



Working Paper 506

# Journeys on hold

How policy influences the migration decisions of Eritreans in Ethiopia

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Cover photo: Tesfay, 24, writing poetry and short stories in the Adi Harush refugee camp, Ethiopia

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## Acronyms

<b>ARRA</b>	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs, Ethiopia
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OCP</b>	Out of Camp Policy
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>PFDJ</b>	People's Front for Democracy and Justice, Eritrea
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>US</b>	United States

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# Executive summary

Around 5,000 Eritreans leave their country every month. Evidence suggests they go for a range of reasons, including compulsory National Service, political persecution, and a restricted economy that offers few opportunities for the population.

A large number of these travel directly to neighbouring Ethiopia, where there is an open-asylum policy for refugees. Once in Ethiopia, many receive support in refugee camps, where interventions exist that are designed to both better people's livelihoods and deter irregular secondary migration. But despite this humanitarian and development assistance, for many people, their journey doesn't end in Ethiopia. Reports suggest that huge numbers of Eritreans not only aspire to move on, they actually do so: in 2015, for example, estimates from Amnesty International (2016) show that around two-thirds of the Eritrean population residing in Ethiopia at the time pursued secondary migration.

Why, then, do so many people continue to plan onward movement from Ethiopia? And how do policies and programmes play a part?

In this study, we set out to better understand whether, by providing alternative options, it is possible for policy-makers to prevent or reduce irregular migration. We look at two measures in particular: in-country livelihood support (including vocational training, loans, and initiatives designed to afford refugees greater mobility outside camps) and refugee resettlement programming (which provides a safe and legal migration channel to those meeting certain criteria). We selected these measures based on 63 interviews with Eritreans in Ethiopia, which took place in both the northern province of Tigray as well as the country's capital, Addis Ababa, in September 2016. These measures were specifically cited and discussed far more than any others, highlighting their particular relevance in this setting. As such, the overarching research question driving this study is:

*To what extent, and in which ways, do in-country livelihood support measures and refugee resettlement shape the choices, plans and behaviours of Eritreans currently living in Ethiopia?*

This question is important, and holds wider relevance, for two main reasons. First, policy-makers seeking to address Europe's ongoing 'migration crisis' are increasingly engaging with its underlying drivers – that is, with the factors that compel people to move in the first place – rather than simply managing flows once they have reached European territory. This new focus includes attempts to improve the circumstances of 'would-be' movers currently residing in countries- and regions-of-origin, of which livelihood support is a core element. As such, we are starting to see implementation of some major job creation initiatives in high-priority countries, with Ethiopia's proposed 'Jobs Compact' – designed to generate 30,000 new jobs for refugees, and co-funded by the United Kingdom, the European Union and the World Bank – sitting alongside similar schemes in other 'hotspots' such as Jordan. But second, for all the interest in this approach, knowledge is lacking about the links between migration policies and migration decision-making. Despite some important empirical advances in recent years, the evidence base remains limited at best.

This study contributes three sets of findings to the broader debate, from which a series of specific policy recommendations follow.

## Ethiopia is a vital country of asylum

Drawing on data from both camps and urban centres, we first ask what life is like for an Eritrean in Ethiopia. Three points stand out. First, Ethiopia offers the prospect of freedom and security, particularly when compared with life in Eritrea. This is critical given that so many report leaving out of fear, persecution and sometimes indefinite conscription. Second, despite better prospects, those who cross the border continue to find it difficult to pursue decent, fulfilling and relevant livelihoods. And third, these challenging circumstances induce different responses: while some seem willing to accept a 'good enough' improvement on life in Eritrea, others aspire to move on.

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We have two key recommendations:

- 1. Ethiopia's open-asylum policy should be supported and maintained.** The country is serving a critical humanitarian function by allowing refugees from the region to freely enter Ethiopia and reside there. At a minimum, the Ethiopian Government should be supported in hosting these refugee populations. International agencies should continue to assist in refugee camps, but measures to protect refugees living outside camps are also important. This includes providing safe housing, supporting access to education and healthcare, and assisting to the most vulnerable groups and individuals.
- 2. Policy measures should recognise the diversity of Eritreans living in Ethiopia.** There is no singular 'Eritrean community', but groups stratified by geography, education levels, social status, eligibility for assistance, and plans for the future. As such, we cannot expect policy measures to produce universal effects and interventions should be tailored to different groups.

## Livelihood support is being offset by deeper economic constraints

Against this backdrop, a range of policy measures are being implemented to reduce or prevent secondary migration, particularly via irregular means. Although in-country livelihood support is helping people get by and meet basic survival needs, potential impacts are being undermined by the fact that refugees living in Ethiopia are denied the right to work. Newly acquired skills and capital cannot be put to good use, and many Eritreans are forced into insecure, precarious and possibly illegal economic arrangements.

We have two recommendations from this evidence, following on from our first set:

- 3. Programming should be adapted according to local needs and realities.** More could be done to better align interventions with both the intended beneficiaries' needs and the dynamics of the local context. When designing interventions, policy-makers should i) (re)evaluate the local relevance of skills training currently on offer, and ii) expand the range of vocations permitted to Eritreans, in order to diversify livelihood options and mitigate market saturation.
- 4. Refugee labour rights should be enhanced.** A fundamental problem is that Eritreans are prevented from legally accessing the labour market in Ethiopia. This underpins both the challenge of survival, as well

as the compulsion (amongst many) to move on. While there is no guarantee that addressing this problem (e.g. through the proposed Jobs Compact) will generate a blanket preventive effect, the evidence suggests that many people will be more inclined to stay in Ethiopia as a result.

## Resettlement is slowing irregular migration down

Refugee resettlement serves a vital protection function, but it is also designed to deter irregular migration by offering the prospect of safe and legal travel. Our analysis reveals three findings. First, resettlement seems linked to people's geographical preferences: countries often identified by respondents as favoured destinations also tend to be those that resettle the highest numbers of Eritreans. Second, by providing an opportunity for safe and legal migration, resettlement often produces an initial preventive effect, linked to people knowing how dangerous and expensive the irregular alternative is. Third, however, is that this effect appears to dissipate over time. Essentially, as faith in accessing formal channels declines, the risks of irregular transit become more tolerable.

Again, two key recommendations emerge from this evidence, following our other key recommendations:

- 5. Information about resettlement should be clearer and more accessible.** People are often uncertain how resettlement works, particularly in relation to timeframes and general likelihood of acceptance. By creating a more transparent process, and making information about procedures and applications more accessible, people could make more informed decisions about the options available to them. In turn, this would help minimise the mental stress often caused by the experience of 'life in limbo'.
- 6. Legal pathways should be developed and expanded.** Many of those who want to migrate, initially aspire to do so through formal rather than informal means; the danger and cost of the latter often acts as a serious deterrent. But where people feel the formal migration system is not working for them, evidence suggests they gradually 'deflect' into irregularity. Development of legal pathways does not have to mean open borders; rather, it should be about finding ways of better managing migration. Expanding and diversifying these channels – for example, through humanitarian visas, guest-worker schemes, quota enlargements, study scholarships – is key to building people's trust in the formal policy apparatus. Or, in other words, to ensuring that there are genuinely viable and credible alternatives to irregular migration.

# 1. Introduction

In a recent study entitled *Journeys to Europe* (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016), we examined the role of European migration policies on the decisions and movements of refugees and migrants from three countries: Eritrea, Senegal and Syria. Drawing on interviews with over 50 respondents in cities across Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, we set out to better understand people's journeys and the key decision-points they faced along the way (albeit from a retrospective angle), thus shedding light on the factors that influenced their choices. Our key findings are summarised in Box 1.

Of particular interest are the migration control measures, which refer to a set of policies designed to limit or prevent migration. Our findings raised doubts over the viability of the preventive approach, highlighting refugees' extraordinary resolve to move to Europe, as well as their high tolerance to personal risk, which is capable of absorbing the dangers of transit. These conclusions are broadly in line with the findings of a wider body of recent research, which concludes that migration policies are, for the most part, unable to control the absolute volume of migrant flows, but are to some extent capable of altering the underlying dynamics (Belloni, 2016; Czaika and de Haas, 2013; de Haas, 2011; de Haas and Vezzoli, 2011; Koser and Kuschminder, 2016).

At the same time, there were some limitations to the *Journeys to Europe* study. This was most apparent in relation to its methodology, particularly the way respondents were selected. By interviewing individuals who had already arrived in Europe, we were drawing on a sample of people who had already made their journeys (i.e. for whom preventive policies patently did not suppress mobility, at least not in an absolute sense). As a result, the present study aims to build on these findings and add depth to our more general understanding of migration policy effectiveness – an area still dominated by theoretical analysis (Bendixsen, 2016) and in need of 'more empirically informed insights' (Czaika and de Haas, 2013: 487) – by capturing the experiences of individuals at an earlier 'stage' of their migration trajectory.

This new study is set in Ethiopia – currently the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa (UNHCR, 2016) and a key priority for European policy-makers looking to tackle the underlying drivers of the ongoing 'migration crisis' (see BBC, 2016). Our research is concerned with the livelihoods, aspirations and plans of Eritreans currently living in Ethiopia, who comprise the country's third biggest refugee group ( $n=155,207$ ) after South Sudanese (282,033)

## **Box 1. Key findings from *Journeys to Europe: the role of policy in migrant decision-making***

**The journey itself influences migration decision-making.** The process of migration can itself be quite transformative, iteratively shaping people's ideas about destinations, routes and means of travel along the way.

**Precarious journeys are often the norm.** Irregular migrations are not only expensive – costing an average of £2,680 among those interviewed – but acutely dangerous, with physical risk often present throughout.

**Anti-migration messages transmitted by European governments are unlikely to drastically alter people's decisions.** For information to prove influential, it first needs to be trusted. Information coming via government campaigns does not fit this criterion.

**Unilateral preventive measures might shift migration flows from one country to the next, but at the regional European Union (EU) level they make little difference.** A border fence can divert movement, but it seems not to prevent migration in an absolute sense.

**Migration trajectories are influenced less by restrictive migration policies, and more by perceptions of 'welcoming-ness', labour-market opportunities and access to education.** The influence of migration-specific policies is often secondary to broader public policy: people care about getting their children into school and being able to find a job.

*Source: Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2016)*

and Somalis (251,797) (Carter and Rohwerder, 2016). More specifically, it looks at the ways in which people's lives are being shaped by an evolving policy environment, which includes measures implemented by the Ethiopian Government as well as actors within the international community.

Cross-border migration from Eritrea into Ethiopia is not new. Nor do all Eritreans who have made that initial 'jump' intend to move on. But it is a continuing phenomenon, and many do keep moving. According to a survey conducted in the camps of northern Ethiopia in



2014, 84% of the 382 Eritreans interviewed identified ‘moving to another country’ as their plan for the future (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014). And although not quite as high, more recent reports suggest that the share of Eritreans *actually leaving* is substantial, with roughly two thirds of the Eritrean population in Ethiopia pursuing secondary movement in 2015 (Amnesty International, 2016). Many of these, if not the vast majority, will have travelled via ‘irregular’ means.<sup>1</sup> So too would a significant number have been destined for Europe: while the number of Eritreans crossing the Mediterranean halved in 2016 compared to the previous year, they still formed the fifth largest group of irregular arrivals in Europe, constituting 6% of the overall number (UNHCR, 2017).

The purpose of this report is to dig beneath these headline numbers. We seek to better understand why, despite a range of measures designed to prevent irregular secondary migration from Ethiopia, so many people aspire to move on (and are in many cases achieving that goal). Through mainly qualitative analysis, we explore the ‘efficacy gap’ between implemented policies and actual migration behaviour (Czaika and de Haas, 2013), pinpointing the ways in which such interventions may or may not be addressing the needs and interests of targeted individuals.

A full assessment of Ethiopia’s entire policy environment is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, we focus on two key measures – refugee resettlement programming and in-country livelihood support – which were identified by respondents as particularly relevant within this context. While these measures have multiple objectives, including protection, economic development and vulnerability reduction, they also aim to contribute towards preventing irregular migration. We explain this in greater detail at the beginning of section 2.

Thus, the overarching research question driving this study is:

*To what extent, and in what ways, do in-country livelihood support measures and refugee resettlement programming shape the choices, plans and behaviours of Eritreans currently living in Ethiopia?*

In **section 2** we outline the study’s **conceptual basis**, which draws primarily on an established framework for examining migration decision-making, and then discuss the **methods of data collection and analysis**.

**Section 3** illustrates **what life is like for an Eritrean in Ethiopia**. While we recognise the limitations of the sample



Refugees making beer to sell in the Adi Harush refugee camp, Ethiopia

size and are therefore cautious not to overgeneralise, we observe and explore common themes and patterns that have emerged from the dataset and analysis. We find that, in many respects, Ethiopia provides the safety and basic freedom so lacking in Eritrea. But it is the challenges that people experience in Ethiopia, particularly in relation to continued livelihood constraints, that enables us to understand the reasons why many decide to engage in secondary migration.

Next, we turn our attention to the ways in which policy interventions shape the migration decision-making process, looking at **in-country livelihood support in section 4**, before examining **refugee resettlement programming in section 5**. Through this analysis we explore the ways in which these measures genuinely affect people’s choices, plans and behaviours – but ultimately do not always prevent irregular migration.

Finally, in **section 6**, we **summarise our main findings** and consider what they mean for improving the effectiveness of programming. We provide **six targeted recommendations** that are intended to inform the development of future policies in this critical area.

1. According to recent mixed-methods research by UNHCR/DRC (2016), 56% of Eritreans surveyed in Ethiopia’s northern camps indicated an intention to migrate *irregularly* – for unaccompanied youth between the ages of 16 and 18, this rate was even higher, at 71%. Irregular migration is defined by the International Organization for Migration as ‘entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorization or documents required under immigration regulations’ (<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#Irregular-migration>).

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# 2. Research approach

Our research approach is outlined here in two parts. First, from an analytical perspective, we look at the range and variety of possible measures designed to control irregular migration, consider the theoretical assumptions underpinning them, and introduce a conceptual approach that is appropriate to their analysis. Second, we provide information on our research methods, including data collection and analysis.

## 2.1. Measures of migration control

Policy-makers attempt to prevent irregular migration through a range of different measures. These can be broadly divided into two categories (see Carling and Hernandez-Carretero, 2011): those that fall under a ‘traditional control-oriented’ umbrella; and those forming a subtler ‘alternative’ approach.

The first (‘traditional control’) is designed to work through largely coercive means (ibid.: 46-9). Measures include:

- detection and apprehension
- post-arrival processing
- repatriation/deportation
- pre-border-crossing surveillance.

Each of these requires direct engagement with migrants and refugees. In the first three instances, this interaction takes place either in transit or once an individual has reached their destination. In order to function as expected, these measures need to be implemented systematically and produce clear consequences. As Carling and Hernandez-Carretero (2011: 46) note, while ‘the possibility of being apprehended can be a deterrent [...], this depends entirely on the probable consequences [...]. Apprehension is only a serious risk if it is likely to be followed by an expulsion order and effective repatriation’. This may seem obvious, but we know there is often a significant ‘implementation gap’ between policies on paper and policies in practice (Czaika and de Haas, 2013).

Then there is the ‘alternative’ set of measures, which takes individual-level incentives and decision-making as its starting point (see Carling and Hernandez-Carretero, 2011: 49-52), and forms the focus of this study. These measures include:

- awareness campaigns in countries of origin
- prevention of illegal employment in Europe

- employment creation in countries of origin or first country of migration
- creation of increased options for legal migration, such as resettlement and family reunification.

These measures work slightly differently in the sense that they are focused less on direct control per se, but more on changing the way that someone views irregular migration prior to departure. Forming aspirations is a constant work-in-progress within an individual’s mind. As Koikkalainen and Kyle (2015: 12) remind us in their work on ‘cognitive migration’, there is always a ‘process by which our minds migrate before our bodies do’. What ‘alternative measures’ essentially try to do is nudge the formation of personal aspirations a particular way, preventing (or reversing) this process of ‘mental migration’ from happening before it takes place in the physical world.

They try to achieve this in various ways. Awareness campaigns, for example, aim to discourage irregular migration by emphasising both the risks of transit and barriers to employment, welfare and rights at destination. They set out to change behaviour via knowledge transfer, although recent evidence points to the limitations of this approach (Alpes and Sørensen, 2015; Browne, 2015).

Other ‘alternative’ measures can be considered relatively more transformative and ambitious, concerned with creating viable alternatives to irregular migration via the provision of protection and economic stability. Legal pathways are one example, but it is livelihood support in places of origin or first countries of migration that has become the focus of recent policies. In February 2016, for instance, we saw the establishment of the ‘Jordan Compact’. This is a major initiative to improve the economic circumstances of both refugee and host communities within Jordan, including providing work permits to refugees (Jordan Compact, 2016). A similar plan followed soon after for Ethiopia. First tabled at the United Nations (UN) Refugee Summit in September 2016, the Jobs Compact represents a £410 million agreement between the Ethiopian Government and external donors (the UK, EU and the World Bank) to create 100,000 new jobs through building two major industrial parks in Ethiopia. Around one third of these jobs are guaranteed to go to refugees. Aside from major initiatives like these, there are also smaller-scale livelihood programmes, typically run by humanitarian and development agencies in areas hosting vulnerable communities.

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Many of these interventions are based on well-established humanitarian and development principles and practice, and aim to achieve a number of objectives, such as providing vulnerable groups with protection and ensuring their economic wellbeing. However, there is growing interest in these measures' potential to mitigate and reduce irregular migration, partly as a result of the recent increase in arrivals in Europe from the Middle East and Africa. Lidi Rimmelzwaal, the former Dutch ambassador to Ethiopia, made this clear in her speech at the launch of new vocational skills training for Eritreans:

*'The challenge is not only to create a secure environment and accommodate you. It is even more difficult to give you a real perspective, to avoid that you are taking the unpredictable risks that are linked to the very dangerous journey up north, to crossing the desert and the Mediterranean.'*<sup>2</sup>

But to what extent are such measures actually influencing the way people think about their options and plan for their futures? As yet, the empirical evidence is still limited. In light of this knowledge gap, our intention here is to help better understand the relationships between such 'alternative measures' – specifically, in-country livelihood support and refugee resettlement programming – and migration decision-making.

## 2.2. The conceptual framework: exploring policy through decision-making

Our report builds directly on the conceptual approach adopted in *Journeys to Europe*, drawing again on the idea of 'migration thresholds'. It offers a useful tool for understanding the ways in which people make decisions about migration, as illustrated by the recent collection of case studies in van der Velde and van Naerssen (2015). In its simplest formulation, this approach posits that unless three particular mental 'thresholds' are crossed, migration does not occur.<sup>3</sup> These include:

- the *indifference* threshold (the initial tabling of migration as a viable and beneficial option)
- the *locational* threshold (deciding where to go)
- the *trajectory* threshold (coming to terms with the means of travel).

The strength of this approach is that it places us within the individual's mind, compelling us to heed the process of 'cognitive migration', which, as just discussed, precedes the physical act of migration (Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2015). It starts from the premise that international *immobility*,

rather than mobility, is the norm, and that these thresholds, which are as much psychological as physical, effectively serve to prevent people from leaving their countries of origin (or, in the case of Eritreans in Ethiopia, from moving on through secondary migration).

In order for an individual to cross a border, the *idea* of (secondary) migration as a viable option must first take root in someone's mind. Overcoming these mental barriers often involves years of deliberation. For migration to become an option, a person must: a) stop feeling indifferent towards the idea – conflict and persecution can do this, as can limited livelihood options in a place of origin or transit; and then b) accept it as something that might potentially bring a positive change in wellbeing. Van der Velde and van Naerssen (2011) refer to this process as getting over the *indifference threshold*. It is the first 'stage' of migration.

However, the *locational threshold* and the *trajectory threshold* must also be crossed before physical migration occurs. While the former refers to a decision-making process about where to go (destination), the latter is more concerned with the logistics (journey). Again, each represents a mental barrier that must be overcome. For instance, if a certain route is perceived to be too risky – a judgement conditional upon the individual's particular risk disposition (which is in turn influenced by a range of factors, including the context in which decisions are made) – then the option of staying put may be favoured over migration.

It is not until all three thresholds have been reached that (secondary) migration actually occurs. There is considerable non-linearity in decision-making processes, and, as circumstances change, each threshold may be (re) visited on a continual yet irregular basis. Individuals who at one point in time feel compelled to reach a particular destination may, at another time, reorient their strategies to suit a shifting set of livelihood objectives.

One of the (implicit) objectives of many of the policy interventions discussed in this paper is essentially to push people back across these various mental thresholds (or, in the case of those not intending to migrate, to keep them there). For instance, providing livelihood support can theoretically prevent people from crossing the indifference threshold if migration seems less beneficial compared to livelihood options at the current location. We return to this approach as we move through the analysis in the following sections, empirically illustrating how our respondents' 'threshold positions' may or may not be shifting in response to various policy measures.

While much of the research on the links between policy and migration is quantitative (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016: 6), this research adopts a qualitative approach to

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2. <http://ethiopia.nlembassy.org/news/2015/10/the-netherlands-engaged-with-eritrean-refugees-in-shire-northern-ethiopia.html>

3. The following paragraphs are adapted from Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2016).

provide much needed evidence, detail and understanding on a relatively under-studied area of migration research – namely, whether and how policies feature in the migration decision-making processes. In terms of data collection, standard approaches in qualitative research were applied, with a team of five researchers undertaking 63 qualitative interviews with Eritreans in Ethiopia during September 2016.

There are three main reasons why we decided to focus on Eritrean rather than Somali or South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia. First, this study was designed to build on and corroborate two pre-existing pieces of research: ODI's *Journeys to Europe* (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016) and Samuel Hall Consulting's (2014) *Living out of camp*, both of which looked at the experiences of Eritrean refugees at different stages of their migration trajectories.<sup>4</sup> Second, although significant numbers of Eritreans are leaving Eritrea and migrating onwards, there is limited evidence to help us understand migration decision-making within this particular group. And third, in order to maximise the resources available for this study, we decided to focus on members of a single nationality

rather than spread ourselves too thin across a diverse mix. A greater range of nationalities would have resulted in a smaller sample size within each, making it difficult to draw meaningful comparisons. However, going forwards it would be valuable to extend this research to include a range of countries and groups within them to compare the experiences of different individuals on the move.

The majority of Eritreans live in camps spread throughout the country (UNHCR, 2016). But Eritreans across different locations have different characteristics and vulnerabilities (high-profile political refugees, for example, receive permission to live in Addis Ababa), as well as differential access to support and assistance. To capture different groups' experiences and perceptions, our sampling strategy covered both urban and camp locations, with more respondents interviewed in the camp location to reflect Eritreans' overall distribution in the country. See Figure 1 for the interview locations: two urban (the capital Addis Ababa, and Shire in the country's northern Tigray region), and one camp-based (Adi Harush camp, also in Tigray).

**Figure 1. Interview locations**



4. The *Living out of camp* study used mixed methods to explore the Ethiopian Government's 'Out of Camp' initiative, implemented in 2010 as an alternative to its encampment policy (also discussed later in this report). The research focused mainly on a selection of Tigray-based camps, as well as some urban areas including Addis Ababa and Mai Tseabri.



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In addition, we also sought to capture variation in the characteristics of the respondents at each location. The sampling strategy sought differences in terms of gender, age, education and duration of stay, comparing those who arrived relatively recently to those who have been residing in Ethiopia for more than five years. We interviewed a fairly even mix of men and women (37 male, 26 female) of different backgrounds and ages, although the general profile of respondents was young (average age 33 years), reflecting the relatively young profile of Eritreans living in Ethiopia. See Annex 1 for an overview of all interviews conducted.

Interviews were semi-structured, and were designed to explore an individual's plans for the future as well as to understand the role that policy measures may or may not play in shaping those plans. To this end, conversations focused on people's current livelihood strategies, access to livelihood programmes and other support, aspirations and concrete plans for the future, in addition to capturing the respondent's migration history to date. Most interviews were conducted with an Eritrean interpreter, although a number of interviews were conducted by an Eritrean and Ethiopian researcher in Tigrinya. In addition, we interviewed several key informants – mostly government officials from the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), personnel from international organisations, and urban refugee committees working directly with Eritreans in the north – in order to better understand the options and constraints people face.

The qualitative data gathered during this research has been triangulated with some light-touch quantitative analysis drawn from a survey undertaken by Samuel Hall Consulting in Tigray in 2014. Their survey of 779 respondents focused mainly on youth living in two camps (Adi Harush and Mai Aini), and in particular explored their access to and experience of livelihood assistance, as well as plans for secondary migration. Given our selected research sites, we draw only on the 382 respondents interviewed in Adi Harush. While this data does not statistically represent Eritreans in Ethiopia – nor those in

Adi Harush – it nonetheless provides further insights into some of the qualitative findings.

The interview data was analysed by a team of four core researchers, who together read and coded each interview. A coding structure was developed to analyse the data against the concept of migration thresholds, and, in broad terms, included identifying:

- interviewees' reasons for their move to Ethiopia
- current aspirations and current plans
- knowledge and experience of different migration policies and programmes
- perceptions of livelihood and other opportunities in Ethiopia.

An initial analysis workshop was organised between members of the research team to discuss the coding structure, with a second held after the interviews had been coded in order to discuss findings. These were important for quality-control. In particular, the workshops provided space for researchers to work collaboratively through their different perspectives and interpretations of the data; ensured that all emerging themes accurately reflected the nature of the interview material; offered the opportunity to double-check the 'size', consistency and validity of findings; and encouraged the triangulation of these findings against existing research and theory.

Given the methodology behind this study, our findings do not represent all Eritreans in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, as our sampling strategy covered different locations and groups of Eritreans within the country, the data collected and analysis conducted speaks to the experiences of a range of sub-groups within the Eritrean population. Given the limited empirical research conducted to date, this constitutes valuable evidence. As such, we hope that the specific findings and analysis presented in this report help inform a better and more nuanced understanding of what is currently a central policy issue, especially in designing effective development policies and measures for addressing secondary migration movement from Ethiopia.



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# 3. What is life like for an Eritrean in Ethiopia?

Having crossed the border in response to a range of different factors in their home country, what are the opportunities and challenges that Eritreans face in Ethiopia? And how do people navigate their new environment?

Without appropriate knowledge of these issues, it would be impossible to i) establish people's aspirations (as well as what underpins them), and ii) understand how 'fit for purpose' current policy interventions are in this context. For these reasons, this section provides important baseline data against which to 'read' the material that follows in sections 4 and 5.

This section is structured around three key findings that emerge from the analysis. The first is that, in comparison to life in Eritrea, Ethiopia offers the prospect of freedom and safety. This is critical given that so many are fleeing fear, persecution and forced indefinite military conscription. Second, while this may be true, there are still significant barriers to autonomy, particularly in people's capacity to build a sustainable livelihood on their own terms. This is one of the main challenges to the prospects of building and maintaining a life in Ethiopia. And third, despite the generally difficult circumstances in which they find themselves, there appears to be significant variation in how people respond and adapt. In a sense, there is no singular Eritrean 'community' in Ethiopia, but a mixture of groups stratified by geography, education level, social status, eligibility for assistance, and plans for the future. It therefore seems unlikely that policy interventions intended to control migration will have uniform effects among all those targeted.

## 3.1. Ethiopia offers the prospect of freedom and safety

For many Eritreans, reaching Ethiopia is about the search for freedom to make one's own decisions in life, and safety from the authorities. An estimated 5,000 Eritreans flee their country every month (DRC/RMMS, 2016), despite both a 'shoot-on-sight policy' enforced against people attempting to cross the border, and the risk of being detained for arbitrary periods of time if caught (Crawley et al., 2016; DRC/RMMS, 2016).<sup>5</sup>

So, what drives these movements? A combination of factors emerges from existing research and from our interview material. Indefinite forced conscription into the National Service is generally considered the main driver of migration for Eritreans (Amnesty International, 2015). Since 1995, all Eritreans between the ages of 18 to 50 must undertake an 18-month period of National Service. Evidence shows that this often extends beyond the mandatory period, however, and in some cases can become indefinite (ibid.; Human Rights Council, 2015; Plaut, 2016). Eritrean men and women without children are then made to engage in forced labour in construction or agricultural work on government-owned farms, receiving wages equivalent to as little as £36 a month (Amnesty International, 2015). Deserters face the threat of detention, torture or punishment of their families (ibid.).

Reflecting these reports, our interviewees often described the brutality of National Service, and expressed resentment at the low wages they were forced to take in exchange for hard labour, too meagre to support any kind of desirable existence or meet the needs of their families. Some left Eritrea after they had been imprisoned for only minor infringements; others were escaping 'constant harassment everyday', where 'every night people [from the state] came knocking at my door'.<sup>6</sup>

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5. This 5,000 per month estimate was first stated in a 2013 UN Special Rapporteur report (see [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.53\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.53_ENG.pdf)). While there is some uncertainty over the precise figure, including the extent to which it may have fallen in recent years, the original continues to be widely cited (Frouws, 2017).

6. NM06 [female, 30, Addis Ababa] (see Annex 1)



Eritrean in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

A number of those interviewed went first to Sudan, some with plans to migrate northwards but ended up going to Ethiopia instead, most for security-related reasons or out of fear. As Dawit<sup>7</sup> described, ‘I didn’t want to stay in Sudan because the Eritrean security agency was coming to Sudan to look for Eritreans. I didn’t want to be caught so I only spent two days there and came to Ethiopia’.<sup>8</sup> Independent reports confirm that the Sudanese state has been involved in the deportation of Eritreans back to Asmara (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Indefinite forced conscription is embedded within a broader context of authoritarianism in Eritrea. According to Freedom House (2015), Eritrea is one of the most repressive states in the world. In power since 1993 and elected in 2001, the leader of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), President Isaias Afewerki, actively suppresses the media and political freedoms, while detaining individuals suspected of opposing the party.

Limitations on private enterprise result in a lack of economic opportunities, which, coupled with a wider inability to pursue livelihood strategies on one’s own terms, are powerful factors that drive migration from Eritrea. Forced labour, continuing UN sanctions and droughts have impacted living conditions (GSDRC, 2016; Kibreab, 2013), and shape Eritreans’ aspirations for a better life. While Eritreans have tangible and valid claims for asylum, it is important to remember that – just as with other nationalities (Crawley et al., 2016) – Eritreans also have

personal aspirations for happiness, wealth and security that make them decide to leave the country (Carling, 2014).

For some of our respondents, the decision to migrate to Ethiopia represents an attempt to restore a sense of social order over their lives, which had not been possible in Eritrea. Existing research suggests that the militarisation of the country’s labour force has resulted in a gradual disintegration of family structures, as relatives find themselves separated from one another for extended periods of time (Hirt and Mohammad, 2013). Mustafa explained how he ‘wasn’t allowed to see my family. I have two children and I didn’t see them for two years’,<sup>9</sup> while Negesti was rarely able to see her husband because the authorities ‘didn’t grant him leave to see me’.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes, these restrictions prevented respondents from providing basic care for relatives in times of great need, as Daniel illustrated:

*‘Lots of things made me come here. My father is ill and my mother developed a mental health problem. When I was in military service I requested permission to look after my parents [...] I tried to stay and look after them but the government put me in prison for this. I was in prison for six months. After that I decided to leave the country.’<sup>11</sup>*

Life in Ethiopia therefore came loaded with certain expectations: about greater security, work opportunities, and the freedom to pursue one’s dreams. So how have the realities matched up? At the most basic level, Ethiopia guarantees at least a modicum of peace and security. The Ethiopian government maintains a policy of open borders for people seeking protection, which may help to explain why it is currently the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa (UNHCR, 2016).

For those who have crossed the border, life is much better: there is no constant harassment from the authorities; people are not kept awake at night by the threat of state intrusion. Certainly, when compared with its counterpart in Eritrea, our respondents generally viewed the Ethiopian government in a relatively positive light. And in many cases this appears less to do with any provision of support – indeed, most do not receive much from the Ethiopian government – but more because it simply leaves them alone. As one respondent put it, ‘I don’t expect more from the government. They have done enough. They allow their people and country to accept us and to let us live as brothers. This is hard to do but they have done this’.<sup>12</sup>

7. All respondent names have been changed.

8. IDI49 [male, 53, Adi Harush]

9. IDI46 [male, 43, Adi Harush]

10. IDI47 [female, 28, Adi Harush]

11. IDI56 [male, 24, Adi Harush]

12. IDI17 [male, 36, Shire]

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## 3.2. But barriers to autonomy and decent livelihoods persist

Beyond the absence of state-sponsored oppression and violence, the situation facing many Eritreans in Ethiopia is still fairly bleak, with the central problem being one of economic mobility and work. While the 1951 Geneva Convention enshrines the right to work for refugees, this is not applied in Ethiopia, nor in most refugee-hosting countries. Under current Ethiopian law all refugees are prevented from engaging in formal employment, regardless of whether they live in camps or in cities.

Individuals often seek ways around this restriction – 38% of the 2014 Samuel Hall sample reported to have worked in the month prior to being interviewed – and this can take different forms. For example, although few and far between, formal opportunities do exist. Some respondents in Adi Harush told us how they had managed to access much-coveted ‘salaried’ jobs working for humanitarian agencies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Sebhat works as a sports teacher in the centre run by the Jesuit Refugee Service,<sup>13</sup> while Libena works as a chef for ARRA,<sup>14</sup> and Dem is employed as a social worker by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).<sup>15</sup> But the demand for such employment opportunities outstrips supply by far, and wages are still low at 700 birr a month (roughly £25) (see also Rawlence (2016) on a similar situation in Kenya’s Dadaab camps).

Instead, it seems more common for people to bend the rules by trying to secure casual labour in the informal economy, of which there is evidence among both camp- and urban-based populations. Talking in Shire town, one interviewee described how he would often go to a nearby marketplace where ‘Eritrean refugees come to find construction jobs’.<sup>16</sup> The reason this man was initially able to leave the camp was because the owner of a local construction company sponsored him to do so. This is one of the main pathways out of the camp setting. But work became irregular after the owner left, highlighting the insecure positions of dependency that many Eritreans must enter into if they want to earn an income.

In Addis Ababa we similarly found that some of the only opportunities available to Eritreans involve working informally for Ethiopian business owners. While it generally seems straightforward enough to find different types of informal work, presuming one is at least partially

connected into the city’s social and economic networks, participation in the labour market is structured on adverse and often exploitative terms. At the extreme end of the scale, two female respondents in Addis Ababa told us that, in the absence of other economic opportunities, girls as young as 14 are entering the sex trade.<sup>17</sup> Rita explained:

*‘More and more women in Addis, Eritrean women, you see alone, young, they fall in prostitution circles. [...] They go from one house to another. They get around. They are 14, 15, 16 years old’.*<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, respondents in Addis Ababa regularly mentioned the low wages offered by the informal economy, related in turn to the reportedly abusive practices of employers and the irregularity of work.

Accompanying this is a perception that, for some Eritreans at least, certain types of occupation are in a sense socially undesirable. As Kedija put it, ‘No Eritrean would accept being a waiter or houseworker unless they are desperate’.<sup>19</sup> The individuals falling into Kedija’s category would include Eritreans not receiving any form of humanitarian assistance (e.g. encampment, food rations, stipends) and without social networks of support (via the diaspora or Ethiopia-based relatives). This is not about a predisposition against work per se, but rather reflects a preference for *certain kinds* of work. We often heard, for example, how running a small shop or labouring on a construction site would simply not meet the expectations and aspirations of well-educated, highly-skilled Eritreans. Notions of morality, status and pride are at play here, and can cause some Eritreans to consider themselves culturally ‘superior’ to their Ethiopian neighbours/hosts (as described to us in a number of interviews). It is particularly revealing, for example, that one interviewee recalled the following saying: ‘Fill your stomach with the leaves of a tree, but let your clothes be good in appearance’.<sup>20</sup>

These patterns of economic life are broadly reflected in the 2014 Samuel Hall survey data. Looking at people’s income sources, as depicted in Figure 2, it is clear that formal employment constitutes a fairly small share of people’s livelihoods; only 15% of respondents reported having salaried employment. Instead, most rely either on informal economic activities, such as those described above, or on aid and charity. For those in the camp,

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13. IDI39 [male, 31, Adi Harush]

14. IDI36 [female, 50, Adi Harush]

15. IDI30 [male, 25, Adi Harush]

16. IDI12 [male, 35, Shire]

17. IDI5 [female, 32, Addis Ababa, NM06 [female, 30, Addis Ababa]

18. IDI6 [female, 30, Addis Ababa]

19. IDI9 [female, 34, Addis Ababa]

20. IDI1 [male, 32, Addis Ababa]

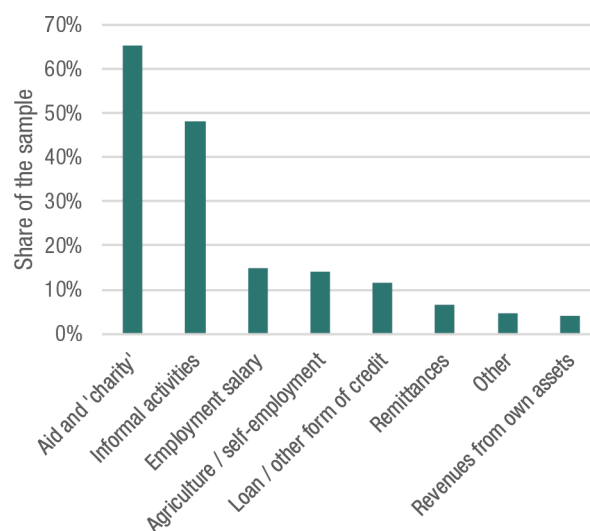
this typically takes the form of housing, some limited food rations, and access to basic health services. For the comparatively small numbers of urban refugees in Addis Ababa, a rental stipend helps people get by. At the same time, however, ‘extras’ such as children’s shoes often remain beyond reach for those relying on these forms of basic assistance.

Thus, while Eritreans in Ethiopia have more physical security in their lives, there is a continuation of prior circumstances in the sense that viable livelihood options remain few and far between. Just as in Eritrea, people’s choice of and access to work is tightly regulated. Whilst the source of this regulation may be different, it nonetheless serves to narrow the range of opportunities available. To many respondents, this reality came as a shock: ‘In my mind, initially I thought “I am free” when I arrived in Ethiopia. “I will work”. But I understood quickly that it was not true’.<sup>21</sup>

In a sense, then, a situation of limbo is created. Those who have left Eritrea generally express no desire to return, at least not until something as ground-breaking as regime change occurs. To do so would be to hand their fate to the authorities (see IRB, 2014). But without the opportunity to secure decent work in Ethiopia, these individuals find themselves relying on humanitarian assistance, becoming dependent on friends and family, or labouring in the low-return, reportedly exploitative informal economy. None of these constitute what many would consider a dignified way to make a living, with many of those interviewed aspiring to provide for family members across the border rather than being dependent themselves on others’ charity.

Thus, while those we interviewed generally feel safe once reaching Ethiopia, they remain unfulfilled. During this time, their lives pass by, while their dreams and aspirations remain untouched. Adult Eritrean men, who arrived at a young age, still plan at the age of 40 or older to continue higher education and pick up their lives where they left them in Eritrea, even though they know they know they will not be able to achieve these goals in Ethiopia. As for women, the ‘time wasted’ narrative is present across interviews with urban refugees and out-of-camp Eritreans, with tensions expressed over not being productive, having to wait for male family reunification or for a chance at resettlement, and a lack of agency relative to

**Figure 2. Most respondents in Adi Harush rely on aid or informal activities**



Source: Based on the 2014 Samuel Hall survey.

Notes: The survey sample does not represent the Eritrean population in Ethiopia. Respondents were asked if they receive income from each source.

men. Situations like these relate to the so-called ‘negative peace’ of exile, which offers freedom from persecution but sustains the dynamics of underdevelopment: hunger, injustice, and human incapacity (Galtung, 1969). As one interviewee reported: ‘I am enjoying the peace here, even if I don’t have enough food’.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3. Different people respond in different ways

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone responds to such circumstances in the same way. In a sense, an individual’s pre-existing mindset – in other words, their position with regards to the various mental thresholds – shapes the way in which they react to the opportunities and challenges within their new environment, as well as any associated policy intervention. Using the threshold approach outlined in section 2, we can broadly categorise the Eritrean community in Ethiopia into three groups according to the nature of their migration intentions.<sup>23</sup>

21. NM06 [female, 30, Addis Ababa]

22. IDI49 [male, 53, Adi Harush]

23. These are designed to be stylistic, and do not capture the full range of heterogeneity in people’s experiences and aspirations. We also acknowledge that there are no distinct boundaries between each.



1. **Group 1 | rapid movers.** In addition to existing research (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2017), interviews with key informants suggest that some Eritreans, especially those with access to funds, move on within days of arriving in Ethiopia. For them, Ethiopia is a brief stop-off, where arrangements for onward travel may be made. They are, in a sense, already quite far along their mental migration threshold: certainly not indifferent towards the idea, and relatively set on where to go and how to do it (although the specifics of plans may be subject to change). Although we were unable to interview anyone falling into this category, key informants told us that this group tends to comprise of young men (ibid).

2. **Group 2 | immobile movers.** Evidence suggests there are many Eritreans who aspire for onward movement but cannot currently achieve it. This aspiration is fuelled by constrained possibilities in Ethiopia (particularly economic and educational opportunities for themselves and their children); a reluctance to remain dependent on family networks (and a related desire to reverse that relationship); and cultural factors relating to ideas about belonging and ‘home’ (and the dissonance many people feel between those and a future on Ethiopian soil). Further migration is not possible, at least in the present, due to the financial costs and physical dangers

associated with irregular journeys, but it is plausible that changes in these variables might change in the future. People falling into this group have crossed the *indifference threshold*; they may also have a relatively clear idea about where they want to go. But the challenges of travel mean the *trajectory threshold* remains beyond reach.

3. **Group 3 | settled.** Not everyone aspires to move on. Despite the challenges that characterise life in Ethiopia, some people appear relatively settled. These are individuals who may simply feel indifferent to moving on (understandable given the enormity of what this entails), are fearful of risking their lives, or for whom the current conditions are deemed relatively acceptable.

These broad categories suggest that policy interventions intended to discourage or prevent secondary migration will mean different things to different people: because expectations and aspirations vary, we cannot expect to see just one type of response. We return to these groups in the next two sections through a series of case studies (see Boxes 3, 4 and 5), each designed to illustrate this differential response to both circumstances and policy measures.





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# 4. The benefits of in-country livelihood support are offset by deeper economic constraints

It is against the backdrop outlined in the previous section that measures designed to prevent secondary migration, specifically through irregular means, are being implemented. While it would be inaccurate to characterise these as preventative in an absolute sense – in many ways, interventions such as livelihood support and resettlement are also about development and protection – they are, to a large extent, designed to alter the mindsets of ‘would-be’ migrants and refugees (Carling and Hernandez-Carretero, 2011). More specifically, through creating viable alternatives (better livelihood opportunities at source; safe, legal passage), it is hoped that they discourage people from moving on, particularly through irregular means.

In this and the next section, we consider the viability of those alternatives in real terms, as well as the nature of their deterrence effect. We begin with in-country livelihood support which, as described in Section 2, is often assigned objectives beyond basic development outcomes. One of our key informants, a programme officer for Innovative Humanitarian Solutions, made this point: ‘The aim of livelihoods programmes is to dissuade people from secondary movement. If they are engaged in work, they have a purpose and so are less likely to try to go to Sudan’.<sup>24</sup>

Of particular note are the loan and training programmes implemented by humanitarian actors in Tigray’s camps. These programmes are typically delivered by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and are designed to i) provide capital for participants to establish a micro-enterprise, or ii) equip participants with vocational skills in a particular ‘sector’ (such as tailoring or computing) and/or basic educational skills (such as

numeracy and foreign languages). Beyond these, there are also policies designed to afford Eritreans greater mobility within Ethiopia, which enable eligible individuals to live outside camps. These policies are briefly outlined in Box 2.

Two key findings emerge from our analysis of in-country livelihood support. First, although these programmes are helping beneficiaries to get by, there is little evidence of further effects. And second, Eritreans are currently unable to effectively deploy newly acquired skills and capital due to limited access to the labour market. Each of these is explored in turn.

## 4.1. Livelihood support is helping people get by, but the effects are limited

Broadly speaking, our evidence suggests that livelihood support is helping people to meet basic needs, but there appears to be little meaningful effect beyond this. A number of those we talked to in Adi Harush camp described how they had received financial support from NGOs, which they used to start up their own micro-enterprises such as small shops within the camp or buying and raising livestock. Many respondents welcomed this kind of support: Birhan, for example, is now running a successful horse and carriage transport service on the back of an initial loan<sup>25</sup>; Hagos, a single mother, told us that her NRC-funded chicken farm is doing well and that she may soon be able to work in an NRC-funded hair salon. She summed up: ‘These are good opportunities for me’.<sup>26</sup> Some respondents highlighted that the additional income allows them to buy extra clothes, shoes or food, but others still struggled to get by:

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24. KII6 [programme officer, Innovative Humanitarian Solutions]

25. IDI35 [male, 27, Adi Harush]

26. IDI34 [female, 37, Adi Harush]

*'My shop is quite small but I can afford to buy shoes and other things for my family.'*<sup>27</sup>

*'The cow gives a good amount of milk and I can sell it. The earning is a good addition to the rationing I get. But I wouldn't say it is enough especially for me as a single mother.'*<sup>28</sup>

*'The ration given by the UNHCR is bare minimum for survival. And with the income from my shop I can support myself but it is little to support the whole family. I can't afford to buy clothing, special needs etc.'*<sup>29</sup>

Many of our interviewees highlighted the limitations of these programmes. While Semira, for example, used the loan to establish a small shop within the camp, her main problem was one of marketplace saturation. As she saw it, because 'there are so many shops' it is hard to profit and expand.<sup>30</sup> Mustafa reported a similar struggle following receipt of his loan, insisting that 'we only manage to cover

our basic needs, our food – nothing more [...] It is hard for me to be self-sufficient'.<sup>31</sup> The broader point underlying these examples is that although camps form their own economies, the markets within them are often limited, creating little opportunity for decent accumulation.

We observe a similar pattern for skills and vocational training: while respondents often expressed gratitude for, and satisfaction with, the experience, at the same time they reported little significant or long-term impact.<sup>32</sup> According to the 2014 Samuel Hall survey data, of the 20% of their sample who had received such training, three-quarters reported feeling either 'satisfied' or 'highly satisfied' with the training itself. But when we delved deeper through our own qualitative research, we found that people's newly acquired skills often cannot be put to use in the existing environment.<sup>33</sup> As Yohanna told us, 'I will gain skills but I will not be able to apply those skills here. There is no hope for a decent living even if I get a diploma'.<sup>34</sup> Mesfin relayed a similar story, explaining how he had originally planned to get a driving licence and start working as a taxi driver,

## Box 2. Ethiopia's 'Out of Camp' and urban refugee policies

In 2010, the Ethiopian Government with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), introduced an **Out of Camp policy (OCP)**, permitting Eritrean refugees to reside outside of camps as long as they could support themselves financially or were sponsored by a relative or friend (UNHCR, 2010).

In 2014 there were only 2,429 Eritrean beneficiaries of the OCP in Addis Ababa and 233 in the various cities of the Shire region – in particular Axum, Mekele and Shire (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 17). But this number has grown rapidly: according to UNHCR, more than 8,000 Eritrean refugees lived in Addis Adaba under the OCP in 2015 (UNHCR in USCRI, 2016: 3). Although this policy is currently restricted to Eritrean refugees, at the September 2016 Refugee Summit the government pledged to relax its encampment policy for all refugees, raising the number of OCP beneficiaries to 10% of the refugee population – amounting to about 75,000 refugees.

In addition to the OCP, over 12,500 **urban refugees** of all nationalities are currently authorised to stay in Addis Ababa for security, medical or humanitarian reasons (UNHCR, 2016). Although they are not authorised to work, they receive a subsistence allowance from the UNHCR, and have access to basic health services and education. That said, as of 2015, less than 50% of urban refugee children were enrolled in primary education (UNHCR, 2015). In terms of financial support, amounts vary depending on family size: a single male urban refugee who we interviewed for this study reported receiving 2,000 birr per month (just over £70), which is significantly higher than the national per capita average income of around £40 (World Bank, 2016a). Note, however, that access to the urban refugee scheme is limited, and that monthly income in Addis Ababa is likely to be higher than the national average.

Source: IDI55 [male, 29, Adi Harush]

27. IDI43 [male, 70, Adi Harush]

28. IDI38 [female, 18, Adi Harush]

29. IDI45 [male, 26, Adi Harush]

30. IDI48 [female, 26, Adi Harush]

31. IDI46 [male, 43, Adi Harush]

32. These findings are consistent with the cross-country, quantitative analysis of OECD (forthcoming).

33. IDI51 [female, 42, Adi Harush], IDI7 [male, 48, Addis]

34. IDI5 [female, 32, Addis Ababa]

but then heard from ARRA and fellow Eritreans that he is not allowed to do this.<sup>35</sup> For others, the range of training programmes currently available are simply not relevant to their interests and aspirations, which deters take-up altogether. Box 3 provides one such example from a member of the ‘immobile movers’ group outlined in section 3.<sup>36</sup>

The OCP falls under the same broad category of livelihood support, aiming to improve the mobility of Eritreans within Ethiopia by enabling some to move out of camps (as outlined previously in Box 2). Again, however, beneficiaries are not allowed to access formal work opportunities and, as discussed in the previous section, often join the informal labour market or rely on others’ support. Their inability to gain legal employment often exposes individuals to exploitation: existing research shows that many get paid less than a third of what Ethiopian workers would receive for equivalent positions, and with no chance of legal reparation because of their refugee status (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 41). OCP beneficiaries also receive less support relative to Eritreans who are registered in camps, as there is only minimal assistance from humanitarian or other organisations in Addis Ababa, and no support whatsoever in other cities.

Struggling to secure access to any kind of employment or livelihood support, OCP beneficiaries are often heavily dependent on whichever family member or

friend sponsored them to move outside the camp or on remittances from the diaspora. Afwerki, for example, has lived out of the camp for two years, has a job in a mill, and lives rent-free with a distant family member. However, he still depends on his family for food, and considers his current earnings insufficient to achieve what he describes as ‘good life’.<sup>37</sup>

At best, then, livelihood programming helps people get by. Yet for many, barely surviving just isn’t good enough, especially when they experience shame at being continually dependent upon remittances or Ethiopian relatives for extended periods of time – a feeling reported to us by many of those we interviewed.

## 4.2. Problems are rooted in refugees’ lack of access to decent work

Ultimately, what the evidence here tells us is that these forms of livelihood support are addressing the symptoms rather than the underlying structural causes of poverty and economic marginalisation. These include being taught skills that cannot be used within a camp context, the lack of rights to formal, better paid and higher skilled employment and, in some instances, strained social relations with Ethiopians.

Indeed, social inequality and (perceived) differential treatment by Ethiopians causes many Eritreans to feel that

### Box 3. Case study 1: ‘Autonomy is life but there is no autonomy in the camp’

Dawit, a young man currently registered in Adi Harush, arrived in Ethiopia hoping to build his future there. However, he was soon disappointed by the limited options for work.

In Eritrea, Dawit trained as a health professional and would like to use his skills in Ethiopia to earn enough money to support his ageing parents in Eritrea and to support a family. He dreams of going to Europe where he has Eritrean friends who are allowed to work and study, but he cannot find a way to get there. He has applied for resettlement but feels disillusioned when others seem to be resettled before him, and subsequently doubts that his application will ever be accepted. He does not have family in the United States (US), Canada or Europe, and so cannot apply for family reunification. Without a legal and safe channel to leave Ethiopia, he could try to make the journey himself using smugglers but he does not have a relative who can sponsor his journey.

Without the means to move to a country where his work prospects would be better, Dawit considers the support available in the camp. He is not interested in the skills that the livelihood programmes offer. He would much rather use his own medical knowledge and skills to work in healthcare, than to own a small shop or livestock in the camp.

Dawit has heard about the chance to study in Addis Ababa, but he thinks that this might be a waste of time because still he will not be able to use any new knowledge or skills to work in Ethiopia. Without relatives in Ethiopia he cannot apply for the OCP, and thinks that this would not be a good option anyway since it would be hard to earn enough money working informally to pay for rent and food.

Dawit is desperate to find a good job where he can use his skills and earn enough money to support himself and his relatives. But he feels trapped and cannot see how he will be able to leave Ethiopia.

Source: IDI55 [male, 29, Adi Harush]

35. IDI27 [male, 26, Shire]

36. IDI55 [male, 29, Adi Harush]

37. IDI23 [male, 33, Shire]

they will never become a full member of Ethiopian society. For instance, Robel, who has been in Adi Harush for more than a year, told us: ‘Even if I lived in the town, I would be considered a second-class citizen. If anything happened, they would suspect me even though I am innocent because I am different’.<sup>38</sup>

Constraints to formal employment prevent people exercising full autonomy to develop their potential. We observed this particularly in interviews with young and skilled Eritreans, as well as with those focused on securing access to education and better livelihood opportunities for their children. One respondent told us: ‘I’m living here in the camp and can’t achieve my goals here. [...] I’m no longer thinking of myself, only of my children. I want to sacrifice myself for my children’s future. I want them to have an education’.<sup>39</sup>

It is this inability to meet goals for oneself as well as for other family members that tends to underpin many people’s desire for secondary migration. During interviews with those falling into the ‘immobile movers’ category, access to employment came out as a key motivator for secondary migration:

*‘There is a big difference between living in Ethiopia and in Holland. In Holland you can get job with better wages. My husband tells me that it is also much better to access the basic infrastructure services in Holland than in Ethiopia. [...] I know it is possible to travel to Holland.’<sup>40</sup>*

*‘For me, I am living here free but I am hoping to get access to a job. If I am not working, I will run out of patience and I may attempt the dangerous movements to Europe but I hope I can get a job and will not need to risk this.’<sup>41</sup>*

As such, the support that is being provided by such programmes is for the most part overshadowed by refugees’ lack of access to decent work – work that is reliable, adequately paid and that draws on their skills. Without significant changes to the latter, we cannot plausibly expect these measures to produce much of a deterrent effect (see also UNHCR/DRC, 2016). Mewael, for example, who first trained as an electrician and more



recently as a cook, is planning to join his brother in Dubai upon completing his training. He explained: ‘I have training in electrical work and now I am studying to be a chef but I don’t think I can make an income here’.<sup>42</sup> In Mewael’s opinion, these new skills have not improved his prospects in Ethiopia.

When looking at the Samuel Hall data, the descriptive statistics suggest that those participating in such livelihood programmes are *more likely* to want to pursue secondary migration than those not participating in them (and *less likely* to want to stay in Ethiopia). Both of these differences (between participants and non-participants) are statistically significant. However, this is not to suggest a particular chain of causality. It is plausible that the types of people participating in and targeted by such programmes already intend to migrate prior to taking up the intervention, and that non-participants simply have less desire to move on.

At the same time, while it is clear that many Eritreans want better access to the formal labour market, opening it up to Eritreans would not necessarily prevent all secondary migration. Recent analysis shows that, despite the country’s relatively strong economic performance in recent years, growth in Ethiopia has not been sufficiently inclusive or pro-poor (World Bank, 2016b). Particularly in urban areas, unemployment rates remain high and the lack of opportunities affect both those with primary and even secondary education (ibid.). Thus, even once ‘inside’ the formal labour market, there are no guarantees that livelihood security will automatically follow.

38. IDI49 [male, 53, Adi Harush]

39. IDI54 [male, 38, Adi Harush]

40. IDI15 [female, 25, Shire]

41. IDI14 [male, 36, Shire]

42. IDI21 [male, 20, Shire]

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# 5. Resettlement slows irregular migration down

As things currently stand, the potential benefits of existing livelihood support programmes are being undermined by underlying structural issues of restricted access to the labour market, as well as general problems such as high unemployment. With the proposed Jobs Compact, that may or may not change – time will tell. In the conclusion we reflect briefly on how this particular initiative might play out in light of this report’s analysis.

In the meantime, the aspiration to migrate onwards remains strong. The fact that many Eritreans are unable to meet their own needs and goals, despite having already crossed one international border (and in some cases participating in livelihood programmes), means that the search for alternative destinations remains an objective. It is here that legal channels come in: where individuals are seeking onward movement, it is hoped that the possibility of a formal pathway can deter the riskier, irregular alternatives.

As one of the only legal channels available to Eritreans, resettlement represents the ultimate prize for many. Our research suggests it completely shapes the way people think about their futures and frames the viability of other options – and in doing so drives certain kinds of behaviour. We examine these dynamics in detail here, highlighting three findings associated with the way in which resettlement policy can interact with people’s aspirations and migration decision-making.

## 5.1. Resettlement links to preferences for destination

As already mentioned, of the 382 camp-based Eritreans surveyed by Samuel Hall Consulting in 2014, 84% indicated that they were intending to move on in the future. Of those, the vast majority (85%) named a specific country as their intended destination, which illustrates that people often plan journeys in advance. Of course,

the information that they draw on when planning their journey comes from multiple sources, and it is difficult to pinpoint precisely what matters and when. One piece of information that seems to prove influential is actual resettlement patterns – if we compare those respondents’ preferred destinations to actual resettlement patterns, the association is striking.

Figure 3 illustrates the relative popularity of possible destinations against actual resettlement of Eritreans by the UNHCR in 2014 (note, the latter are global figures, not just for Eritreans being resettled from Ethiopia). A quarter of the Samuel Hall sample identified the US as their preferred destination, compared to 5% selecting Australia. The US accepted by far the most Eritreans in 2014 (1,167), while some countries took very few (UK, 3) or none at all (Switzerland).

These UNHCR country-by-country variations are reflected quite clearly within the preferences recorded in the Samuel Hall sample.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, the respondents want to move on to those countries where they know others (including family and friends) who have been resettled, and where they perceive their chances of being resettled as higher.

We also find that other kinds of legal channels can sway destination preferences. Particularly in the Adi Harush interviews, respondents quite frequently mentioned the success rates of asylum claims as a reason for wanting to go to Europe. For instance, Haben told us that rumours within the camp suggest that once in Europe, it’s likely that an application for asylum will be approved: ‘If you make it to Europe, you will stay in a camp and eventually [be] granted asylum. I know this from my husband who is informed by the young men here’.<sup>44</sup> Jonathon, who considered going to Israel but was kidnapped on the way, shares a similar opinion: ‘I know Israel has closed its borders, so the only option is Europe, where Eritreans are granted asylum’.<sup>45</sup> Several interviewees also brought up

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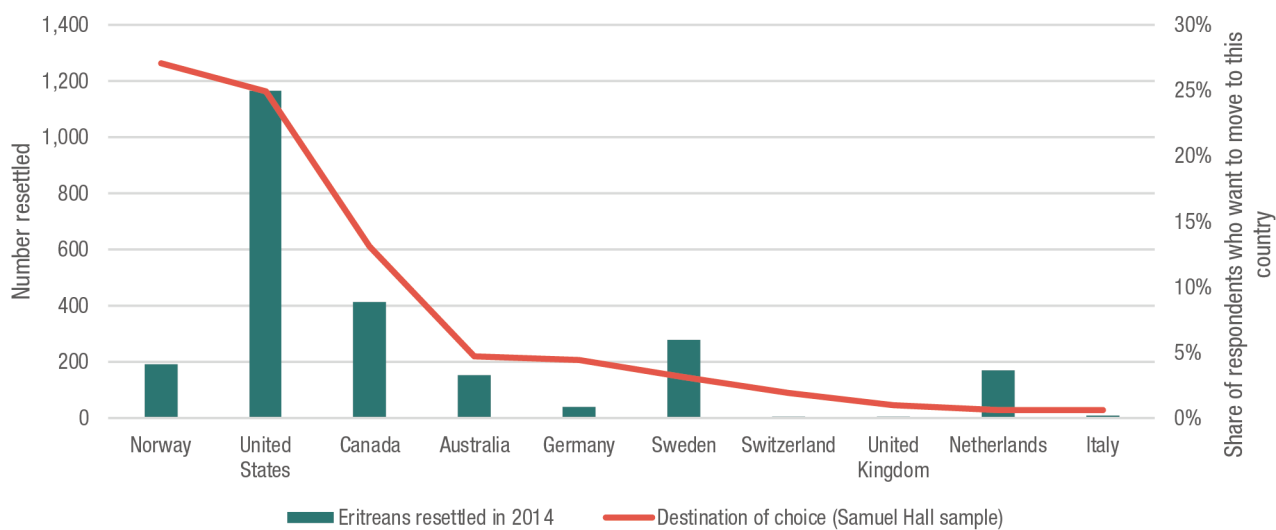
43. Removing the outlier that is Norway. Given that the study was implemented in partnership with the NRC, we would expect to see a reporting bias for a question such as this – we see that these two variables are statistically correlated at a value of 0.95, which is a strong correlation. This correlation coefficient needs to be interpreted with care, however, as the sample that it is drawn from is small.

44. IDI31 [female, 30, Adi Harush]

45. IDI44 [male, 31, Adi Harush]



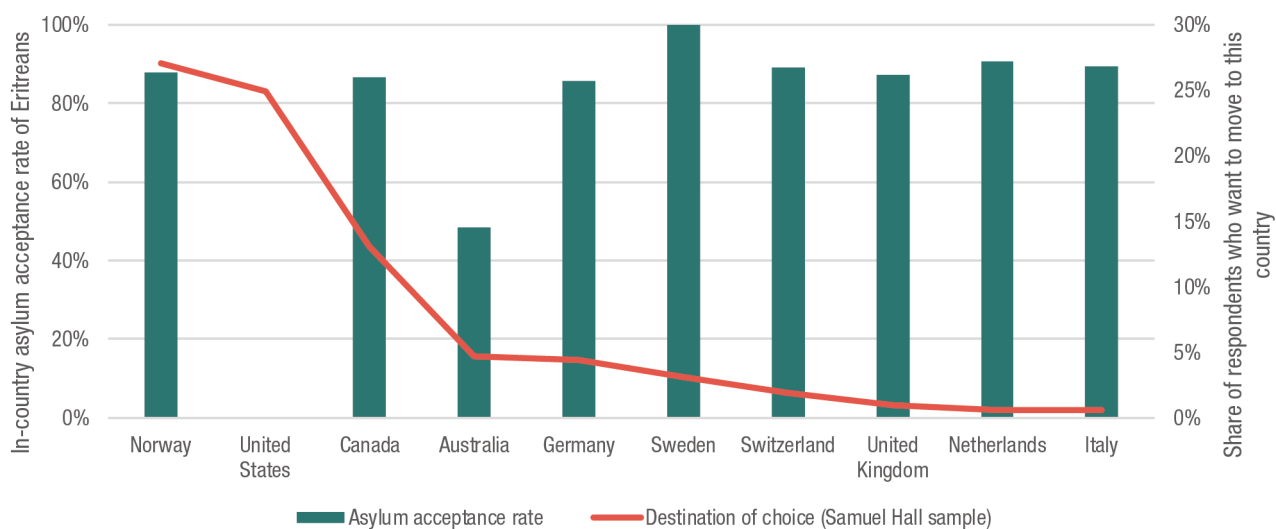
**Figure 3. Destination preferences and actual resettlement patterns appear closely associated**



Sources: UNHCR (2014a) and Samuel Hall Consulting (2014).

Notes: Resettlement figures are global and not limited to Eritreans resettling from Ethiopia. The Samuel Hall survey sample does not represent the Eritrean population in Ethiopia.

**Figure 4. Destination preferences and asylum acceptance rates do not seem to be strongly linked**



Sources: UNHCR (2014b) and Samuel Hall Consulting (2014).

Notes: Asylum acceptance figures are global and not limited to Eritreans coming from Ethiopia. The Samuel Hall survey sample does not represent the Eritrean population in Ethiopia.

family reunification, citing this as a safe way to come to Europe should their resettlement claim be rejected.<sup>46</sup>

This being said, specific knowledge of asylum and family reunification policies was rather vague amongst our respondents (see also Crawley et al., 2016; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016). Freselam's statement exemplifies this: 'I will apply to join them [my family]. It's difficult, I have limited information, I hope to be reunited but I don't know how'.<sup>47</sup> Most of the time, people referred to policies in Europe without naming specific countries, even though European asylum processes and policies are far from coherent (Metcalf-Hough, 2015).

The inaccuracy of knowledge regarding asylum is reflected in Figure 4, where the same destination preferences of respondents in Adi Harush shown in Figure 3 are overlaid with asylum acceptance rates for Eritreans in 2014. There is clearly not a strong association here, and we conclude the same when comparing against family reunification policies.<sup>48</sup>

It is worth noting that these kinds of policies do not appear to shape migration aspirations in a fundamental sense. Rather than constituting 'tipping points' – that is, pulling someone over the indifference threshold – they instead appear to influence ideas about destination. In other words, it is only once someone has already decided to migrate that their understanding of migration rules and policies starts to affect their position on the locational threshold.

## 5.2. Aspirations for resettlement can slow down irregular migration

Amongst Eritreans who come to Ethiopia but don't immediately move on – the 'immobile movers' – it seems quite rare that they prioritise irregular migration over existing formal alternatives, at least in the first instance. Alongside family reunification, resettlement offers an opportunity to migrate legally, with the advantage that it has virtually no associated financial costs and is safe.<sup>49</sup> Yet, while the 'obsession of resettlement' (key informant quote in Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 43) may not require formal fees, in reality it places a significant cost on individuals in other ways.

In the Kenyan refugee camps of Dadaab, the dream of resettlement is referred to as *buufis*, which means a longing or desire projected into someone's mind. This has been shown to bring hope to Somali refugees living

in dismal circumstances, but at the same time can also have adverse psychological effects when their dream is not realised (Horst, 2006). Our evidence suggests that the hope for resettlement is also one of the main dynamics that underpins the fragmented and protracted nature of many Eritreans' migration trajectories (for more on the phenomenon of 'fragmented migration', see Collyer, 2007). By offering the possibility of an alternative future, the hope of resettlement incentivises immobility over long periods of time instead. Because of the possibility that this aspiration *may* come to fruition, resettlement programming can shut down the pursuit of alternative livelihood goals and strategies. For example, according to the 2014 Samuel Hall study, one of the main reasons given for not taking up OCP status was fear of losing the chance of resettlement, second only to not having a sponsor.

Even when alternatives are sought, the prospect of resettlement is always there to pull people back towards the camps. As the chairman of an urban refugee organisation in Shire explained:

*'Refugees struggle to find work [here in town]. They lack skills. They were soldiers, and so now they don't even have the right skills [...] People who can't cope go back to the camp and try to move to a different country. It depends on the individual, how long they try for. Maybe four or six months before they go back to the camp.'*<sup>50</sup>

It is clear that our respondents are operating on a long timeframe, placing great value on far-off goals (even if highly uncertain) and less on their present situation (see also Belloni, 2016). Many were willing to spend days waiting in line, and years waiting for a final decision. Segen, a single mother interviewed in Addis Ababa, had passed some of the initial stages of the application process, with promising outcomes following two interviews. But it has not been straightforward: 'It has been a fight. After a year and a half, they have finally accepted me'.<sup>51</sup> Segen must still complete a medical examination before a flight schedule can be arranged, which 'might take another six months or so. Who knows? They don't tell you everything'.

For many, the likelihood of being resettled is extremely slim – 1 in 100, by some accounts (see Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 10). The US, which resettles 97% of Eritreans according to recent estimates, only resettled 1,783 individuals in 2015 (USCRI, 2016). Most people

46. IDI40 [female, 29, Adi Harush]; IDI31 [female, 30, Adi Harush]; IDI15 [female, 25, Shire]

47. CC4 [male, 53, Adi Harush]

48. The correlation for asylum acceptance rates is -0.16; for family reunification it is 0.23. Both are measured without Norway due to the likely bias mentioned previously. Correlations need to be interpreted with care, as the sample size is small.

49. While resettlement schemes are formally free of charge, in practice they still involve minor costs, such as photocopying documentation.

50. KII5 [chairman of urban refugee organisation, Shire]

51. IDI11 [female, 30, Addis Ababa]

will not get anywhere near the stage that Segen has reached, prioritised as she is in the ‘women and girls at risk’ category. As a result, people use a range of strategies to improve their chances of being resettled, which in some cases can lead to drastic decisions. For example, we heard in our interviews a number of cases where women had divorced their children’s father to improve their chance of resettlement. This is likely to impact mental wellbeing as well as affect their ability to get by in the short term.

Furthermore, while there is often confusion about the specific bureaucratic procedures involved, people had heard enough stories and rumours to know that they could wait for years to be resettled. For example, Yohanna said: ‘I am now expecting to get resettlement to the US because I am qualified as a woman with children in danger. The process usually takes two years or longer’.<sup>52</sup> Other respondents appeared to have accepted that the chances of being resettled were extremely low, regardless of how long they had to wait for a decision. ‘My plan is to stay put, serve God here and pray that I am resettled abroad safely.’<sup>53</sup>

Box 4 describes Negesti’s story: she is an ‘immobile mover’ holding out for resettlement, and considering her options in the meantime.<sup>54</sup>

### 5.3. There are doubts over the durability of its deterrent effect

Although resettlement appears effective at stopping irregular migration for some Eritreans – that is, at altering the incentives so that irregular movement appears a less desirable option – our evidence raises doubts about the permanence of this effect.

A number of respondents suggested that people increasingly consider irregular migration as time goes by. Having discussed the danger of the crossing, one interviewee, Yacob, went on to reflect on the options available to him: ‘I would have preferred the legal way, but it is becoming difficult. Resettlement is scarce’. Although he plans to persist with the legal route for the time being, he admits to giving increasing consideration to irregular alternatives.

In other words, limited or no access to legal migration options can push people into irregularity – something also reported by UNHCR/DRC (2016) in their study of onward refugee migration from Ethiopia. Similar findings emerged from recent quantitative work suggesting that, while restrictive European asylum policy reduces the number of people claiming asylum, it can also push potential and rejected applicants towards irregular status (Czaika and Hobolth, 2016). This is a critical point: even when individuals aspire to migrate through legal means, the limited access to legal routes can push people into precisely

#### Box 4. Case study 2: ‘I want a good future for my daughter now. A better life for her. We need to leave.’

Negesti arrived in Ethiopia with her children. She is hoping to find her husband who left Eritrea before her, and is currently living with relatives in Addis Ababa through the OCP. She has been unable to find her husband and suspects that he has tried to travel to Europe. Negesti is worried about her children’s education and wants to support them so that they can have better lives. She feels guilty about staying with her relatives for so long, and often misses meals to avoid asking for food. She is trying to work informally but struggles to earn enough to pay for food or to cover her children’s basic needs.

Negesti is worried that this is a critical time for her children to be in school. She thinks that leaving Ethiopia and living in the US, Canada or Europe would be better – anywhere where she can work more to earn enough to support her children and send them to school.

But Negesti does not want to risk the journey to Europe; she cannot afford to pay the smugglers and is afraid of the dangers that the irregular route poses to herself and her children. She has applied for resettlement and is hopeful that one day her application will be successful. However, she does not understand the procedure and does not know why she has not been called.

Without family outside Ethiopia and Eritrea, Negesti cannot consider family reunification programmes. Instead, she hopes that skills training programmes for refugees in Addis Ababa may help her to earn more money. If she can at least do this, she may be able to better provide for her children and give money to her relatives who are hosting her.

Source: IDI9 [female, 34, Addis Ababa]

52. IDI40 [female, 39, Adi Harush]

53. IDI29 [female, 40, Adi Harush]

54. IDI9 [female, 34, Addis Ababa]

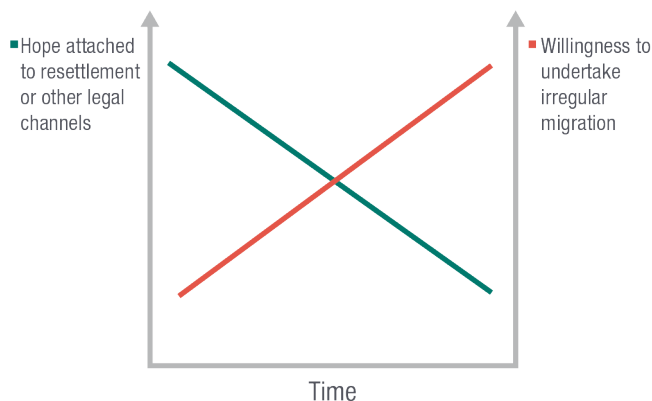
the kinds of trajectories that policy-makers are trying to discourage.

The lack of faith in formal channels is also heightened by perceptions of unfairness and patronage in how the various programmes are managed. We heard several complaints about (perceived) corruption in the allocation process and about people jumping the queue in their applications for resettlement. According to one respondent: ‘They are not fairly distributing the resettlement opportunities so some refugees risk their lives by leaving the camp and going on secondary movement’.<sup>55</sup>

Linking this back to the threshold approach, people continuously reconsider their decision to migrate, and thus their position on the trajectory threshold may change as different options are internalised as more or less viable. On the one hand, this can be attributed to new information and experiences – for instance, if a resettlement application is turned down. On the other, it may also relate to changes in preferences and behaviours. Our interviews suggest that as circumstances fail to change over time, risk tolerances increase can thicken and irregular migration becomes an increasingly viable option. This is stylistically represented in Figure 5, although it is important to keep in mind that there is a range of other factors at play.

As suggested in section 3, there is no single response to these shifting circumstances. In cases where resettlement is simply not an option – or rather where someone feels it isn’t – and an alternative irregular route is deemed too challenging, an individual may give up on an exit strategy altogether. Our final case study (Box 5) draws on an interview with someone in the ‘settled’ group.<sup>56</sup>

**Figure 5. As people lose hope, a gradual deflection into irregularity occurs**



Source: ODI, 2017.

Note: This is a stylistic representation of the relationship between hopes for resettlement and the propensity to move on through irregular means. This relationship is not necessarily linear and is influenced by other factors (e.g. security, access to work).

**Box 5. Case study 3: ‘My plan is to stay here, look after my children and work. I dream of having a plantation with a generator for water pumping.’**

Falling into the ‘settled’ group, Eyob has been living in a refugee camp in northern Ethiopia for more than six years. He fled National Service in Eritrea, which he claims forced him into poverty and denied him from visiting his family. He arrived in Ethiopia seeking peace and freedom.

Since living in the camp Eyob has been able to establish a small livestock business. He has developed close connections with the nearby village and has married an Ethiopian woman from there. He does not intend to leave Ethiopia because he thinks he can make a living near the camp and has a family to support here.

Eyob has remained in the camp because it is easier than trying to pay for rent and food outside of the camp. He is pleased that the camp policies allow him to come and go relatively easily, and has used this freedom to buy goats and sheep from nearby markets, which he breeds or sells for meat in the camp. He is not interested in the livelihood programmes because he already has a small business, although he hopes that one of the refugee agencies will give him a loan so he can expand it.

Ultimately, Eyob would like to leave Ethiopia and have a better life in another country, but he has been told that he is not eligible for resettlement. He has no intention of travelling across the desert to Europe because he has heard of the danger and does not have anyone who could help him if he was kidnapped. Eyob has resigned himself to living in Ethiopia, and focuses on growing his business so he can continue to provide for his family.

Source: IDI53 [male, 41, Adi Harush]

55. IDI60 [male, 41, Shire]

56. IDI53 [male, 41, Adi Harush]



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# 6. Conclusion: what would a better adapted policy landscape look like?

With ideas still being sought to ease Europe's ongoing 'migration crisis', increasing attention is being given to tackling the situation's underlying drivers. The logic is that, rather than manage migrants and refugees once they have reached Europe, and reduce the risks and hardships faced by people along the way, it is better to address the crisis at source – to deter irregular secondary movement by improving people's options and opportunities in 'regions of origin'.

Seen from this perspective, Ethiopia is currently regarded as a priority case. As the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa – a consequence of both its geographical proximity to several sites of regional conflict and persecution, as well as the government's noteworthy open asylum policy – there are just under one million vulnerable people in need of both protection and development assistance in Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2016). In this study we have focussed on Eritreans, the third largest national group falling into this category, after South Sudanese and Somalis.

A majority of refugees in Ethiopia either migrate onwards or aspire to do so. This is certainly the case for Eritreans within Ethiopia. As discussed at the beginning of this report, over 80% of the 382 camp-based Eritreans surveyed by Samuel Hall Consulting in 2014 reported plans to move on. And figures by Amnesty International (2016) show that just under two-thirds of Eritreans in Ethiopia actually did so in 2015.

In this study, we have tried to better understand how and why this is the case. What is it about the circumstances of life in Ethiopia that compel so many to continue onwards? And in what ways are formal attempts to both support refugees and discourage secondary movement falling short?

In this concluding section, we recap the main findings of the research and suggest targeted recommendations – including brief 'pointers' for the proposed Jobs Compact – to enable policy-makers to refine and improve existing policies and interventions. A number of our findings and recommendations reinforce those identified by UNHCR/DRC (2016) in their study of onward refugee migration

from Ethiopia, thus further underlining the need for a better adapted system of support.

## Ethiopia is a vital country of asylum

Three points stood out when looking at the circumstances facing Eritreans who make it across the border into Ethiopia. First, Ethiopia offers the prospect of freedom and security, particularly when compared with life in Eritrea. Second, despite these better prospects, those who cross the border continue to find it difficult to pursue decent, fulfilling livelihoods. And third, these challenges circumstances induce various responses: while some seem willing to accept a 'good enough' improvement on life in Eritrea, others still aspire to move on.

We have two recommendations from these findings:

- 1. Ethiopia's open asylum policy should be supported and maintained.** By allowing refugees from the region to freely enter and reside in Ethiopia, the government is providing an important right and serving a critical humanitarian need: people living under repressive regimes can seek safety and physical security nearby. The Ethiopian Government should be supported in hosting these refugee populations. International agencies should continue to support refugee camps, as well as providing important assistance to protect refugees living outside of the camps, including safe housing, and access to schooling and healthcare. Much can be learnt from on-going initiatives in other countries to support urban refugees, e.g. in Jordan where various initiatives support the large urban refugee population there, or Uganda (see Rohwerder, 2016).
- 2. Policy measures should recognise the diversity of Eritreans living in Ethiopia.** In a sense, there is no singular 'Eritrean community' there. Instead, there are groups stratified by geography, education and social status, eligibility for assistance, and future plans: we cannot plausibly expect policies and interventions to produce uniform effects. For example, depending on

the strength of an individual's intention to migrate (as well as their tolerance for risk), providing employment could consolidate their decision to stay or compel secondary movement (if opportunities do not meet their expectations or skills). There is relatively little that can be done to control this when Eritreans are considered a uniform group; interventions need to be tailored to different groups.

## Livelihood support is being offset by deeper economic constraints

It is against the backdrop of challenging circumstances that a range of policy measures are being implemented to reduce or prevent secondary migration, particularly via irregular means. More specifically, through creating viable alternatives (safe and legal passage, better livelihood opportunities at source), it is hoped that individuals considering secondary migration come to change their minds. Such interventions seek to expand the options and opportunities available to vulnerable groups 'at source', and, as a result, are as much about development and protection as they are deterrence.

We looked at two such programmes – in-country livelihood support, and resettlement – which lie at the core of the current policy landscape in Ethiopia.

In-country livelihood support includes loans, as well as training and measures permitting residence outside camps. Our research reveals two key things: i) these programmes are helping people to get by and meet basic survival needs, but ii) their potential impacts are being undermined by the fact that refugees living in Ethiopia are denied the right to work. This makes it difficult to put newly acquired skills and capital to good use, and forces Eritreans into insecure, precarious and possibly illegal economic arrangements.



Dance class at the Jesuit Refugee Service, Adl Harush refugee camp, Ethiopia

We have two recommendations from this evidence, following on from our first set:

- 3. Programming should be adapted to local needs and realities.** Some of the evidence suggests that more could be done to better align these interventions with both intended beneficiaries' needs and the dynamics of the local context. People sometimes reject interventions on the basis that the skills being offered are of little relevance to their own needs, interests and environments. There are also problems of market saturation, as the activities that many beneficiaries pursue tend to be crowded out with supply. As such, efforts should be made to i) (re)evaluate the local relevance of skills training currently being offered, and ii) expand the range of vocations and types of work that refugees can participate in. Further to this, more should be done *after* people have received loans and training to provide ongoing mentoring and supervision, and to maximise the potential gains. Underlying all of this is the need to avoid blueprint approaches, and to be generally more adaptive in programme design. A stronger understanding of the effectiveness of livelihood support is required, with lessons to be learnt from related research areas such as reintegration programmes for internally displaced people and labour/employment programming more generally.
- 4. Refugee labour rights should be enhanced.** A fundamental problem is one of labour market restrictions. Even with better livelihood programming, refugees' ability to build successful, dignified lives hinges on their access to work. In many ways this is the priority issue; it underpins both the challenge of survival in Ethiopia, as well as the compulsion (amongst many) to move on. While there is no guarantee that relaxing this restriction will generate a blanket preventive effect, the evidence suggests that many people will be more inclined to stay in Ethiopia as a result (not to mention the intrinsic value of achieving greater economic freedom for vulnerable people). Lessons can be learnt from the experiences of OCP participants, with improvements needed in both the scope of this initiative (reaching all refugee groups) as well as the kinds of rights that should be made available under the OCP (including the right to work in formal and gainful employment, as per the 1951 Geneva Convention). The proposed Jobs Compact (see BBC, 2016) could also be used to leverage more relaxed legislation (see Box 6). On a broader note, the accurate communication and use of evidence should be central to any case for reform, as recent research provides critical insights into the economic benefits that refugees can make to their host communities, given the right conditions (see, for example, Betts et al., 2014; Woetzel et al., 2016).

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## Resettlement is slowing irregular migration down

Resettlement programmes serve a vital protection function, but they are also designed to deter irregular migration by offering the prospect of safe and legal travel. Our analysis reveals three findings. First, resettlement appears linked to people's geographical preferences; countries often identified by respondents as preferred destinations tend to be those resettling the highest numbers of Eritreans. However, it is not clear that this is driving the aspiration to migrate in a fundamental sense. Second, resettlement appears to exert a deterrent effect for many, something which is also linked to people's knowledge of how dangerous and expensive the irregular alternative is. Third, but despite this, there are real questions over the durability of the deterrence effect, with evidence suggesting that it begins to dissipate over time, particularly as people lose faith in the system.

Again, two key recommendations emerge from this evidence, following our other recommendations:

**5. Information about resettlement should be clearer and more accessible.** Refugees often lack accurate knowledge about the resettlement process, their eligibility status and how they would be assessed (including how long it takes), and the general likelihood of acceptance. It is this uncertainty that keeps people waiting for months and years, foregoing the pursuit of alternative strategies.

By creating a more transparent and accessible process, people are able to make more informed decisions about the options available to them, and may suffer less mental stress caused by the uncertainty and sense of injustice surrounding resettlement measures.

**6. Legal pathways should be developed and expanded.** Many of those who want to migrate initially aspire to do so through formal rather than informal means, with the danger and cost of the latter often acting as a serious deterrent. Yet evidence suggests that these individuals gradually 'deflect' into irregularity, as a result of demand far outstripping supply (in practice, just a fraction of those wanting to move on get to do so via legal means), and rumours exist of corrupt allocation practices that undermine these mechanisms' credibility. Developing legal pathways does not mean open borders, but should rather be about finding ways of better managing migration. Expanding and diversifying these channels – for example, through humanitarian visas, guest-worker schemes, quota enlargements and study scholarships – is key to building people's trust in the formal policy apparatus. This approach needs to be at the forefront of the debate if governments wish to see safer migration, better regulation and more accurate monitoring of refugee/migrant flows.

### Box 6. Four pointers for the Jobs Compact

It is anticipated that the proposed Ethiopian Jobs Compact will be rolled out in 2017. Based on our analysis, we urge policy-makers and practitioners to keep in mind four things regarding the design, implementation and potential effects of the Compact.

- 1. Clarity is key.** Information about the initiative should be transparent and accessible in order for refugees to make informed decisions about their options. Who is eligible? What are the terms of the contract? What can people expect? This information should be shared in a way that is clear and understandable to refugees.
- 2. Take-up will be mediated by individual preferences and aspirations.** Located in two new industrial parks, it is possible that some refugees will reject these jobs on the basis that they do not align with their own backgrounds and interests. Take-up will also be influenced by the way in which these jobs are communicated, framed and perceived among the Eritrean community: do they offer decent work, or is the activity considered demeaning? Geography is another factor: recent analysis of special industrial zones in Jordan shows that low take-up among Syrian refugees often comes down to factory locations, with people not wanting to take on long travel times or be separated from family (Lenner, 2016).
- 3. The politics of job allocation must be anticipated.** Urban unemployment in Ethiopia remains high across all groups of society, and recent years have seen a slowing of economic growth. In a context where significant numbers of Ethiopians may also be affected by poverty and vulnerability, one might expect a rise in social tensions where refugees are prioritised as beneficiaries (one third of all new jobs will be allocated this way). This issue requires sensitive handling.
- 4. The Compact should be used as an entry point for reform.** The initiative is expected to create 30,000 jobs for refugees in Ethiopia. While both positive and promising, only a small proportion of the refugee population will benefit directly. The Compact should be used as a platform for further conversations about rights to work and a step in an iterative reform process, rather than a one-off intervention.

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# Annex 1: In-depth interviews and key informants

## In-depth interviews

Interview code	Date	Location	Sex	Age	Received livelihood support?
IDI1	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	32	Yes
IDI2	15/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	20	No
IDI3	15/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	29	Yes
IDI4	16/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	29	No
IDI5	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	F	32	Yes
IDI6	16/09/2016	Addis Ababa	F	30	No
IDI7	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	48	Yes
IDI8	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	M	38	Yes
IDI9	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	F	34	Yes
IDI10	14/09/2016	Addis Ababa	F	28	Yes
IDI11	16/09/2016	Addis Ababa	F	30	No
IDI12	13/09/2016	Shire	M	35	No
IDI13	13/09/2016	Shire	M	18	No
IDI14	13/09/2016	Shire	M	36	No
IDI15	13/09/2016	Shire	F	25	No
IDI16	14/09/2016	Shire	F	30	No
IDI17	13/09/2016	Shire	M	36	No
IDI18	13/09/2016	Shire	F	33	Yes
IDI19	09/09/2016	Shire	F	26	No
IDI20	14/09/2016	Shire	F	30	No
IDI21	15/09/2016	Shire	M	20	No
IDI22	15/09/2016	Shire	F	28	No
IDI23	15/09/2016	Shire	M	33	No
IDI24	09/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	35	Yes
IDI25	09/09/2016	Shire	M	33	No
IDI26	14/09/2016	Shire	M	30	No
IDI27	14/09/2016	Shire	M	26	No
IDI28	13/09/2016	Shire	M	36	No
IDI29	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	40	No
IDI30	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	25	No
IDI31	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	30	Yes
IDI32	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	30	No

Interview code	Date	Location	Sex	Age	Received livelihood support?
IDI33	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	43	Yes
IDI34	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	37	Yes
IDI35	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	27	Yes
IDI36	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	50	Yes
IDI37	29/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	25	Yes
IDI38	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	18	Yes
IDI39	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	31	Yes
IDI40	29/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	39	Yes
IDI41	29/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	32	Yes
IDI42	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	35	Yes
IDI43	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	70	Yes
IDI44	26/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	31	No
IDI45	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	27	Yes
IDI46	21/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	43	Yes
IDI47	21/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	28	Yes
IDI48	21/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	36	Yes
IDI49	21/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	53	No
IDI50	21/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	30	Yes
IDI51	22/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	42	No
IDI52	22/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	25	No
IDI53	22/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	41	Yes
IDI54	22/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	38	Yes
IDI55	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	29	No
IDI56	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	34	No
IDI57	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	F	24	No
IDI58	23/09/2016	Adi Harush	M	36	No
IDI59	24/09/2016	Shire	M	34	No
IDI60	24/09/2016	Shire	M	41	No
IDI61	24/09/2016	Shire	M	37	No
IDI62	24/09/2016	Shire	M	31	No
IDI63	24/09/2016	Shire	M	40	No

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## Key informant interviews

Interview code	Date	Location	
KII1	20/07/2016	Shire	NRC employee
KII2	19/09/2016	Shire	Child protection officer, NRC
KII3	19/09/2016	Shire	Monitoring and learning officer for 4 camps
KII4	19/09/2016	Shire	NRC livelihoods project officers, Adi Harush and Shire
KII5	20/09/2016	Shire	Chairman of urban refugee organisations
KII6	20/09/2016	Shire	Programme officer, Innovative Humanitarian Solutions
KII7	20/09/2016	Shire	Children protection programme coordinator, NRC





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