

## Ethiopia Country Profile

*Updated May 2016*



### Key mixed migration characteristics

- Ethiopia is an important country of origin, transit and destination for people in mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa region.
- Mixed migration movements into Ethiopia predominantly include refugees, trafficked persons, irregular and economic migrants from neighbouring countries particularly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and Yemen.
- Ethiopia hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa. As of March 2016, the refugee and asylum seeker population in Ethiopia was 735,165 with South Sudanese and Somalis being the majority (UNHCR)
- Few legal migration options have led to irregular migration with the majority of Ethiopians going to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States via Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen. Significant numbers of Ethiopians also head south towards South Africa, while others head westwards to Europe via Sudan, Libya and the Central Mediterranean route.
- Ethiopia is also a major transit hub out of the Horn of Africa. Refugees and migrants from Somalia, Somaliland and Eritrea cross into Ethiopia and move onwards to Sudan and Libya in an attempt to reach Europe.
- According to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report 2015, Ethiopia is a source and to a lesser extent, destination and transit country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.

### As a mixed migration origin country

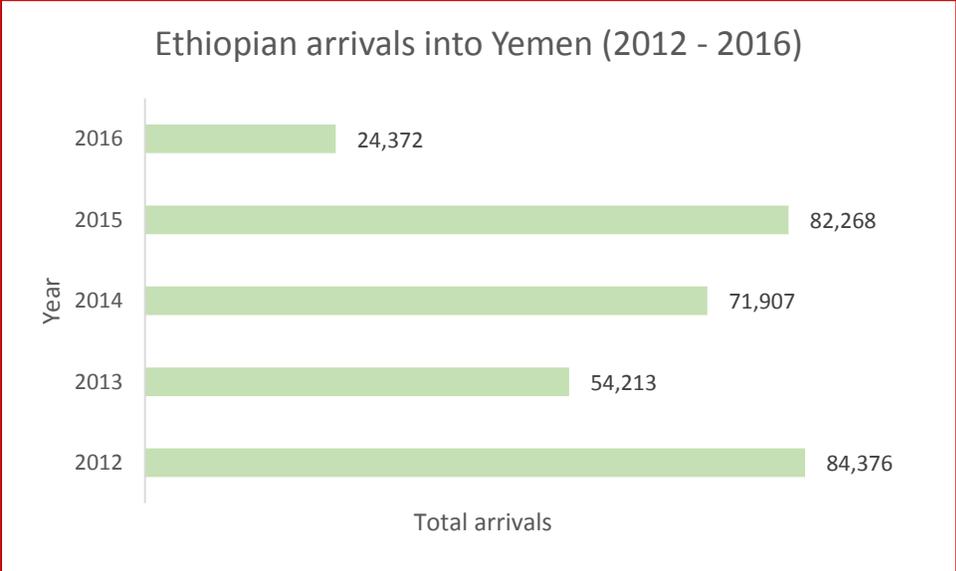
Ethiopia is a major country of origin for mixed migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Ethiopia's diaspora is also considered one of the largest of all African countries and while exact figures are unknown, this is estimated to be about two million.<sup>1</sup> Large numbers of Ethiopian migrants are found in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, USA, Canada, Europe and African countries such as Sudan, Kenya, South Africa and Botswana.

Ethiopians leave their country either as regular or irregular migrants. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) indicate that approximately 460,000<sup>2</sup> Ethiopians migrated legally from their country between 2008 and 2013 mostly to the Middle East with the majority going to Saudi Arabia (79%), Kuwait (20%) and others to Dubai and other countries. However, according to RMMS research conducted in 2014, only about 30-40% of Ethiopians who migrated to the Middle East and Gulf countries in 2012 did so as regular labour migrants meaning that about 60-70% travelled irregularly, with many either trafficked or smuggled.<sup>3</sup>

Potential Ethiopian migrants choose irregular means of migration since this option is perceived to be less bureaucratic and time consuming, cheaper and more rewarding.<sup>4</sup> In addition, irregular labour migration particularly to the Gulf States has reportedly increased following a temporary ban on labour migration by the Ethiopian government between October 2013 and mid-2015. In 2015, approximately 92,446 persons arrived in Yemen from the Horn of Africa of which 89% were Ethiopian nationals. This was one of the highest recorded flow of Ethiopians going into Yemen despite the conflict that started in the country in March 2015. The flow of Ethiopians going into Yemen in 2016 continued at a similar pace to previous years. Ethiopian migrants on this route transit through Djibouti or Puntland to cross into Yemen, mostly aiming to transit through Yemen onwards to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Monitoring missions established in 2006 by UNHCR and partners along the shores of Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea have recorded more than 512,000 Ethiopian migrants on this route between 2006 and March 2016.

In 2014, there was a noted shift in migration patterns of Ethiopians (and Somalis) leaving the Horn of Africa heading to Yemen. Historically, most departures to Yemen were from the coastal town of Obock in Djibouti, averaging at 69 percent of movement between 2009 and 2013. During the course of 2014, figures began to show a gradual shift indicating an increased preference by migrants and refugees to travel from Bossaso in Puntland via the Arabian Sea. By the end of 2014 this had resulted in an inversion of the routes' popularity, with Arabian Sea arrivals accounting for 54 percent of movements. In 2015, this was firmly entrenched at 85 percent. Statistics in the first quarter of 2016 confirm the trend, with movements along the Arabian Sea totaling 84 percent.

**Trend of Ethiopian arrivals into Yemen 2012 - 2016**



Source: UNHCR  
 \*2016 data as of March 2016

For migrants going to Yemen, smugglers may provide transport all the way to the Djibouti coastal points of departure and the smuggling fee could even include sea crossing into Yemen. Other smugglers may offer transport from the Ethiopian interior to Bossaso in Puntland. Migrants who cannot afford smuggling fees walk large stretches of the journey into and/or through Djibouti and these are the most vulnerable and reportedly face numerous hardships including lack of food and water, extortion, severe abuses or detention during the journey. According to the RMMS Monthly Summary of March 2016, Ethiopian migrants reported paying between USD 465-600 for the

journey from Ethiopia to Yemen while the average cost for sea crossing from Djibouti to Yemen was between USD 150-250.<sup>5</sup>

Most Ethiopians do not register with UNHCR or government authorities in Yemen as they do not easily gain refugee status and prefer to take their chances with smugglers or independently. There are thousands of Ethiopians also working informally inside Yemen – many in rural areas working as labourers (mainly on *khat* plantations) and herders. Some can also be found in specific areas of large cities such as Sana'a, Aden and Ta'iz.

According to the US Department of State, Ethiopia is a source country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.<sup>6</sup> Many young Ethiopians who migrate to the Middle East and Gulf states in search of employment opportunities are vulnerable to trafficking both during their journeys and upon reaching destination countries where they are subjected to abuses including physical and sexual assault, sex trafficking and forced labour. Between November 2013 and March 2014, the Saudi Arabian government deported more than 170,000 Ethiopians for unlawful presence in the country.<sup>7</sup> Ethiopian officials and human rights organizations believe thousands of deportees were victims of trafficking.

Ethiopian migrants are also found on irregular flows along the Southern corridor from the Horn of Africa towards South Africa transiting via Kenya, Tanzania and other countries in southern Africa. In 2009, it was estimated that more than 10,000 Ethiopian migrants are smuggled on this route every year from Ethiopia to South Africa. More up-to-date figures are not available.

Significant numbers of Ethiopians have migrated to Western countries. The top five OECD countries with the highest number of Ethiopians are the USA, Canada, Israel, Germany and the UK. Ethiopians in irregular mixed migration flows on the western/northern route cross into Sudan and Libya in an attempt to reach Europe. An estimated 50-100 Ethiopian migrants or refugees cross into Sudan every day and may reside in transit countries for longer periods before travelling to Europe.

Data from Eurostat indicates that in 2015, a total of 6,350 asylum applications by Ethiopian nationals were received in European countries.<sup>8</sup> The number of Ethiopian migrants arriving in Europe may be higher as there are reports that Ethiopian nationals claim Eritrean nationality upon arrival. In the first quarter of 2016, Ethiopians made up 2% of arrivals along the Central Mediterranean route which is almost on par with Eritrean arrivals in the same period at 3%.<sup>9</sup>

The largest number of Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers is found in Kenya, which hosts a total of 30,662 Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers as of March 2016 with smaller numbers in other neighbouring countries. An estimated 4,002 Ethiopian refugees have been resettled from Kenya to Western countries including USA, Canada, Australia and European countries between 2010 and 2016.<sup>10</sup>

The most common drivers of migration cited by Ethiopian migrants are political reasons, economic factors, a sense of responsibility towards family as well as a strong positive perception towards migration. The latter is linked to pressure put on young Ethiopians by family members, peers and community to migrate as a means to escape poverty.<sup>11</sup> Data from RMMS [Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative \(4mi\)](#), qualifies the key political reasons for emigration to include tribal or ethnic discrimination and oppression.

Despite Ethiopia's strong and broad-based growth over the past decade, averaging 10.8% per annum between 2003 and 2014, which is attributed to improved performance particularly in services and agriculture sectors as well as increased public investment, migration both within and from Ethiopia is expected to increase in the next few decades until the country becomes an upper-middle-income country.<sup>12</sup> An estimated 2-3 million people enter the labour market every year while growing youth unemployment adds to existing migratory pressures. (See additional drivers of migration cited in the previous paragraph). While it seems Ethiopians are leaving their country in large numbers, the total Ethiopian emigrant population may not exceed 1% of total population estimated to be 96 million in 2015.<sup>13</sup> With ongoing economic development, it is expected this number will rise, as more and more Ethiopians will have the resources and aspirations to migrate.<sup>14</sup>

### **As a mixed migration destination country**

Many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers entering Ethiopia are escaping political and civil unrest as well as harsh or undesirable conditions (e.g. drought) in neighbouring countries. The majority of the refugees and asylum seekers in Ethiopia come from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan (see figures in the section on refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs below). Following the escalation of conflict in Yemen in March 2015, the Ethiopian government grants automatic refugee status to Yemeni asylum seekers. An estimated 1,323 Yemeni nationals arrived in Ethiopia between April 2015 and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016.<sup>15</sup>

Ethiopians also return to their country due to various reasons such as to reunite with family or friends, investment, or repatriation and deportation. An estimated 8,519 Ethiopian nationals have returned to their country from Yemen between April 2015 and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The Ethiopian government has introduced various initiatives to facilitate the temporary and permanent return and reintegration of diaspora Ethiopians and returnees. For instance, the Persons of Ethiopian Origin Identity Card, introduced in 2002, grants diaspora Ethiopians nearly same rights as citizens.<sup>16</sup>

### **As a mixed migration transit country**

Ethiopia is a major transit hub for migrants and asylum seekers out of the Horn of Africa. People in mixed migration flows from Eritrea, South Central Somalia and Somaliland transit through Ethiopia in an attempt to reach Europe via Sudan and Egypt or Libya. Eritrean refugees in Ethiopian refugee camps also voluntarily leave the camps and cross into Sudan to join other migrants and asylum seekers on the western/northern routes towards Europe. Others are lured or abducted from refugee camps in Ethiopia and are vulnerable to human trafficking in Sudan and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Somalis and Sudanese nationals also transit through Ethiopia to seek asylum in Kenyan refugee camps.

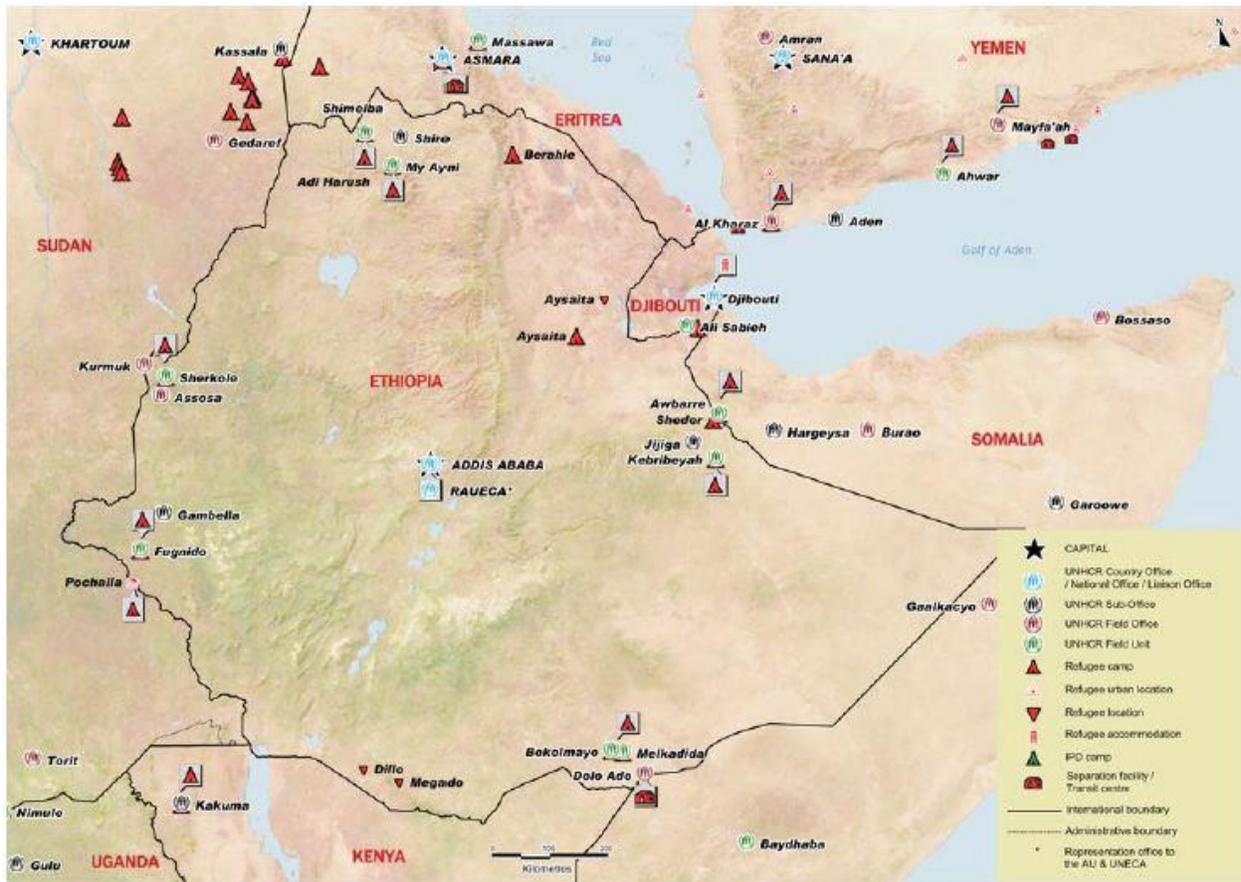
According to a report by the Sahan Foundation and IGAD, human smuggling and trafficking from the Horn of Africa to Europe is controlled by sophisticated and interlinked networks operating from Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and Italy. Smuggling kingpins coordinate the entire journey including transport, storage of human cargo, bribing of law enforcement agents and armed militia convoys and launching of sea journeys from Libya's coast. Migrants on this route are transferred from one group of smugglers to another near national borders and other transfer points along the journey. The report notes that Eritrean smugglers and traffickers dominate this route and collaborate with ethnic Somalis, Ethiopians and Sudanese to facilitate movement of migrants across the borders out of the Horn of Africa to Italy via Libya or Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

In 2015, Eritrean migrants and asylum seekers were among the top nationalities arriving in Europe via the Central Mediterranean route. Out of the 153,842 people who arrived in Italy in 2015, 27% (39,162) were Eritreans, 8% (12,433) Somalis (migrants and refugees from these two countries have generally transited through Ethiopia) and 6% (over 9,000) Sudanese nationals. In the first four months of 2016, Eritreans were not among the top nationalities arriving on Italy's shores, however Somalis and Sudanese nationals accounted for 8% and 4% respectively.<sup>18</sup>

### Refugees, Asylum-seekers and IDPs in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is currently the largest refugee hosting country in Africa. The government generally maintains open borders for refugees seeking protection in the country. The total refugee and asylum seeker population in Ethiopia as of March 2016, is 735,165<sup>19</sup> of which 49.7% are women and girls and 56.7% are children. The number of unaccompanied minors and separated children is 38,995.

Ethiopia provides protection to refugees from 19 countries including Eritreans, South Sudanese, Somalis, Sudanese and Yemenis. Yemenis and also Somali refugees who received refugee recognition in Yemen are granted prima facie refugee status in Ethiopia. Following the escalation of conflict in Yemen in March 2015, an estimated 1,323 Yemeni nationals have sought refuge in Ethiopia between April 2015 and 25th April 2016. Refugees and asylum seekers are generally expected by the government to reside in refugee camps although some are allowed to reside in urban areas for special circumstances such as medical, security or humanitarian reasons. The government has allocated land for the 24 camps around Assosa, Dollo Ado, Gambella, Jijiga, Semera and Shire regions.



Location of refugee camps in Ethiopia. Source: UNHCR

Ethiopian government’s “Out of Camp Policy” introduced in 2010 enables Eritrean refugees in particular to live in Addis Ababa and other locations provided they have the necessary means to financially support themselves and have no criminal record(s) while in refugee camp. Some Eritrean refugees have claimed that the policy has discouraged them from embarking on perilous onward movements to Europe since they enjoy freedom of movement and can pursue education as well as earn an income by working in informal sectors.<sup>20</sup>

**The total refugee and asylum seeker population in Ethiopia, March 2016**

Country of Origin	Refugees and asylum seekers
South Sudan	284,016
Somalia	251,101
Eritrea	154,491*
Sudan	38,853
Other nationalities	6,704

Source: UNHCR

\* UNHCR notes that 81,078 Eritrean refugees previously registered as living in the camps are believed to have spontaneously settled in Ethiopia. This figure is to be verified.



Tierkidi and Leitchour refugee camps in Gambella region of Ethiopia. Photo credit: Antonio Florente/DRC

*Internal displacement*

Ethiopia is also a country of internal displacement. According to available figures by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the country had more than 413,400 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of July 2015<sup>21</sup> of which more than 221,801 were men and 191,611 women. Displacement in Ethiopia is largely attributed to inter-communal and cross-border violence with most IDPs living in protracted displacement situations.

In 2016, the IOM estimates that 821,400 people will be displaced across Ethiopia of which 286,400 from drought, 425,000 from flooding and 110,000 from communal conflict.<sup>22</sup> Human rights organizations have reported incidents

of forced displacements and lack of adequate compensation as a result of government led development schemes such as agricultural plantations and dam constructions in Gambella region and Omo Valley.

### **Protection issues and vulnerable groups**

Migrants and asylum seekers from Ethiopia including those transiting through the country face significant protection risks during their journeys. Migrants on the eastern route towards the Middle East and Gulf states report cases of abduction, robbery, extortion, physical and sexual assault during sea crossings from Djibouti, Somaliland and Puntland to Yemen and upon arrival in Yemen. Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers have dominated this route for many years. On-going conflict and related void in rule of law in Yemen has paved way for criminal gangs and human traffickers who have been active along Yemeni shores targeting arrivals from the Horn of Africa. Data from RMMS monthly summaries indicate that an estimated 6,093 migrants, mostly Ethiopian nationals, were abducted upon arrival in Yemen in 2015 alone. An estimated 416 migrants and asylum seekers have been reported as missing or dead in boat accidents on sea crossings from Horn of Africa to Yemen between 2012 and March 2016.<sup>23</sup>

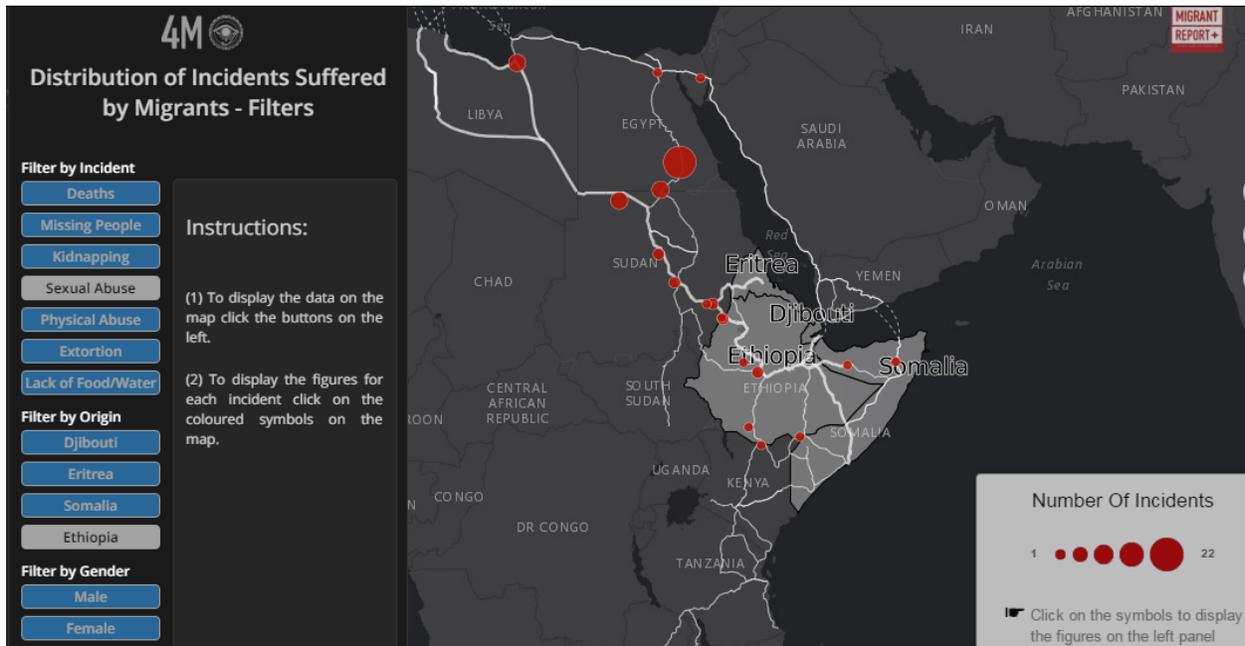
The US State Department notes that young Ethiopians are recruited from the rural areas with promises of a better life in the Middle East and Gulf states. Ethiopian men and boys are vulnerable to trafficking and are subjected to forced labour in transit countries (e.g. Djibouti) and destination countries. Ethiopian women who migrate for labour purposes (e.g. domestic servitude) to the Middle East face severe abuses including physical and sexual abuse, denial of salary, withholding of passports, confinement, sex trafficking and even murder.<sup>24</sup>

In response to human rights violations against Ethiopian migrants in the Middle East and Gulf states, the government imposed a temporary ban on overseas labor recruitment between October 2013 and mid-2015. There were reports that employment agencies licensed to recruit for work abroad were involved in both legal and illegal recruitment. A new legislation, Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 909/2015, was introduced with the aim of safeguarding the fundamental rights and dignity of workers. New regulations for recruitment agencies were also introduced while potential labour migrants are required to have attained a minimum education qualification.<sup>25</sup>

Migrants and asylum seekers transiting through Ethiopia are also vulnerable to human trafficking and other protection risks along western/northern routes towards Europe or Israel as well as on the southern route towards South Africa. Many cases of arbitrary detention, extortion, deportation, physical and sexual abuse, and deportation of Ethiopian migrants have been reported particularly in Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and other southern Africa countries.



## Incidents of sexual abuse reported along key migratory routes



The red dots on the map indicate incidents of sexual abuse reported by Ethiopian migrants along key migratory routes. The larger the dot the higher the number of incidents (Source: <http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

### *Detention of migrants*

There is scant information about immigration detention in Ethiopia. There are media reports of Eritrean and Somaliland migrants being detained or deported as they attempt to transit through Ethiopia to Sudan and Libya in an attempt to reach Europe. Human rights organizations have also reported on incidents of arbitrary detentions and/or torture of Ethiopian returnees particularly those from certain ethnicity groups or political groups seen as criticizing the government.<sup>26</sup>

Ethiopian migrants on the southern route towards South Africa via Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and other southern African countries also face multiple risks of arbitrary detention and/or deportation during their journeys and upon arrival in South Africa. In Kenya for example while there is no comprehensive data on the number of migrants being detained in the country, there are reports of Ethiopian migrants being detained almost on a weekly basis.

### *Trafficking*

The US Department of State's 2015 Trafficking in Persons report places the Ethiopia on Tier 2 Watch list for a number of reasons:

*Compliance:* The government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, however it is making significant efforts to do so. The government continued to facilitate the reintegration of thousands of Ethiopians deported from Saudi Arabia and increased its efforts to prevent and raise awareness on trafficking and trafficking related crimes.

*Prosecution:* The government maintained its efforts in enforcing anti-trafficking laws however the State department noted the continued focus on transnational labour trafficking, with little evidence of investigations or prosecutions of sex trafficking or internal labour trafficking cases. This is partly attributed to lack of a clear legal definition of human trafficking. In addition, corruption and official complicity in trafficking offenses remained a significant concern preventing enforcement of anti-trafficking laws.

*Protection of trafficking victims:* The State department noted that the government provided inadequate assistance to trafficking victims with international organizations and NGOs almost exclusively providing such services without government funding. The government operated child protection units in Addis Ababa and six major cities in the country where staff were trained on providing assistance to vulnerable children including potential trafficking victims. Despite the government providing anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel, the State department noted that limited consular services were provided to Ethiopian workers abroad.

### **International and national legislation and migration policies**

Ethiopia has ratified the following international legislation relevant to mixed migration and protection of human rights of migrants and refugees.

- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees & its 1967 Protocol (Ethiopia maintains reservations regarding refugees' employment)
- 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Rights of Children
- United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Ethiopia is a signatory but has yet to ratify the Convention)
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Ethiopia is a signatory but has yet to ratify the Convention)
- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea

### *National legislations*

- Refugee Proclamation No. 409 of 2004
- Ratification proclamation for the Convention on Forced or Compulsory Labour. Proclamation No. 336/2003
- Employment Exchange Services Proclamation No. 632/2009
- Criminal code Article 596 (Enslavement)
- Criminal code Article 597 (Trafficking in Women and Children)
- Criminal code Article 635 (Traffic in Women and Minors)

- Criminal code Article 636 (Aggravation to the Crime)

#### *Bilateral agreements*

- Memorandum of Understanding on human trafficking between Djibouti and Ethiopia, November 2009
- Kenya and Ethiopia have a bilateral open border policy allowing citizens to cross freely without visas.

The *Ethiopia Diaspora Policy* was launched in 2013 to guide the country's diaspora affairs and in particular to maximize the economic potential and skills of Ethiopia's diaspora in national development. The policy seeks to promote diaspora engagement and participation in investment, trade and tourism, encourage foreign currency inflows as well as enhance knowledge and technology transfer.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RMMS (2015). A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with a special focus on the Horn of Africa region

<sup>2</sup> Carter, B. and Rohwerder, B. (2016). Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Ethiopia (Rapid Literature Review)

<sup>3</sup> RMMS (2014). Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, attitudes and practices of Ethiopian migrants.

<sup>4</sup> RMMS (2014). Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, attitudes and practices of Ethiopian migrants.

<sup>5</sup> RMMS (2016). Mixed migration in Horn of Africa and Yemen monthly summary: March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> US Department of State (2015). Trafficking in Persons Report: 2015

<sup>7</sup> RMMS (2014). The Letter of the Law: Regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change.

<sup>8</sup> Carter, B. and Rohwerder, B. (2016). Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Ethiopia (Rapid Literature Review)

<sup>9</sup> RMMS (2016). Mixed migration in Horn of Africa and Yemen monthly summary: March 2016.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR (2016). Kenya Factsheet March 2016. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/>

<sup>11</sup> RMMS (2014). Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, attitudes and practices of Ethiopian migrants.

<sup>12</sup> Carter, B. and Rohwerder, B. (2016). Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Ethiopia (Rapid Literature Review)

<sup>13</sup> RMMS (2015). A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with a special focus on the Horn of Africa region

<sup>14</sup> RMMS (2015). A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with a special focus on the Horn of Africa region

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR (2016). Yemen Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan. Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/yemen/regional.php#>

<sup>16</sup> RMMS (2015). A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with a special focus on the Horn of Africa region

<sup>17</sup> Sahan Foundation & IGAD (2016). Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa-Central Mediterranean Route.

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR (2016). Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean. Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=105>

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR (2016). Ethiopia Factsheet March 2016. Available <http://www.unhcr.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Sudan Tribune (2016). Eritreans favour “out of camp policy” over peril sea route. Available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article58008> [Accessed on May 6, 2016]

<sup>21</sup> IDMC (2016). Ethiopia IDP figure analysis. Available at <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/ethiopia/figures-analysis> [Accessed on April 26, 2016]

<sup>22</sup> Government of Ethiopia & Ethiopia Humanitarian Country Team. (2015). Ethiopia: Humanitarian Overview 2016.

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR (2016). New Arrivals in Yemen Comparisons 2012-2016.

<sup>24</sup> US Department of State (2015). Trafficking in Persons Report: 2015

<sup>25</sup> All Africa (2016). Effective, Efficient Implementation for New Overseas Employment Proclamation. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201601140895.html> [Accessed April 28, 2016]

<sup>26</sup> RMMS (2015). Behind bars: The detention of migrants in and from the East & Horn of Africa

<sup>27</sup> RMMS (2015). A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with a special focus on the Horn of Africa region