



A Who's Who in Ethiopian Migration?

Migration policy brief | No. 5



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Introduction

The face of migration in and from Ethiopia has been changing, from large refugee flows in the 1980s and 1990s to different forms of labour migration in the present decade as people seek employment opportunities abroad. The large refugee flows from the 1980s and 1990s have led to the emergence of the Ethiopian Diaspora that now numbers approximately one million people living abroad. At present, highly skilled emigration remains a challenge as doctors increasingly migrate to better off African countries such as Botswana and South Africa, but the majority of flows are now characterized by low skilled migration. The changing nature of migration in Ethiopia has led to changing mandates in migration for government institutions, international organizations, unions and NGOs. This policy brief will provide an outline of the roles and responsibilities of different organizations with regards to migration in Ethiopia. The information in this policy brief is based on interviews conducted with these organizations in November 2010.

Government Institutions

There are several government institutions that have a role in dealing with migration issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and the Ministry of Civil Service are the two most involved in Diaspora engagement and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is involved in new labour migration, particularly to the Middle East. At the same time the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia is also engaged with the Diaspora in that they try to attract immigrants abroad to hold foreign currency accounts and also issue Diaspora bonds that are promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Immigration Department is mainly involved with migrants coming into Ethiopia. The Ministry of Justice and the Federal police work more in the area of legal issues dealing with migrants and investigations of trafficking.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Expatriate Affairs General Directorate, established in 2002, is the section that is charged with Diaspora engagement and developing a migration and development plan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also responsible for the embassies and consulates that serve migrants abroad. According to the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate (EEA) has the objective to: (1) serve as a liaison between the different Ministries and Ethiopians abroad, (2) encourage the active involvement of Ethiopian expatriates in socio-economic activities of Ethiopia, (3) safeguard the rights and privileges of Ethiopians abroad and (4) mobilize the Ethiopian community abroad for sustained and organized

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image building. At the same time, the EEA focuses on disseminating information to the Ethiopian community abroad and keeping them informed of relevant development. In addition, the EEA conducts research to identify the challenges of the Diaspora abroad so as to improve legislation that can allow them increased participation in nation building as well as ensuring the well being, safety, security, rights and privileges of the Diaspora.

Specific initiatives of the EEA relating to emigrant communities include: the publication of an Information Booklet for Ethiopians and Foreign Nationals of Ethiopian Origin Living Abroad, publication of the Ethiopian Investment Guide, organization of the annual 'Ethiopia Diaspora Day', support for the 2006 launch of the broadcast of Ethiopian television programs and information dissemination through Embassies and Consulates on Investment Opportunities and Financial Incentives in Ethiopia to Ethiopians abroad.

Ethiopian Embassies and Consulates now also have the role of enhancing the link between Ethiopia and its emigrant communities in main destination areas such as the United States and Europe (ICMPD-IOM, 2010). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, matters specifically focused on Ethiopians abroad which are performed by the embassies and consulates include: forming links with Ethiopian expatriates, registration of Ethiopians abroad and the establishment of departments within missions with the key task of engaging the emigrant communities.

The Diaspora engagement plan of the Expatriate Affairs General Directorate is still being worked on. It has been drafted and is currently under internal review with the plan to submit it to the government by mid 2011. There are planned consultations with the Diaspora in Europe, North America and the Middle East to gain feedback on the current policy plan.

Ministry of Civil Service

Formerly known as the Ministry of Capacity Building, the newly named Ministry of Civil Service houses the Diaspora coordinating office that is charged with engaging the highly skilled Diaspora abroad for capacity building initiatives within Ethiopia. The Diaspora Coordinating Office was established in 2005. The main task of the Diaspora Coordinating Office, which previously consisted of three people and is now comprised of one director, is to help run the MIDA (MidEth) program with the IOM (see IOM section for a description of the MidEth program). They are specifically mandated with coordinating the transfer of knowledge, whether it be the knowledge of the Diaspora or the knowledge of other highly-skilled individuals who are interested to make a contribution in Ethiopia. They mainly work with health professionals but also with University lecturers and other highly skilled individuals. The office does needs assessment in the various regions and in Addis Ababa to understand what people and skills are needed and where they can be placed. Then, they approve the matches and make the placements. The office mainly works with people coming from North America and Europe..

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is working on current labour migration, particularly to the Middle East. They are responsible for checking on the labour conditions and ensuring fair employment contract conditions when a person wants to work aboard and in some cases to provide assistance to emigrants. If a person would like to work abroad, there are three possible (legal) ways to do this: 1) through self effort; 2) through private employment agencies and; 3) through government-to-government arrangements. To find a job via self effort means that the individual has found a job abroad via their own friends, family, or networks. Then, they must apply for approval at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs who then checks that the minimum working conditions are adhered to. Once approval is given, the person is free to emigrate. When an individual migrates through a private employment agency or through government-to-government arrangements the procedure is virtually the same from the Ministries perspective as they still check every contract to ensure it meets labour conditions and fair employment standards. The Ministry deals mainly with domestic workers to the Middle East. Most working contracts in the Middle East, regardless of the way the job was found, are two years in duration.

Another way the Ministry assists emigrants is with pre-departure orientation and training. At the moment, this is a three hour session where would-be emigrants are lectured on the content and terms of their employment and their legal rights. They are also given an orientation to the country where they are migrating with regard to the climate, socio-economic and cultural environment, health and hygiene and who they

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can contact in the event of a problem. Currently, between 80 and 100 people are leaving Ethiopia through these means every day. There are currently plans in the works to partner with the IOM to establish a model house where migrants can be trained on the types of domestic work they will be doing in the destination country, since there are often issues of rural women not knowing how to use appliances such as vacuum cleaners when they arrive in their destinations. This can cause problems when the skills of the domestic worker do not meet the expectations of the employer. The Ministry is also part of the National Anti-Trafficking Committee but the committee has not become completely active because of a lack of capacity.

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice has recently become involved in the area of migration. It is newly on the agenda of the Ministry and discussions are underway as to how to handle issues relating to migrants. The Ministry has a limited mandate dealing with prosecution and legal counsel, drafting laws, prosecuting criminals, legislating laws and crime prevention. The first objective of the Ministry is to understand the current gaps in legislation with regards to migrant issues. They must understand their baseline to know what next steps to take. Currently, one area where the Ministry is active is in dealing with the prosecution of illegal employment brokers (or traffickers). However, there are many gaps in the legal framework in Ethiopia making prosecution challenging for the Ministry of Justice.

Federal Police

The Federal Police enters the picture when there is a crime committed or an investigation into a crime, particularly with regards to human trafficking, which seems to be overly prevalent and under investigated. The Federal police work on trying to prevent and investigate trafficking although from a legal perspective it is still unclear where they can step in, which comes back to the issue of a better legal framework brought up by the Ministry of Justice.

Immigration Department

The Immigration Department is a stand-alone department that deals mainly with immigration matters, so non-Ethiopians coming into Ethiopia. UNHCR also works with this department with regard to refugee hosting issues. The ARRA is the main department for refugee affairs in the immigration department.

Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia has two main ways that it engages with migrants. They issue the Millennium Bond which is a bond targeted at the Diaspora and they allow Ethiopians abroad to hold foreign currency accounts. In 2004, The Government of Ethiopia established Directive No. FXD/31/2006 on the Establishment and Operation of Foreign Currency Bank

Account for Non-Resident Ethiopians and Non-Resident Ethiopian Origin. The objective of this directive was to encourage investment from the Diaspora and to “support the international foreign exchange reserve and ease the balance of payments problem of the country” (Directive FXD/31/2006).

Foreigners are allowed to open three types of accounts. The first is a *Fixed (time deposit)* account. The second type of account is a current account. A current account acts in the same fashion as a regular bank account wherein deposits or withdrawals can be made at any time. The third type of account is a *non-repatriable Birr account*. This account takes the form of a savings deposit that can only be used for the purpose of local payments. The interest on this account is double the interest of the minimum savings deposit rate set by the National Bank of Ethiopia. The Directive established that banks must keep foreign accounts in three currencies: the US Dollar, sterling pound, and the euro. Banks have the option to offer foreign accounts in the additional following currencies: Canadian Dollar, Saudi Riyal, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar and UAE Dirham. These accounts are intended as an incentive for investment from the Diaspora. The interest earned on all foreign currency bank accounts is tax-free. The funds in a *fixed account* can also be used for collateral to obtain credit from local banks for investment in Ethiopia. With the first issuance in 2008 Ethiopia, was the second country in sub-Saharan Africa to issue a Diaspora bond (Ghana issued the Global Jubilee Savings Bond earlier the same year. The Diaspora Bond was issued by the state-owned power utility company Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCO) (Negash, 2009). The bond is known as the Millennium Bond and is a corporate bond underwritten by the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (Ethiopian Embassy UK, 2009). The minimum amount is US \$500, and the interest rates are 4%, 4.5 % and 5% for five, seven, and ten years maturity (Ethiopian Embassy UK). The bonds are tax-free in Ethiopia, and interest is paid annually. The bond can also be used as collateral for borrowing from local banks in local currency. To date, the Millennium bond has raised \$500,000 and there is approximately \$1.2 million (July 2010) in foreign currency accounts of the Diaspora.

¹ For more information on these accounts see Kuschminder and Siegel (2010)



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Inter- Governmental and International Organizations

Several International Organizations are active in the field of migration in Ethiopia. This includes the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations International Children's and Education Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR).

International Labour Organization (ILO)

The ILO is the international organization responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards. The mission in Addis Ababa is not only the Ethiopia Country Office, but also the regional office for Africa. In Ethiopia, the ILO has taken a lead in trafficking issues, particularly of female domestic workers to the Middle East. The ILO works closely with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and local Trade Unions to develop policies and approaches to protect women seeking to migrate abroad. The ILO has also funded research on trafficking from Ethiopia.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The IOM mission to Ethiopia works to facilitate migration in Ethiopia. The IOM runs the following specific programmes (IOM, 2009 in Franssen and Kuschminder, 2009):

- Movement, Emergency and Post-crisis Migration Management – provides emergency assistance to flood victims and the internally displaced, and prepares refugees prior to resettlement in third countries.
- Migration Health- provides health assessments for refugees for resettlement and for visa applications.
- Migration and Development- works with the Diaspora to support Government of Ethiopia's Development goals. The Migration for Development in Ethiopia (MIDEth) programme is the primary migration and development initiative. One aspect of MIDEth is to bring people from abroad to contribute to knowledge transfer and capacity building in Ethiopia. This programme is run in cooperate with the Diaspora Coordinating Office of the Ministry of Civil Service.
- Regulating Migration- Counter-trafficking programme that includes: counselling service for migrants, potential migrants, returnees and their families; basic assistance, training and counselling to victims of trafficking; and an information, education and communication (IEC) campaign among potential migrants, high school students and the society at large to create awareness of trafficking.
- Facilitating Migration- works with the Government of Ethiopia to strengthen border control.
- Migration Research- seeks to build capacity in research, data processing and analysis on federalism, peace-building, and conflict management for the Regional Affairs Section of the Ministry of Federal Affairs.

The IOM in Ethiopia has done research on trafficking in Ethiopia that has sought to create an understanding of how people are trafficked and the migration routes utilized to exit Ethiopia. In addition, the mission in Ethiopia provides services to return migrants.

The United Nations Children and Education Fund (UNICEF)

The primary responsibility of UNICEF for migration in Ethiopia is to provide assistance to unaccompanied minors who are returned. For instance, recently 56 minors (that is individuals under the age of 18) were deported from Yemen back to Ethiopia. Individuals under the age of 18 are seeking to move to Saudi Arabia to find work. Some return on their own, while others are caught while in Yemen and are deported back to Ethiopia.

United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR provides protection in Ethiopia to Somali refugees and individuals claiming asylum for Eritrea. The UNHCR currently operates three refugee camps in Ethiopia and provides protection to approximately 100,000 people. The UNHCR is also a member of an inter-agency task force between Ethiopia and neighbouring countries that deals with migration issues in the region. One of their main partners in the inter-agency task force is the IOM.



Unions, NGOs and Other Bodies

Private Employment Agencies Association and the Private Employment Agencies Union

The Private Employment Agencies Associate and the Private Employment agencies Union are both organizations (trade unions) of legal employment agencies that help to place people in jobs abroad and particularly in the Middle East. Currently they are two organizations but have plans to join forces to become one new entity. There are currently 58 legally registered employment agencies.

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Center for Migration and Displacement, Addis Abba University

The Center for Migration and Displacement at Addis Abba University was founded in 2010 as a research group. The group is currently working on a Diaspora study for the IOM and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Conclusion

Emigration from Ethiopia in the 1980s and 1990s has led to the growth of the Ethiopian Diaspora and recently emigration has been increasing to the Middle East. This has led many government, inter-governmental agencies, and non-governmental agencies to increase their mandates to support migrants abroad. At this time there is no central migration body in Ethiopia and although some partnerships exist, there appears to be fragmentation between different groups working on migration issues. For instance, the Government of Ethiopia does not have an electronic interface, so knowledge sharing within the Government itself is limited.

A key concern of the Ethiopian Ministries is a lack of capacity to be able to provide the levels of needed support to migrants. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in particular expressed that it is very difficult to be able to reach people in rural areas to provide them with information on the conditions of migrants in the Middle East, to be able to follow up and monitor migrants once they are in their destination countries, and to provide adequate support to migrants upon their return. In addition, more capacity is needed to be able to increase and improve the training of migrants prior to their departure to the Middle East. On a similar note, the Diaspora Coordinating Office is experiencing budget declines and capacity issues to be able to deliver further programmes to the Diaspora.

Finally, the legal instruments and frameworks in Ethiopia are not sufficient to provide the needed support to migrants abroad. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the ILO are currently working to address this issue. However, once the legal frameworks are updated there is a still question of capacity for enforcement.

In conclusion, the increasing prevalence of Migration in Ethiopia has led to many legal and logistical challenges to provide adequate support to migrants. Institutions are seeking to

provide much needed support to migrants and to meet and understand the current migration demands. All indications suggest that migration will continue to rise from Ethiopia and thus it is increasingly important for the legal frameworks and support programmes to be established.

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