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# A state-incorporated business: the migration economy along the Ethiopia–Sudan border town of Metema

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## Abstract

The pattern of migration from Ethiopia to Sudan, through the Metema border town, has proved complex and is expanding, making it difficult for government bodies to control and manage. Regardless of government efforts, every year substantial numbers of irregular migrants have been observed crossing the border into Sudan, some of them with the objective of going on to Europe. The migration channels and networks have changed and adapted to the evolving contexts and situations on both sides of the border. Irregular migration from Ethiopia thus remains a vibrant business. This paper explores how some members of the state, and brokers, are involved in this business of migrant mobility, including in human smuggling and trafficking. It shows how government attempts to stop irregular migration have opened a route that is less safe for migrants. In addition, anti-human trafficking initiatives taken by the state are driving up the market value of human smuggling, making it more expensive for migrants and more profitable for those involved in the business. By analysing evidence gathered from Metema, the paper considers the changes in migrants' value and safety brought about by state actions.

## Keywords

Irregular migration, migration drivers, informal economy, human smuggling, human trafficking, migration control

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# 1 Introduction

This paper examines the migration industry in the Ethiopia–Sudan border town of Metema by analysing the process and facilitation of migrants’ journeys across the ‘western route’ that runs from different parts of Ethiopia through Sudan and Libya to Europe. Based on the experiences of migrants and interviews with government officials, the paper attempts to elucidate both the irregular and regular channels of migration and the attempts by the Ethiopian government and nongovernmental organisations to manage migration.

Ethiopia serves as a country of origin, with a net migration rate of 0.278 in 2018, somewhat lower than that of other countries in the region. However, with increasing numbers of migrants leaving the country, agents facilitating their journeys have emerged and evolved, making it a profitable business for many. Considering the risk migrants face in using irregular channels of migration, the Ethiopian government has attempted to develop initiatives to put an end to the outmigration of its citizens, such as creating job opportunities. Nevertheless, young people continue to move out of Ethiopia through different migration routes for distinct reasons. One of the destination countries for these migrants has been Sudan, which most reach through the western border point of Metema. According to a United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs Population Division 2017 report, there were in that year 71,631 Ethiopian migrants in Sudan, many of whom were considered to be political refugees (UNDESA, 2017).<sup>1</sup> An earlier report by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS – now known as the Mixed Migration Centre) indicated that between 18,000 and 100,000 migrants leave for Sudan through Metema each year, the majority of whom take irregular routes (RMMS, 2014).

In order to cross the border, migrants have to pay brokers a significant amount of money, depending on their place of origin. The price demanded by these brokers and other migration ‘facilitators’ varies based on the season and any other arrangements made. Such arrangements may include better accommodation, protection from abuse by brokers and/or other agents involved, safety, and assurances of reaching their destination without any further cost.

In response to the scale of irregular migration, the Ethiopian government has established various structures backed by legislation. However, as a result of improved state control of the borders and strict regulations against human trafficking, many migrants are forced to use different, irregular routes, which are more expensive and dangerous. Further, government regulations have pushed the migration industry in Metema underground. What was before an open business is now conducted in secrecy; the once used hotels that openly gave shelter to smugglers and their clients have been replaced by private homes, which are used as warehouses. Brokers are heavily armed to protect themselves and migrants, whom they see as merchandise, from security forces and other brokers. Some residents are also now involved in ‘selling’ migrants to, for and among the different broker networks. Furthermore, in Sudan, some police forces and detention centres have tapped into this economic opportunity by requiring US\$2,000 from detained ‘illegal’ migrants to facilitate their deportation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This number is restricted to documented migrants. The actual number, including irregular migrants, is believed to be higher than indicated in the official statistics. See <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> The amounts stated here may have changed: they are the amounts last recorded during the final fieldwork, in October 2018.

In line with this, this paper explores how the smuggling business is changing in the face of new legislation and anti-trafficking measures. As a result of these changes, it argues, the migration industry is connecting both irregular and regular structures and channels of migration. As will be shown in the discussion below, the migration business chain links broker networks and facilitators at different stages, to make it possible for migrants to cross the border. In managing and facilitating migrants' journey, different actors are involved, such as brokers, residents of the border town, hotel and private house owners, drivers, security guards, government officials, and others.

The state is also directly and indirectly involved in the migration industry in different capacities. In the regular channel, migrants are expected to register at immigration and nationality affairs bureaus, to take training and get approval from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in order to take employment overseas. Through attempts to manage and regulate migration, the state indirectly contributes to the irregular channel. Together with the state, international and local humanitarian organisations also partake in the regulatory aspect of the migration industry by providing information and various kinds of assistance to potential migrants, returnees and stranded migrants.

The paper thus attempts to look into the migration industry and how it has been adjusting to changing state actions and relations between countries. The data presented here were collected in 2017 (August–September) and 2018 (March and October), as part of an ongoing PhD research project.<sup>3</sup> In order to explore and analyse the issues at hand, interviews were conducted with potential migrants, returnees, ex-brokers, Metema town residents, International Organization for Migration (IOM) officers, and government officials at different levels. Informal interviews were also conducted with intermediary brokers and Sudanese residents in the border town of Galabat.

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<sup>3</sup> A follow-up on recent developments was carried out after the final fieldwork through phone calls and desk review.

## 2 The migration business

John Salt and Jeremy Stein introduced the term ‘migration business’ to explain that international migration was more than the mere movement of people, and could be thought of as an international business with its own vast budget (Salt & Stein, 1997). Salt and Stein further argued that this diverse international business “provides hundreds of thousands of jobs worldwide, and is managed by a set of individuals and institutions, each of which has an interest in how the business develops” (quoted in Spener, 2009, p 2). In this business chain, intermediate institutions encourage, manage and facilitate the stream of migrants between nations. This migration business model also shows how migration is a process rather than an act of moving from point A to B. Within this process, migration facilitators, such as brokers and the state, play key roles in the different stages of migration.

Although it is not entirely new to conceptualise migration as a form of business that organises and channels mobility for profit, the notion of migration infrastructure has also been introduced in the literature, emphasising the regulatory, technological, humanitarian and social domains (Hernández-León, 2008; Sørensen & Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013; Xiang & Lindquist 2014). This is because migration cannot be described without giving attention to the necessary infrastructural developments that configure and enable mobility (Hannam et al, 2006).

Five key dimensions have been identified by scholars in this move to introduce infrastructure to the migration business model: the commercial, regulatory, technological, humanitarian and social apparatuses (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014). Focusing on transactions, monetary, in-kind or any other form of payment, the commercial dimension explains how migrants make payments to facilitate their journey. The regulatory dimension includes state apparatus and procedures for documentation, licensing, training and other purposes, which give migrants either legal or illegal status. The technologies used for gathering information, communication and transportation facilities are categorised as technological apparatuses, while the humanitarian apparatuses are those provided by nongovernmental and international organisations who offer different kinds of assistance to migrants deemed to be at risk. Finally, the social dimension refers to networks of migrants formed through kinship, friendship, neighbourhood or other kinds of acquaintance. These networks connect places of origin and destination by providing information, contacts, resources, accommodation and employment opportunities, and thus assist migrants in crossing borders (Lindquist et al, 2012; Schapendonk, 2018; Hernandez-Leon, 2005).

According to Xiang and Lindquist (2014), however, these five dimensions of the migration infrastructure are not discrete domains but rather indicate different logics of operation. Although the actors, driving forces, factors, strategies and approaches of these dimensions differ, for the migration industry to function all the elements need to interact with each other. In addition, as part of the infrastructure, Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013) argue, the migration industry is not only an important phenomenon in and of itself, it also fundamentally affects migratory flows and governments’ attempts to manage or regulate migration. This approach has enhanced our understanding of migration as a multi-level process involving different actors. Among these actors is the state, which for Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013, p 2), “actively sustains and funds large parts of the migration industry”. By outsourcing border controls and commoditising migrants’ labour, the state at times acts as a broker (Goh et al, 2017; McKeown, 2012; Findlay et al, 2017). Migration management initiatives and control mechanisms introduced by the state directly or

indirectly determine brokers' operation by collecting and directing scarce information in useful ways (Lindquist et al, 2012). Brokers make crossing the border possible through their networks and information, which in some cases is provided by members of the state apparatuses. Their business depends on several factors, including resources and power relations. It is this business within the migration industry that the paper looks into by delving into empirical evidence gathered from migrants who cross to Sudan via Metema, located at the northwest boundary of Ethiopia.

While the literature shows that many different actors, including the state at times, take on the brokerage role that enables the migration business to operate, in this paper I am using the term 'broker' to refer to those who charge fees to provide a wide range of services for migrants to facilitate their travel. Some of these may support legitimate services such as advice on visa applications, planning routes and booking travel; others may involve organising clandestine border crossings, informal accommodation, and so forth. Since the overall services of any broker may involve both legal and illegal activities, it is hard to draw the line between legal operators – say travel agents – and illegal ones – human smugglers. In this context, I am focused on those who are engaged in some element of illegal activity. Moreover, I use the term 'brokers' to refer to both human smugglers and human traffickers. Although there is a clear theoretical difference between the two categories, in practice in Metema it is almost impossible to make distinctions between the two, and migrants use the term 'broker' for both.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in this paper, the term 'broker' is used to refer to both traffickers and smugglers.

Here, brokers are those who take on the organising role in enabling migrants' journeys. They may in turn employ many different facilitators to deliver the services required – transport operators, accommodation providers, (bribed) border guards, and so forth. In the rest of this paper, the term 'facilitator' is used for those who undertake work for brokers in this way.

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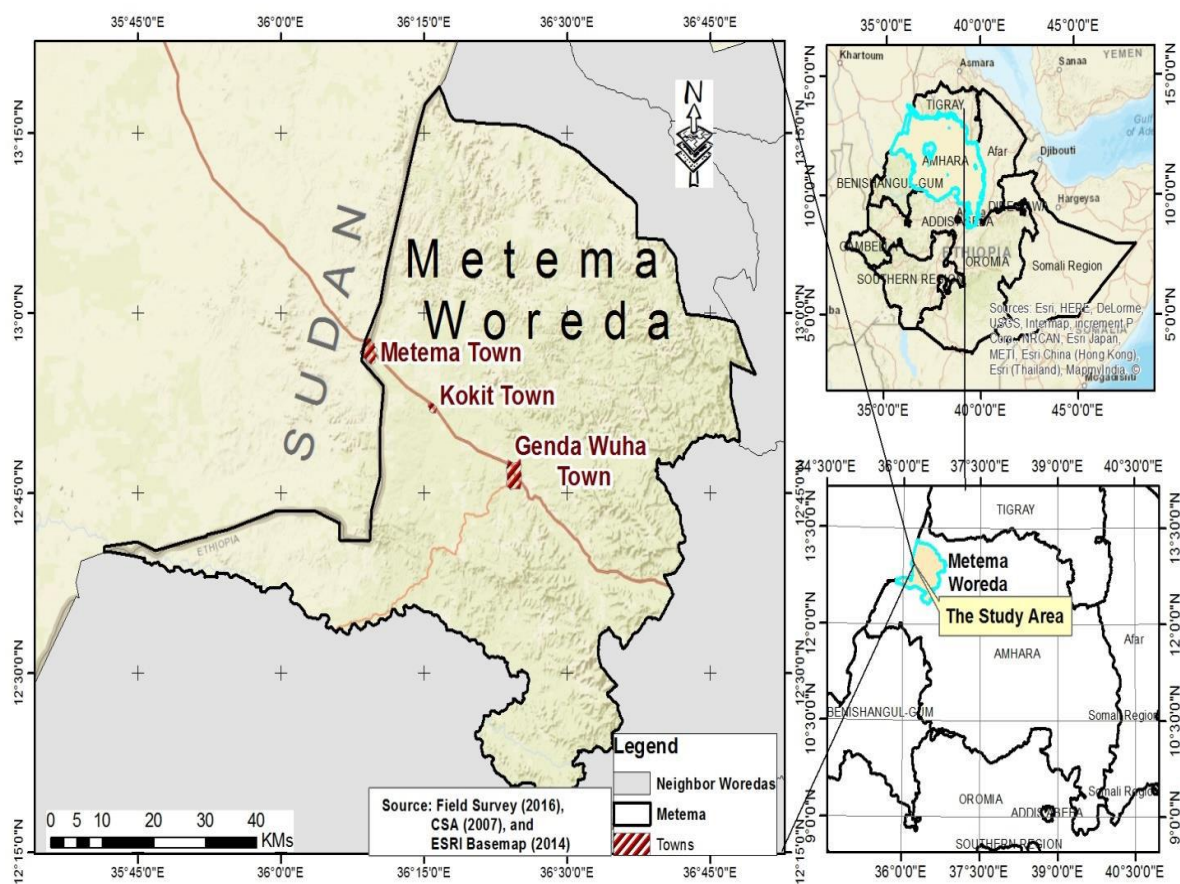
<sup>4</sup> Human trafficking entails crossing of international borders by means of threat, deceit, use of force, or any other forms of coercion. Meanwhile, smuggling of migrants involves helping people cross the border for mutual benefit.



# 3 Movement across Metema

Metema is one of the three major overland migration routes out of Ethiopia,<sup>5</sup> and the principal crossing point for different types of migrants wanting to reach Sudan.<sup>6</sup> Lying on the road between Addis Ababa (800 km to the southeast) and Khartoum (550 km to the northwest), Metema sits in the west of the Gondar administrative zone of Amhara National Regional State. Until 2015, Metema town used to be a *kebele*;<sup>7</sup> since then it has become a town administration with its own municipality.

Figure 1: Map of Metema town and Metema Woreda<sup>8</sup>



Source: Zeynenba (2017).

<sup>5</sup> The other routes include the eastern route through Djibouti and Somalia and the southern route through Moyale. The majority of migrants using these other routes are attempting to reach the Middle East and the Republic of South Africa, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> What is known as ‘the Metema route’ includes different towns and crossing points in Metema *woreda* and its surrounding *woredas*. Among these routes, Metema town has long been used as the main exit route for many migrants. In this paper, therefore, the author focuses on Metema town, otherwise known as Metema Yohannes.

<sup>7</sup> *Kebele* is the Amharic term for neighbourhood, the smallest administrative structure in Ethiopia after a *woreda* (district).

<sup>8</sup> *Woreda* is the Amharic term for district; a third-level government structure in Ethiopia that is divided into the smallest administrative unit, the *kebele* (neighbourhood).

With long-established historical ties with the corresponding Sudanese border town of Galabat, Metema has had economic, political, social and cultural significance throughout Ethiopia's history. The battle of Metema (9–10 March 1889) between Emperor Yohannes IV and the Mahadists made the area well known among the Ethiopian public as a historical landmark.<sup>9</sup> Metema also served historically as an outlet for the long-distance trade of the 19th century and continues to be used as an inland port for the export and import trade from Port Sudan.

Although the border is characterised by continuous conflict and tension,<sup>10</sup> the two border communities continue with their daily interaction and thus sustain a close relationship. In particular, economic relations based on trade and agriculture allow local residents to cross the border on a daily basis. In this cross-border interaction, contraband trade is a livelihood activity for many young people. Meanwhile, women, particularly migrants who came from other parts of the country, dominate the service sector in hotels and teashops. Other internal migrants, mainly men, also come to the town to work on large-scale agricultural plantations located in the *woreda*. As a result of the uninterrupted flow and movement of people from and to the town, the total population has fluctuated greatly. Notwithstanding this fact, according to *woreda* offices, in 2015–16, Metema town had a total population of 25,008 of whom 12,657 were male and 12,350 female.

There is also a widespread customary practice among farmers – known as *Mofer Zemet* – of crossing the border at Metema. These farmers cultivate 'unoccupied' land in the border areas of Sudan as well as in the Metema surroundings.<sup>11</sup> The 2013 land registration programme in Ethiopia left many with insufficient amounts of land and drove farmers from Amhara National Regional State to migrate to Metema and bordering areas of Sudan to practise *Mofer Zemet*. Having only small landholdings of less than a hectare, or the absence of land, coupled with environmental factors, have pushed farmers to seek land elsewhere. Because of a lack of money to rent land on either side of the border, farmers resort to *Mofer Zemet*, which enables them to gain access to land for free. However, the farmers engaging in this practice risk being evicted or having their crop destroyed by residents who have existing claims over the land. According to the Metema town administration and security affairs officer, the Ethiopian government allows *Mofer Zemet* so long as it is within Ethiopian territory. However, as a result of the land certification programme, there is no more open land accessible for *Mofer Zemet* on the Ethiopian side of the border, and this has forced people to farm on Sudanese land. The *Mofer Zemet* farmers have moved about 30 km into Sudanese territory in search of farmland. Every year, according to unofficial records, it is estimated that up to 1,000 Ethiopian farmers cultivate Sudanese land without legal permission. The numbers increased in 2015, when the Ethiopian government began to allow and encourage *Mofer Zemet* on 'open lands' within Ethiopian territory. A GIZ report of 2018 indicates that about 80,000 people from Amhara region cross the border every year to work on farmlands in Sudan (GIZ, 2018).

Another common type of border crossing is linked to seasonal labour work. Seasonal labourers,

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<sup>9</sup> The Mahadist movement was a religious and political movement, which took over the governance of Sudan in 1885. The movement stayed in power until the coming of the Anglo-Egyptian administration in 1898. It was known for establishing an Islamic State in Sudan and for its expansionist ideology. The battle of Metema was fought in an attempt to regain control of the frontier and expand territory by both sides. The battle culminated with the defeat of the Ethiopian army and the death of Emperor Yohannes IV.

<sup>10</sup> Continuous contentions and conflict have been evident throughout the history of this border area, intensifying under different regimes. Some of these have been between the two states for political reasons, over demarcation of the international border. Mainly, however, conflicts have taken place over control of resources such as agricultural land, pasture and livestock. Raiding of properties and farmland by local border residents has been common. These conflicts have, in some cases, involved security forces from both sides of the border.

<sup>11</sup> The term *Mofer Zemet* not only refers to the practice of farming but also to the people/farmers engaged in such activity. It is translated as 'Marching with plough', signifying the practice of travelling long distances with agricultural tools in search of arable land.

known as the *Saluge*, arrive in Metema Yohannes during the different farming seasons to work on the large-scale plantations and farmland on both the Ethiopian and Sudanese sides of the border. These are usually young men, whose numbers increase in July, when schools are closed and when the rain-fed agriculture begins. Many are students, mainly from the South Gondar and Gojjam areas, who come to Metema to earn money to cover school expenses and generate additional income for their households. Some request legal contract agreements (*toleb*) and use *Tasrih* to get to Sudan, while others cross the border irregularly.<sup>12</sup> In most cases, however, Sudanese employers contract Ethiopian workers informally and the workers thus cross to Sudan illegally.

From the other side of the border, Sudanese, mainly men, frequently visit Metema in search of entertainment and trade opportunities. To accommodate them as well as the *Saluge*, a 'red-light' district, Jingra – otherwise referred as *yeqeletew mender* (the rowdy neighbourhood) – has been established close to the border. Men who frequent Jingra are seen as tourists and boost the town's economy, especially in the service sector. 'Sex tourism' and hotel services have become common in the area, accounting for the bulk of income earned by many residents. This booming business of commercial sex work lures women from other parts of the country into the town. Most of the women engaged in this line of work are former Ethiopian migrants from Sudan who decided to stay in Metema. Considered as failed migrants,<sup>13</sup> these women chose to stay in Metema as a temporary measure and make some money, but found that it had become their permanent residence. Others have come from other parts of Ethiopia for different reasons but end up working as commercial sex workers. Such reasons include escaping marriage or seeking employment after being dismissed from higher education institutions.<sup>14</sup> There are also large numbers of commercial sex workers who only move into Metema from neighbouring towns during the peak farming season, usually following the *Saluge*.

Other movements across the border involve contraband traders as well as import–export traders. Women are active in petty cross-border trade of food items such as cereals, processed and semi-processed items and household consumables. The transportation of contraband goods across the border is, however, done by boys and men. Outside petty trade, men dominate other cross-border transactions, in both the formal and informal sector, including livestock and manufactured goods, firearms, electrical appliances, fertilisers, forest products, tea, coffee, honey, roots and spices, pulses, incense and gum, wax and dates, and edible oils, among other things. It is people locally known as the *sheqaba* who conduct contraband trade transactions across this border.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Tasrih* is a Sudanese temporary residence ID, which is processed by the Immigration office in Galabat.

<sup>13</sup> The term 'failed migrants' refers to those who have not achieved their goals upon their return. While some have failed to save money to bring home, others have been deported before paying back the debt they took on to pay brokers. As a result, in fear of social discrimination from family members and the community at large, these migrants prefer to stay in Metema and make a living.

<sup>14</sup> A considerable number of informants were university dropouts who were not willing to go back to their families. Because of an anticipated lack of acceptance from family members and the community in general, many are not willing to let their families know about their dismissal. Instead, during the time they are expected to be at university, they stay in Metema, then visit their families during the holidays.

<sup>15</sup> The term *sheqaba* refers to people engaged in different lines of brokerage. It also includes people involved in human trafficking and smuggling, by acting as intermediaries between brokers, migrants and other agents.

## 4 Onward migration through Sudan

In addition to these many forms of localised movement across the border, Metema is an important hub for international migration from Ethiopia to Sudan, with many people hoping to go onwards to Libya, across the Mediterranean and eventually on to Europe. It is one of the starting points for the 'western route' of irregular migration towards Europe or other destinations.

The number of Ethiopian migrants recorded to be using the western route has been significant, regardless of the danger and human rights violations experienced on the way (Carter & Rohwerder, 2016). While some stay on in Sudan, others consider it a transit country on routes to Europe or Israel. In 2011, ILO reported the number of Ethiopian migrants travelling to Libya through Sudan to be around 75,000–100,000 (Anteneh, 2011, p 48). In 2014, the number of migrants using the western route was reported to be between 18,000 and 37,000 (Frouws, 2014). Zeyneba (2017) puts this estimate at 14,400 to 32,400 migrants in 2015.

According to an assessment by IOM (2017), four main crossing points for irregular migrants have been identified in the district: Metema–Galabat, Delelo–Sennar, Lominat–Fogera and Tümet–Mendoka. Of these, the main exit routes for migrants have been identified as Metema town, Shinfa, Meqa and Kokit. Most migrants prefer to use Metema town because of its convenience, with access to the main road that runs from Addis Ababa to Khartoum. The direct bus from Addis Ababa to Khartoum, passing through Metema town, also makes this route easy and navigable.

Looking further into the demography of migrants taking this route, reports show that many of the migrants are young Ethiopian, Eritrean and Somali men hoping to reach Europe through Libya and Egypt (Frouws, 2014; Strachan, 2016). Other Ethiopians, mainly from Oromiya National Regional State, are attempting to reach Sudan. Some Eritreans and Somalis have first come to Ethiopia as refugees.<sup>16</sup>

According to Collyer (2015), many of the most vulnerable migrants, such as unaccompanied minors and women, use this route. Their exposure to risk, however, may be avoided or lessened through financial, psychological and emotional support from family networks and friends en route and in destination countries (Carter & Rohwerder, 2016).

Irrespective of the risks migrants face along these routes, which in most cases are anticipated and well prepared for, people continue to use them. Nonetheless, the migration pattern has shown dramatic changes at different levels in response to government actions to tackle irregular migration and to the political changes in the different countries of the region. These will be discussed below.

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<sup>16</sup> The town of Humera (located in the far north-western corner of Ethiopia, and administratively part of Tigray Region, close to the Sudanese town of Gedaref) is also used by some Eritrean refugees and Ethiopian migrants from the northern part of the country (Carter & Rohwerder, 2016).

# 5 Journey to Sudan

## 5.1. The process

There are three main ways by which migrants, excluding temporary labour migrants such as the *saluge*, leave for Sudan using the Metema route. They can obtain a one-month tourist visa from the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa and then, having entered the country, overstay their visa. A second option available is travelling through the desert to cross the border illegally with the assistance of brokers.<sup>17</sup> Used by smaller numbers and rarely acknowledged is the third option of getting a *Tasrih*, a temporary residence visa (ID) provided by the Sudanese government for limited reasons. Although the *Tasrih* is used to enter the country legally, the purpose of stay and duration can be falsified and extended, which makes the migrants irregular. Eventually, in all three cases, even if people enter Sudan through regular channels, all end up as irregular migrants in the country. This shows that migrants will opt to violate regulatory requirements to obtain entry to Sudan.

While use of the western route was common previously, large numbers of migrants are presently leaving the country 'legally' via temporary tourist visas. Processing a visa from the Sudanese embassy takes only five days and costs around 980 ETB (US\$36). Other costs include a passport fee (600 ETB – \$22) and transportation costs (1,400 ETB – \$52) when using a direct bus from Addis Ababa to Khartoum, or around 500 ETB (\$19) when using local buses. Assuming no delays on the road, the total cost ranges from \$111 to \$148 (3,000–4,000 ETB).

Local government officials estimate that, on a daily basis, 40 to 90 Ethiopian migrants enter Sudan using temporary tourist visas (Zeyneba, 2017). Of these migrants, the majority are women travelling for the purpose of domestic work. Ethiopian women in Sudan also engage in selling tea and coffee on the streets and sometimes in commercial sex work (Anteneh, 2011; Shewit, 2013; Zeyneba, 2017).

Another legal option for these migrants is to cross the border with a *Tasrih*, which costs less but requires networking with Sudanese government officials, employees, police officers and/or citizens. The *Tasrih* is issued to Ethiopians who seek to enter the country temporarily for court cases or family reunification. Pastoral border communities searching for livestock that have roamed to the other side of the border are also given *Tasrih*. These circumstances and opportunities are, however, exploited by migrants to get into Sudan, where the ID enables them to travel freely in the country and seek employment, albeit temporarily. The process of getting *Tasrih* may take between a day and up to a week and usually involves bribing Sudanese officials.

For those who lack any kind of documentation, illegal crossing points stretch through the desert around Metema and along the border with Sudan. There are two ways by which migrants make their way through the desert: either simply walking through it or using false documentation to pose as a Metema resident permitted to cross the secured border. According to the cross-border agreement, residents of the two border towns can cross during the day without any documentation required.

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<sup>17</sup> Here the term 'brokers' refers to both smugglers and traffickers of humans. Although there is a clear theoretical difference between the two categories, in Metema, overlaps make it almost impossible to make distinctions between the two. Thus, in this paper, the term broker is used, as it is by migrants, to refer to both traffickers and smugglers.

Thus, either by acquiring a Metema residence ID or by dressing like a resident, putting on the long robes known locally as *dreya*, migrants cross into Sudan.

## 5.2. Facilitation

In all these processes, although it may not be strictly necessary, migrants turn to brokers and other agents to facilitate their journey. As a result, networks of brokers are well established in the town and different routes and mechanisms are used to cross the border, which makes it difficult for the government bodies concerned to track and control the migrant flow. The route, cost and network used is different for each type of migrant. Ethiopian migrants whose destination is Sudan usually process visas from the Sudanese embassy themselves, using information provided by brokers. Although arrangements are made in advance, the direct service of brokers resumes after migrants secure their passport and visa. Brokers are then expected to assist migrants to reach and cross the border, depending on the arrangements made. In most cases, brokers assist migrants to get from their place of origin to their destination, since, in general, migrants lack knowledge of the route and are looking for guidance.

For migrants from cities such as Addis Ababa and Adama, arrangements are made with brokers in Metema. Among the services brokers provide are transportation to Sudan and a contact to get them jobs in different parts of Sudan. Because of the required brokerage fee, some migrants reportedly stay in Metema town for a period before departure to earn money and gain knowledge of the route to Sudan. By staying in Metema, they avoid the ‘full service’ of brokers and cross the border themselves after learning about the process with the help of acquaintances. They also avoid having to pay brokers to bring them to Metema. For such migrants, brokers require a fee that ranges from 5000 to 7000 ETB (\$185–259) to travel from Metema to Khartoum. In both processes, brokers tap into their networks to get migrants to their preferred destination.

When arrangements are made with brokers to travel from their place of origin, Ethiopian migrants have to pay a fee of up to \$800 to enter Sudan irregularly through Metema (Frouws, 2014; Majidi & Oucho, 2016). The fee is higher for Eritreans and Somalis intending to travel beyond Sudan to Libya, who pay from \$3,000 to \$7,000 (Majidi & Oucho, 2016; RMMS, 2017). The reason for the higher fees, according to stranded Eritrean refugees interviewed, is the belief that they have relatives abroad and thus are able to pay; the payment for these migrants is therefore calculated in US dollars. Social networks in destination countries sustain migration by providing information and pointing migrants to safer routes. For migrants, having such networks with a link to a broker guarantees relative safety and protection en route. Migrants abroad often provide others with the contact details of the brokers they used for their journey. The migration business for brokers is hence maintained by individuals referred to them by former migrants. Their testimony of safe arrival and success in the destination country is used as an advertisement to potential migrants. To sustain the network, brokers keep migrants who come with such recommendations safe until they arrive at their destination. Otherwise, their reputation and business risk ruin.

Besides nationality and the existence of social networks, another important factor in determining the fees charged by brokers is the season. The cost of migration increases significantly during ‘high season’ for migration, which runs from January to June, the period when migrants can expect to reach the Mediterranean and find better weather for a crossing in calmer waters.

Other payment arrangements are made whereby migrants pay brokers after reaching Sudan or Libya. Women’s salaries are often transferred directly to the brokers for an agreed period of time. Some are forced to continue working for the broker to pay off their fees. Migrants travelling to Europe are expected to make payment once they reach Libyan or Egyptian shores. This enables migrants to extort money from their families or relatives; relatives are warned that migrants will be

stranded and abused by brokers until payments are made. Because of such arrangements, in which money is collected well into the journey, many migrants from around Ethiopia flee without feeling the need to secure money for migration before they leave home. In an interview in Addis Ababa with families of stranded migrants in Libya, it was noted that such families were being forced by brokers to pay the fee because their relatives were being held en route and their journey halted. In some cases, migrants are held against their will, while in others migrants orchestrate a kidnapping to get their families to send money, according to an IOM official in Metema.

This 'travel now, pay later' arrangement has been given as a reason by migrants I interviewed for preferring the irregular channel, even though it is more expensive than legal channels. It is an option often chosen by young migrants, who do not have the money to finance their travel legally. Other reasons given as to why many migrants prefer not use the legal option to go to Sudan include their lack of knowledge of the regular route, as well as effective marketing of the irregular route by brokers. Leaving out the difficulty and risk involved, brokers publicise the irregular route as an easy option. On the other hand, the lack of effort from the government to make the 'legal' route accessible has also had an impact on migrants' decision to pursue the irregular route.

For all these routes, the network of brokers operates in an organised manner, stretching from migrants' place of origin to Metema and further to Sudan and Libya/Egypt (Faiz, 2013; Barasa & Fernandez, 2015; Majidi & Oucho, 2016, Zeyneba, 2017).

Further, facilitators such as bus drivers, hotel owners, border security guards, government officials and other agents are directly or indirectly involved in these networks. While bus, truck and car drivers make possible the transportation of migrants, hotel and private house owners provide accommodation. In previous times, it was mostly bus drivers and hotel owners who were engaged in this business. However, as the state control system was strengthened against human trafficking and smuggling, brokers turned to private cars, ambulances, trucks and tractors to move migrants to and across the border. Hotels are rarely used as a resting place by migrants these days. Inspections of hotels and pensions left migrants vulnerable, so brokers prefer to rent private houses to provide lodging.

Besides this chain of local brokers and facilitators, state structures and government officials are also used as facilitators of both regular and irregular migration to Sudan. Government officials from the police, border security and customs are involved in issuing *kebele* IDs for migrants, providing alerts on security checks and assisting with an easy pass through the border undetected. Migrants from Eritrea and Somaliland are provided with Ethiopian residence ID cards to help them navigate freely through the *woreda* and in Metema town. In 2018, according to Metema residents, the involvement of security forces in smuggling migrants was significant. Their direct involvement working with brokers was indicated in many of the interviews held, either by using government-owned cars to get migrants to the border or by turning a blind eye to those who cross illegally in return for payment.

Further, in the regular channel, the state plays a vital role in facilitating and benefiting from the migration industry. In the process of facilitating migrants' journey, eg by providing soft-skill training or approving work contracts, the state demands fees from the labour migrant, 'legal' broker (locally known as an agent), and employer. As will be shown below, the involvement of the state has been significant in regulating migration channels and thus shaping the migration industry.

## 6 Regulatory structures and state involvement

Changes in the patterns of migration between Ethiopia and Sudan over the years have reflected the transformation in state structures and the introduction of new laws and regulations, as will be shown below. During the militarist Derg regime (1974–91),<sup>18</sup> because of famine, civil war, political instability and repressive political rule (Faiz, 2013; Hailemichael, 2014; Grabska, 2016), a large number of people (mainly refugees) left the country through Metema. Some remained in Sudan but others moved further to Europe and the US (Asnake & Zerihun, 2015).<sup>19</sup> By 1990, 942,295 Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees were living in Sudan (UNDESA, 2017).

Later, after the downfall of the Derg, the repatriation programme for Ethiopian political refugees from Sudan to Metema and other nearby *woredas* bordering Sudan renewed the focus on the route as a gateway in and out of the country. According to Bariagaber (1997), political conflict and war with Eritrea led to the displacement of thousands, particularly Eritreans, who migrated to Sudan through Metema town as well as other border crossings. The large majority of people during this period were fleeing persecution and thus were regarded as refugees. Later, the economic boom in Sudan that followed the discovery of petroleum in the 1990s attracted economic migrants from Ethiopia.

With the fall of the Derg in 1991, the new Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government granted citizens the right to free movement within and out of the country, subject to individuals securing an entry visa to another country. As a result, tight restrictions on people's movement to border towns such as Metema were lifted and the number of migrants passing through the town grew. In particular, there was a marked increase after 2013, when the government banned overseas labour migration to the Middle East. Following the rise of abuse of Ethiopian migrant workers, which became a source of concern for the Ethiopian government, seeking overseas employment in the Middle East was temporarily banned in October 2013. Following said ban, a large number of female migrants crossed the border to Sudan with the aim of reaching the Middle East. Others made Sudan itself, Libya and Egypt their destination. For many young men, the Mediterranean route to Europe through Sudan and Libya continued to be popular.

As a result of the growing number of irregular economic migrants to and through Sudan, the Ethiopian government introduced different measures, with the aim of curbing human trafficking and smuggling. From revising anti-human trafficking proclamations to setting stringent border controls along major migration routes, the government stated its commitment to putting an end to irregular migration.

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<sup>18</sup> Also known as the Provisional Military Government, the Derg came to power in 1974 after the overthrow of the last monarch, Emperor Haile Selassie I, and ruled the country until 1991.

<sup>19</sup> During this time, migrants left for the US and Europe through resettlement schemes after registering under UNHCR, making their departure a legal process. The fact that such schemes are only available to registered political refugees from Ethiopia, and lack of access to them for most Ethiopian migrants, has become one of the reasons people are taking irregular channels as an option, regardless of the danger and risks involved.



In response to the scale of irregular migration, in 2015, the Ethiopian government established the National Anti-Trafficking and Smuggling Taskforce, headed by the Federal Attorney General (Anti-trafficking Proclamation No. 909/2015).<sup>20</sup> This taskforce replaced the previous national coordinating body, which was not backed by any legislative measure. The taskforce is supported by a secretariat and coordinates the work of relevant government and nongovernmental institutions in ending human trafficking and smuggling across the country. At the national level, the taskforce is made up of member ministries and other national government structures (see Annex 1). Similar taskforces have also been established at regional and local (*woreda*) levels.

Other initiatives taken by the government, such as legal and policy changes on migration,<sup>21</sup> have also had an impact on movements in and out of the country. As a migration policy response, Ethiopia ratified a number of international and national laws on migration and refugees. These include the Refugee Proclamation No 1110 (2019), Overseas Employment Proclamation (923/2016), Ethiopian Diaspora Policy (2013), and the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No 909 (2015).<sup>22</sup> These legal frameworks recognise international laws, treaties and conventions which Ethiopia has ratified or become a signatory to, such as the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems, United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes, United Nations Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children. Accordingly, the proclamations are an attempt to make these international commitments an integral part of the law of the country and thus provide a comprehensive legal framework in accordance with international standards. Further, to strengthen the mechanism for monitoring and regulating domestic and overseas employment services, the Employment Exchange Services Proclamation (Proclamation No. 632/2009) was revised and reissued as the Overseas Employment Proclamation (923/2016).

To reduce the growing number of irregular migrants leaving the country and provide greater protection to migrants, the Ethiopian government has also introduced several legal documents and regulations. To put into effect anti-human trafficking laws incorporated under the Criminal Code articles 596, 597, 635, 636, different legal bodies have been established, such as the 11th Criminal Bench within the Federal High Court (2007), the Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section in the Organized Crime Investigation Unit of the Federal Police (2009) and the Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force (2011). However, because human trafficking has continued unabated, the government has also taken additional measures. In 2015, a proclamation was adopted which clearly defined human trafficking and smuggling and the penal codes for such crimes. The Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No 909/2015 fines individuals up to 500,000 ETB and imposes between 15 years and life imprisonment for those convicted of human trafficking. Under this proclamation, according to a report of the Anti-Trafficking Council, in 2015, at a national level, 50 brokers were prosecuted and sentenced to between three and 17 years in jail. At present, the proclamation is under revision and aims to introduce a preventative strategy to tackle human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, and provide appropriate protection, support and rehabilitation to victims. Among the preventative measures are awareness creation programmes, creating job opportunities in the country and promoting legal channels for access to overseas employment.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/101059/126622/F-402220324/ETH101059.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> The adoption of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No 909/2015, the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons drafted in 2014, the revision of the Overseas Employment Proclamation (923/2016), and other initiatives have influenced the migration process to some degree.

<sup>22</sup> A proclamation is similar to a declaration under Ethiopian law, and needs to be reviewed and approved by the House of Peoples Representatives, the highest legislative body in the country. To come into effect, a proclamation then needs directives and regulations stating the detailed strategies and ways to enforce the law stated in the proclamation.

As government control has intensified, migrants and brokers have sought other mechanisms by which to cross the border, which many argue have left migrants vulnerable. Intense and strict border controls along the main Addis Ababa–Khartoum road that passes through Metema have resulted in the emergence of other migration routes through the desert. This in turn has led to inflation in the cost of migration. Broker services that used to cost migrants 5000 to 7000 ETB (\$185–259) five years ago have now risen to 20,000 ETB (\$741). Regardless of the fact that the cost of the ‘legal’ route for those able to facilitate their own journeys has not been affected by these price changes, many still prefer to take what is known as the desert route, putting themselves at risk of dehydration, hunger, exhaustion, robbery, poaching (by other brokers) and being sold from one broker to another. On the other hand, in some cases these risks also encourage the ‘protection’ of migrants. Since they are seen as ‘merchandise’, many brokers nowadays take more care in getting migrants safely to the other side of the border. To protect their merchandise and get a good payment for it, brokers provide relatively safe routes and protection from other brokers who might forcibly take migrants en route. However, this depends on the investment migrants are willing to put into their journey and the potential profit brokers anticipate from assisting them. In this process, brokers’ protection of migrants comes to an end when the latter reach the end of the broker chain in Libya. The final payment is made by family members and one way for brokers to get the payment they require is by detaining, torturing and threatening the migrants. In 2019, the payoff demanded by brokers to release their migrants was up to \$120,000 per individual. Families who cannot afford to pay such an amount of money are sent videos, pictures and audio of migrants being beaten and shot at. This is believed to incentivise families to make the payment quickly. Refugees who come from refugee camps in the north of Ethiopia are also referred as merchandise and goods. This treatment also extends to Ethiopian and Somali migrants using the Sudanese border as a transit point for travel to Europe through Libya and Egypt. However, the connotation of merchandise does not apply to migrants whose final destination is Sudan.

In other cases residents have recently claimed that they have observed some government officials and members of the military acting as brokers and smuggling migrants across the border using government vehicles. However, the extent of the government’s involvement cannot be verified and needs future scrutiny.

To many, it is also such involvement that has led to the failure of the different migration control infrastructures and regulations introduced by the government. The widespread allegation made by residents and law enforcement bodies in Metema that brokers are given protection by some government officials is also cited as a reason for the low rate of prosecution of human traffickers and smugglers.

According to Triulzi (2013), migrants know from the outset that the journey through Sudan and Libya is long and difficult. Thus, they prepare themselves for the risks anticipated en route and at the destination. Migrants prepare themselves mentally to accept and cope with the difficulties they face, creating friends among other migrants for support, and there have even been reports of women taking contraceptives in anticipation of potentially being raped or sexually assaulted. These are just a few examples of the many ways that migrants prepare themselves for the anticipated risks. Sexual violence, mainly by brokers, is common and expected among female migrants.

Although many complete their journey into Sudan, others return to Ethiopia, unable to continue travelling because of thirst, hunger, sexual abuse or language barriers, among other factors. Some also are caught by security forces on either side of the border. Metema town has thus become a place where stranded and detained migrants in both Ethiopia and Sudan are brought.

This and the existence of active irregular migration in the border area has attracted the involvement

of international and local humanitarian organisations, which provide training, information and assistance to migrants at risk.

## 6.1 Assistance to return

An emergency migration response centre was set up in 2016 by the IOM to assist Ethiopian migrants and deportees in Metema town. But IOM only provides this service to migrants who are willing to go back home and it is restricted to assisting return. Those who refuse to return are kept in the police station for a while and then are let go. The Metema community also provides financial and emotional support to victims of irregular migration and stranded migrants who come back from Sudan. IOM and, since 2018, a local NGO called TimretLehiwot Ethiopia, provide stranded migrants with temporary shelter and meals.

Under the Better Migration Management project, with funding from the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), TimretLehiwot Ethiopia has taken over the implementation of drop-in centres focusing on vulnerable migrants, particularly unaccompanied minors. Following this, a drop-in centre was opened in 2018 in Gendewuha town, 38 km east of Metema, to provide immediate assistance and support with voluntary return and reintegration of migrants. Temporary shelter, counselling and medical care is made available in these centres.

Both IOM and TimretLehiwot provide transportation facilities to migrants going back to their hometowns. Such assisted return programmes are viewed by some migrants as a safe and 'free' alternative if their attempt to cross the border fails. Brokers also target these offices in search of potential migrants and clients.

While the initiative taken by both organisations has been to provide assistance to stranded migrants, brokers utilise it as an opportunity to provide their services to those they refer to as 'failed migrants'. Upon their return to their hometown, migrants are accompanied by the police as far as the capital city of Addis Ababa or other big towns such as Gondar. The rest of the journey is expected to be made by the migrants themselves. However, there are reports of brokers intercepting such journeys and making clients out of these migrants.

## 6.2 Awareness campaigns

The *woreda* department of Labour and Social Affairs, in collaboration with IOM, police, immigration and the customs office in Metema, is also working to stop irregular migration and trafficking across the border. Awareness-creation and sensitisation programmes are being launched to educate people on the risks facing migrants, and thus to dissuade them from getting involved, directly or indirectly, in the trafficking of migrants. They are also using local community structures, such as the development army,<sup>23</sup> to expose brokers. The community is, however, reluctant to get involved in these initiatives for two principal reasons: first, the benefit some get from the migration industry; and, second, the fear of retaliation from brokers. The absence of strong legal action against brokers discourages community members from reporting them to legal bodies. The current political instability in the area since 2015 has further put a halt to the awareness-raising campaigns and other initiatives taken by the government.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Established by the Ethiopian government in 2011, the development army is a mass-mobilisation community structure in the countryside, mainly focusing on educating and organising women in various activities. Women organise themselves into groups of one to five or one to 30, including all households in the community.

<sup>24</sup> The country has been enduring political instability since 2015, when opposition to the ruling government rose throughout the country. There have been consecutive states of emergency, particularly in 2016 and 2017, following the

### 6.3 Support for legal migration

To support legal migrants to Sudan, in 2014 the Ethiopian government established associations, collectively known as *Shanta Maheber*, of individuals who were previously *sheqaba* (contraband smugglers). The aim was to bring order and peace to the town by bringing people operating illegally, such as the *sheqaba*, into a legal process. The associations receive migrants at the bus station in Metema, identifying them after asking the purpose of the traveller's visit. They then take them to a temporary shelter near the border and to the immigration office. They also facilitate the process at the immigration office on behalf of the migrants. They then help them change currency and take them to the bus coming from or going to Sudan. If need be, they take them to a hotel room for the night. Migrants are required to pay for these services. There is, however, no supervision of these associations by the government.

The government claims that the *Shanta Maheber* is keeping migrants safe and away from brokers, who are known for their deceit and for luring migrants into irregular channels. However, when closely observed, the 'poaching' of migrants by both brokers and these 'associations' – which claim to provide services of legal agency – is common in Metema. Some association members have been accused of being brokers and of taking advantage of the interactions they have with people coming into the town at the bus station. The *Shanta Maheber* also often overcharges travellers or asks for the same payment twice. The payments required by the association include fees for assisting with luggage (300–400 ETB [\$11–15] per item) and for making a copy of their passport (\$2 per page) to process their exit visa at the immigration office.<sup>25</sup>

The associations further derive income by exchanging currency for migrants. Although, by law, the only place where foreign currency can be exchanged is a legally registered bank, the associations ignore this rule, setting the exchange rates themselves. According to residents, members of the associations have become wealthy from the money they get from migrants. Indeed, residents claim, the local youth see working for an association as one of the major job opportunities in the town.

The associations rely upon the flow of migrants crossing the border into Sudan and coming back to Ethiopia throughout the year. In 2017, 77 to 120 legal migrants were believed to have crossed the border per day. Irregular migrants using the desert route also do so in large numbers, although exact statistics are unavailable. Since 2018, however, given the economic turmoil and inflation in Sudan, the number of legal migrants crossing the border into the country has drastically decreased. In turn, the number of Ethiopian returnees from Sudan has increased since April 2018.

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violent nature of the opposition in some areas. In April 2018, the country ended up with a new administration, but under the same ruling party.

<sup>25</sup> According to the tariffs set by the local government, they can only ask for \$3–5 (80–150 ETB) for luggage and barrels. Though not allowed by law, migrants are expected to pay twice when unloading and reloading on the bus at Immigration and Customs. for the cost of a single copy of a passport is 1 ETB (\$0.03).

## 7 Recent changes in numbers

With the recent peace deal in July 2018 and following the reopening of the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, together with the economic crisis in Sudan, large flows of Eritrean refugees have been observed crossing the border back to Ethiopia. The truce between the two countries has affected the economy of Metema town at different levels. According to brokers, they have lost a lucrative business and, as they call it a “good merchandise”.

‘Selling’ migrants from one broker to another is also considered profitable. A single migrant can bring up to 20,000 ETB (\$740) when sold to brokers on the Sudanese side. As a result, either on the road or from safe houses, poaching of migrants has now become more visible among brokers and intermediaries. Brokers are forced to protect themselves and migrants from other brokers and security forces by carrying guns and heavy arms, or by bribing the *Sheqaba*. *Sheqaba*, in this case, are young Metema residents who act as intermediaries, either looking out for migrants on the move in order to blackmail brokers or poach migrants, or assisting directly in the crossing by taking commissions from brokers. Their role sometimes extends to acting as informants about security conditions. The *Sheqaba* may be self-employed or integrated into the already established broker networks. Residents of the town also benefit from the migration industry in which migrants are considered as merchandise.

In addition to improved Ethiopian–Eritrean diplomacy, the state of relations between Sudan and Ethiopia at different times has also affected and continues to affect the migration industry and migratory route through Metema town. During the administration of the socialist Derg, the longstanding historical relationship between Ethiopia and Sudan was characterised by rivalry and animosity. Ideological differences with the Derg and support for guerrilla fighters on both sides of the border affected the relations between the two countries and, as a result, restricted movement and interaction across the border (Dooop, 2013; Regassa, 2007; Young, 2003). Regardless of this situation, irregular migration was common among Ethiopians and Eritreans, who sought refuge in Sudan. The Sudanese government provided support and opened its borders to these refugees. With the coming to power of the EPRDF, and with the support of the Sudanese government, relations were once again restored in 1998, forming a strong economic and political alliance (Assal, 2007). As a sign of ‘friendship’ between the two countries, free movement across the border was allowed, extending a few kilometres into both countries. Access to visas was eased and people living on both sides of the border were considered to be good neighbours with a close cultural identity.

As Assal noted, “since 1999, the Sudanese government eased restrictions on Ethiopians in Sudan and made it easy for Ethiopians to enter the country” (2007, p 12). The newly arrived migrants were able to enjoy the loose border controls and freedom of movement within Sudan. Nonetheless, to avoid detention and deportation, irregular Ethiopian migrants paid bribes to security forces en route and in Khartoum. Following the rise of economic migration, the Sudanese public perception of all Ethiopian migrants as ‘illegal’ also put pressure on migrants, both regular and irregular, to keep a low profile and avoid confrontation with the security forces.

While the Ethiopian government is now implementing strong border controls to put an end to human trafficking, the lack of or at best loose controls on the other side of the border have made it difficult to stop irregular movement. This has also opened opportunities for brokers and organ traffickers in Sudan. In fact, claims of ‘selling’ migrants’ organs are common both along and on the

other side of the border. During the fieldwork, organ trafficking was considered to be a new phenomenon; police have reported dead bodies stitched up and missing vital organs. There is, however, no substantive evidence showing when and where such activities are developing.

Recent talks on cross-border coordination mechanisms and border management between the two countries in relation to seasonal migrants might result in a new migration trend in Metema *woreda*. Since 2018 there have been talks between the two countries to establish regulated recruitment agencies and information centres along the border. However, the irregular and seasonal nature of the movement makes it difficult for government bodies to regulate cross-border movements, even under these systems.

In addition to state relations, the migration business has also evolved in the wake of political changes in Ethiopia and Sudan. With the coming to power of Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia, the peace deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea and economic turmoil in Sudan, migration via the Metema route has declined. The change in the Ethiopian political administration has sparked hope among potential migrants for economic and political change in the country, the earlier lack of such change being a factor in many people's decision to leave the country. Meanwhile, political crisis in Sudan in the same year affected the economy, which migrants then found to be less attractive. As a result, few made the journey to Sudan in 2018 and 2019. Following these changes, however, the focus of both governments on reducing human trafficking and smuggling has loosened, with human smuggling being openly practised and reviving once again.

## 8 Conclusion

The migration industry greases the engines of international migration by providing and articulating the expertise and infrastructural resources needed for cross-border movement (Ayalew, 2018). In this age of international migration, which affects all countries directly or indirectly, scholars have investigated different parts of the industry when explaining migration from and to different parts of the globe.

In general, today, with the increasing intensity of migration flows, particularly from Africa, Latin America and Asia, both the regular and the 'irregular' movement of people is intensively mediated. The systematically interlinked technologies, institutions and actors that facilitate and condition mobility need to be constantly explored in terms of their relational components and their dynamics over space and time.

By briefly showing the engines of migration and the contexts defining the migration industry at border crossing points such as Metema town, this article has focused on empirical developments in migration patterns along the Ethiopia–Sudan border. It was argued that the migration industry is influenced by broader social and political considerations besides the macro economy. Regardless of states' efforts to tackle irregular migration involving migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, the migration industry is still a vivid business and a reality along the Metema route. Thus it continues to affect the safety of individual migrants, who face higher risks when using the irregular route.

Much of the migration industry scholarship refers to the smuggling phenomenon as a form of commerce, business, industry or entrepreneurship. By and large, a common understanding that underlies migration is the framework of viewing it as an economic activity, made up of dealings at different levels, and directions among different actors, including the state and local and international humanitarian organisations.

The case of Metema shows that networks, including brokers and some state officials, move between formality and informality depending on the context. Brokers exploit the formal channel to gain access to visas and residence IDs for migrants. State officials are also alleged to be involved in the broker network, facilitating the irregular channel. Migration trends also take on forms not anticipated by government actions.

As migration increases, both in scale and scope, better transportation and communication facilities and social networks at destination sites make movement across the border relatively easy and accessible for some people but not, however, for all. It has become clear from the findings that strict regulatory mechanisms, without the presence of or access to favourable regular channels, are pushing migrants into the hands of brokers and thus the irregular channel. To deal with this challenge, states need to promote legal channels for migration. In such a way, states can become part of the industry of regular and safe migration and benefit from it while providing protection for their citizens. The endorsement of the free movement protocol by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) state members in February 2020 is a step forward. However, labour regulations need to be in force to provide protection to migrants, with strict prosecution of human smugglers and traffickers.

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# Annex 1: Members of the Anti-human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force

Government Agencies	NGOs and International Organizations	Faith-based Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>• Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</li> <li>• Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</li> <li>• Ministry of Youth and Sport</li> <li>• Government Communication Affairs Office</li> <li>• Ethiopian News Agency</li> <li>• Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency</li> <li>• Ethiopian Press Agency</li> <li>• National Intelligence and Security Service</li> <li>• Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs</li> <li>• Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency</li> <li>• Federal Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency</li> <li>• Federal Police Commission</li> <li>• Ministry of Culture and Tourism</li> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Ministry of Health</li> <li>• The National Disaster Risk Management Commission</li> <li>• Ministry of Federal and Pastoralist Development Affairs</li> <li>• Office of the Attorney General</li> <li>• House of Peoples' Representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations (more than 360 member NGOs)</li> <li>• Ethiopian Employer Federation</li> <li>• Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions</li> <li>• Ethiopian Women Federation</li> <li>• Ethiopian Youth Federation</li> <li>• ILO</li> <li>• IOM</li> <li>• UNICEF</li> <li>• UNDOC</li> <li>• UNHCR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethiopian Orthodox Church</li> <li>• Ethiopian Catholic Church</li> <li>• Ethiopian Adventist Church</li> <li>• Ethiopian Inter-Religious Council</li> <li>• Mekaneyesus Evangelical Church</li> <li>• Kale Keywet Evangelical Church</li> </ul>