is
made in case of the domestic worker […] and it often reproduces stereotypes based on class, gender and race relations” (Anderson 2000:156).

The intersectional framework is a useful tool to understand the different aspect of social categories, to raise the importance of women in labor migration and to analyze the phenomenon in gender context. Butler points out that gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities (1990:3).
MIGRATION IN ETHIOPIA

In the following chapter, I will describe Ethiopia's historical relationship with the Middle East. I will look at how women and their families make decisions of migration, but also how the migration process is linked to different factors. I will also discuss mobility, the status of women and conflicts between different interests.

Why the Middle East and the Gulf states?

The increased migration to the Middle Eastern region is because of the geographical proximity and historically Ethiopia and the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula have been closely related since the seventh century BC (Erlich 1994:3). The movement of slaves, merchants, traders, pilgrims, and scholars has been accompanied by circulations of commodities, money, and religion (De Regt and Tafesse 2015:4). The main pull factors to the Middle East and other migration destinations include job opportunities and better payment, and this has increases the motivation to migrate. The recent labor migration has become an important part of the connection between these countries. The large majority of migrants from Ethiopia to the Middle East are women, particularly young women (ibid., Fernandez 2011:440).

Ethiopians make use of three main channels for migration towards the Middle East and the Gulf states. First, through "Public Migration" that occurs by the official facilitation of Ethiopian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). In an interview with a representative of the ministry, the official presented an index from 2008 to 2013 that shows a total of 480,480 men and women who officially migrated to the Middle East and the Gulf States. The second channel is through "legally registered Private Employment Agencies" (PEAs). Third, through channels of "irregular migration" using the services of illegal agents, which can be illegal brokers, individual operators, or legally-registered companies that illegally provide employment brokerage services to migrants (interview MoLSA 2016; see also Fernandez, 2010:251f).

The Khafala sponsorship system and the treatment of labor migrants in the Middle East and the Gulf States has long been a subject of controversy. The contract puts the women under control of their employer and it creates easy opportunities for the exploitation of domestic workers as employers take away passports and abuse their workers with little chance of a legal consequence. It places the domestic workers in powerless positions as they do not have the same basic rights as other workers. According to IOM employee the majority of the
women and the young girls are unprepared for the different ethics, mind-set, the heavy workload and the cultural shock they face, as well as the discrimination and abuse they face in the countries of destination. This in turn has created abuse and human rights violation against the domestic workers in this region (interview IOM Addis Ababa 2016).

On the problem of abused Ethiopian migrant domestic-workers in the Middle East, the Ethiopian government has been criticized for not actively helping the migrants, and also for not responding to the harsh treatment of its citizens. In response, in October 2013, the Ethiopian government officially temporarily banned issuing work visa to Lebanon, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. At same time Ethiopians were also banned for the same reason from working in Oman and Bahrain. For the first time the government requested a labor agreement from these countries to guarantee workers’ pay, conditions and employee rights. The call for such agreement is to prevent exploitation by illegal recruitment agents and abusive employers (interview MoLSA 2016).

Over the past decade there has been a record increase in out migration from Ethiopia by largely female domestic worker to the Middle East and the Gulf States. The numbers of forced returnee migrants are increasing predominantly from Yemen, Libya, and Syria. The most noticeable is about 160 000 deportees in 2013 to 2014 from Saudi Arabia (interview MoLSA 2016, see De Regt and Tafesse 2015:1). According to MoLSA (2016) individual returnees such as my informants, who returned before they were deported are not included in the official repatriation registration or record as they are considered as voluntary returnees.

### Forced or voluntary return

Return migration may refer to the voluntary or forced (deportee) involuntary repatriation of individuals or group of people. According to IOM glossary the compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or third country, on the basis of an administrative or judicial act; while voluntary return is explained as assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or another third country based on the free will of the returnee (2004).

The woman’s limited arrangement of their visa at the destination countries are one of the aspects of their temporary migration. King points out that "temporary migration leads sooner or later to return migration" (2013:7). The counter flow of migrants or return migrants are the movements of migrants going back to their homeland. Common characteristics of return
migrant are "that they are individuals who face conditions that in essence did not allow them to continue a sustainable livelihood in the host country" (Ruben et al. 2009:911).

Erik Fong indicates that migrants who move back to their home country often are determined to resettle; "return migration signifies a desire to reestablish social and economic activities in the home country" (2012:27). On the other hand, Gmelch has drawn attention to typologies of return migration and the difference between those who intend their departure to be permanent and those who intend it to be temporary (1980:137). Contrary to Fong’s findings, I learned from the women I interviewed that not all returnees are convinced to resettle and to reestablish themselves in the home countries. Most of the informants’ descriptions point that their return is more in line with Gmelch’s account that is temporary and the women are in the most cases in a circular migration. Circular migration is the movement of people between countries, including temporary movement and linked to the labor needs of both countries of origin and destination (IOM 2011). Castles et al. describes the circular movement as economic migration, and they are often economically motivated, who want to save enough in a higher-wage economy to improve conditions at home by buying land or by setting up a business etc. After a period in a destination country, some of these migrants return home, or return and then migrate (2014:56). This is particularly true with my informants. Most of them hope to re-migrate, one informant, Meyrem expresses her situation and express her wish for re-migration as follows:

After many years of hardship, I was lucky to get a job in Dubai, because of that I could help my family. Now that I am back, I am able to open this little shop even though both going and coming back has not been easy. I am still looking to get employment sponsorship abroad to re-migrate.

Meyram a 32 year old is a returnee from the United Arab Emirates. She was working as a domestic worker in Dubai for six years in a private arranged sponsorship. Before departing for UAE, Meyram was one of thousands of young unemployed, from a poor family of eight siblings, with fourth-grade elementary education. One of her family’s friends has arranged through their relatives in Dubai a three year domestic work contract. Her contract was extended another three years. Until her return she was working at a family house sharing the two-floor household and 14 family members with two other maids from the Philippines and from Indonesia. Her work schedule was very tight starting at six in the morning, finishing late in the evening with an hour break every day. She was earning 150 USD per month. Meyrem reviews her time in Dubai with a mix feeling:
While working in Dubai we (the maids) were not allowed to go out or to talk to anyone. We can call but we cannot pay a visit to our family and friends who are working in Dubai. Shopping and other errands were done only under employers’ family members’ supervision. I got off for four weeks every two years to see my family. I was waiting eagerly for these weeks; it was a great feeling to return home then. Now I am home I want to migrate again (She shakes her head…sigh). All those time I was focused on helping and saving money, which I did. Every month I was sending about one hundred dollars, this was my core aim and main responsibility. I helped and improved my family’s life as much as I could; they managed to have a pipe-water, refrigerator. On my return I had some savings, it was not much but enough to open this little shop in my mom’s house. Life is tough here and horrible abroad. The problem is that I cannot help the family now that I am back. Everything is getting so expensive. I am thinking of leaving the little I have (my shop) to my youngest sister and re-migrate again. That way I can contribute better and I can do more than I am able to do here.

Meyrem, migration story confirms Ruben et al. and other researcher’s argument that "Return migration is nowadays more broadly conceived as a stage within an ongoing migration cycle of spatial mobility" (Ruben et al. 2009:911). Her account also gives a glimpse of how the maids are limited to manual labor and to the home environment. It also reflects on global migrant women’s history; they all are focused on helping and getting their families out of poverty. Now after a few years of her return Meyrem lacks the income and she is planning to re-migrate and to send her earning back home.

The paradox of women’s labor migration is that even though domestic work is harsh and unprogressive, the women’s migration can also be seen as empowering. In general the remittances sent to the family or the money the women brought with is spent on households that have improved living standards and the material needs. Women as Meyrem become stronger and more self-sufficient through migration and the experiences that come with it. A remittance also give the women raised status in their household, networks and their community. I was told about Meyrem before meeting her I was told "how she has been a good provider for her family" and she was described as a person with a great integrity and diligent young girl. Meyrem is looking for sponsorship in the Middle East and the Gulf States with great anticipation to find a job at a good and better family than a previous one.

Unequal socio-economical opportunities, structural barriers and gender stereotypes have limited the Ethiopian women’s ability; however migration in some extent has created a new space for agency within the given power structure for girls and women. Changing labor markets with globalization have increased both opportunities and pressures for women. She is determent to take the risk but she has not confirmed that the family will let her re-migrate. It also shows how this young woman has become more mobile.
The status of women and mobility

The ethnic groups of Ethiopia are traditionally patriarchal and are based on gendered role division (Fransen and Kuschminder 2009:7). The women constitute about 50% of the population and contribute about 50% to subsistence production. However, the Ethiopian women are subject to gender discrimination in economic, social, cultural and legal aspects with less access to schooling and employment (Mengesha 2001:2). There is a high birth rate and widespread poverty within the country. The income level of the majority of the population is very low, as well as the education level, especially among women. Due to a patriarchal culture women have very limited access to education and training opportunities in the rural areas. As a result, women’s access to employment is much more limited than that of men (Kebede 2001:9). Urban areas are less strict on gender roles than the rural areas and the participation of women in the public domain has in some way increased in Ethiopia compared to prior decades. Women are allowed to go to work and they are presented in public spheres holding a few political and economic positions, but they are still expected to oblige to traditional gender roles for instant women are still expected and associated with marriage and family.

The traditional norms have an effect also on the women’s mobility but with migration it has become more flexible. Women are more mobile except that at destination countries the social structure halts their movement and rights. Even though the woman’s life is limited to the private sphere at destination countries, at home their migration is considered as public by many families. At the same time, women’s migrating in order to work in a family and in the domestic sphere is considered by parents as safe and appropriate. This, in turn, makes it easy for so many families to agree to send women and girls to the region. The general perception is that as women they are safe at private homes, the abuse and exploitation the women and the girls face is not considered. The women’s mobility has given girls like Meyrem, Rahel and Amina to get new experiences and self-confidence as they never left their community, let alone their country. As indicated in studies of Houndago-Soltelo 1992, and De Regt 2015, the increase of women migrants signify increased flexibility for women who previously were limited to their homes, villages, or neighborhoods. Now they travel long distances crossing international borders to take up paid labor. At the same times De Regt points at how "the employment of migrant women as domestic workers and the particular ways they are employed often implies sever restrictions in women’s mobility, both the houses where they
are employed and in the countries in which they work and live” (De Regt 2010:240). Thus, there are limitations to the mobility of the women.

In Ethiopia it is common to consider women as weak. However, migration has created a shift in the advantage of the women not only in their mobility but they have also widened their influence in the family decision making. For instance, women have an authority to buy and sell or rent their property without any male consensus. In this aspect, the affluent women not only dominate the domestic but also the public sphere as a decision maker, generally it is not as apparent and common as men’s decision-making position.

In my discussion with Selam she mentioned that after her migration “she has taken all important decisions” regarding her move to Turkey for the second time, setting up business and buying a house all these big decisions are taken by her. She says that prior to her migration it was her parents and the elder who had made decision in the traditional manner. Even though power positions have shifted with women being independent, she points at how traditional views are still strong among many women and men in the communities around the country.

**The economic role of female migration**

Ethiopian women choose to migrate for domestic work, they choose it because this is the only labor market they can accesses. In addition, the economic pressures and family responsibilities are the main reasons. Moreover, they are encouraged by their communities and families. Most Ethiopian women migrate for domestic works are contract labor migrants. According to Castles contract labor migration may be defined as “temporary international movements of workers, which are organized and regulated by governments, employers or both. This type of migration is limited of duration; it also involves both sending and receiving countries authority” (2000: 95). In the Middle East and the Gulf States instance, the Khafala sponsorship system is the system that controls the impermanent migration.

In recent years international migration has been seen by policies makers primarily in development terms:

[…] the relation between international migration and development in countries of origin has been viewed in a positive light by the majority of policymakers, who anticipate that migrants' transfer of money, social capital and skills contribute to poverty reduction and maybe also to sustainable long term development (Åkesson 2011:62).
Her study of Cape Verdean returnees shows the contrast in some basic and general assumptions of policies makers on migration, return and development (2011:61). Similarly to Åkesson’s finding in Cape Verde, in Ethiopia my informant’s situation shows that all returnees are not developer or able to benefit their communities with their new abroad learned experience. The author further explains how the different migrant groups’ approaches depend on their migration destination, and on their experiences, and social and economic positions at return.

Åkesson states according to the development discourse; the migrants are expected and have been given the position of responsibilities for their countries’ economic growth that the migrants are urged not only to send remittances. They are expected also to transmit new ideas and entrepreneurial skills and to provide access to transnational social networks. Hopes are put on circular migrants and returnees and their contribution to development (ibid., 64). Ronald Skeldon argues that remittances cannot be seen as a solution for development, even if they clearly can play a role in reducing poverty (2008:6). Ehrenreich and Hochschild also emphasizes that governments of some sending countries actively encourage women to migrate in search of domestic jobs. In that case female migrants are overwhelmingly taking up work as domestic workers. The motivation is that their remittances will have a significant economic impact on the economies of the sending countries (2003:6f). Sending countries hope the money and knowledge migrants gather abroad can foster human and economic development (Castles, et.al 2014:1). But this approach has resulted in national dependency on migration and migrants, particularly women migrants, and some sending countries’ governments actively encouraging women to migrate in search of domestic jobs (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003:7). Government of labor–sending countries such as Ethiopia consider migration a way to reduce their own unemployment, and they also emphasize the positive effects of remittance labor migrants send home to their families. These remittances have a significant impact for the government on foreign exchange. This approach has created a gendered remittance; women are encouraged to migrate and expected to send their earnings home. In general, by focusing on remittances, the women’s working conditions and the disadvantageous labor contracts is not taken in to consideration by the sending countries’ governments.

Some feminist scholars have seen wages for housework as a way to give women some economic power and attributing value to the work they do (Hooks 2000:104). Other feminist
studies have suggested that migration can provide new opportunities for women and change oppressive gender relations (Castles et al. 2014:62). When looking at my informants’ case the remittances and wages earned have placed them as breadwinner while abroad. It has also given them some power to determine their will to re-migrate. Overall it has given them a particular position in their household but their return has weakened the power and position they acquired, as they become dependent than provider. This creates a disproportional burden on the female migrants and it keeps them on circular migration. In my view, positive outlook at migration and remittance is not a sustainable approach to improve and to empower the women’s socio-economic position in a long run.

**Decision making and the choice of migration**

When looking at how these migrations are arranged and the final decision is taken in the Ethiopian household, my field study shows that households, families and social networks are interlinked in migration process and practices. Therefore, where and which family member will migrate is determined by families and sometimes by extended families, seldom by the individuals only. Traditionally, Ethiopian women have experienced economic, social, cultural and legal discrimination and have had fewer opportunities than men to progress, such as advancement at workplace, education and for employment prospect (Mengesha2001:2). All my informants addressed the lack of economic opportunities faced by women in the country. Consequentially family, relatives, and friends encourage the women to migrate, by pointing to how working abroad will improve their and their family’s lives.

Women’s migration is extensive and has created a widespread acceptance of female migration. Oishi argues that "for large-scale female migration to take place; women in the particular country have to have more autonomy and decision-making power within the household" (Oishi cited in Ghosh 2009:9). I agree with Oishi’s statement in general. Many females in Ethiopia have the liberty of movement and when financially secure they have decision making power. Migration has furthermore changed the structure partially and the women are freer in many cases for their movement. However as a patriarchal society, at the same time they are discriminated by cultural norms and conditions for instant in many cases families invest less on women as compared to men.

According to informants, when they initiate the move they consult their parents, husband or other relatives, not only for the financial reason but because it is a custom. They said it was important to get the "blessing" of the family and to keep the network of the kin.
The women further explain that today more women are able to determine their migration financially alone as they are economically independent. Nevertheless they all pointed out the importance of the approval of kin and network. Some explained they told and involved their families once they had started the process of migration as they needed funding and moral support. Others journey were arranged by family and kin, whereas two of the girls have taken migration as an adventure, to be independent and to get a better life away from the patriarchal system and family strain. Even these girls have involved their family and kin in different ways to achieve their migration.

In case of my informants nearly every one of them, has got their visa through the agency (PEA) and through public migration, a few of them through family and friend’s network. Some of them have made the first move by themselves, while others were encouraged or pushed by family and friends from the start. The correlation between the women’s free will, and the families and communities influence for their migration is intricate. Even when, the initial decision is made by the individuals themselves, they are however, forced by the economical and social pressure. This shows the women’s free will is limited and the families and kin stance is more influential.

In general at home and abroad the women’s and the girls’ migration is seen as voluntary. Some of the individuals did not want to migrate but they felt responsible for their families’ well being while very few are voluntary to improve their life and to have a new experience. One of them was Rahel 22 years old. She got inspired from seeing lots of girls from her neighborhood helping their families gaining economical and material status. She explained:

After I finished my high school, I traveled to the Middle East. My fellow classmates and other girls from our neighborhood left before me. The girls I saw up to were improving their families’ lives. I wanted to be independent like them from my family and I was forced to leave, there is no job here not even for the well educated individuals. Migration is difficult; if we had the opportunity in the first place to work here we would not have gone to the Middle East. The situation is hopeless at home, it discourages one to stay.

Hochschild writes that "whatever the original motive, the more people in one’s community migrate, the more likely one is to migrate too" (2002: 28). Her point is clear in relation to the approach most communities’ in Ethiopia had in large. Many women were influenced by other women, some women misrepresenting their own experiences abroad as positive and the material status they showed lured other young girls and women. The positive association with migration and making money is mentioned frequently, not the problems associated with
migration such as rape, cruel treatment and the long-term mental problem is not mentioned by many former migrants and agents. Family and peer pressure especially contributed to the mass migration of young girls. It is a strategy to escape domination from family members, and the husband.

Castles et al. writes that migration can also be an individual strategy to escape from social control, abuse and oppression within families (2014:39). Rahel initiated her migration and saw migration as an escape from family but also as a way to improve her livelihood and work prospect. Soon after the interview, she discussed the misinformation she had. How seeing some of the neighboring girls succeed encouraged her and her friends. She said "No one tells you the real history of migration, people talk about success but not abuse". She also talked about how the young girls and women are not holding a strong position in society, but also how women are perceived and their limited right in cultural context. We further discussed women’s resistance in general to traditional power structures, men and boys are preferred to girls but due to female migration it has begun to weaken. When women start earning their own money and increase their economy not only do they start to acquire freedom but they are also treated with more respect in their families and communities.

A study of Johan Lindquist in Indonesia illustrates that migration also offers the possibility for divorced women, of supporting their children and parents, after divorce as the burden of income shifts from the man to the woman in many cases. Furthermore going abroad is seen by many young rural women as a possibility of at least temporarily escaping from a circumscribed and patriarchal village life, writes Lindquist (2001:123). Similarly Pedraza writes "the decision to migrate because of the gains in personal autonomy they anticipated, reducing the patriarchal control of fathers and husbands" (1991:309). Mobility through migrations offers women more economic power and status in a women’s social and material space. They can also resist discrimination in their communities by migration to gain more autonomy. It gives individual women more independent position and an opportunity to create different power relations in the individual's household with their newly acquired economic position. In general, migration gives economic freedom but also comes with more responsibilities for the women to maintain their families’ economy, but also kin and other links to manage and arrange their migration.
Procedure and arrangement of migration

Women migrate for many reasons and they came from different ethnic and economic backgrounds. Generally it is expected that it is rarely the poorest that migrate (Skeldon 2008:3). In Ethiopia there are two different approaches to the migration arrangement. For most of my informants such as Seble and other women, migration involves having initial capital. To pay for the process in the Ethiopian case is from 6000 ETB to 8000 ETB (cir.300 - 400 USD). On the other hand as Katie Kuschminder’s study finds in many cases lots of women in Ethiopia when migrating for domestic work do have to pay any significant up-front costs to a broker. According to this arrangement a broker will pay the costs associated with their migration fees to get a passport, visa fee etc. in exchange for their first three or more months of wages:

The fact that women do not require any significant upfront costs to migrate means that the poorest of the poor can migrate in Ethiopia. This migration flow is, therefore, accessible to women in situations of extreme vulnerability, and furthermore, is highly attractive to them as an option to provide a potential opportunity to leave their situations (Kuschminder 2014:2).

As reported by two of my informants, Hirut and Tigist, many young women as themselves who comes from the poorest background and in the rural area use this broker scheme even in domestic migration rural-urban migration. This kind of arrangement has an advantage; the women are able to migrate without having a lot of funding. At the same time it places the women and the girls in debt bondage to the brokers.

According to IOM employee, when looking at the social class makeup of migrants one finds that a good number of the poor and working class mainly migrates to the Middle East and to the Gulf states. Nevertheless one needs to place the migrants’ socio-economic backgrounds in context. Their income and class belonging alone do not determine the migration; mostly the social contacts offer them opportunities that are available for them. Therefore the reason for migrating is not only the pull-push factors but it reflects a significant variation among women. Certainly poverty is a primary reason for the women’s depart in search of work (interview Addis Ababa IOM 2016).

Another general perception is that migrants are single women. As Jayati Ghosh explained it both single and married women migrate and having children do not prevent the women from migrating (2009:8). When moving for work women with children often time rely upon their mothers, sisters, or on other female relatives, leaving the care of their children with them and other family members who remain at home (ibid.). Informants such as Elsa and Selam have
left their children with their mothers while working in the Middle East and in the Gulf states even though they are criticized frequently by the society. Elsa a 29, mother of a 4 year old son describes the situation as follows:

I left my son after birth with my mother; she was the one who took care of him until my return. My husband was not happy but we did not have enough money I need to work, I did not neglect or abandon my son; his father could not take care of him by himself. I was criticized for leaving him but the only solution was to leave him behind.

This shows the women’s power to some degree, how they can decide and influence in their household. At the same time there is a conflicting situation and the dilemma of care giving and earning for their families. Elsa also negotiated and compromised with her husband regarding their son and her becoming the head breadwinner of the family. When women migrate to the Middle East, gender roles and power relations change in the homes and communities they leave behind. Michele Gamburd point out how female migration in Sri Lanka has reconfigured male gender roles in an often uncomfortable fashion. The old patterns of behavior are challenged and male are faced with a new social role and structure (2003:190). Both in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka the male position as breadwinner is affected by migration and in some families women are the sole providers, consequently that creates a new power structure in families. The new power arrangement gives women an advantage of earning their own money, at the same time the male partner’s role decreases as the head of the household. As in Sri Lanka, in Ethiopia many people believe that women should stay at home and tend their families while men earn a living for the household. The changes to the gendered labor structure generate harsh opinions of both male and female towards the women. Elsa and other women are condemned; in spite of this, the local poverty and a better earning abroad drives many women to pursue domestic work abroad.

Elsa left Addis Ababa for Dubai, with the initial plan for 5 - 6 years stay but managed to stay only 2 years and 45 days. Her visa was for 3 years but after two years and forty-five days she did not manage to get her contract extended or to get a new sponsor. Elsa describes her situation and the need to re-migrate, as following:

I and my husband are working hard; he works as a driver and me at this restaurant as a cashier. But our salary hardly covers the transportation to work, school fee for our son, food, and shelter. All is so expensive soon we are not going to afford the basic thing as having pipeline water and electricity. I have to go back, that is the only way I can earn more than what I am earning now. You know, I want to give my son a better life. My parents and relatives were not glad when I returned, I did not have enough fund or saving. I have to go again, everyone expects help from me, it is hard. My husband and I are hard workers, we both try to save and give our son a better life. I have to offer my motherhood
and give my son to my mother who will care for him; he will be in a good hand. Even though it is hard, but what can I do? Working in the Middle East and sending money home is the only way I can care and save to help and full fill my wish and dream to help my family. Most importantly I will be able to buy a house for my family. If you do not have a house or just a room you are homeless, especially these days in Addis Ababa. You need a place of your own. My first migration did not work out according to my plan. This is why I still want to go back and I need to go back to make some money. If I am lucky this time around I may stay longer, I will manage to save some money. That way I can give my son a safe and better life. The government has prohibited traveling to the Middle East and the Gulf states. I have to wait until it is permitted to travel and work again. In a way, it has been a blessing, I am still with my family and it also has given me time to save the little I have for the visa process (the government ban was still in effect at the time of this interview 2016).

Her history shows the dilemma migrant women often deal with as mothers and wives. Womanhood is linked to ideas about marriage, family, the home and children (Moore 2000:25). As a result of migration and women’s waged labor abroad, society has been forced to undergo certain changes. Such as Elsa’s wanting to leave her son and her husband’s acceptance of her re-migration shows that a variety of cultural roles has become flexible and individuals are tolerating more and more women’s independence and employment abroad. Some families have adopted a more open attitude regarding gender roles, while many still hold on to elements of traditional views and women are often discredited. Elsa is forced to exchange motherhood for her son’s better life and security, having a house is not only about status but as Åkesson points out: "Ownership of a house is a basic condition for a dignified life. The house is a symbol for a successful migration, but it is also economically important as they can sell or rent to generate income" (2011:69).

Elsa is determined despite the previous failure of her not being able to save enough money now with a great anticipation and hope that the government will lift the ban and she will be able to travel. Hoping this time she will get the opportunity to stay longer at a good family home, to fulfill her wish for a better life but also to fulfill her extended family’s wish of economical support though her remittance.

Even though domestic work can be oppressive but it can also be seen as something empowering for these women in relation to the conditions at home. They become stronger and more self-sufficient through the experiences that come with it both locally and abroad. Although there are changes of attitude in many households to let the women to work abroad, however how the migrant women are perceived has not improved in their communities. Many people still think the women’s place is in the home caring for the elder and the children.
Migration may give them higher living standard and better education to their children or siblings but it comes at a high emotional cost. The women are seen as responsible for helping the families’ economic need, but at the same time seen as irresponsible for putting care for their families aside. Their migration can be seen liberating but at the same time it puts them in a position of a provider for the immediate family and not as a career. This positions women like Selam and Elsa in emotional guilt, dilemma and also in disagreement with family members.

**Conflict of interest and discrimination**

Several of my informants described their needs and motivations to migrate, however; they are not aware of and properly prepared for the hardship that it comes with the economic opportunities abroad. A Saskia Sassen (2003:255) point out that globalization has greatly increased the demand in global cities for low-wage workers to fill jobs that offer few advancement possibilities. When women travel for a domestic work, they are introduced to the big cities’ of global economies such as in Dubai. At the host countries they are not part of the society and they face new challenges. Most Ethiopian domestic workers to the Middle East are overwhelmingly uneducated, unexposed to different cultural and normative systems, and most importantly, have had no formal educational or vocational training (interview MoLSA 2016, Beydoun 2006:1014).

Responding to my question of the women and the girl’s vocational training, MoLSA officer confirmed Beydoun’s findings regarding lack of vocational training, as one factor that creates conflict. Most of the women and the girls from rural Ethiopia that migrate to the Middle East and the Gulf states have no experience of a modern life standard. The lack of handling modern utensils has created tremendous problem both for the women and their employers. Another main conflict creator is the lack of language and cultural awareness. This has created frustration and overwhelming pressure on the women, leading to abuse and exploitation (interview MoLSA 2016, Beydoun 2006). I discussed this with the women. As my informants were from the big city they confirmed that mostly the rural women and girls suffer the most because of the lack of handling the modern house utensils. Regarding language, they all were affected by misunderstandings and confusions. Not only does miscommunication creates conflict, what is more is that it is used by employers as an excuse. On one hand the employers are expecting and demanding a lot from their maids as they see them as their servant whom they have spent money on. On the other hand the women see the opportunity of earning money and not the consequences of what miscommunication and misunderstanding can create.
as they desperately need the job. The employers use their excessive power both legally and illegally and exploit the powerless women as much as they can. Domestic workers are excluded from the labor law as mentioned before and subject to restrictive immigration rules based on the employer-specific sponsorship Khafala. This puts the workers at risk of exploitation and makes it difficult for them to leave abusive employers. Non-payment or delayed payment of wages, forced confinement to the workplace, a refusal to provide any time off for the worker, forced labor, and verbal and physical abuse are common for a lot of domestic workers (interview IOM and MoLSA Addis Ababa, 2016). Kebede also points out that in many cases, migrant women do not sign employment contracts before departure (Kebede2001:6).

The kind of work they are required to do is chores, employers themselves would never consider doing. One of my informants Sara summarized the expectations and the conduct of employers: "Once they have a domestic worker, they see us as their slave, they want to use and abuse us all they can and as long as they can".

The mistreatment and exploitation of migrant women have made headlines, in a different news outlet. Ethiopian domestic workers’ situation has also been reported with a focus on abuse. Major inquiries and reports have been written how the female migrants are victimized, excluded and marginalized in the labor country. For example in Lebanon it was found that women migrants from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Nepal and other countries were marginalized and discriminated. Reports such as "Despite frequent abuse, immigrant domestic workers in Lebanon are denied protection under the law" by Belén Fernández for American Aljazeera (March 26, 2015) writes this about the way the women are treated:

The direness of the situation, however, barely registers in Lebanon. Perhaps one reason is that premature death is more familiar in this conflict-plagued nation than it is elsewhere. But the lack of concern is better explained by the dehumanization of immigrant workers, who have been incorporated as accessories into many well-to-do Lebanese households -and some not-so-well-to-do ones. Maid’s rooms, a common feature of residential architecture, are often indistinguishable from closets (Fernández 2015:2).

Those informants who returned from Beirut, Lebanon have expressed the horrible conditions they went through, as Sara described her ordeal in Beirut, how she was mistreated and imprisoned for weeks in a small space. "They kept me on the brink of starvation, giving me only little to eat and drink. The psychological pressure was beyond description" (interview 2016). Sara’s description is similar to Fernández’ story. While in Turkey Selam’s passport
was seized by the family head and her movement was limited to the house. Another informant Tigist mentioned her movement was limited to the kitchen even though the family house was a two storehouse. Only when the head of the family permitted she was allowed to enter and clean the different rooms. Movements between the different stores and the garden were prohibited. Tigist’s, Selam’s and Sara’s experiences in Lebanon and Turkey are few examples of how employers confiscated migrants’ passports and locked them inside the homes. Moreover, women and girls are much more often targets of gender-based violence particularly rape (Mahler and Pessar 2006:39, Kebede 2001:18).

Another report covering similar problems was on BBC "Almaz’s story" (September 30, 2014). The story illustrates the slave-like condition of the Ethiopian maids in Saudi Arabia. These two reporting reveal Ethiopian women domestic workers’ situation in the Middle East and the inhuman treatment they are confronted with. The power relation between employees and the employers are distinctive the employers are usually women with economic power superior over poor migrants who are in a subordinate position. Being oppressed, as domestic worker is always intersect with other social divisions such as, social class, age, nationality, immigration status (Yuval-Davis 2006:195). The discriminatory attitude which exists and the lack of legal rights in the region has provided for the abuse and exploitation of migrant women often time employers take full advantage of the situation to control their employers to the extent they choose. Migrants are often made to endure abusive working conditions in order to pay back the money they or their family owe (Kebede 2001:8).

Both the informants and Bena Fernandez (2011:438) pointed out that migrant domestic workers in these countries are employed not only by Gulf nationals but also by professional expatriates. Rahel was employed by an Indian expat and Seble’s employees were Lebanese professional expat living in Dubai. Both ladies experiences reflect the exploitations, the common outlook of women domestic workers and their widespread low status. The working conditions are often times atrocious; the exploitation of workers without regard for health is the experience of many migrant women. The experience of Ethiopian women domestic workers in the Middle East is not unique but the increase in flux is a concern. One reason is the lack of legal protection granted by the Ethiopian government and by the destination countries’ governments.

To get the perspective of employer I spoke to one employer from Dubai who was at time in Addis Ababa for a short visit. From her standpoint employers such as in Dubai are
giving these women opportunities for employment. However, when I mentioned the harsh working conditions and the exploitation of workers, she pointed out that in her family home everyone is treated very kindly and as a member of the family. She further pointed out that as a woman herself she has a certain understanding for migrant women’s circumstances. The miscommunication and misunderstanding was mentioned as problem factors. According to her the problem is that some women often time expect more than an employer can offer them. “If it was so unbearable they would not be working for such a long time and want to extend their visa”.

This explains that women with power view their superior position as caring and kind, but it is also a way to reinforce their power. Contradicting to the interviewee’s narrative, this shows how women in different positions approach exploitation. The problem of exploitation and of power abuse is not acknowledged instead both sending and receiving communities are accepting it as miscommunication and misunderstanding.

The migration of hundreds of thousands of women for domestic work in Ethiopia is mostly presented as voluntary labor migration; since the women willingly travel to seeking a better job opportunity and livelihood. In reality, the women’s labor migration is a result of the economic situation, lack of access to employment opportunities at home and gender-based discrimination, as most women are not well educated, therefore there are few opportunities for economic development and growth for women. These are in turn a major driving force of the rising labor migration to the Middle East countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates. These countries offer attractive salary compared to the domestic salary. That is one of the incentives to travel to the region despite the ill-treatment.
EXPERIENCES OF RETURNEES WOMEN

In this chapter, I will discuss women migrants’ positions in society upon their return to Ethiopia and their aspiration for re-migration. From a gender perspective, returnee women migrants’ position is complicated; how the women see themselves and how society sees them. Mechanisms such as liberation, self-confidence, and independence, both strengthen and weaken the status of returnee women in society. The economic situation, the expectations from family and from society, pushes the returnees to re-migrate.

The distrusted champions

According to my informants, many people in Ethiopia are ambivalent about migrant women returning from the Middle East. In general, they are seen as great contributors because they improve their family life. At the same time, their moral values are also very much distrusted. A senior programme assistant for IOM said "the women are heroes; unfortunately, people do not appreciate them much for what they have done". She talked about people’s doubt and suspicion of these women’s moral and also how their ordeal in the destination countries has not been taken into consideration (interview Addis Ababa, 2016).

There is generally a negative emphasis on return of these women, it is seen as a failure, and when they succeed they are still mistrusted. Their migration and their success have an added value, either negative or positive, depending on who one is speaking to. The common remarks from men and sometimes even from women are said with negative connotations and doubtful comments are more common regarding the migrant women’s successes such as "I doubt the money is clean" or "I wonder if she earned it in a legal manner …etc". All of the informants mentioned that many people in their communities are suspicious and wonder what they were up to in the "Arab country" Meseret describes the common attitude in her own words:

People are not sure how to approach us; they see us with a "very negative eye" as if we are all morally corrupt. Even though they know we went to improve our lives, our families and we went through difficult circumstances doing that. Coming back to our relations is not only different but also difficult with the family and the community. It is also affecting our relationship with men. Most men think we got money and that is all they want from us. Getting married to a return migrant is associated with moving into "a new house, a household fully furnished with modern equipment". You know some of the girls are even paying the entire expense for the wedding and care for him as the breadwinner in the household. It is not our culture, it is wrong and one is not appreciated. Instead people will prize the man for successfully finding a girl with money. There are also some men who do not want to do anything with us at all, as they see returnee women who have been in Arab countries as "indecent and untrustworthy". There are as well men who think we are all mentally unwell or we are just a group of disappointed and unsuccessful returnees.
In fact, her illustration shows that the liberation and independence they experienced through migrating weakens their social status at home. All these action and attitude are significantly shaped by the return environment and society. On their return the women with their prolonged absence no longer fit into the community they left. When I discussed this subject with the women, and I found out that it is not only the distress they went through at their destination but also the treatment at home that has been difficult, especially when they returned without funding. Åkesson found in her study of Cape Verde, to be a "returnee without savings and a house of one's own is a social catastrophe" (2011:76). The same goes for Ethiopian migrants. It is important to have funding and to show that one is successful, when returning.

For these women, going to the Middle East has consequences not only positive that people could improve their lives, but it also comes with a lot of negative effects, such as ill repute, mental stress, and verbal abuse both abroad and at home. In contrast to the IOM employee’s opinion, a civil servant official expressed his view by stating that migrant women are lazy and get spoiled in the Middle East:

[...] they do not want to work here in their home communities they want to go there and have their packed juices; here they have to make it from scratch. They are so used to the ready-made material now they do not want to work hard as everyone else here at home...therefore; they re-migrate again and again (Addis Ababa 2016).

Yet again, it is shown how differently people reflect upon these women in dissimilar ways; both the negative and positive are reproduced in society. It is demonstrated that, as Ghosh explains it, that migration is a multidimensional phenomenon, which can have many positive effects because it expands the opportunities for productive work and leads to a wider perspective on many social issues. "It can also have negative aspects, migration creates a social rift, it can promote an open attitude but it can also strengthen and reinforce traditional attitudes" (2009:1).

The officials’ and the IOM employees’ view reflects opinions of many people in Ethiopia. According to the traditional beliefs women should stay at home, in this case, they should stay in Ethiopia and not migrate to other countries. The civil servant official’s view reflects a conservative male traditionalist opinion, while the IOM employee, as a modern independent woman herself sees them as heroes. These are just few examples of such contradicting statements I have heard regarding women migrants and their positions in communities. Even between women returnees themselves, some are upholding a conservative and traditional view. These migrants and returnee women are being stigmatized just for
having worked in the Middle East and in the Gulf states, regardless of their experiences and success in the destination countries. As mentioned above the situation is briefly mentioned by Meseret who described how people associate migrant women’s journey and return from the Middle East mainly with good money, mental problems or prostitution.

These negativities views are common in sending countries. As Pareñas (2003) describe it, migrant women in the Philippines are vilified and criticized in the public discourse, while their contribution to the country’s economy has been downplayed: "It gives people a possibility to lecture women morality [...]" (ibid., 52) and to refuse the changes that occurred due to migration, such as changes in the gendered division of family labor. As in the Philippines, in Ethiopia as well mostly men and in some cases women also view by pointing at the new social behavior as foreign. Ultimately, they want to maintain the old structure with women as mothers and sisters who are dependent on their male companions.

Unfortunately, as women are or seek to be independent they also run "the risk of being characterized as morally loose". In this aspect migration has become central for fear among men often expressed as a concern (Moore 2000:95). The women are to help with managing the household but they should not be totally independent, their independent creates fractures in the traditional male hierarchy and structure. Migration creates a contradicting view on women migrants as both champions and immoral persons, depending on who is responding. At times, the women’s relationships to their families, relatives, and community or to each other appear to be based on the economic transaction. But their relation is more than financial and complicated. The ambivalent relationships these women have have been putting them in a hard-pressed position. Women’s desires and motivations for a better life have created a complex case in terms of socio-economic relations. However, the economic opportunity has put them in a distressing situation and they are faced with hardship and discrimination. The economic opportunities abroad have influenced the women’s lives, their social status and mobility both in positive and negative terms.

To a certain extent, migration creates awareness and cultural exposure. The women I spoke to gained self-confidence, they did become stronger in the sense that they increased their knowledge about other cultures, especially the Middle Eastern culture, and language. They gained self-assurance in their ability to provide for themselves and their families. They also acquired new skills while working abroad, which improved their self-confidence but considerably not every skill was useful when they returned home. Rahel points out as follows:
I have learned how to clean and wash with a different detergents and utensils. But here at home, no one got these items such as the washing machine and vacuum cleaner, so I cannot go and clean people’s houses. We only got the old way of cleaning, it takes time and it is backbreaking. Migration has given me opportunities to improve myself even though, at a time I and others who have migrated and returned do not see our experiences as positive and appreciate it. The negative experience of migration is so overwhelming we overlook the good part. We have learned a new skill; many people do not see us as improved individuals with different skills.

Rahel works at a pool table as a cashier and she spends her entire day with young men. Some of them treat her well and they like that she is there as one of a few women in the branch. While others comment that she should "get another job, like all other women". These young males’ expectations reflect society’s view in general, women are expected in certain occupation and some young returnee as Rahel break this employment pattern not all but some do as they get more self-confidence. I have made my observations at this place and I have noticed their treatment of her. They were ordering drinks from her and other requests, but Rahel was very consistent with reminding them she is a cashier, not their waitress. As the players are young men, she is expected not to be at a pool table. This shows that the women and the girls are expected in certain occupations. Rahel is an example of how returnee changes the labor pattern, by interring to the new area of male occupation as they get more confident and new experience. Going through a hard time in the Middle East gave Rahel self-esteem and a “I can do anything” attitude, as she described it.

Gendered prejudice and gender division of labor intersect in many ways; negative stereotypes are noticeable and are stigmatizing the women. The norms people hold in general, and their effects on returnee migrants are difficult to assert. However, these women are approached with a contradicting manner in many ways. Based on information from my informants, migration is a source of women’s economic empowerment and self-confidence; nonetheless, gender relations are less positive, as the women told me.

**Remittances and responsibility**

In general, women’s remittances have a great impact on the socio-economic situation of many household. The remittances being the most important, the women and young girls have been given responsibilities to raise their families’ and their countries’ economic status. How do the economic incentives and responsibilities shape women migration? Bina Fernandez (2011) describes the Ethiopian case as follow:

[…]The migration of young, unmarried women as domestic workers to the Middle East is embedded in a strong cultural expectation that they will provide for their natal families. It is underwritten by the
provisioning values of caring, responsibility and duty and sustained through women’s remittances, which can be significant contributions to households (ibid., 441).

Not only families depend on remittances but also the governments of sending countries rely on the flow of remittances. According to World Bank data the total global inflow of remittance for 2016 was 536.029 Billion USD (World Bank 2016).

During my second interview with Meyrem, she explained how her income was declining and she is worried about her siblings’ well being. I asked her about her brothers if they were contributing. She replied that her remittance will be much significant and it is better if she travels again to the Middle East rather than her brothers’ contributions with their almost nothing labor salary. Her remittance will be sufficient to cover and supplement basic living costs of her family. Ghosh writes:

In most labour-surplus developing countries, labour migration especially temporary migration for work can have very positive effects on the economy of the sending country, on the balance of payments, and also upon the lives and income opportunities of women migrants. There are positive human development implications as well, to some degree material improvements resulting upon remittance incomes which raise most families out of poverty and allow more spending on health care and education of the young in the household (2009: 32).

As the household gets dependent on their women, the contributions from women like Meyrem and Selam become more important to improve the livelihoods of their families. The World Bank data shows that Ethiopia is one of the top 10 remittance recipients, in 2015 remittance inflow was 0.6 Billion USD (World Bank 2016). Selam explains how remittance can help Ethiopians:

The outcome of working and sending money from Turkey has made it possible for me to buy a house for my mother and rent a house to my own family. This, in turn, helps us to invest in our family, community, but also as I invested my savings on entrepreneurship that helps my country. If the system develops and provides opportunities for small investors that would be helpful. It will create employment opportunities and would accommodate small business; especially for women. Women job-creating desire is great in this country. Regrettably, our tax structure and other tax methods are problematic. Therefore, it is difficult for returnee women to invest their modest savings. If the system was supportive that would be an advantage for development and self-sustainability. The current situation is difficult and discourages small investors, despite my lost through my investment; I will come back again and invest here. I am still for coming home and investing in our communities and country, it is important. For instant, hiring other women without exploiting them, for child care or for household work, creates employment opportunities for rural girls.

Further, in our discussion, I asked how she will manage regarding her son’s care and the household at her re-migration. She affirmed that she already had arranged to have a young relative from a rural area that will help her mother while she is abroad. Selam will hire a rural
relative, who in turn, will send remittance back to her family in rural community. This supports what Anderson points out that while most of the migrant domestic workers relied on unpaid care by female family members, for domestic workers themselves to employ careers, often rural migrants (2000:118).

Selam, Emebet and Elsa pointed out that they become a provider with their remittance instead of being a care giver which, as they described it, more of their wishes as mothers to stay with their children and to care for their elders. Several times during the interview Selam emphasized the importance of women’s involvement in labor and development, but at the same time she contradicted herself by expressing a feeling of guilt for not caring for her family. The cultural norms are deeply embedded and it is difficult to disregard them. Although the women migrated to improve their families’ lives and went through difficulties, they still felt as they let down their family and kin.

In general, remittance has been seen in national level as positive and industrious by politician convinced that migrants’ transfer of money, will help to reduce poverty. Åkesson points out that the migrants are encouraged not only to send remittances but also to transmit new ideas and entrepreneurial skills and to provide access to transnational social networks (2011:62). After remittance contributing with competence is one of the expectations usually everyone has on Diaspora and return migrants. Mulu describes that her family and friends were expecting that not only remittances but also she would bring home new acquired skill from abroad:

I was in a kitchen 24 hours I have learned new dishes, what that will help now? They expect that I would earn better by working in a restaurant kitchen however with my failing health I cannot do it. They expect sometimes too much from us women in particular. Women who have migrated somewhere are expected of more than any other person. It does not matter if you migrate from rural to urban, the Middle East or Europe. The expectation is the same remittances, skill, and care for family, everything.

There is a lot of anticipation from migration. This, in turn, has created a dependency of families on their daughters and on the women’s remittances. In many cases, as Meyrem and Elsa point out, they need to re-migrate as family members are dependent on their income and they cannot provide the same help as they were able to do when they were abroad. This confirms Skeldon’s point that remittance may improve human capital but, in doing so, may lock certain populations into dependence upon further migration (Skeldon 2008:7).
Many family members have become dependent on remittances and it creates as well social inequality between giver and taker. The women while abroad as they were a provider they felt proud to be able to help themselves and their families. At their return, they lose the power they acquired while abroad, back at home they are partially dependent on their family members, which make the relationship hard and complex.

**You should have handled it better**

Cassarino (2004) discusses the neoclassical view of return migration. According to this view "people move permanently to raise and maximize their wages in receiving countries; return migration is viewed as a failure, if not an anomaly" (ibid., 256). Return migration is perceived to be determined by financial or economic factors only. In contrast, Eric Fong writes that anthropologists suggest "an alternative cultural explanation" why migrants return and argue that some return migrants decide to return not for economic reasons, but because they find it difficult to adjust socially and culturally to the new country. In addition, anthropologists stress "the strong social and emotional attachments to the home country" (Fong 2012:29). One of my informants who explained problems of this adjustment is 22 year old Amina.

With only elementary school diploma, Amina migrated to the Yanbu province of Western Saudi Arabia in 2013 for a two-year contract through one of PEA. Her plan was to help her family and save some amount of money and then return home. Her dream of improving her life with some savings and to help her sibling of six were "distorted not dead", as she pointed out and she was determined to re-migrate again. At the time of the interview, she was working in a hotel kitchen:

"I have been working here for a year and a half now. My plan is to stay for two years and re-migrate again this time to a different destination". As she expressed it "my memories from Saudi are not a pleasant to say the least, and I will never ever go back". She was harassed by the employer’s son and she was forced to handle a massive workload. According to Beydoun, exploitation and abuse of domestic-workers are often carried out not only by the family's matriarch but also often time by the entire family (2006:1032). The author further states it is generally the head employer, often the mother who establishes the tone of how the domestic-worker will be treated by the extended family; the latter will follow the former.

Amina said that it was difficult for her to describe how uncomfortable and misplaced she felt to the new environment and the host family. She further pointed out that she never traveled or
lived outside of her family house before this journey: "As the only maid, to take care of nine family members and cleaning a two-floor house was too much work. It was impossible and I missed my family". Now she is back and her return experience and others expectations at home are not easy to handle. She describes her return experience as follows:

Since I came back many times family members (not my mom), relatives and friends told me, that I should have handled the situation with my employer better. I should have endured like everyone else the difficulties I faced in Saudi Arabia. I feel I've let them down. At the same time, I am so disappointed that they did not show any understanding of my unpleasant experiences. Even though I told them the different aspects of my problem, the difficulty I had with the host family, language, and also the social environment in Saudi such as being locked in the house. No one says "well done for leaving the misery in Saudi". Of course, they were happy I was alive and, not dead like some of the women and the girls, but that is about it. I would say only my mother is on my side.

She tells this about her experience in Saudi:

The first few days the family treated me kindly especially the house lady. Then all changed the kids were very rude, particularly the oldest son. Every time he came from college he was making life hell (I am assuming abuse, could be verbal or sexual, she did not want to talk about it when asked). After a while the house lady was complaining more and more, although I was working almost 20 hours a day, that I was not a good worker and that I did not deliver according to her standard and expectation. That her son had complained and that I did not serve the family well. Honestly, I was not prepared to face this amount of work. I did my best but she did not approve my effort and the harassment was just too much. I give this family a credit for being helpful when I requested to my return to my home country. The family did not force me to finish my two years of contract nor did they refuse my payment, which was really great. Also, they did not contact the agency. This family has assisted me with their own expenses for my return and I got my full salary.

Amina received her salary and return ticket; she did not reflect upon why they helped her, if they maybe were guilty and ashamed of their son’s behavior, or if they acted out of kindness. She was just thankful for their help. Kebede (2001) explains the domestic workers contract situation as follow:

[…] how employers had the right to return them to their agents within three months of their employment if they were not happy with their services. It is quite common that they do not get paid for the first three months because their employers insist that they will have to find out whether they are suitable for the post or not before they start paying them their salaries (ibid., 8).

In general, one has to stay the entire contract time, in Amina’s case for two years. It is barely possible for the women to terminate the agreement before the expiration as its seen breach of Khafala contract. As the result women may have much difficulty leaving their employers and their agents and may sometimes be confronted with physical violence. Sometimes women borrow money from their agents to pay the fees and end up in "debt bondage," in which they become completely dependent on their agents. Unable to pay or terminate the contract the
women are forced to work the fixed time (Kebede 2001:7, De Regt 2010: 251). As her sad story continues she describes her return as follows:

Coming back family and friends expect you to have some money. I was even lucky I got paid and I had a small amount of money, not enough to start my own business. Unfortunately, it is not enough to help my family to get them out of poverty. I did spend, though, the little I had on my family. Most of the people I know made me feel as I am a loser; I returned very quickly, I should have stayed. Many girls and women stay their contract out no matter what, so everyone was expecting the two years from me. Some people think I wasted a lot of money that we do not have on my migration process and I put my parents in debt for nothing. I should have stayed and saved to pay back that money, I feel guilty thinking of it. My future plan is to migrate again, hoping this time I would be lucky to get a good family. Then, I can stay all my contract time and save some money. I will continue to dream about my own little shop in a rented one room, here in my neighborhood. I was born and raised in this district, you know. It is nice to be in our own country and your own culture. The problem is I cannot afford just working here and not being able to save any money. However, if I re-migrate again I will earn far more than what I earn now. Here I am making about 50 USD per month, while in Saudi and in the other Gulf States I can earn between 150 USD and 250 USD. It is a lot of money, and I will save a lot if I can stay longer next time around.

It is indeed a lot of money compared to what she earns at home, but one wonders if it is worth to go through all these horrible circumstances and abuse. Amina’s and the other women’s story show the women are responsible for their families’ well being and economic growth. The other problem is that families are in debt to their kin and to their network because of the women’s migration expense. Basically, women are more likely to accept very difficult conditions as they fear losing their income and of letting their families down. The labor opportunities and the attractive wages at the destination countries overshadow the problems associated with migration such as discrimination and abuse problem.

Hochschild writes how the remittances the women send home provide food and shelter for their families and often a nest egg with which to start a small business (2003:18). Almost all of the informants mentioned that their earnings were spent on the family, only two of twelve informants said their savings were invested at their return in a small business. Do these women, in general, accomplish their economic goals?

**Working hard, but unable to improve our lives**

The Ethiopian women’s migration to the Middle East and the Gulf States is commonly seen positive and as voluntary labor migration. The women, as King explains it are "rational actors" (2013:14) before migration they made decisions they weigh up the pros and cons of moving comparing to staying, based on information they have. However, the realities to achieve their objectives are very challenging and complicated as is shown in Kebedes study
with their salaries unpaid or having to send money home every month, they usually have little money to bring back with them (2001:11). Few migrants have been able to maintain their socio-economic position and reach their goals. Turning to Kuschminder’s (2014) study one finds out that the majority of domestic worker returnees do not achieve their goals in their migration as the challenges they face do not allow them to achieve their financial goals and change their living situations in Ethiopia. The author further describes that the average salary in the Middle East for an Ethiopian domestic worker is 150 USD per month. The majority remits all of this money to their families and in rare cases the families are able to save some of this money for the women’s return. Upon return, most women have limited money that they have been able to bring back with them. Dreams of being able to "improve themselves" are not achieved and many women are in a worse situation compared to when they left. In her study, Kuschminder found that over 60 percent of returnees were unemployed upon return and the lack of employment opportunities upon return is driving several women to consider re-migration, despite the challenges that they had faced (Kuschminder 2014:3).

One such returnee was Hirut, 24 year old, originally from Bahir Dar (a northern city). She has lived in Addis Ababa for many years. She is one returnee from Kuwait after 3 years working there as a maid. I met Hirut at the migration office while she was processing her re-migration paper. She asked me for help, at the time she was all dressed as a Middle Eastern Muslim woman with a headscarf and a long dress. After offering my assistance we started to talk and through our conversation, I found out that she is an orthodox Christian, she was just trying to blend in as a Muslim at her upcoming destination. She was in the process to re-migrate to Dubai; she pointed out several times during our conversation how important it is to have the cultural attire and the language both in Kuwait and in the UAE.

I asked her if I could interview her, she agreed and as I continued my questions (on a taxi ride) she pointed out that her first migration to Kuwait was through a PEA, a two-year contract then got her contract extended for another year at the same family. She continued describing her situation as follows:

The last three years were tough, I did not want to extend my stay after three years. I also did not find a sponsor either, so I was quite happy to come back home until I found out about my saving. You see, my family does not care much about me and my well being. They care only about my money. I have sent all I have worked for, all my earning was sent to them. And now that I am back I get nothing. I have three siblings, we lost our parents few years ago. They live with my cousin here in Addis Ababa; she was the one I was sending all my money to. I am not educated I only went to elementary school to sixth grade. I never had a bank account; I do not know how to use an account. She got a bank account
so I was sending every penny to her on a monthly basis. I came back when my visa expired. When I asked about my money I was told I have no money left, not even just to buy necessities for the day. She claimed that she spent all the money on my sibling’s school and that my sister was sick for quite a long time. According to my cousin, most of the money was spent on my sister’s hospital bills. I thought that cannot be correct as I have sent all my earnings all this time, and now all the money is gone, all is gone, gone!! She was tearful describing her loss.

Hirut’s depiction explains the conflicts remittances can create and also the dependency the women have in relation to their kin. Without their network, they cannot manage to have sponsors or help to care for their children or in Hirut’s case someone who takes care of her sibling. Another problem is conflict over money sent home. Anderson writes "Hidden costs or losing their saving become apparent to many workers when they return home. They often fell ill at ease in their home countries, where things have changed in their absence, and where they may feel that they no longer belong" (2003:110). Losing her saving has created a rift between Hirut and her cousin; it has also created a distress in the family as they lose her remittance. This is one of the reasons for her to take on migration again. Her plan is to save her income all over again and send the rest to the family.

I asked further about her new process to Dubai, and the governments ban as the government had banned labor migration to the Middle East at the time of our interview. She explained that the ban is necessary but she hopes this would not bring an end of migration to the region. She said that she hopes the ban applies only to Private Employment Agencies (PEA). Even though she is not using the PEA this time, as the ban is in place she is not sure if she will succeed with her re-migration. She said she will keep trying. "This time is different I am using a private sponsorship from my kin; I hope the migration officers will accept my request". She clarifies that she is going to replace her cousin and the sponsorship has been arranged through her cousin’s employer. The cousin Bezunesh has worked in Dubai for more than 6 years for this family, and now she is back in Ethiopia to give birth. She wants Hirut to replace her at the employer’s house. That way she helps her employer by sending them a reliable person that she knows well, but also keeps her work position when she gets back after her maternity leave.

According to her story, one of her cousins is helping her to re-migrate and to get work at the same time to keep her position. The other cousin in Addis Ababa has "deceived" her with her money, yet she got support from her as she is still the guardian of Hiruts’ siblings. The relationship between Hirut and her two cousins are very contradicting. This arrangement confirms how migration network is flexible and complex. The women try to cope with the
situation such as losing their saving by compromising and by using a complex set of negotiation with their kin. They are in debt to each other by set of reciprocity. Responsibilities and roles are assigned in both fluid and rigid social structures. Women labor migrants rely on networks of relatives or friends, most of whom are also women domestic workers. As Brettell points out women are often at the center of immigrant networks, they both initiate and maintain them (2008:126, see De Regt 2010:255).

I found that the women have roles and responsibilities in the web of network and they keep the communication alive both at the migration destination and at home. The multiple layers related to remittance are affecting the women's personal improvement and progress. Sending all their earning affects their savings; in turn this positions many women such as Hirut in a worse state and keeps them in the circular migration arrangement.

**Responsibility, roles and expectations**

Women leave their homes and communities for different reasons, in many different ways, for a long and short time, both inside and outside of the country. When looking at women migrants’ positions and responsibilities from a gender perspective, one finds that responsibilities and expectations are different for men and women migrants in their families and communities.

How family members act and make decisions is very interesting, I found out that they do not necessarily act as a unit concerning migration, though, families and kins are always involved. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) argues that people do not migrate as a result of a firm household plan, but as a consequence of negotiations often filled with conflicts in families and social networks. Who, how and when one can migrate is decided in a complex arrangement. Further, the author states that family interests and individual interests especially women's and men’s do not always connect (ibid., 395). One of my informants Seble 29 year old described her dilemma for re-migration as follows:

I want to go back to UAE but my brothers do not want me to go. You see our mother is not feeling well and she is getting old. They prefer that I stay and take care of her, I am the only daughter and they think that is my responsibility. I want to earn my own money and improve my life and contribute to the family’s economy, but my brothers are against it.

As a daughter and a sister she is expected to fulfill the traditional role and responsibilities such as giving care for the youngest and for the elder. Seble describes her disappointment as she was trying to convince her brothers to let her re-migrate for the third time. According to
the traditional norm as males, her brothers have no responsibility of caring for their mother; they are rather expected to contribute economically. While as a sister and daughter Seble is expected to take care of the mother. It is seen as a natural thing to do.

Seble’s previous migration pattern was as follows. The first time she was in Lebanon for two years on a contract earning 100 USD a month as a domestic worker. Then she left to Dubai for another two years contract and she was earning 250 USD as a nanny. At both times her migration was arranged through PEA, which cost her about 250 USD each time. As she explained it, it was worth the amount spent, as she did not have a network and the necessary connection at the time. Now on her third migration to the Gulf States, her plan is to arrange sponsorship through an individual employer and a friend. At our final meeting, she reconsidered her brother’s request and decided to stay for the time being. She affirmed that her family needs her:

They need me, my mother needs me. I will try to get a job nearby and I will look after my family. I have to be at home, I am the daughter, and it is my responsibility. If I go, what would people say? No, I will take care of the family here, I will not earn much but I will be at peace and fulfill my duty.

Despite the fact that, most of the informants in my study migrated with the intention of a long stay. However, the legal and judicial reasons such as not finding a new sponsorship in the host country did not allow them to stay and they did not see a possibility to stay. Therefore, they returned when their visa was about to expire and before they were deported. The legal issues are not the only reason for repatriation as Gmelch points out that strong family ties, rather than economic factor are the most and the major incentive for return (1980:139). Such family cases were mentioned by three informants for their repatriation, for example, a parent getting sick or a family member passing away etc. As a result, they had to return involuntarily against their personal interest to respect their families’ wishes and also as women to fulfill the expectations of family and the society.

All informants pointed out that as women they are anticipated by their family and community to care for the elder and the sick. They are expected to return when their assistant is required in case of a family crises situation such as a parent’s poor health, or death in the family. Their length of stay at home depends on the family’s request and the women’s economic position. As Stack cited in Brettell “...bad times back home can pull as well as push…” (2007:116). Another informant who was in a similar position was Mulu 38 year old. She described her cause of return as abrupt, she returned home when her father got ill. After a week of her return, her father passed away.
In her case she could not re-migrate after her father’s death. Her husband also got sick and she was forced to take care of the family as her assistance was required. She also explained it was her responsibility as a daughter and a wife.

At the interview time, Mulu was at home taking care of not only her husband but also of her grandson who was two years old. I asked her if she would like to re-migrate if the circumstances were different. She replied with "not any more". She said she was eager at first to go back and resume her work in the Gulf States, not at the same employer though, even though they still call her after such a long time and want her back. Now she also has health problems herself, so migration is not on her mind and the possibilities of saving money for the journey is not there.

Mulu and other women in this situation are caught between what they want and what the family wants them to do. While the men are expected to provide for the family, they are not expected to give care to parents or the children. Also, male migrants are not expected to return home, when a family member is sick. And if they do not contribute while working abroad family and kin does not condemn them, they just express their disappointment. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) points out in her findings the different responsibilities and expectations of men and women:

[...] although men migrated in order to support their families better, they were less accountable to their families while in the United States than if they had not gone north and less accountable than the women who stayed (ibid., 402).

In line with the insightful study of Hondagneu-Sotelo the women’s accounts demonstrate that although both men and women migrate to support their families, women have the major burden and responsibilities. Also, the women’s work is not taken seriously in the same way as the men’s work. Men’s work is regarded as important families do not want them to leave their jobs and come home abruptly as women expected to do. The cultural structure and the gender roles also generate separate expectations. Therefore, men are seen to be less accountable both when they stay and when migrating.

In general, the women’s migration and domestic work involvement in the Middle East and the Gulf states are considered secondary to domestic duties, home, and family responsibilities. My informants’ depictions give an idea about the burden and responsibilities the women and young girls have been given. Some informants have argued that migration has provided new opportunities for Ethiopian women and that woman are more mobile.
According to most of the informants’ illustrations, many traditional norms are still in place, such as the idea that care giving and domestic responsibilities are only for women.

**The work division, hierarchy, and solidarity**

Marina De Regt (2009) points out how stereotyping domestic workers based on their nationality or ethnic and racial background is very common and has resulted in the racialization of domestic work. These stereotypes have a major impact on domestic workers, affecting their access to jobs, working conditions, wages, and citizenship rights, as well as their identities and everyday experiences (ibid., 561)

There is a clear hierarchy among migrant domestic workers in the Middle East and the Gulf States. Filipinas rank top and they hold a superior position partly because of their knowledge of English and awareness of local laws and regulations (De Regt 2009:569). In addition, labor markets exhibit wage discrimination by country of origin Filipina domestic workers receive higher wages and status than those from Indonesia or Sri Lanka, while Ethiopians and other Africans are at the bottom and are paid the lowest salaries as my informants themselves illustrated. The work division in the household shows the women’s status-positions. My informants pointed out that Asian women more often cook and take care of the children and the elderly, while African women typically do cleaning tasks. Race and ethnicity have a lot to do, but they all pointed out how knowledge of language and of the local practices is important to improve one’s position, at least it helps to improve the payroll. Having the knowledge of the countries rules and regulations has been mentioned. Furthermore, getting support and guidance from one’s own government representative is seen as helpful and the women are hopeful of the government’s involvement to improve their situation in the future.

Anderson points out that domestic work are deeply embedded in status relationships, some of them obvious but other less so (2003:104). Social differentiation such as race and class identities is reproduced through household labor. There is agreement among feminist scholars that race and gender intersect in the labor market. This intersection creates a situation of multiple troubles, predicting that individuals who occupy the lowest position on two or more social categories such as female and women of color will experience the most disadvantage of any group and possess the least amount of economic resources and rewards (Browne and Misra 2003:492f). These multiple disadvantages are apparent in the case of Ethiopian and African women domestic workers in the Middle East and The Gulf states, who are most consistently found at the bottom of the economic and racial ladder. The women
encounter greater disadvantage through the combined race/gender/class status. Sara mentioned whenever she or any other worker makes a mistake, family members would complain about their nationality or race: "Instead of complaining about what I've done, they would say that Ethiopians or you people from Sri Lanka are worthless, some of them remind you how inferior you are all the time". By calling them names and treating them as less than human as Anderson writes that "racism both reinforces and gives a new aspect to social divisions and the debasement of the worker[...] and identities are quite literally reproduced" (2000:159).

There are also cultural differences that shape the knowledge they have about each other as workers and as employees. Nira Yuval-Davis based on her research the interrelationships of gender, class, race and ethnicity; she explains how social divisions exist in the ways people experience personally on a daily basis in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage. The author further writes "importantly, this includes not only what they think about themselves and their communities but also their attitudes and prejudices towards others" (Yuval-Davis 2006:198). When asked about the solidarity among the women, they responded that the relationships and the solidarity between the different nationalities is "complicated". Even though they do have solidarity with each other in many cases, they also compete for positions between themselves and with new arrivals. Those who have established a relation to the lady of the house and acquired language and cultural knowledge have more power and can use it towards the other employees and the newcomers. Seble depicts her experience as follows:

Once I was accompanying madam to her relatives, there I met another Ethiopian so I was so happy I told her all my disagreements with the house lady and shared my troubles. Instead of helping me as a compatriot the girl told everything for madam, I was there but I did not understand the s she told her. So I got in trouble because of that and the madam treated me so badly. People actually make things difficult for you, if they feel you threatened them by being good or competitive at the job or they do not like you they can put you in a dangerous position and you can get in deep trouble because of their action. You have to know our position, especially when you are new.

Her depiction demonstrates that when Seble confided in her fellow Ethiopian she did not understand the hierarchy and the hard competition between them. When she met the other girl she felt a connection but she was not included in the network of these women. Ultimately the girl excluded Seble by telling her complain to the employer. Yuval-Davis writes that "categorical attributes are often used for the construction of inclusionary/exclusionary boundaries …" (2006:199). Seble being the newcomer, the girl wanted to highlight her power
by rejecting Seble. Besides the other girl wants to strengthen her position by showing her allegiance to her employer, so she can be more trusted. Seble’s account confirms when migrants perceived to compete for jobs and other resources settled migrants can "evolve from being bridgehead to gatekeepers" who are hesitant or reluctant to assist prospective migrants (Böcker and Collyer cited in Castles et al 2014:46).

I found out with other informants how an established compatriot has helped them to access the system of getting a new sponsor or getting to the new ones a cellular phone or re-connecting them with their families back home. They create a common set of social network and organization. Here they emphasized the importance of collaboration and that there are implications of collective action and mobilization among the women. For example, Selam illustrates how strangers (an Ethiopian woman) who happen to pass by the house saw Selam and helped her to get a new passport while she was locked in her employers’ house. She also got her a new employer and they became friends and still both ladies help each other in many ways. Selam’s gave another account where she highlights women’s solidarity and help she got from another domestic worker in the house to escape while the family was on vacation. She mentioned with gratitude a Bulgarian nanny who was very helpful and supportive as well.

While other domestic worker a Filipina who was the longest employee of the family, was described as the controller on behalf of the employers.

My informant’s emphasized the importance of solid networks and how they were describing collective national identities by emphasizing cultural characteristics such as trustworthiness: "We Ethiopians are reliable, the employers know they can trust us. They know that we have an old and a nice culture. Furthermore, when it comes to family and kinship we have a similar culture as our employers, we understand their need and respect for their families and relatives". Castles et al. points out "for ethnic minorities, culture play a key role as a source of identity and as a focus for resistance to exclusion and discrimination" (2014:63).

Individuals are positioned in labor market based on their social-class, race ethnicity and nationality which created wage inequality among different women domestic workers in the Middle East and the Gulf states. The different ethnic groups are perceived differently and they are given different places in ethnic hierarchy. As a very proud people, the Ethiopian hold up their culture and identity, the national pride provides them self-worth and personal importance.
CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have described and analyzed Ethiopian women migrants’ circular migration to the Middle East and particularly how social dynamics in the family, gender relations and economic circumstances are linked and affect their decision making regarding their migration. Moreover, I have looked at the role of the social network in both the migration process and at home.

When I began my research, I entered the field with a set of assumptions e.g., that I will study women migrant who have returned voluntarily and, thereafter, their reintegration process. As I got involved in my informants’ life stories, I realized that the out-migration, the return as well as the re-migration are interconnected. The most important factor driving the women to re-migrate is the economic reason which is greatly interconnected with the issue of discrimination and gender inequality. Mahler and Pessar points out that migration are not only understood in economic and or political terms, it is a socio-cultural process mediated by gendered and kinship practices (2006: 33). The complex relations show how the different reason for migration is intersecting in different level. It also shows the simple pull-push factors are not the only reason for migration or for return. Both their migration and return are shaped by the economic situation, the family structure and by household strategies. My informants’ account highlights that most of the women’s movement will not stop with the return, they are determined to continue their economical pursuit by re-migrating.

Overall, in relation to return as well as out-migration the women themselves, their employers and their families were all engaged. All participants had different approaches and goals, which created tensions between different parts at times as we have seen for instance in Seble’s case. In addition to the various reasons mentioned above, depending on how they have returned, influences their re-migration.

The network is rather important at the women’s migration and at their return as well. It can facilitate integration and employment opportunity both at home and abroad. Women with a strong network have better possibilities to re-migrate as they are supported by their network economically, for instance, by raising money and arranging a loan or funding and by other necessary resources such as providing sponsorship. Those who lack a strong network need a savings to fund their travel expenses or they go through a PEA who pays everything, in that case, they get trapped to debt bondage to the agent.
The women are pressured by the socio-cultural expectations and also by family pressure. One of my informants stated; “we are freer to make differences for ourselves and our families but the cultural pressure is tough, for instance women are expected to prioritize interest and need of family and kin, that needs to change”. Also the general expectation and demand are both encouraging and distressing for the women. Addressing women’s access to economic opportunities and women’s education only is not sufficient. These communities need to deal with the influence of social norms and beliefs, such that a return is not always a failure. The women’s and the girl’s situation should be given more consideration.

In general, return is seen as going back to their place of origin to resettle. In my interviews I found that the return is transitory rather than permanent; they repatriate for a while and re-migrate again. Now that they are back, they cannot stay at home either due to personal or economic reasons and they will ultimately re-migrate and stay in a long process of circular migration. One of the facts that keep them in circular migration is that the Middle East and the Gulf countries have only a short-term migration policy. As a result, the Khafala system allows the women two to four years entry and work permit at a time. The women return when their visa is about to expire. Therefore, there are only temporary or circular migrants to these countries. In addition, the Middle East and the Gulf states are seen as an attractive working destination due to the double or triple payment of what the migrants were earning at home country. Once at home the returnee women face high unemployment, other difficulties and also the skills learned overseas may not be relevant to life at home. They realize they have not achieved their goals and have not created a sustainable economy. This, in return forces them to re-migration despite the mistreatment.

Remittances is the major factor for re-migration, there is also a strong culture of migration in communities across Ethiopia and a broadly held positive perception about the rewards of working abroad. International remittance is a great economic source for the Ethiopian government and it gives rise to economic status for the individuals. In addition, remittance restructures the women’s power position in their families; by giving them more influence and authority in their household. However, the absence of it creates social tensions and estrangement between the returnees and their families.

All of the informants have mentioned at first they were welcomed by their families and relatives at their return; however, many of them eventually encountered critique as the support diminished. Family members became unhappy and that created enormous conflict. Amina and
Hirut are some of the girls and women who faced this problem. For both married women and single women, being able to send money home is one of the crucial factors of their migration. However, due to traditional roles, women migrants, especially single women are more pressured from their families to remit the largest part of their earnings. As a result of this burden and their feelings of responsibility towards their families, women migrants accept very difficult living and working conditions.

Informants have also pointed out that migration has given them some chance to be independent, to progress in their personal and economic objectives, even though it was short-lived for most of them. On their return, most of the informants have lost their independence because of the loss of employment and resources. The preparedness of the returnee is crucial for their homecoming.

The lack of work opportunities, lack of funding and not to be able to utilize their ambition at home, such as starting a small business (one of a top wish for all) force most of the women to re-migrate. Many migrants’ dream is self-employment and they hope to set up their own businesses up on return. Despite the fact that degrading treatment abroad is a well-known subject many said they are willing to tolerate such things in order to attain their migration goals. None of them has described their migration experience as successful, only Meseret said that on one of her employment situation as "I was lucky, did not suffer a lot and they treated me as a family". Many times at the interview and casual conversation they all talked about their suffering, the mistreatment and their desolated dream and broken promises, often described as "I do not want anyone to suffer the way I suffered and I do not want anyone to go through what I went through"; yet most of them got a plan and desire of re-migration. Regardless, they will re-migrate, and try again by taking a high risk. The two women who are not going back insisted that their dignity is more worth than the economic gain.

Anderson writes "the domestic worker is embodied by virtue of her gender, her race and by her enforced association with dirt […] " (2000:147). While working abroad women were stripped of their humanity through actions, words, and perception. They were discriminated and treated badly both emotionally and physically by their employers, mostly because of their ethnicity and race. Yuval-Davis explains ethnic and racial divisions relate to discourses of collectivities constructed around exclusionary/inclusionary boundaries that can be constructed as permeable and mutable to different extents and that divide people into ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Yuval-Davis 2006:201). For the most part employers see their employees as the "other"
without any solidarity even though they are women themselves. The combination of gender, ethnicity and race systems creates a unique practice to divide women of different background in labor hierarchy. In this study the intersectional analysis has helped me to understand the nature of different oppressions, disadvantages, discriminations and exploitations the women face in the Middle East and the Gulf States. Each social division has a different reality depending on the women’s class, ethnicity, age, nationality, etc. The mechanisms proposed by intersectional approaches offered insight to the social divisions, social power and questions regarding the interrelations between multiple stratification and the hierarchies in the women’s wage. Race, ethnicity and gender represent systems of inequality within wage gap particularly for those at the low end of the income distribution such as Ethiopian women (Browne and Misra 2003).

In Ethiopia, women are linked to the idea of marriage, family, and home. They are seen in a traditional manner as dependent and as the weakest of society, especially in the rural areas. With migration, women shift their positions in many ways. However, mostly men, but also some women, oppose these changes that they regard as a negative development, and the men do not want to lose their privileged power position.

To some extent the women act as agents for culture change in introducing new values and attitudes upon their return. That has also created both conflict and backfire; some see it as an alien behavior to Ethiopian cultural norms and label the women as women of low morale. These women try to re-structure the gender relations by influencing their own (rigid) culture. For example, as I mentioned previously women who pay for a wedding, they saw themselves as progressive women, by contrary the conservative women perceived their action as negative and opposite to the long-standing cultural norm. The absence of the women and not taking care for the children and the elderly are seen also as non-traditional and alien to Ethiopian culture. At the same time, looking at the women’s migration statistics one gets the impression that both men and women have accepted the new trend of women and girls earning for the family. However, there are class differences, based on economy and education that affects how men accept the changes.

Another important result from this study confirms that women develop a sense of empowerment and their decision-making ability increases as they earn their own money. However, earning and administering an autonomous income did not completely turn into greater power for the women. In general, most women have improved their household
economy and their social mobility; however, because of the patriarchal social structure they have not gained or improved their gender positions that much. The women I interviewed are still less powerful in the public realm as women mostly are expected to act in the domestic realm.

As previous studies by Pedraza 1991, Gambu 2003, De Regt 2010, mobility is a central element in discussions of women's migration and employment as domestic workers. On one hand, the feminization of migration indicates increased mobility. In case of the Middle East and the Gulf states, migration can empower women but it can also be seen as a disempowering force. In many cases women in these countries can only work within the home sphere. The disadvantaged cultural structure and other gender discrimination which are in place have pushed Ethiopian women into more a segregated and isolated work position. Despite the isolated milieu, exposure to another language and a new social and cultural environment has improved the women’s self-confidence. Working in the Middle East and the Gulf states has given them different perspectives both to appreciate and to question their own position and freedom at home. Women in Ethiopia are not restricted by law in many ways; they can do whatever they are capable of; although culturally, women are restricted in many ways. While in the Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia women are restricted both legally and culturally. At their return, this has generated independency and self-confidence in Ethiopian women, in comparison to their employers who have a great amount of money but limited rights in rigid cultural and legal structures. For instant Emebet and Amina who was in Saudi Arabia as women with neither legal right nor rights of mobility, on their return they appreciated their freedom at home. Most of them discussed and criticized the slow development of gender equality at home, as Rahel discussed it regarding employment opportunity, while education was not an issue. There is more progress in that sector in Ethiopia for women, especially in the urban area.

Another important point is how these women were torn between being loyal to their families, communities but also to their country. They were saying that being home and their decision for coming back was good considering the circumstances. At the same time they did not see any future in their communities and country, therefore they had to migrate and re-migrate. Most of the returnees said "there’s no future for me, I can’t stay here", and "one will never progress here". On the contrary, few of the informants said they should not have left in the first place, for the Middle East but that might just be in retrospect. If they had succeeded and been successful it would not been questioned. It explains the ambivalent feeling the
women have for migration and the different reasons, which force them to consider to re-migrate and to face the harsh circumstances that they so dislike but still would like to consider it. Regardless of their initial experience both the women and the girls were very determined to continue their endeavor.

It is important to recognize the women’s perspective, they have a life that is hard, and both options staying or going are so complex and difficult. They take tremendous risks in order to escape their situation. They are strong enough to give up their family life, the household in exchange for a better life by facing unfamiliar and difficult conditions abroad. With so many financial expectations and demands on these women, they have no choice but re-migrate no matter what the circumstances are. They offer their life and health for their and their families’ survival. If no changes happen with the socio-economical situation, gender equality and the labor market in Ethiopia, the circular migration trend will continue.

In this study, I have gained insight that the combined factors of high levels of family dependence on returnees, weak labor market as well as the absence of reintegration policies for all returnees encourage re-emigration. Gender segregation of occupations and the devaluation of female-dominated jobs affect the women’s position. The women are pressured as individuals at many levels, from the family, the community, and even from the government. They have taken the burden of social and economical responsibility. The women’s responsibility is high both at home and at their destination countries.

Finally, one of the obstacles I found out is the gap between the expectations of the returnees on the authorities and authorities’ expectation on returnees. The returnees have mentioned the lack of help from the authority, such as accesses for rehabilitation center as many of them have gone through a horrible situation (there is one facility in Addis Ababa with a limited capacity which caters forced returnee). On the other hand, the authorities expect a productive citizen with investment ability that can reintegrate economically when returning home. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs the government is trying to create opportunities to assist and rehabilitate the forced returnee in to their communities (interview Addis Ababa 2016). In some examples governmental and non-governmental organizations together provide technical / educational assistance to officially mass forced returnee and repatriated refugees. However, women like Hirut, Selam and Meyrem etc. who return themselves with their own expenses; they have been left out and disregarded by this program. As all my informants returned outside of the official repatriation scheme, therefore, they are
not entitled for resettlement or other help. They all complained about the lack of information and assistance from the government and NGOs, and this has created a frustration as the returnees’ had expectations from the government on their return.

This study shows that one can never make any assumptions about women’s migration from a single approach. One journey of migration may be voluntary, but involuntary in the next. Even though, the women themselves take the ultimate decision to migrate. Their socio-economic conditions and there are so many interrelated causes that force the women to migrate. They go through difficulties and discrimination both at home and at migration destination. At the destination countries the women face discrimination based on their nationality or their ethnic and racial background and that has a major impact affecting their access to jobs, working conditions and wages. Social constructions of gender and race are systematically related to labor market dynamics to generate inequality (Browne and Misra 2003:491). Yet, the women reclaim their dignity and survival. The women have made it possible for me to see the changes and challenges of returning home. Returning home is not always a pleasant experience, it could be tension and distress as it is for some of these girls and women.

It is very difficult to assert their journey as voluntary neither on their out-migration nor on their return. Even though, they were actively involved in their departure process, some more active than others, their situation makes it involuntary. Looking at the timing of their return, their reasons for return, as well their present situation makes it clear that their return is temporary and not permanent as I expected. They are on ongoing circular migration.

In conclusion, I believe adequate housing, accessible labor market and occupational training for the women will decrease the remigration but it will not stop it. Poverty, limited employment and economic prospects make the women’s situation complex, even though the government of Ethiopia has implemented a number of policy and legal forms to improve women’s rights. In general, women's decision-making power is limited and there is still gender discrimination in the labor market. The problem has not been regarded as a priority for societies and in the countries of destination. A continued study and research on the domestic worker's issue, to understand the women’s situation and to create a sustainable socio-economic policy is necessary.
REFERENCES


ATTACHMENT

APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Full Name, age, marital status and education
01. Where were you living before your migration?
02. Why did you leave? Can you describe your situation? Where you a student or were you working? If you were working, what and where were you working?
03. Where and how long were you abroad?
04. Did you know anything about the country or the culture before your departure?
05. Who made the decision for your migration?
06. Which migration channel have you used?
07. Would you describe your experience, what have you done and for how long?
08. Why and when have you returned to Ethiopia?
09. What was the reaction from your family, kin, and friends?
10. How is the resettlement going for you? Have you gotten any help from the government or NGOs?
11. Tell me what have you been doing since your return?
12. Why do you think the returnee’s social status is low/ high and why is it so?
13. What is your future plan?
14. Why would you like to migrate again, and for how long?
15. What made you change your mind?
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dusitabdiali@yahoo.com

Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology
Upplala University
Box 631
SE-751 26 Uppala, SWEDEN
Tel. +46 (0) 18 471 22 85
Fax +46 (0) 18 471 70 29
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