

# **The Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration in Eastern Tigray**

**Consultant Institution: Adigrat University**

**P.O. Box: 50**

**Website: [www.adu.edu.et](http://www.adu.edu.et)**

**Adigrat, Tigray, Ethiopia**

**Team of Researchers**

**Abreha Gebrearegawi (MA)**

**Shshay Yhdego (MA)**

**Gebregwergs Teklay (MA)**

**Assefa Tesfay (Assistant Professor)**

**Muuz Abrha (Assistant Professor)**

**Gebre Kirstos Tewelde (MA)**

**Client: CISP ETHIOPIA**

**Tigray National Regional State Branch**

**Adigrat, Tigray, Ethiopia  
ADIGRAT UNIVERSITY  
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## Abstract

Nowadays, irregular migration has become a universal social problem affecting all. No part of the world is invincible or free of the predicaments of irregular migration; be it in the developed or developing countries, irregular migration is one of the most pressing agenda of the international community. A more striking, however, is the steadily raise of involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. Thousands of minors have joined the risky migration process and remain part and parcel of the migration crisis. This research project basically aims to explore and provide an overview of the involvement of unaccompanied minor children in irregular migration in Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia. The research presented a brief survey of the degree of involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration, causes and risks of the migration, coping mechanisms employed by unaccompanied minors in the migration process and finally the interventions made by the government to halt the problem. It has employed a mixed research approach, both quantitative and qualitative. Four districts were purposively selected by the agency and eight kabeles (villages), two from each district were purposively selected. The primary data were basically collected in the field thoroughly questionnaire, interview, FGD, and document analysis. To strengthen the primary collected data, the research has utilized different official reports, documents and studies of governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Then, the collected data was analyzed using thematic data analysis technique. Consequently, the findings show that the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration is high. Although the data was collected in the most migration affected kebeles, the prevalence of migration is much more pervasive and the degree is higher. Out of the total respondents about 47.69 % unaccompanied minors have involved in irregular migration and out of the total parents involved in the study about 76.74% them revealed that they have migrant children most of them below 18 year. This indicates that migration is a serious problem but compared to adults, it is more sever and exaggerated in youth aged greater than 17 years old. The structural factors that force unaccompanied minors involve in irregular migration are mainly; poverty and poor living conditions, unemployment, lack of access to land, and lack of educational schools. While the pull factors that attract them in abroad include ample job opportunity, high paying wage and salaries. Furthermore, the findings also show, in addition to the structural causes, there are also significant trigger factors that exacerbate or full the flow of unaccompanied minors. These include, direct and indirect family pressure, peer pressure, smugglers and traffickers, brokers, lack of good governance/ bureaucratic administration and low level of societal awareness pertaining to the peril of irregular migration. The defenseless children being physically unable to face the risks/challenges of irregular migration process remained vulnerable to different risks and hazardous conditions emanated from the atrocious and long journey of crossing deserts, jungles and oceans. In the journey unaccompanied minors loss their live from thirty and hunger. In addition unaccompanied minors face detention, beating, financial and labor exploitation, abuse and all forms of violence both along the hazardous journey and in the host states. Therefore, the research recommends the government and other stake holders devise a viable policy and strategy that ensure that citizens in general and women and children in particular emancipate themselves from abject poverty, have better job and economic conditions, have descent life and focus on their education only. Moreover, stake holders, need to aggressively work on uprooting the root causes of migration as it enables to ensure the wellbeing of youth and unaccompanied minors, reduce and prevent the problem at home.

**Keywords:** *irregular migration, trafficking, unaccompanied minors, push factors, pull factors.*

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and Rational

Migration is the movement of a person or group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It encompasses any kind of movement of people as migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification. Researches show that orderly movement has been largely the norm and has contributed to growth in economies, increased human development, the capacity to protect large numbers of people facing persecution, and the ability of hundreds of millions of people to forge meaningful lives abroad (Gebrehiwot & Fekadu, 2012; McAuliffe and Koser, 2017). Irregular migration has in recent decades become a significant public policy issue and the focus of considerable human, financial, diplomatic, physical/capital, technological, operational and other resources (McAuliffe and Koser, 2017).

In fact, determining the flows of irregular migrants is inherently difficult. Hence, it is common to see governments and other stake holders give wild assumptions and estimates in regard to irregular migration flows. Nevertheless, sound attempts to quantify irregular movements can provide clear benefits to national governments, regional and local governments, international organizations, service providers, employers and others (Kraler and Reichel, 2011). If such actors can better understand the number of people engaging in irregular migration, they will be better able to develop responses and mitigation strategies able to manage the many potentially conflicting interests. These different interests may range from those of governments focused on border management, civil society actors working on safeguarding migrants from exploitation and other forms of vulnerability, and service providers seeking to support irregular migrants in transit or destination countries (*Ibid*).

But what do we mean when we say irregular migration and how do people become irregular migrants? What does the trend look like internationally, regionally and locally? People use different systems and follow diversified routes to get into other countries. For the purpose of this study, the term 'irregular migration' is mainly limited to the migration processes involved in travelling to and entering a country irregularly. We are, therefore, interested in intentional

migration embarked upon to gain irregular entry into a country, regardless of whether this has been unassisted, with the help of a smuggler or has been as a result of human trafficking.

The predicament of illegal migration is intensified in scope and weightiness by the mounting involvement of organized crime groups who get billions of dollars at the expense of millions of victims of illegal migration (Milki, 2014). As Narli (2007) discussed illegal human movement is a prevalent challenge countries blow into with increasing rate. Though illegal migration has different forms like human smuggling and trafficking, most of them have interconnected nature. The smuggled and trafficked people, too, work illegitimately in the destination and sometimes in the transit country. The presence of large scale human migration in illegal routes makes the international community, policy makers, government and different non-governmental organizations to be concerned of international migration and its prospect.

Several studies indicate the difficulty of getting accurate data on the extent of illegal migration since it is a clandestine activity but the number of irregular migrants is assumed to be large in the world in general and in the Ethiopian context in particular (Regt, 2007; Selamawit, 2013). According the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2016) international migration report (IMR), the estimated number of international migrants has increased dramatically over the past 55 years, from estimates of around 77 million in 1960 to around 244 million in 2015 (McAuliffe and Mence, 2017). The most recent data by the International Migration Report (IMR), also indicates that the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow over the past seventeen years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 248 million in 2015 (UNDESAIMR, 2017). This is to mean in the last seven years from 2010-2017 the number of international migrants in the world steadily raised to 258 million getting additional 38 million migrants in seven consecutive years: on average about 5.4 million per year (Ibid).

From the complicated nature of irregular migration currently, almost every country is both a place of origin; destination and even some are still serving as transit points or all at once for migrants (Valtonen, 2008). Globally, socio-political, economic and ecological factors are regarded the main forces driving migrants. Economic disparities between developing and developed economies encourage the movement of skilled labor from the former to the latter. Rising communal violence and political conflicts often because of ethnic or religious intolerance, power competition and

succession has also significantly increased the level of irregular migration (McAuliffe and Mence, 2017).

In the African case, irregular migration in and out of the Sub-Saharan Africa is diverse and significant in volume. Migration within the region is traditionally dynamic and highly reactive to political and environmental factors, while emigration from the region is extensive and growing. In contrast to the internal movements, migration out of the East and Horn of Africa tends to be driven by longer-term structural factors such as poverty, lack of opportunities or long-term insecurity or oppression. Most of the countries in the East and Horn of Africa region are, at least to some extent, source, transit and destination countries of irregular as well as forced and regular migrants. Migration flows within the East and Horn of Africa region as well as from the region can best be described as mixed migration flows. Most migrants make the decision to leave their home country based on a mixture of different factors, which makes the categorization of migrants challenging (Ibid).

Regarding to unaccompanied minors and children, the Australian Irregular Migration Research Program (AIMRP) report (2014) since 2006, approximately 113,000 asylum claims have been lodged by unaccompanied or separated children worldwide. Another most recent data shows that the number of unaccompanied child refugees globally has increased five-fold since 2010. According to new figures by UNHCR (2015), the UNHCR counted more than 300,000 unaccompanied and separated children worldwide in 2015 and 2016 - up from 66,000 in 2010 and 2011. Of the 300,000, some 100,000 were caught trying to cross the border from Mexico to the US. Overall, 200,000 applied for asylum in around 80 countries, including 170,000 lone child refugees who applied for asylum in Europe. Although official figures on the phenomenon are lacking, it is clear that children arriving in the European Union (EU) are often accompanied by persons other than their parents or guardians. Such children are usually referred to as 'separated' children. Their identification and registration bring additional challenges, and their protection needs are often neglected. On arrival, these children are often 'accompanied', but the accompanying adult(s) may not necessarily be able, or suitable, to assume responsibility for their care. These children are also at risk of exploitation and abuse, or may already be victims. Their realities and special needs require additional attention. The lack of data and guidance on separated children poses a serious challenge. The main countries of origin of unaccompanied minors were

South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the report indicated Kenya, Sweden, Germany, Malaysia, UK, and Norway have the highest number of unaccompanied minors' claims. Available information indicates that more than 7,100 unaccompanied or separated children were recognized in 2013 as refugees or granted a complementary form of protection in 44 countries.

In the Ethiopian context, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (2011), Ethiopia – with a population of 90, 873, 739 inhabitants is one of the major exporters of labor, particularly youth and children, to the Middle East and Europe. Studies show about three-quarters of the general population of Ethiopia consists of women and children that are exposed to widespread poverty and experience serious challenges that affect their survival and development as a result of socio-economic, political and cultural factors (Kebede, 2002). Globally there were 88,149 Ethiopian refugees registered in June 2015 (UNHCR, 2016e). Main countries of destination are others in the region, mainly KSA, Europe, Kenya, Sudan and Yemen though the number of Ethiopians seeking asylum in Europe or North America is limited (UNHCR, 2015). Coming to Eastern Tigray, a study conducted by (Gebrehiwot & Fekadu, 2012) revealed the high degree of irregular migration and the importance of migration in improving the livelihoods and assets of different households. Of course migration has advantage for both country of origin and country of destination, but when it is held illegally as Faiz (2013) observed it could be a source of enormous problems like environmental devastation, health problems, brain-drain, political and social instability.

However, since majority of irregular migrants who enter to and work clandestinely, in the host countries, the involvement of unaccompanied children is accurately unknown though expected to be considerable. According to Shshay (2015) unaccompanied children have always travelled alone across borders for good or bad reasons. They have fled war, turmoil and persecution at home; they have left behind destitution, hopelessness, unemployment, in search of opportunities; they have experienced violent death of parents. Thus, forced by different factors unaccompanied minors have been part of the international forced migration though little is thought or heard about the extent of involvement, the determinant factors influencing them to leave their country and the associated risks and conditions faced in the journey process.

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<sup>1</sup> Little is known about the involvement of unaccompanied children in Ethiopia.

Generally, large number of researches has done on migration in Tigray and Eastern Tigray but no research is done on the issue under investigation. So, although unaccompanied children in Ethiopia (particularly Eastern Tigray Zone) are expected exposed to irregular migration and share the associated risks as any of minors in the world no data can be found to cite. Therefore, this research is meant to fill the gap on the involvement of unaccompanied children in irregular migration in Eastern Tigray Zone).

## **1.2. Objective of the Study**

### **1.2.1. General Objective**

The overall objective of this study is to examine the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Tigray.

### **1.2.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study includes;

- ❖ To assess the extent of involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration in Eastern Zone Tigray.
- ❖ To examine the causes that motivate unaccompanied minor leave their homeland and involve in irregular migration.
- ❖ To explore the challenges and risks that unaccompanied minors face during the irregular migration process.
- ❖ To identify the coping mechanisms that unaccompanied minors employ to escape from the associated risks of irregular migration.
- ❖ To examine the government devised intervention mechanisms to halt unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration in Eastern Zone Tigray.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

- ✚ What is the extent of unaccompanied minors' involvement in irregular migration in Eastern Zone Tigray?
- ✚ What are the causes that motivate unaccompanied minors leave their homeland and involve in irregular migration?
- ✚ What are the challenges and risks that unaccompanied minors face during the irregular migration process?

- ✚ What kind of coping mechanisms employ the unaccompanied minors to escape from the associated risks of irregular migration?
- ✚ What are the government devised intervention mechanisms to halt unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration in Eastern Zone Tigray?

## **1.4. Research Methodology/Approach**

### **1.4.1. Research Design**

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Tigray Zone. Investigating the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Tigray Zone, requires a mixed-research approach though it provided a due attention for exploratory part (what and how is going on) and explanatory (why it is happening) approaches. Therefore, to gather relevant data and come up with sound findings, the study employed mixed approach (both quantitative and qualitative). This is basically relevant to reduce the limitation of employing single approach. Pertinent to the design, the study used phenomenology as one approach of qualitative research inquiry through which the phenomenon under investigation is best thoroughly understood and narrated. Besides a survey design was employed for the quantitative approach part.

### **1.4.2. Data type and source**

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. The Primary data was gathered through field work interaction with people living in the selected *Woredas/Tabyas* of Eastern Zone. Thus, the primary data was collected mainly from the local people such as potential unaccompanied minor migrant, returnee unaccompanied minors, parents of migrants, youths and elders in the community. In addition to this, there were participants representing administration offices (*Tabyas*, *woreda* and *zone*), justice sector officials, police and militia who are familiar with irregular migration related issues. While the secondary sources are gathered from official documents, previous studies, policy documents, declarations, government and non-governmental reports via extensive and careful analysis. Even trafficking and smuggling related court cases were taken as secondary sources of the study. Finally the collected data was analyzed, synthesized, triangulated and presented depending on the type/nature of data and its relevance to the study.

### **1.4.3. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

Scientifically, the size of sample should neither be excessively large nor too small, but it should be optimum. An optimum sample is one which fulfills the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, flexibility and should be determined through the principle of data saturation point. The parameters are research interest, heterogeneity/homogeneity, costs and budgetary constraint must invariably be taken into consideration when we decide the sample size (Kohtari, 2004). For the qualitative aspect, the study employed purposive and snowball sampling technique (both are non-probability sampling techniques) which involves selecting a sample of small number of units from a larger population with the good judgment of the researchers. Thus, the exploratory part of the study was conducted purposefully in all selected 4 *Woredas* of Eastern Zone Tigray (purposefully taking two *Tabya* from each *Woreda*) with the intention of comparing and contrasting the degree of severity and vulnerability of unaccompanied minor irregular migrants in the whole study area. Therefore, *Erob, Gulomekada, Saesie Tsaeda-Emba, Ganta-Afeshum*, were purposively selected for which irregular migration is believed to be higher than the others. From these *four Woredas*, eight *Tabyas*, -two *Tabyas* from each *Woreda*, were purposively selected taking into account the severity of unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration thereof. In addition to purposive sampling technique, snow ball sampling technique was used to reach returnees and potential unaccompanied migrants, victim unaccompanied minor irregular migrants and responsible authorized officials. Then snow ball sampling technique helps to reach more distant unknown respondents. Regarding sampling technique for the quantitative data, there is no accurate data or size of unaccompanied minors that can be used as sample frame. So, it is difficult to draw the sample size. Therefore, convenience sampling technique was used. Based on this justification, about 216 samples were determined. Accordingly 216 close-ended questionnaires were distributed and collected timely.

### **1.4.4. Data Collection Instruments**

To collect optimum data with the objective of triangulation and checking the reliability and trustworthiness of data, different instruments employed as described follow:

#### **Survey Questionnaire**

In this study, survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from the sample population. The questionnaire includes both close-ended and semi closed questions. The questionnaire was aimed at providing information on causes and consequences of unaccompanied

irregular migration. Besides, the questionnaires covered demographic, socio-economic and background variables such as age, sex, educational status, marital status and family size.

### **Semi-structured Interview**

In this study, semi-structured interview was extensively used as it enabled the researchers to gather detail and context specific first-hand information from the respondents. Thus, using semi-structured questions qualitative data was gathered mainly from returnees of irregular migrants (with special emphasis to unaccompanied minors), families of victims, potential migrants, and youths in the community. During the interaction process, the interview items were translated from English in to Tigrigna language to make understandable to the participants.

### **Key Informant Interview**

In-depth interview was also employed with intention of getting rich and deep information from the key informants. Key informant interview was utilized to collect data from the local government officials in different sectors who are expected have knowledge with migration related issues. Heads of the following offices were interviewed: administration authorities of the selected *Woredas*, youth and sports bureau, labor and social affairs office, justice desk, police commission, and women's affairs. In addition to this, border security officers and some *Tabya* level administrators were interviewed according their relevance to the objective of the study. Meanwhile during the interview time, the interview questions were translated from English to Tigrigna language with intension of smooth communication and understanding.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussion is very important method to gather information from the local community hence it stimulates discussions among group members in relation to the subject of the study. This method helped to collect primary information regarding the feelings and attitudes of the community and particularly the unaccompanied minors on the pervasive risks of irregularly migrated elsewhere out of their home country. Participants for focus group discussion were selected through purposive and snowball sampling technique cognizant to their age, vulnerability, sex, role in the community, vulnerability, and experience of irregular migration. While the FGD was proceeding, the researchers' role was limited to facilitation and posing of questions when

necessary. The medium of conversation during the interaction time was Tigrigna as it is mother language of the researchers and the wider community under study.

## **Document Analysis**

This tool was specifically used to gather secondary data. Accordingly the reliable sources from the available published and unpublished documents was gathered and reviewed. Beside to this, institutional sources like migrants' related statistics from the each *Woreda* was taken through careful examination and their relevance to the study. Data available in the form of recording, files and reports at regional and *Woreda* and *Tabya* were also used. Narrowly few court case documents pertaining to the investigation, prosecution and trial of brokers in Eastern Zone Tigray was also considered. These sources then helped to cross check and triangulate with the data obtained through the other tools of this study.

### **1.4.5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

The process of data collection is not an end by itself and thus after selecting the participants and collecting the necessary data, the next activity was presenting, analyzing and interpreting of the data obtained. Accordingly, the researchers sorted out the information obtained from primary and secondary sources in to the category they belong through thematic organization and triangulation. On the other hand, the quantitative data from the questionnaires was processed using SPSS version 20.0 and was presented in the form of simple descriptive statistical method.

## **1.5. Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of this study lies in the way that some relevant information was accessed from relevant actors and institutional bureaus/offices during the data collection process. Some of the limitations were:

**I.** Victims of smuggling or trafficking unaccompanied minors are sometimes difficult to easily access them due to different factors such as the stigma/fear of discrimination being victim, clandestine and negative attitudes towards irregular migration experiences. This was sometimes a challenge in easily accessing of reliable information directly from unaccompanied minor returnees who are victims of smuggling or trafficking during the data collection process.

**II.** Traffickers, smugglers and brokers are not easily accessible or are unwilling to provide information due to fear of being reported to the police for their illicit/illegal activity. Thus, obtaining direct information from the hidden perpetrators of irregular migration regarding the recruitment and smuggling of unaccompanied minors' irregular migrants were difficult.

**III.** Institutions and bureaus concerned irregular migration, especially at the local level do not maintain easy way to access up-to-dated and organized data. This hampered the collection of accurate statistical data regarding the reported number of unaccompanied minors who are actually involved irregular migrants, number and pattern of victims and accurate reports of death and disappearance of people due to the practice of irregular migration in the study area. Even if these hindrances were recognized as limitation of the study, however by using alternative ways and cost benefit analysis measures, the researchers made dedicated efforts to minimize the effects of those limitations on the study.

#### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

This study opens an opportunity to understand and examine the extent of involvement of unaccompanied children in irregular migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray. It is also disseminates knowledge of the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts which influence unaccompanied minors migration decision. Therefore, it enables to fill the knowledge gap on the extent of unaccompanied children involved in irregular migration. Besides, better understanding of the determinant factors which influence unaccompanied children migration decision could enables governments, policy makers and other stakeholders better understand the factors behind the causes of unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration and in turn devise children and youth sensitive policies and programs. Moreover, the outcomes of the project might help development agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) intervene and take appropriate measures to combat child migration and ensure child protection mechanisms. So, the focus on children in general and unaccompanied children in particular can help reduce the consequences of irregular migration on children and youth. It further enables to comprehend the situation of unaccompanied children and associated risks during the process and after arrivals and to ensure child protection mechanisms as early warning.

### **1.7. Ethical Considerations**

While managing this study, necessary ethical research guidelines were being followed so as not to contravene with the values, social principles and obligations of the society under investigation. Thus, while conducting the study, participation was mainly with informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality principles were also strictly followed to reduce fear and possible risks of respondents. In addition, the researchers were trying to make the respondents at ease through developing rapport and informing them properly in advance. In turn this had paramount role in building trustful relationships among the researchers and participants. Regarding to the secondary sources, the researchers appropriately acknowledged the work of other scholars and researchers.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This study is organized in to four chapters. The first chapter includes background, statement of the problem, general objective, specific objectives, research question, research methodology and design, source of data, data collection instruments, method of data analysis/interpretation significance of the study, limitations of the study, ethical considerations, and organization of the paper. The second chapter deals with review of related literatures. The third chapter deals with, description of the study area, data presentation, data analysis and key findings. The fourth chapter provides concise conclusion alongside of the possible recommendations based on the findings of the study. Finally, list of reference materials used for conducting the study, questionnaire, interview and FGD guide lines, code list of participant's and administration map of the study area are annexed at the end of the paper.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter deals with major issues of the study from available relevant literatures in order to get a broader insight and meaningful understanding about the issue under study. It first briefly highlights the nature and trend of unaccompanied child migration in general-global, regional and national level. Next the cause for migration particularly the involvement in irregular migration and the challenges that unaccompanied children encounter right from start of the journey until they arrive in hosting states, namely, pre- arrival, in the border of destination states and while they arrive in the destination states are discussed. Lastly, policy and legal frameworks applicable to unaccompanied minor are discussed comprehensively.

#### 2.1. Concept Definitions and Operational Terms

**Migration:** is a movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border or within a state. It is a movement of peoples whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification(IOM, 2004). Migration can be regular and irregular. Regular migration refers to an international migration of peoples that occur through recognized legal channels of the sending and receiving state and irregular migration refers to a movement of people that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries (IOM, 2004). However, this study only deals with irregular migration.

**Irregular Migration:** refers to undocumented movement of people from one country to another country within the same continent or different one for different reasons. It is defined as one part of migration in which the movement of the peoples takes place outside of the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries (IOM, 2004). Irregular migration means when peoples enter a given country without the proper authority (for example through clandestine entry and entry with fraudulent documents); people who remain in a country in contravention of their authority (for example by staying after the expiry of a visa or work permit and when peoples moved by migrant smugglers or human traffickers (Ibid).

From the perspective of destination countries, cross border irregular migration is an illegal entry, stay and work in the country. Meaning migrants do not have the necessary authorization or

documents required under immigration regulations to cross border, enter, reside in or work in a given destination country. According to this definition, the irregular migrants enter the territory of the transit or destination state without having proper documentations and visa. They cross borders, seas, oceans, jungles and deserts in a manner that threatens the safety and dignity of the migrants themselves. Even it can endanger the national security of the home, transit and destination states (GAATW, 2010).

**Children/Minor:** the term children or minor, otherwise in this research refers to every human being below the age of 18 years as defined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article, 1).

**Unaccompanied Children/Minor:** the Committee on the Rights of the Child defines “Unaccompanied children” as children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so (CRC Committee, General Comment No.6, 2005). In addition to this, the Committee has identified other groups of children called “separated children” these are children, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives and this may include children accompanied by other adult family members(CRC Committee, General Comment No.6, 2005). This study considers both categories of persons. However for the sake of consistency and simplicity and for the fact that most but not all of children migrating from Ethiopia arrive without the accompaniment of adult, the term unaccompanied children /minor will be used throughout this study. Hence, the term ‘unaccompanied children’ refers to persons below eighteen years who have the plan to migrate alone or with other adult, arrive/live in countries that are not their places of origin alone without both parents or any adult who is legally responsible for their care and children who have returned to home country due to refoulement or other reasons.

## **2.2. Overview of Recent Migration Phenomenon**

Migration is an old-aged history of human being. Today international migration has become a reality that touches nearly all corners of the globe. Modern transportation has made it easier, cheaper and faster for people to move in search of jobs, opportunity, education and quality of life. At the same time conflict, poverty, inequality and lack of sustainable livelihoods compel people to leave their homes to seek a better future for themselves and their families abroad. Overall, the

estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past four-and-a-half decades. The total estimated 244 million people living in a country other than their country of birth in 2015 is almost 100 million more than in 1990 (when it was 153 million), and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million ). While the proportion of international migrants globally has increased over this period, it is evident that the vast majority of people continue to live in the country in which they were born. Most international migrants in 2015 (around 72%) were of working age (20 to 64 years of age), with a slight decrease in migrants aged less than 20 between 2000 and 2015 (17% to 15%), and a constant share (around 12%) of international migrants aged 65 years or more since 2000 (IOM, 2018).

Generally, the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow over the past seventeen years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 248 million in 2015, 220 million in 2010, 191 million in 2005 and 173 million in 2000. According to estimates produced by the IOM in 2010, approximately 10 to 15% of the world's 214 million international migrants are undocumented. Between 2000 and 2017, Africa experienced the largest relative increase in the number of international migrants who had originated in that region (+68%), followed by Asia (+62%), Latin America and the Caribbean (+52%) and Oceania (+51%) (UN, 2017).

Yet on the global level, there is no accurate authoritative source specifically focusing on global trends and numbers on irregular migration. As a result, the available sources are either not comprehensive or not adequately shared.

### **2.3. Nature and Trend of Child Migration**

The migration of unaccompanied children is not a new phenomenon. For centuries children have travelled alone across borders. The prevalence of civil war, famine and other wide range of problems have almost always resulted in children being separated from their families. They have been dominantly a feature of refugee flow of developing world either experienced natural or human made disasters. Children who have been displaced by war or any other factor from developing states often lack the funds to travel long distances, instead many end up traveling to neighboring countries (Bhabha and Schmidt, 2006).

The migration of unaccompanied children takes many forms as adults migration, and the role that children themselves play in their migrations are as varied as those played by their adult

counterparts. *Unaccompanied children may initiate their travels, they may resist, they may simply concur or obey parental wishes; they may accompany, they may lead, they may follow, they may diverge, they may escape* (Bhabha, 2010). In some communities from where large numbers of independent child migrants originate, it appears that it is normal for a child to decide to migrate, or to play a substantial role in that decision. Where as in some situations migration is entirely initiated and executed by children (Yaquub, 2010). A study on unaccompanied Afghanistan children reveals this variation. According to the study, in areas where there is high flow, the decision to travel is shared by the heads of the family and the children, with families pooling resources, borrowing money or mortgaging property to cover the cost of journey. Conversely in areas where there is less flow, children themselves commonly initiated the decision and sought the support of families for the unaccompanied journey (Chona R. Echavez, et.al...2014). Thus, unaccompanied child migration takes many forms and involves many actors in all phases of the movement cycle.

In relation to the scale of movement of unaccompanied children it is not clearly known as there is fragmented data collection system. A concerted international effort to collect data on this population only began in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Since 2006, approximately 113,000 asylum claims have been lodged by unaccompanied or separated children worldwide. According to the UNHCR's annual Global Trends report, “more than 25,300 individual asylum applications were lodged by UASC (unaccompanied or separated children) in 77 countries in 2013, far more than in previous period, which constituted about 4 percent of the total number of asylum claims lodged in these 77 countries” . The main countries of origin of UAMs were South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. Kenya, Sweden, Germany, Malaysia, UK, and Norway reported the highest number of UAM claims. “Available information indicates that more than 7,100 unaccompanied or separated children were recognized in 2013 as refugees or granted a complementary form of protection in 44 countries. Roughly two-thirds of all decisions taken on UASC [unaccompanied or separated children] claims during the year led to the granting of refugee status or another form of protection” [5] (p.29). Accordingly, the recognition rate for UAMs seems to be higher than the overall Total Recognition Rate (TRR) which was 44 percent in 2013 (Report of Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014).

## 2.4. Reasons/Causes of Child Migration

In Ethiopia studies are scarce in relation to unaccompanied child migration that investigate why such children leave their country of origin and involve in irregular migration. Most studies focus on adult migration. However, available documents and studies on unaccompanied child migration in other states indicates that the reasons why such children are leaving their countries of origin are quite numerous and multifaceted. In this case a study conducted in South Africa indicates that unaccompanied children leave their country of origin for economic reason, to escape war and conflict, political oppression, ethnic or tribal persecution, to be reunited with relatives, and for educational purposes (Ingrid, 2009).

A longer list of reasons for why unaccompanied children are leaving their countries can be found in a study by Wendy Ayotte cited in Ali et al (2003). Based on an analysis of 218 cases of unaccompanied children who arrived in Western Europe, Ayotte identified the following factors that forced children to leave their country of origin:

*... violent death of parent(s), sometimes in front of child; detention and torture of child; armed conflicts that target child civilians; genocide; forced recruitment of children into armed forces, some under 10 years of age; trafficking of children for the purposes of prostitution under brutal conditions; persecution of child's ethnic group; denial of education due to the child's ethnic identity; political activities of the child or child's family members resulting in persecution; rape and sexual assault; abuse and/or abandonment by parents; poverty and complete lack of opportunity(Ali et al...2003).*

Likewise, the European Migration Network has identified varied and interconnected reasons as motivations and circumstances for entering the EU. These range from fleeing persecution and seeking protection, to reunification with family members already residing in the EU, for economic, aspirational reasons, to join the migrant/diaspora community, in order to transit to another state, as victims of trafficking or of smuggling, for medical reasons or abandonment, runaways or drifters (European Migration Network, 2009). Unaccompanied child could thus enter the EU for more than one of these reasons and/or move from one category to another. Despite the variation of places the reason that forced the children seems to appear complicated intertwined factors. Worth mentioning most of unaccompanied children are migrating from developing countries such as Africa and Middle East with relative variation from region to region and country to country(Ibid).

## **2.5. Challenges/Risks Encountered in the Migration Process**

Since irregular migration is an illegal activity without the legal recognition of the sending, transit and receiving states the migrants are vulnerable to risks and threats. Migrants endure human rights violations, abuse and discrimination. Migrants, particularly women and children, may fall victim to human trafficking and the heinous forms of exploitation that it entails. As a result this day migration has moved to the top of the policy agenda in many countries around the world

When unaccompanied children flee from their countries of origin to escape from internal insecurity the risky migration process will result in turn difficulty. Many unaccompanied children face with numerous violations of human rights while they made their journey into the destination states crossing inaccessible jungles, deserts and Sea. Briefly the subsequent part will discuss the challenges that unaccompanied children encounter in the journey process.

### **2.5.1. Pre-arrival into the Destination States**

Due their vulnerable situation, unaccompanied children face multitude challenges in the migration process to reach into destination states. Studies indicate that unaccompanied children are exposed to varying levels of danger, harassment and rights violation at the hands of smugglers and in the custody of police authorities when caught at the transit points or destinations. A study on the movement of unaccompanied children from Afghanistan affirms that unaccompanied children face with a range of physical and emotional risks during travel. The physical risks includes dangerous means of transport, deprivation of food and water, and being beaten by different persons such as smugglers/traffickers or even by police officers at the borders of different countries when they are caught (Chona R. Echavez, et.al...2014). A study by European Union also revealed, that the challenges that face to the children include among other things sexual exploitation, economic exploitation, kidnapping, forced marriage, military conscription and organ transplantation (European Union, 2012).

### **2.5.2. Situation at Destination States**

Gaining access to the desired destination state is both a necessary precondition for asylum and any other immigration status. However, crossing the border is not an easy task but something loaded with serious obstacles and multifold life scarification. Unaccompanied children seeking to enter into other states are not an exception from personal and physical security risks. Charles Watters in his book entitled “Refugee Children: towards the Next Horizon” have examined the struggles

many asylum seeking children from Africa, Middle East and South East Asia face to enter Europe via Southern Europe borders. Watters asserted that the external borders of the EU are heavily policed and the incoming migrants without access to the necessary documentation process often feel driven to take life-threatening measures to enter the EU. His study in Italy for instance revealed that, asylum seekers are subject to expulsion or refusal of entry orders on the grounds of illegal, or attempted illegal entry to, or illegal residence in Italy (Watters, 2008). Unaccompanied children reaching Italy coastline face numerous risks that includes: refoulement to countries of origin or transit countries where individuals could face persecution, collective expulsions, discriminatory access to asylum procedures, detention, unfair and inadequate identification procedures(Ibid). Though, the law directs that unaccompanied children should not be detained in the identification centers in practice the reception mechanism for asylum seekers has been subject to sustained criticism both from bureaucratic inefficiency, with asylum seekers waiting between 12 and 24 months for a decision from the Central Commission and on the ground that while waiting, they have little or no means of sustaining themselves and no access to health care (Ibid).

Similarly, a report from members of the EU states on the reception and care of unaccompanied children reflects the same realities. For instance in Spain, access to land is refused for foreign children at ports when they cannot present the necessary documents to enter. Consequently Spanish authorities send them back to the country they came from applying a legal enactment intended for adults (European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, 2010). In France, the law allows for foreigners who are not permitted to enter the territory to be detained in the 'waiting area' a transition area between the international zone and French territory. While waiting admission to the territory unaccompanied children are detained in an area in which they are deprived of their liberty, situated in buildings in the airport zone for duration of up to 20 days (Ibid).

Likewise Jacqueline Bhabha (2010) argued that, in response to their growing concerns about irregular migration, all immigration destinations countries have legal provisions that complicate access to territory. The legal measures include visa requirements, carrier sanctions imposed on the means of transport that carry undocumented or irregular passengers and increasingly, surveillance and intelligence systems operating at and near the borders, and further a field. For instance USA, has established a highly militarized system of border control along the southern border with

Mexico fully equipped with infrared light detection system, 24-hour armed patrols increasing policing the Mediterranean. As a result of these effective measures unaccompanied child asylum seekers are increasingly compelled to use the service of smugglers who accompany them across the perilous Arizona desert-thousands of migrants find themselves lost and dehydrated in this process, and many lose their lives. Similarly, Australia has adopted restrictive provisions, including visa controls, carrier sanctions and collaboration between sending and receiving country governments to track the migration movements of individuals. In addition to these reactive measures, both the USA and Australia have adopted pre-emptive interdiction policies to interrupt the journey of would-be migrants at source and at strategic points during their voyage (Ibid).

Complementary to the above report findings, the Committee on CRC, (2005) identifies a number of protection gaps in the treatment of such children, including the following: unaccompanied and separated children face greater risks of, inter alia, sexual exploitation and abuse, military recruitment, child labor (including for their foster families) and detention. They are often discriminated against and denied access to food, shelter, housing, health services and education. Unaccompanied and separated girls are at particular risk of gender based violence, including domestic violence. In some situations, such children have no access to proper and appropriate identification, registration, age assessment, documentation, family tracing, guardianship systems or legal advice (IOM, 2008).

In conclusion, analysis of the practice from the studies reveals that a gap exists between laws, conventions and protocols and routine practice on the ground. Host societies response to unaccompanied children is characterized by two trajectories; one that is concerned with welfare of the child and is underpinned by a range of statutory instruments and codes of practice derived from international and national instruments and second that is concerned with the security of the territory and their citizens (Watters, 2008). The latter is concerned with the control of populations and includes physical and legal barriers to entry, in which non-nationals are monitored on the territory of another sovereign state (Ibid). Consequently unaccompanied children seeking asylum found it very difficult to access the territory of hosting states because of these restrictive measures. As noted by Bhabha, asylum the long-standing remedy created by the international community to address the problems inflicted on citizens by their own states, is particularly inaccessible to unaccompanied children because the risks they face are often disregarded (Bhabha, 2010).

## **2.6. Policy and Legal frameworks pertaining to Unaccompanied Minors**

Unaccompanied migrant children are entitled protection under international migration law, international human rights law, international refugee law and humanitarian law. Even though these children are covered broadly in various legal instruments, it is not the purpose of this section to analysis the rights of the children in various human rights instrument rather to briefly discuss the most relevant legal instrument that deals with the protection of unaccompanied children at all levels-international, regional and national. In short, the purpose of this analysis is to pinpoint the obligations of states in respect of unaccompanied children and set out the rights of children who could potentially involve in irregular migration being unaccompanied. Accordingly here are blow discussed some of the relevant child related conventions.

### **2.6.1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 6, Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their Country of Origin**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that, globally there is an increasing number unaccompanied and separated children. There reasons are varied and numerous reasons for a child being unaccompanied or separated, including: persecution of the child or the parents; International conflict and civil war, trafficking in various contexts and forms, including sale by parents; and the search for better economic opportunities. Thus, the main purpose of this convention is to draw attention to the particularly vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and separated children; to outline the multifaceted challenges faced by states and other actors in ensuring that such children are able to access and enjoy their rights; and, to provide guidance on the protection, care and proper treatment of unaccompanied and separated children based on the entire legal framework provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child with particular reference to the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and the right of the child to express his or her views freely .

Though all articles included in the CRC, are applicable to the children, the CRC, has four core principles that advances their right. Here are briefly discussed as follow.

#### **I. Non-discrimination (art . 2)**

Article 2, prohibits any discrimination on the basis of the status of a child as being unaccompanied or separated, or as being a refugee, asylum seeker or migrant. The principle

of non-discrimination, in all its facets, applies in respect to all dealings with separated and unaccompanied children.

## **II. Best Interests of the Child (art. 3)**

Article 3 (1) states that “[i]n all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

## **III. The Right to Life, Survival and Development (art . 6)**

The obligation of the State party under article 6 includes protection from violence and exploitation, to the maximum extent possible, which would jeopardize a child’s right to life, survival and development. Separated and unaccompanied children are vulnerable to various risks that affect their life, survival and development such as trafficking for purposes of sexual or other exploitation or involvement in criminal activities which could result in harm to the child, or in extreme cases, in death. Accordingly, article 6 necessitates vigilance by States parties in this regard, particularly when organized crime may be involved

## **IV. Right of the Child to Express His or Her Views Freely (art. 12)**

Pursuant to article 12 of the Convention, in determining the measures to be adopted with regard to unaccompanied or separated children, the child’s views and wishes should be elicited and taken into account (art. 12 (1)). To allow for a well-informed expression of such views and wishes, it is imperative that such children are provided with all relevant information.

Based on the informant mechanisms of the document, states parties are obliged to implement the above articles to the best of interest of unaccompanied and separated children.

### **2.6.2. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**

Considering their relevance to the subject of study (unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration), here are some relevant articles taken from the “Convention the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families”.

In Article 12(4) of the ICRMW, respect for the liberty of parents and legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions is guaranteed. This Article is relevant for unaccompanied minors, since one of the most important ways of protecting them is by providing them, as soon as possible, with a legal guardian who can act on their behalf and in their interests. This is not only a long-term option; it is also important pending decisions regarding permits to stay, family reunion or return – periods during which the migrant child is particularly vulnerable and needs someone who knows the system and who is wholly concerned with their best interests.

Article 17(6) establishes that whenever a migrant worker is deprived of his or her liberty, the State concerned shall pay attention to the problems that might be posed for members of their family, in particular for spouses and minor children. This Article may prevent children from becoming separated from their parents, especially in situations where irregular migration is punished by deprivation of liberty. It is important in these cases that children are not left to their own devices to become de facto unaccompanied migrants.

Article 29 provides that each child of a migrant worker shall have the right to a name, to registration of birth and to a nationality. As noted above, this right is of importance as its neglect may be the basis for the neglect of other rights.

Article 32 recognizes that work which is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development shall be prevented. This is a holistic approach that recognizes that exploitation of children interferes with all aspects of their development.

Beside of the aforementioned legal frameworks, states parties are required to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the conventions relevant to the development, protection and promotion of rights and dignities of unaccompanied and separated children.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter data collected from informants through in-depth interview, key informants interview, personal observation, close ended questionnaires' and FGD are analyzed and presented pertinent to the objective of the study. The chapter comprehensively discusses issues that includes the extent of unaccompanied minor's involvement in irregular migration, the causes of migration, challenges and risks in the journey and destination states, coping mechanisms of individual migrants, and the intervention made by the government to halt the problem and accommodate returnee migrants. In addition, relevant findings of related studies are included to substantiate and enhance the already collected data.

As a context before discussing or dealing with the central objectives of the study, description of the study area and the participant's background characteristic are presented below.

#### 3.1. Description of the Study Area

Eastern Tigray, commonly known as Eastern zone of Tigray, is located in the northern most tip part of Ethiopia. It is bordered on the east by the Afar region, on the south by South Eastern zone, on the west by Central zone and on the north by Eritrea. The Area is composed of nine *Woredas* (districts) including the two urban *Woredas*: *Adigrat* and *Wukro*, *Gulomekeda*, *Irob*, *Ganta-Afeshum*, *Saesi-Tsaeda-Emba*, *Hawzen*, *Klte-ablaelo* and *Atsbi-Womberta*. For the purpose of this research four *Woredas* are purposefully selected. These are *Irob*, *Ganta-Afeshum*, *Gulomekeda*, *Saesi-Tsaeda Emba*.

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), this Zone has a total population of 755,343, of which 359,638 are men and 395,705 women; 146,064 or 19.34% are urban inhabitants (CSA, 2008). However, a recent research conducted by Nyssen *et.al.* (2009) cited in (Gebrehiwot & Fekadu, 2012) show that Eastern Tigray has an estimated population of about 1,500,000, which, corresponds to an average population density of 124 persons per Km<sup>2</sup>. Of the total population about 75.5 percent lives in the rural areas (*ibid*). Ethnic Tigray and *Irob* are the two largest ethnic groups accounting 95.32% and 3.78% respectively (CSA, 2007).

The average rural household of the people in Eastern Tigray is 0.5 hectare of land, which is so scarce compared to the national average of 1.01 hectare of land and a regional average of 0.51 and the equivalent of 0.7 heads of livestock. About 38.9% of the population is engaged in non-farm related jobs, compared to the national average of 25% and a regional average of 28% (Gebrehiwot & Fekadu, 2012). The region is one of the most drought prone, warzone, geographically degraded and densely populated zones in Tigray region where a significant number of youths and women dropout their education & march their foot towards the Arab world, Sudan, Republic of South Africa (RSA) & Europe in search of better income & employment opportunities. In spite of slight differences, almost all the districts in found this zone have been experienced similar socio-economic and environmental experience and/or problems. The “no war no peace” Ethio-Eritrea condition and seasonal drought prone occurred in the region seriously affects all negatively. Moreover, over the past two decades the districts have seen largely exposed to growing cross-border illegal migration.

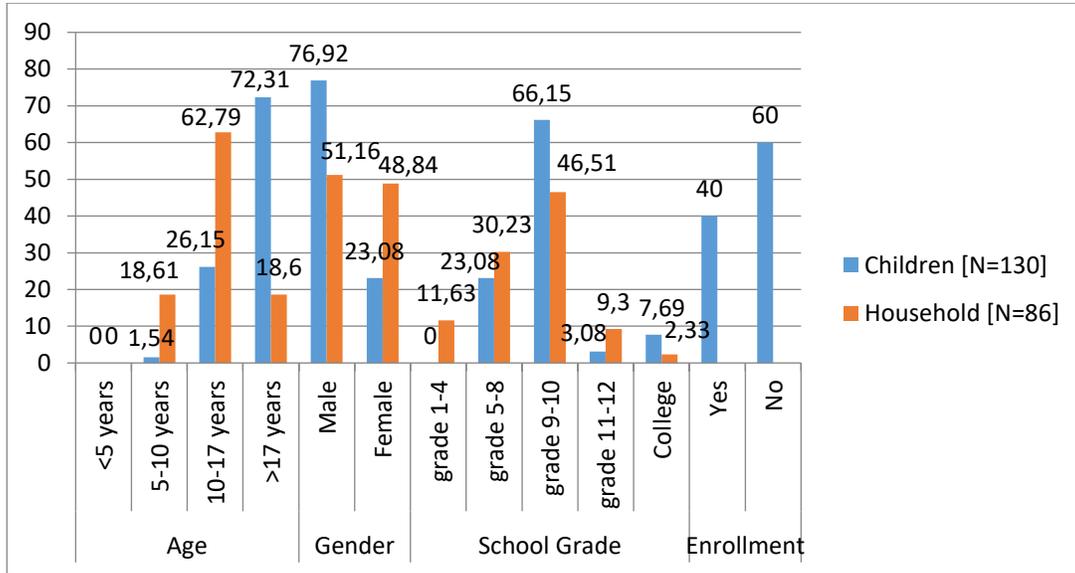
### **3.2. Background Characteristics of Respondents**

Irregular out migration in Ethiopia in general and Eastern Tigray in particular tends to be driven by longer-term structural factors such as poverty and poor living standard, lack of job opportunities, low wage and salary or long-term economic insecurity and political uncertainties resulting in declining investment and economic development. Eastern Zone of Tigray is the most known for irregular migration at national level and worse of irregular migration involving widespread community engagement, community networks and migration syndrome. The people inhabiting the area are of highly exposed to out migration. All sections of the society migrate for economic reasons. To the extent households, teachers, civil servants, women, priests and minor children usually migrate to different parts of the world.

The participants of this study are basically children below 18 years old, those returnees who migrated under age and with no parents as an accompanied minor of sex, students and non-students ranging from elementary to college level education. Here below is presented the demographic characteristics of respondents.

**Graph 1: Demographic and background characteristics of Respondents**

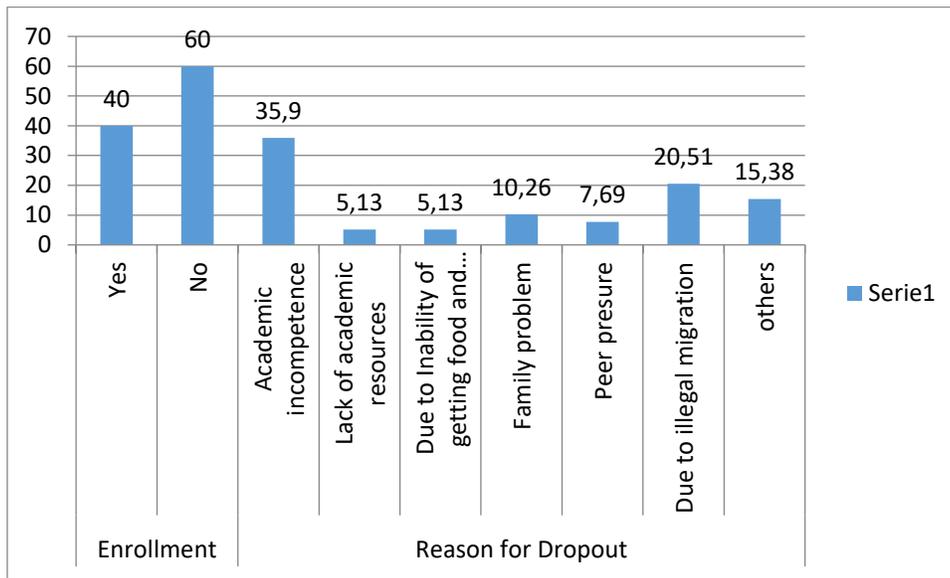
The graph below provides the background and demographic characteristics of the respondents in a brief manner. As you can easily grasp from the graph below out of the total 216 respondents about 35.92 % of them are female and the remaining 64.8% are males. Therefore, the research has considered the gender dimension of migration. Besides, the research has tried to assess the academic enrolment and status of the respondents.



**Source: own survey (2018)**

Based on the survey results, about 40% of the respondents are currently enrolled at schools (46.51% of them at high school, 3% preparatory and 7.69 % of them at colleges) while the remaining 60% of respondents are out of school or have drop out their education due to various reasons. Moreover, in terms of age about 1.5% are between 5-10, 26.15 % are between 10-17 years while the rest 62.79 % are above 17 years old. This indicates that migration is high at high school and post. Interview results also strongly support this result that most students are hopeless on education, give less attention to it and exert less effort to pass national exams. As a result they fail in grade 10 and 12 national and entrance exams respectively. Then, most of them adjust themselves for migration to any parts of the world in search of better job and improved life conditions.

**Graph 2: Reasons for Educational Dropout**

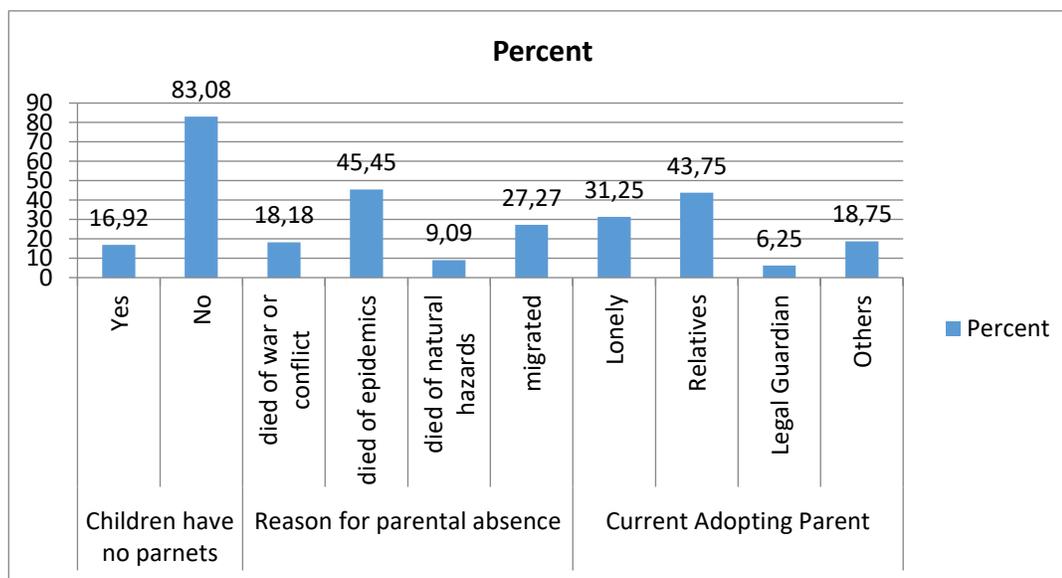


**Source: Own survey (2018)**

As it is shown in the above graph about 60% of respondent unaccompanied minors drop out education and 40% of them are enrolled. The reasons for drop out are various in type and all take their own share. As clearly stated in the graph above, the reasons for academic drop-out includes; academic incompetence (35.9%), due to involvement in irregular migration (20.51%), family problem (10.26%), peer pressure (7.69%), lack of academic resource (5.13%), inability of getting food (5.13%) and other unspecified reasons together take 15.38%. Thus, it can be deduced that involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration is a serious concern in the study area. Besides the existence of other reasons for instance lack of academic resource and inability of the children to get food will potentially force the children to involve in irregular migration. Therefore, a structural solution is demanded to overcome the problem.

**Graph 3: Parental Condition of the Children**

The existence of parents (biological father and mother) is supposed to be very essential for children to grow up and live in descent living conditions and focus on their education that determines their futurity. The survey also tried to assess the parental conditions of the children and accordingly about 16.92% of them have no care of their parents while the rest have parental care and support. Out of the respondents without parents 27.27 respondents revealed that their parents have migrated to abroad and the rest 73 % of them show that their parents are died of epidemics, war and conflict and natural hazards.



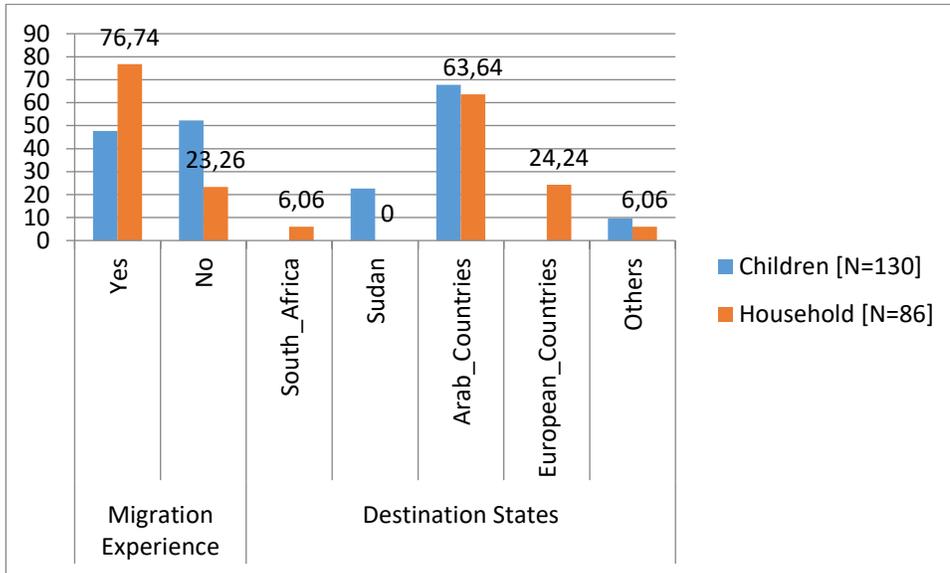
As shown in the above graph, the current care taker of the minor are; relatives (43.75%), lonely (31.25%), others (unspecified care taker, 18.75%) and legal guardians (6.25%). The reasons for the absence of the children is various ranging from death of epidemic disease, war, migration to death of natural hazards. The existence of 83.08% minors living alone have a direct impact on the involvement of minors in irregular migration. From this one can conclude that those who have no care and support of their biological care takers are much exposed to irregular migration.

### 3.3. Extent of Unaccompanied Minors Involvement in Irregular Migration

Previously conducted study show that irregular migration in Eastern Zone of Tigray is pervasive. Many adult men and women march their foot toward other states irregularly facing multitude risks. However, previously conducted study does not consider the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration separately, they were treated with the general irregular migration pool or attracted less attention. But, the findings of this study have found the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration as a pressing phenomenon. Many women and men unaccompanied minor do involve in irregular migration. The mentality and attitude of residents of Eastern Zone people in general and minor is influenced with the positive side of migration. Children and youths are indoctrinated of irregular migration mainly to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Yemen, UAE, Egypt and Israel. Precisely migration is seen as a normal habitual practice and viable

option for better life. The subsequent paragraph indicates the prevalence of unaccompanied minor involvement in irregular migration in the study area.

**Graph 6: Migration Prevalence and Experience of Respondents**



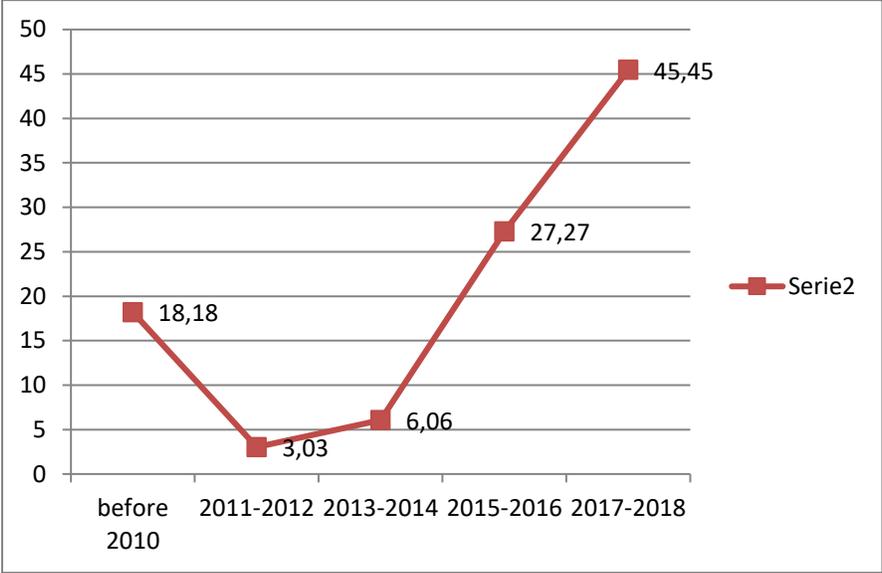
**Source: own survey (2018)**

The graph above depicts that about 47.69 % of the respondents are returned migrants or have migrant experience in different parts of the world crossing their border along the hazardous migration routes. Similarly, the parents involved in the study revealed that about 76.74 % of them have migrant children. Out of the total returned migrants about 22.58% of them flow to Sudan with intention of crossing and entering to Europe while majority of the migrants about 67.74 % of them flow to the gulf states through Djibouti-Yemen, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia(KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar or else. This indicates that the prevalence or involvement of migration is higher in the study area even if the risks of migration faced are immense. This implies that, involvement in irregular migration in the study area is pervasive. Seeing the trends and extent of involvement in irregular migration, it is also increasing from year to year. The subsequent graph indicates the rate of migration considering time frame.

**Graph 7: Trends and Prevalence of Migration**

Globally, Irregular migration is one of the most topical issues dominating the domestic politics, election campaigning, policy proposals and international media. Although accurate data lacks, large number of migrants flow to different parts of the world annually. In Ethiopia previous studies

show that Ethiopia is one of the major sources of irregular migration and this migrant flow has continued even today. The table below shows the migration experience and destination states of the migrants:

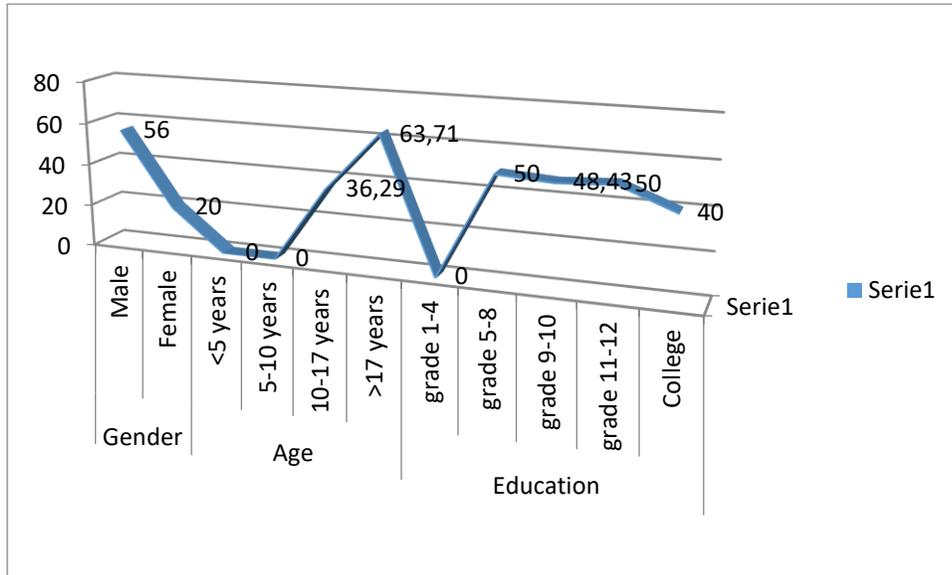


Source: Own survey (2018)

As clearly depicted in the above graph, the level of migration is increasing from time to time. Unaccompanied minor’s involvement in irregular migration for instance was lowest in 2011-2012 around 3.03%, and it has doubled in 2013-2014 reaching 6.06%. In 2015-2016 it has dramatically raised to 27.27% and to the worst in 2017-2018 the number has increasing into an alarming rate. Thus, the issue of unaccompanied minor migration is a pressing phenomenon that deserve a serious attention.

When we see the composition of unaccompanied minor migration involvement in terms of sex, age and education level it shows variations. The subsequent graph contains composition of migrants in sex, age and education.

**Graph 8: Migration Experience of Respondents by Gender, Age and Education**



**Source: own survey (2018)**

To start with the gender composition, the lion share is taken by male that amounts 56% and 20% are females. The dominant age group that involve in irregular migration is 10-17 years and below 17 years, 36.29% and 63.71% respectively. The educational status from bigger to small is grade 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12, putting in percent respectively, 50%, 48%, and 43.50%.

Beside to the above statistical shown data, regarding the extent of unaccompanied minor involvement in irregular migration, qualitatively collected data from the respondent of all selected sample areas-Zalambesa, Irob (Alitena), Sobeya, Haw`ele and Rae`le, Sasun, May`Mesanu and Saese-Tsaeda-Emba - reveal that the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration is a common practice that is almost recognized by the community. Irregular migration of minor has almost knocked every resident home according to the respondents. The following is the verbatim of officials, unaccompanied minor, and parents respectively:

*In our locality, Children aged under 18 are leaving schools deciding to migrate elsewhere irregularly. Now a day parents are begging brokers and smugglers to facilitate journey for their children pledging to do something in favor of the facilitators (Interviewed Official from Saese- Tsaeda- Emba, 07/08/ 2018).*

*[...] all my friends are not here, they are in Italy. Some of them are died attempting to reach Italy. Many children after they finish grade 10<sup>th</sup> want into other states*

*illegally. If you approach a children in Zalambesa and ask what is your plan they will tell you, to migrate into other state either to Saudi, Italy or Egypt. I am also interested to go into Italy. However, I cannot go because my parents are poor and they cannot afford money for the brokers. I do not even fear the challenge that I might face in the migration, what I only think is my families here inability to pay for ransom and the challenge that follow. If they were capable of paying money for ransom, then for the challenge I will move trusting God [...] (Female Unaccompanied children from Zalambesa 06/08/2018)*

*[.....] I am resident of Zalambesa Town. If I have to speak about illegal migration and unaccompanied minor migration, I can say there is no family that is no victim of it. Some of the children migrate to Eritrea, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. I myself have lost four children one to Saudi-Arabia, one to Eritrea, one to Italy and one to Egypt. After they cross the Ethiopian border they are asked by the brokers to pay ransom. Then the parent of the children send money by selling their home and borrowing from Dedebit Micro Finance. To speak the fact, all most all family have paid money as a ransom either by selling home and asset or by borrowing from financial institutions and families. I myself have paid 175,000 Ethiopian Birr to one of my children that was caught in Egypt by selling my home and borrowing from Dedebit Micro Finance. I have been four times in Saudi-Arabia and deported all the time without having nothing. Thus, the children are moving and the city is remaining without youth (Male Parent of Unaccompanied children from Zalambesa 06/08/2018).*

The above stated verbatim of the official, minor and parent of minor asserts how much involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration is pervasive and deeply rooted within the social system of the community. Everywhere you approach youths and children's they have in mind migration as means of getting good life.

A point that should be stressed is that, the extent of migration is not the same from *Woreda* to *Woreda*. According to the findings of this study, the degree of irregular migration of minors is high in *Zalambesa* and *Saese-Tsaeda-Emba* comparing to the remaining sample area-*Sobeya*, *Alitena*, *Haw`ele* and *Rae`le*, *Sasun* and *May Mesanu*. The reason for the variation of extent will be discussed in the cause of migration that will follow in the subsequent topic.

All in all, the extent of unaccompanied minor's involvement in irregular migration is a pressing issue that deserves a serious public and governmental attention. The qualitative and quantitative data discussed above reveal this fact.

### **3.4. Causes for the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration**

Data collected from the children and key informants reveals that unaccompanied minors leave Ethiopia due to diverse factors. The causes are highly intertwined in which it is complicated to set out a single attribute rather a cumulative of factors. A single unaccompanied minor may just involve in irregular migration beyond one reason. Thus, due to the factors interacting and overlapping nature one has to consider the cause together than separately. This study has classified the causes of migration into two groups-structural and triggering factors-for the sake of better understanding of the problem. Accordingly, the first part discuss the root cause and then escalating factors.

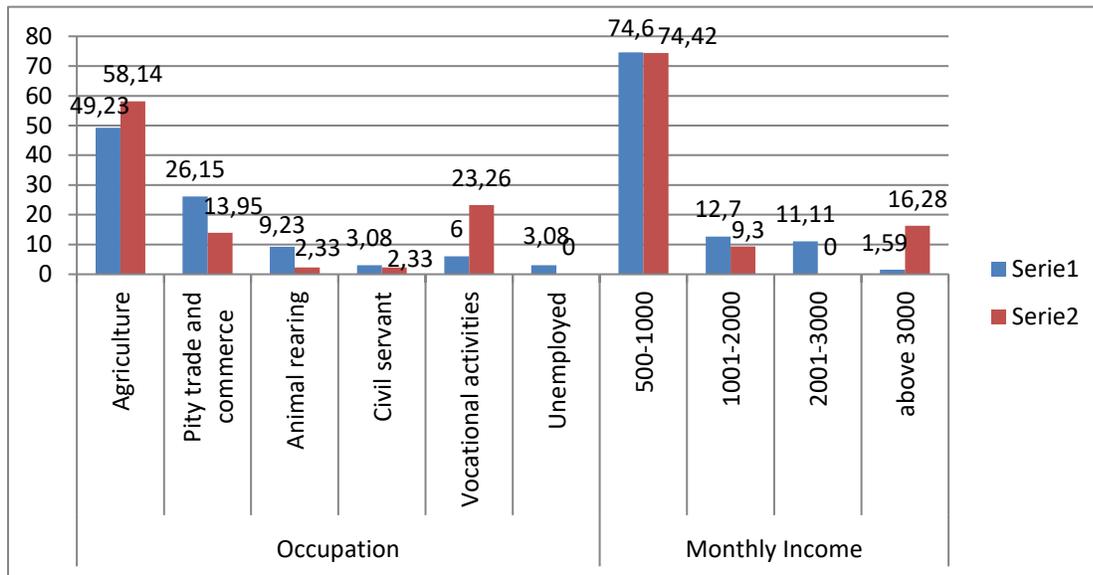
#### **3.4.1. Structural Causes**

Migration in general and irregular migration is primarily caused due to some structural problems that may vary from place to place, what is common is that, it is insecurity that result migration most of the time. Accordingly Eastern Zone of Tigray Region has some structural causes that force unaccompanied minors to involve in irregular migration. The causes might be shared in other areas and some are peculiar to the area. The following are structural causes that force minors to involve in migration.

##### **A. Poverty( Lack of Economic Choice)**

Even though there are different push and pool factors that motivate for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration, poverty is the underlying cause. Most of the interviewed and consulted children mention that they have attempted or fled to other states because their family or they themselves are unable to support economically. However, before we discuss the qualitative data it is better to present the economic status and occupation of the parents of the minors. Thus, the subsequent graphs will help better understand the economic situation of the parents and its linkage to poverty as a cause for migration.

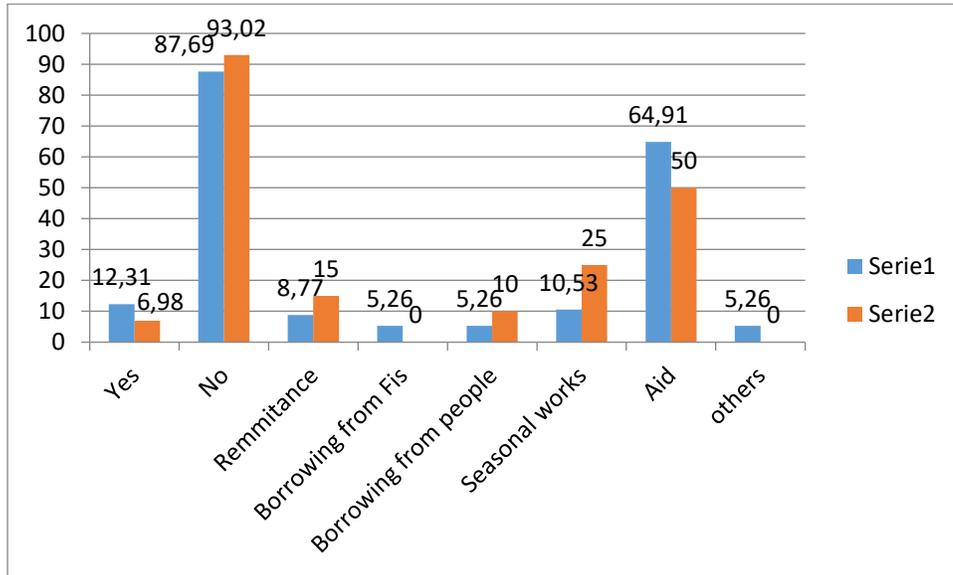
**Graph 4: Parental Occupation and Estimated Monthly Income**



**Source: own survey (2018)**

The graph above 4 indicates that most of the parents of unaccompanied minors are involved in the following occupations: agriculture (58.14%), pity trade and commerce (26.15%), animal rearing (2.33%), civil servant (0.833) and vocational activities (23.26%). While the remaining are reported unemployed (3.08%). This clearly shows that the major source of livelihood is agriculture. Information gathered from the respondents affirmed that though agriculture is the backbone of their livelihood, it is not productive and the existing land is small and not fertile at the same time. Thus, the study area is prone to drought and poverty. The same is also for the income they have between 500-1000 incomes in majority per month which is not enough to feed the household.

**Graph 5: Parental Income Sufficiency and Additional Source of Income**



**Source: own survey (2018)**

When we see the income adequacy and source of additional income most (87.69%) of the respondents or parents replied that their income is low and inadequate, they rather get additional source of income through different mechanisms. The dominant additional source of income is aid (64.91%) and other source of income includes seasonal work, remittance and borrowing. Thus, the residents of the area are affected by poverty, their occupation cannot yield a source of livelihood for their family.

In addition to the above graphs that show the economic status of parents of minors, all most all interviewed parents, officials, and unaccompanied minors have asserted that poverty is the one that takes lion share for the migration of the children. The minors have expressed, they have the ambition and vision by migrating into other states to help themselves and their destitute family. This assertion is also revealed during all the FGD conducted. To substantiate the problem, here is the verbatim of the parents, and children's:

*[.....]The main reason for migration in our area is poverty. We do not have farm land and there is no business activity, since this area is border affected by war. We get 15kg food assistance from the government, which is the only means for survival. Following this many children from our surrounding migrate illegally to other states*

*to help themselves and their families (Male Parent of Unaccompanied children from Zalambesa 06/08/2018).*

*I have migrated to Eritrea when I was 13 years old because my mother and father were usually in dispute. My father were not assisting my mother economically. It was only my mother that was responsible to help the family by engaging in small business. We were also living in rent house. Finally they have got divorced. I was observing here-mother-worrying too much to feed the family. After that, I have an uncle in Eritrea since my mother is Eritrean then I fled to Eritrea (Male minor from Zalambesa, 06/08/2018).*

*Instead of wasting time being at home having dozens of economic question the children in our community prefer to move into other states keeping in their mind all the evils that they can most probably face in their journey. The children have nothing to fear than the evil poverty they grow through. I myself was seventeen while I decided to migrate irregularly to Saudi Arabia before 4 years, because of the poverty in our family. Thanks to Allah, I come back home alive facing all the painful hardships (Male returnee unaccompanied minor from Raele, 09/08/2018)*

The above story is a shared story of many children in the community. All returned migrant youths raveled that no child even youth is amusing to depart from his/her family in the early ages but deep rooted poverty at family and absence of job opportunity for the children who are potential youths of the community forced individuals to join the hazardous migration process.

On the same vain, interviewed officials from *Zalambesa* has pointed out that the major problem responsible for the involvement of unaccompanied minors is the existing abject poverty. According to the officials, particularly areas around Zalambesa and Zalambesa is a vulnerable for food shortage, because, *first* the area is war torn area that is devastatingly impacted by the Ethio-Eritrean war and *second* the natural and made causality has also negative impact on food security. It is not only the war that has spillover effect on economic security of the resident but also the continuing “No War No Peace” situation. Particularly those in Zalambesa Town, they do not have farm land and at the same time the business activity is very weak and the community at large is dependent on food safety net afforded by the government. Consequently the food is not sufficient, some are dependent on remittance from abroad family member that migrate both through the legal and illegal means. Due to this problem, many adult and young children prefer to migrate to ensure economic security that they lack at home. Then the children see their older brother and sister as a role model and they themselves have the plan for migration. It is normal to see in all most all of the study area children’s

have a plan for migration and consider migration as a best means of better life. Most of the children stay with their family to reach grade 10 and some dropout their school and involve in irregular migration. According to the officials since they did not attend their schooling because of poverty and other additional factors their level of scoring points to grade 11 is minimal and it is also against their interest. One parent in Zalambesa has said “all of our children’s are migrating into other states and domestically because of the poverty that we have. If you find some children’s they are addicted of alcohol and lost vision, but those who want to have bright future did not stay here”. All most similar response is forwarded from all study area.

One thing that should be noted, the people in Zalambesa are optimistic of the ongoing peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. They have said that if the peace process is successful then there is a better future and hope in the sense that they will engaged in trade and commerce that would emancipate them from economic problem and the rate of minor migration will be reduced in particular and whole outmigration in general.

To sum up, the graphs and discussions implies that poverty is one of the major driving force for the migration of unaccompanied minor in the study area. Thus, to escape economic hardship and live for better tomorrow minors are migrating into other states facing all the challenges and risks in the journey.

#### **B. Lack of land**

Absence of arable land is also mentioned by the participants as a major cause for migration. Interviewed respondent have expressed that most of the existing land is not arable, it is mountainous that cannot be used for farming. Even the existing land is small in size that cannot be distributed to the youth because of density of population.

The absence of arable land is worst in *Irob Woreda* and *Saese-Tsaeda-Emba* that is characterized by chain of mountains with less farm land and even the existing mountains are deforested because of manmade and natural calamities. This comparison, however, is in relative sense but all the study area suffer from shortage of farming land. To compensate this deficient there is no also trade movement and industry. Thus, households of the *Woreda*’s are dependent on food aid from the government for their survival. Minors does not have potential to stay in their home and engage in

farming. Other opportunities that help minors involve potentially in animal breeding and beef are rare. Then, as a best alternative they decide to migrate into other states.

### **C. Unemployment**

The prevalence of unemployment is also stated by the participants as root cause for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. During the FGD, discussants affirm that the children's involve into migration because there is no job opportunity. When potential unaccompanied minors are asked why you plan to migrate? They have responded that there is no job here and we plan to migrate in search of job.

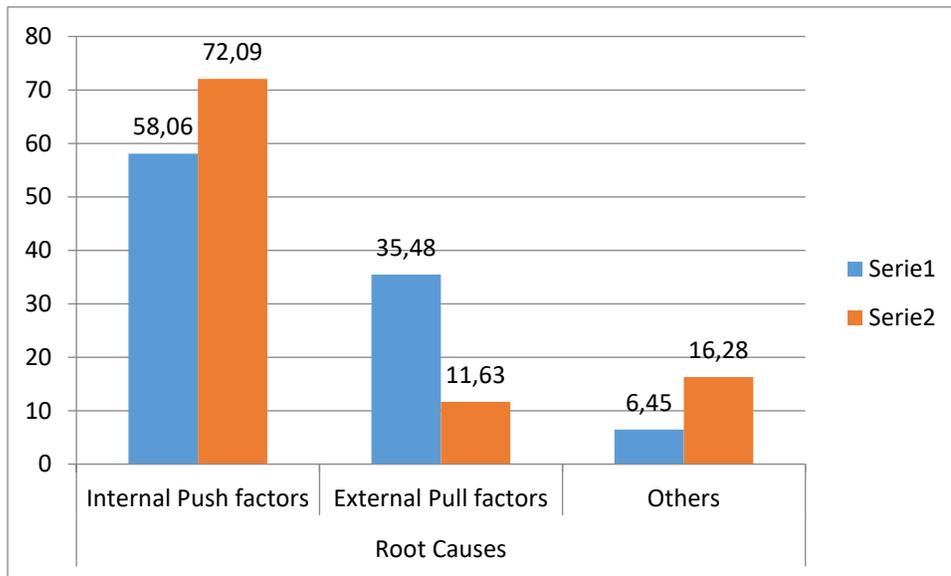
Particularly potential unaccompanied minors from Zalambesa has expressed that we are affected by the "No War No Peace" situation of the Ethio-Eritrean. There is no farming, industry (even single factory), business activity and small and micro enterprise that can employ the youth, due to this reason the youth and minors plan to migrate. The minors added that, if there is vacancy by the government it is for soldier and police positions. Because of this most children prefer to involve into illegal migration to escape themselves from being burden of their family and support their destitute family in return.

### **D. Lack of Educational Schools and Centers of Vocational Training**

At normal circumstances children are expected to attend education. But in the absence of educational opportunities children think to generate income being involved in different task. Similarly in *Haw'ele* and *Ra'ele* Children's terminate school because of absence of nearby high school and vocational training and involve in irregular migration. According to the information obtained from the residents in *Haw'ele* and *Ra'ele* access to education is only available up to grade Eight. After children's accomplish their primary education, they need to travel several kilometers to *Edaghamus* on foot to get secondary and preparatory school. This challenge of access to education causes children's leave schooling and put their foot for irregular migration journey. According to the interviewed key informants school dropout is high is all *Tabias* of the *Saessie Tsaeda'emba Woreda*.

In addition to the above qualitatively discussed data of respondents pertaining to the structural cause for the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration, collected quantitative data replicates the same result. The following paragraph shows the structural cause of migration in degree and extent.

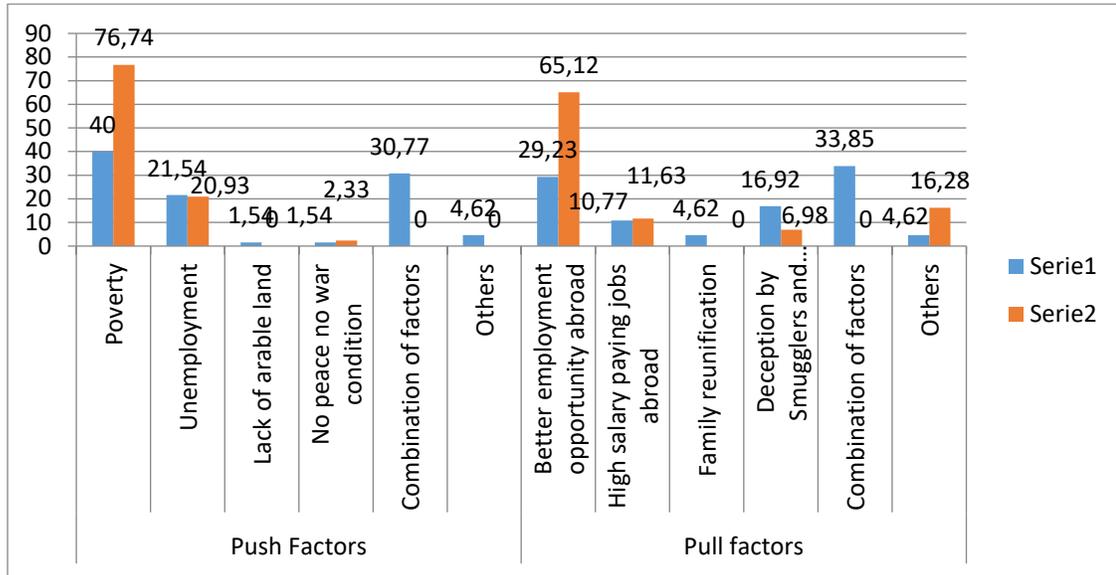
**Graph 9: Structural Causes of Migration**



**Source: Own survey (2018)**

As depicted in the above graph, the internal push factors are the major one composing of 72.09% comparing the external challenge that constitute 35.48%. However, the pull factors which accounts 35.48% is not one that cannot be looked down. Therefore, migration of unaccompanied minors is caused by both push and pool factors.

**Graph 10: Push and Pull Factors**



**Source: Own survey (2018)**

As illustrated in the above table, the push factors for the migration of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration from the major to this list is; poverty(76.74%), unemployment(21.54), lack of arable land(1.54), no peace no war situation(1.54), combination of factors(30.77) and others(4.62). Similarly, the pull factors in series are; better employment (29.23), combination of factors (33.85) deception by brokers (16.92), high salary paying (10.77), and family reunification (4.62). The implication is that both the results of interview and questionnaires' indicate the same result pertaining to the structural causes of migration. In conclusion both the statistical data and qualitative finding shows similar data that unaccompanied minors are primarily forced to involve in irregular migration because of the above stated push and pull factors.

### **3.4.2. Triggering Causes/Factors**

The triggering factors that force the minors to involve into irregular migration are diverse and many in type. However, the subsequent part presents the major triggering factors that is discussed by the respondent. But, the triggering factors should not be seen in isolation of the structural cause since they are the byproducts of the structural cause one or the other way. Thus, to have better understanding about the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration taking the causes mutually without exclusion is vital.

### **A. Family Pressure**

Pressure from family is found to be one of the triggering factor for unaccompanied minor to migrate. Interviewed parents, officials, and even minor themselves have pointed out that some parents pressurize their children to migrate elsewhere and subsidize the remaining family member through sending remittance. The parents of the minor are influenced by successful friends of their children abroad. Consequently, they influence their children one way or the other, for their children to take the same measure. To this end, some parents negotiate with brokers to facilitate the journey for their children but also pledge they will keep it secret and confidential for every risk to their children that might face. Thus, parents are directly involved in decision making of their children migration weather to migrate or not. In relation to this one returned youth stated that:

*In our village most families push their children to think about migration. They also participate in preparing finance for the cost of journey either by selling their assets or borrowing in the form of loan. Parents not only finance but also give moral confidence for their children to migrate. They promise that, they will cover all the financial requests once incase their children is handed to the brokers, smugglers and trafficker on the process of journey (Male returnee unaccompanied minor from Sasun, 07/08/2018).*

The same family pressure is apparent in all the study areas either directly or indirectly. The above narration of the story of the respondent is shared by many migrants' minors. One thing that should be noted is that, the influence of the family is not ought to be direct and overt. There are families that influence their children to involve in irregular migration by just defaming and insulting as their children is wasting age without having any asset while his/her friends have asset and sending money to their relatives by going outside.

### **B. Peer Pressure**

Interviewed key informants and parents of the minor assert that some minors leave Ethiopia because of peer pressure. In line with this, during the interview process returnee unaccompanied minors have elucidated that they involve in irregular migration because they see their friend, sibling and other relatives are migrating into Israel, Saudi-Arabia, and Italy. Particularly the peer pressure is more prevalent in areas where many adult and unaccompanied minors flow, that primarily includes places such as *Saese-Tsaeda-Emba, Irob* and *Zalambesa*. The ease in communication technology makes the peer pressure to be escalated in highest rate. Communication

technology help potential unaccompanied minor to easily access information's pertaining the situation of successful relatives and friends abroad. This situation exacerbates the ambition and interest of the minors to migrate. The following is the verbatim of the children that indicates on how they migrate and how friendship influence them:

*Children in our community tend to migrate irregularly observing that some of their peers return home with something new that the other peers remain home have not. Therefore to have this new one (probably economic asset) children decide to migrate irrespective of the hurdles they may face in the process of journey (Unaccompanied minor from Sobeya, 07/082018)*

*[.....] I was around 14 years when I migrate to Eritrea. We were three friends, together we said let`s go to Eritrea because we all have relatives in Eritrea then we left Ethiopia to Eritrea. After we arrive in Eritrea they sent us into Tigray People Movement for Democracy. That is must if both of your parents are Ethiopian [.....] (Returnee unaccompanied children from Zalambesa, 06/08/2018).*

From the above verbatim of the children and data gathered from parents and officials of the study area peer pressure is found one of the triggering factors that force the children to involve in irregular migration.

### **C. Low Level of Societal Awareness**

Irregular migration is risky and hazardous both for the migrants and their family too. However, due to the low level of societal awareness on the severity of irregular migration, the involvement of children and youth in irregular migration is at increasing rate. Families consider irregular migration as an option to generate income and eliminate poverty. Most of the key informants considered awareness problem and positive popular perception of migration in the society as main socio- cultural driving force. According to the key informants, individuals consider irregularly migrating and working abroad as the best means of emancipating of themselves and their families from poverty and destitution.

According to the resident respondents in the localities of *Ganta Afeshum and Tsai'essie Tsaeda Emba Woreda* the youths consider the available jobs in the community or other employment opportunities in other parts of the country as very menial activity with low payment that cannot improve one's economic status. For that matter some youths lack intent and initiation to be enrolled even in local public services and other income generating lower private activities. Instead they

prefer to go abroad. When students also fail in their educational endeavor, they consider migrating as best alternative to avoid shame of that failure.

Almost all interviewed key informants believe that, low level of awareness and positive public popular perception towards migration is the main causes for many children to leave their home country. Even some *Tabya* Administrators push their children to leave home and involve in irregular migration with the hope of their children will add some material or financial wealth of the family. Thus, because of this phenomenon in the community, culture of migration is associated with personal, social and material success. This makes the involvement of youth in irregular migration as habit in the community. Furthermore, mentality of the children and youths to be rich working in short period of time is also accompanied with the principle of “*either I have to be rich in short period of time or die*”. According to the key informants view, this perception of the youth is the main cause for the pervasiveness of children’s involvement in irregular migration in the community.

However, this is not to ignore the fact that potential migrants as well as the parents are not aware of the challenges faced in the migration process, they do in fact understand as migration can invoke serious challenges to the extent of death, but there is imbalance of perception between the success and risks of irregular migration. All most all tend to assume as they can manage the challenges encountered in the journey and destination state. This perception by itself is not healthy and needs some intervention that is intended to create awareness.

#### **D. Lack of Good Governance**

Good governance is an instrument to build economically, socially and politically stable society. In the absence of good governance societies frustrate about their future. In the study area the issue of good governance is found to be the cause for migration. Almost all of the interviewed respondents confirm that, the administration of their respective *Woreda* faces deficit of good governance aspect in meeting and mitigating youth focused programs, hence, the youths flee the community in search of better environment. All interviewees from different *Tabyas* of the study area stated that, due to the lack of good governance in their *Tabya*, *Worda* and *Zonal* level of administration significant children forced to leave their homeland in their early age.

Most interviewed youths claim that, the overall system of governance is mal, so that the children and youths couldn't access their right economic right, mainly the right to get rural land, right to housing, right to get job opportunities. Thus, the youth prefer to flee than fight the chaotic bureaucracy. Similarly the children feel their future is gloomy take lesson from their elders and the youth in the community and thus decide to involve in irregular migration in their early age.

The respondents bitterly claim that, the government policy of both rural and urban land, the criteria and time span to get loan and even identity card is the most awful form of mal-governance that forces children to leave their home and be involved in the dangerous process of irregular migration.

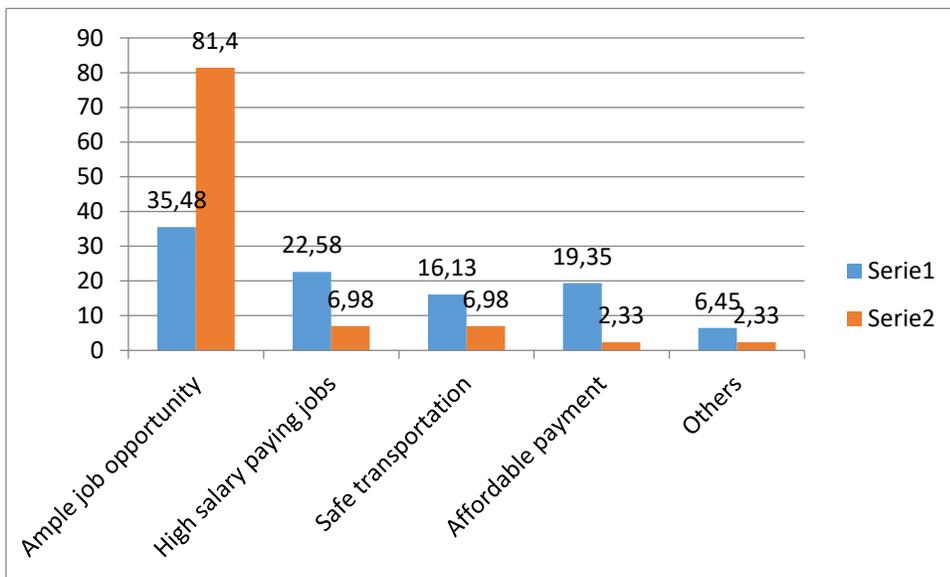
### **E. The Prevalence of Brokers**

Though the structural cause for the migration of the children is for granted. The existence of brokers and their false promise is one of the escalating factor for the prevalence of migration of the children. Though there are some children that began the migration alone, but most migrants from Eastern Zone of Tigray uses the service of brokers to reach into destination states. What makes the existence of brokers impactful is at the first instance they do not ask for the children money. The brokers arrange the cost of journey, food, transport cost and other necessary cost. The challenge comes after they cross the border and reach in Sudan or any other state, after that the children are expected to pay huge amount of money. Then the children give a call to their relatives in Ethiopia or abroad in need of assistance. Those who failed to pay are subject to multitude human rights violation ranging from psychological torture to sexual abuse. Concerning to the role of brokers, returned migrants provided as follow:

*With the objective of raising money from each migrant, the brokers in our community persuade children and youths to migrate to Arab countries mainly Saudi-Arabia and change the economic problem facing to them and their families in a short period of time. To galvanize massive migrants the brokers disseminate positive information within the community about the safety of the migration process and the availability of job opportunities and good payments in the destination states. Hearing the promises of the brokers and the economic problems children are expected to join the risky irregular migration (Returnee unaccompanied minor from Saese-Tsaeda-Emba, 09/08/2018).*

In order to raise more money through mobilizing more migrants the brokers also instruct some other individual migrants to recruit some other potential migrants from their community. If they become successful to bring other 10 migrants, the brokers in turn freed cost journey for these individuals. By doing this and trough disseminating of fabricated information the brokers exploit the heart and minds of the youths and children for irregular migration including minor girls from each *Tabya*/village. The following table show the tactics that the brokers use to deceive the migrants.

**Graph 11: Deception Tactics Used by the Brokers and Traffickers**



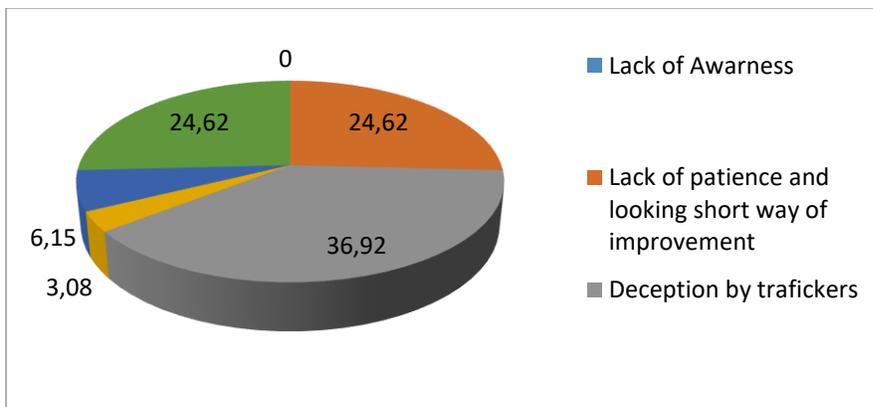
**Source: own survey (2018)**

As depicted in the graph above the brokers use different mechanisms to deceive the potential migrant children. All the tactics are false promise ranging from saying there is ample job opportunity (81.4%), high salary (22.58%), and safe transportation into destination state (6.98%), affordable payment (19.35%) and others (6.45%).

However, the brokers are very much invisible to the children themselves and even the parents have said that they are just like spirit that cannot be seen. They simply order you through many phones to travel to one place and to take rest and to eat food. Whatever they do is too much full of secrecy. Returned interviewee unaccompanied children have revealed that they did not know who help them to travel, they were simply moving through the order of cellphone.

### Chart 12: Triggering Factors

In the preceding paragraph several structural causes have been seen driving or forcing unaccompanied minors cross their border wishing the bread of hope. However, behind these push and pull factors forcing for attracting the potential migrants there are also other significant variables or factors that exacerbate irregular migration. The chart below shows that the involvement of smugglers and human traffickers is equally significant comprising (36.92), lack of awareness (24.62), lack of patience and looking for a short way to change (24.62%) and the remaining are due to other factors such as family, pressure, migration syndrome, strong community and individual networks.



#### Source: Own Survey (2018)

In general nowadays additional factors other than the push factors are also playing significant role as triggering cause worsening the involvement of unaccompanied minor in irregular migration in the study area.

### **3.5. Challenges and Risks of Irregular Migrants**

When individuals migrate irregularly, they commonly face envisaged and actual challenges to their security mainly economic, personal and physical aspect of human security. The impact is nastiest when the irregular migrants are children. Thus, the actual predicament of life occurs starting from the begging of the journey up to the arrival in the destination country. Challenges to human dignity particularly can also sustain while the migrants are living within the destination countries or while are returned back to their home country being a victim of smuggling or possibly trafficking.

As to the informants view obtained through in-depth informant interview with returned migrants from different localities of the study area, threats and actual risks for unaccompanied minors involved in irregular migration is common everywhere in the journey. That means children and youths perish while crossing the border of transit and destination countries being travelling in jungles, the sea and desert routes. Again migrants face violations to their fundamental right, dignity and wellbeing while leaving in the destination countries. Let's first see the risks and threats to the personal and physical security of irregular during the journey.

#### **3.5.1. Risks and Hazardous Condition during the Journey**

As the information shared from informants both successful and failed irregular migrants from Eastern Tigray community shows; the smugglers smuggle the migrants around the borders that are not easily controlled by the border security officers/guards of home, transit and destination countries. So as not to be intercepted by the border guards, most of the journey is done at night and through unknown places. Some times when migrants face security borders, either the smugglers have to corrupt them or advise the migrants' to run away and hide. During this time the border guards can shoot at the irregular migrants and cause physical injuries or total murder. This is consistent with the findings of Grant (2005) which indicated that, if governments tighten their borders without creating conducive situation for regular migration flow, migrants forced to use more expensive, risky and dangerous migration routes.

Informants mainly returned migrants argued that, the voyage is messy, complex and unknown which is dangerous to the physical and personal security especially for unaccompanied children and separated children. Crossing wave of the sea using rickety boats and vessels with offloaded and confined migrants is ever shaky. Key informants also stated that, unprecedented irregular migrants perish in the journey from shipwrecking and sank of boat in different sea routes. This is

reinforced by other previous findings. For instance, Human Rights Watch (2014) has pointed out that, Ethiopian irregular migrants sank in Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean every year while hoping to arrive in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Gulf states. Besides, the findings of ILO (2011) also indicated that, many Ethiopians irregular migrants including children sank in the Mediterranean Sea together with other African migrants while they attempt to enter European countries.

Informants of in-depth informant interview point out that, during the journey shortage of water and food for daily consumption is also very common to every irregular migrant. Peoples die from thirsty and hunger while crossing the hot deserts. The following paragraph is taken from the lived experience of an irregular migrant in *Ganta Afeshum Woreda*:

*I remember when I was in terrible journey to cross the Djibouti desert to enter Yemen; I finished the water I have. Other migrants cannot give me since water in the desert is a matter of survival. At that time I decided to drink my pee. So for me, when you are deciding to cross the desert routes on foot you have to know also you are deciding yourself to lose your life( Returnee unaccompanied minor from Sasun, 06/08/2018).*

The above story is what the informant has faced personally. However, that informant adds also, smugglers and traffickers do immoral and inhuman acts to migrants during the journey. Most of the interviewed informants also confirm that, female migrants are commonly forced or kidnaped for sexual intercourse with smugglers, traffickers, gangs and drug dealers in the passage to Yemen or Saudi Arabia. This is reinforced by Human Rights Watch (2014) report which indicated that, Yemeni traffickers in and around *Haradh* performs horrific brutal measure on irregular migrants to make money through captive and transporting them to isolated torturing camps. To extort money from the migrants' family and friends in Ethiopia or abroad, traffickers inflict severe pain on the migrants through raping, beating, ripping off their fingernails, burning the cartilage of their ears, branding their skin with irons, gouging out their eyes and breaking their bones (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Participants of in-depth informant interview also indicated that, while facing the sun, hot desert and jungles of the journey some evil smugglers and pimps separate male and female migrants in order to abuse the females for forced sex. Even they separate migrating brothers and sisters for

that purpose. Consequently many female migrants expose to unwanted pregnancies, higher risk of contracting HIV as well as other STDs. Community members of FGD discussants and key informants also assured that, these are witnessed reported victim cases of different individuals from among the returned irregular migrants within the Easter Tigray community mainly *Saessie Tsaeda Emba Woreda*.

Substantial in-depth interview informants and key informants assert that, smugglers use duress of coercion as means of raising money from the irregular migrants. They beat, chase and confine the irregular migrants to cause psychological strain or instill anxiety so as to raise the amount of money they seek. Smugglers/traffickers violate various rights of the unaccompanied minor and separated children victims so as to ensure compliance, control and take maximum advantage. The traffickers or smugglers physically abuse and torture irregular migrants as means to instill anxiety, control and obedience. By doing this, they endanger and complicate the security, safety and health situation of minor irregular migrants.

From the actual lived experiences of the returned irregular migrants, the researchers concludes that; abduction, extortion, extreme physical torture, enslavement, rape, human organ harvesting and trading are the most common risks that irregular migrants from eastern *Tigray* community face during the journey of crossing borders, desert and sea routes everywhere of the Eastern and Western irregular migration routes.

### **3.5.2. Risks and Threats to the Personal and Physical Security of the Migrants at the Destination States**

In-depth interview informants of returned migrants stated that, up on the arrival in the destination place; irregular migrants are not allowed to work at different conducive places due to the restriction policy of immigrants by the governments of destination states. Thus, the irregular migrants may intercept by the border guards during the entrance to the territory of the destination country or can be controlled by the internal security officers/police while living in the destination countries. Consequently, irregular migrants face beatings, detention and deportation without accumulating the money spent for transportation cost. Unaccompanied minors that migrate into Eritrea joins the opposing military movement, which is attributed as child soldier. The verbatim of the children regarding the challenge in the journey and after they arrive in Eritrea is illustrated as follows:

*[.....]It was not challenging to reach into Eritrea since it is nearby. However, after I arrived into Eritrea I did not meet my uncle. The Eritrean military send me to Tigray People Democratic Movement. After I joined the military group I have received political education and military training. My stay there for about four year was full of hardship. We were working in farming, construction and other activities without having enough rest, we walk up in the early morning and we work the whole day without rest till evening. The food that we get was not also enough. If I did not go to farm I prepare food and fetch water with children's like me [.....] (Returnee unaccompanied minor from Zalambesa, 06/08/2018).*

*I have left to Eritrea in 2004 when I was around 14 years. It was not as such difficult to cross the border since we know the place well. It was to meet relatives that I crossed the border with three of my friends. However, the Eritrean military official sent us to Tigray People Movement for Democracy, you will be sent if both of your parents are Ethiopian regardless of your relatives there. After we joined the military we have received political indoctrination and all the mal administration in Tigray and we are obliged to fight it militarily. They all the time educate us the negative side of the government of Ethiopia. Some trust and others not, but I have trusted it. But both those who believe and not are obliged to perform a duty. Those who reject to perform duty face psychological punishment and some who attempt to escape even death. Thus, fearing this circumstance you will serve without questioning. My stay there for about 12 year is a waste in my life. When I see it now they have consumed my age for nothing. I am now not educated, some of my age opportunity are lost. It is really sad!!!(Returnee unaccompanied minor from Zalambesa, 06/082018).*

Irregular migrants are always afraid of the migration regulatory mechanisms of the host countries at the border and inside of the border. This respondent view is reinforced by the findings of other studies like Assefaw (2014) and Pécoud & Guchteneire (2006). These findings indicate that, since irregular migrants are considered as illegal non-citizen migrants, they are increasingly seen as a problem to the national security of the transit and destination countries. Having this perception, the governments of destination countries launch restrictive migration policies. Consequently they arrest and deport irregular migrants at entry of transit/destination places. In-depth interview informants assert that, security officers and police of the destination countries also takes irregular migrants in to prison indefinitely in dismal conditions at different detention camps.

Returned migrants argue that, separated irregular migrant children's' dignity is up to the tolerating condition of the governments, communities and moral conscience of the employer in the

destination states. In most cases once female children employed as house servants in various Arab Muslim countries they are asked to change their names into Muslim names and are told to learn the Quran and pretend to be Muslim. The non-Muslim domestic workers are often pressured to participate in religious practices of their employers. When the employers are evil they threaten the economic, personal and physical security of the migrants. Since irregular migrants have illegal status in the destination countries they cannot claim for that. Thus, irregular migrants commonly expose to heavy workloads with no leisure, physical or sexual abuse, torture, restriction of movement, debt bondage, forced labour, underpayment or delayed payment of wages and threat of denunciation to authorities.

To this end, key informants have pointed out that, female child migrants suffer from physical and emotional abuse within the house they employed. Thus, employers cause physical injuries to the domestic workers via disfiguring by the boiling water, burning with plastics on their skins, spilling chemical on their body. Some who were unable to sustain the pressure and abuse hurt themselves when trying to escape by jumping from through the building of high floors. Some others also try to commit suicide by swallowing cleaning detergent and hanging themselves.

Some other informants disclose that, irregular migrants cannot access to basic social amenities like healthcare and denied contact with their families via telephone. Sometimes the employers confiscate the daily or monthly wage salary of the irregular migrant workers. During this time, migrants cannot do anything since they know that, they haven't legal status to enter and work in that country. This is what most irregular migrants especially women face in the Arab countries.

Generally all in-depth and key informant interview participants underscore that; starting from the departure up to the working condition of the destination countries life is difficult being unaccompanied irregular migrant. The state of vulnerability and fear in which the brokers, traffickers and employers keep their victims causes myriad adverse consequences on the economic, personal, physical security as well as mental health situation of the victim migrants. Thus, the perilous journey to the destination, the abuse and exploitation in the hands of smugglers, the hazardous or atrocious working conditions have long lasting impact on the lives of victims.

### **3.6. Techniques Used by Irregular Migrants to Escape Hazardous Conditions and Risks**

To reach the destination countries inevitably, irregular migrants have to face hazardous conditions, different forms of violence, exploitation and associated risks during the journey. So as to escape and minimize the risks and threats, migrants employ different wise mechanisms. In relation to this returned migrants revealed that, to avoid death in the deserts from hunger and thirsty irregular migrants gather durable food and enough water. To escape torture and other forms of violence from the brokers and traffickers migrants have to have money of their own at home with any they can trust him/her to send them when the migrants in custody are required to do so. If they don't have their own money they have to call their families, relatives or any one at home or abroad who can save their life from the hand of the evil traffickers through transferring lucrative money in bid of the troubled migrants. If unable to raise the required money, the migrants lobby to evoke pity of the brokers/bandits and thus can save their life until they get the necessary money. Again if migrants are trapped at the border of transit states or entry of destination states, the irregular migrants do whatever possible to bribe the border security guards so to reach to the destination place.

For female migrants to escape rape and sexual harassment during the journey, they preferred to migrate with their brothers, husbands or close relatives. So they can protect them from of the brokers, smugglers, borders security guards and possibly migrants. According to one key informant, fearing the rape they can probably face at the journey or at the destination states, potential teenage irregular migrant girls decide to lose their virginity with whom the love before they started the journey.

In addition in order to avoid all treats and risks emanated from barriers of language and other socio-cultural differences the potential migrants are obliged to learn and adopt Arabic and the Arabs religious and cultural practices. Even the Christian migrants have to change their name in to Muslim name, their dressing style to Arab dressing style and they have to pretend praying to Alah as the Islam believers do.

Similar with the above assertion, in-depth interview participants assert that, to escape from interception at borders, irregular migrants forced to travel long, risky and dangerous migration routes. Again, to enjoy relative treatment in transit and destination countries, sometimes migrants

change their identity and name. Regarding the changing of name and identity, one informant of returned migrant has expressed as following:

*In most cases irregular migrants from Ethiopia changes their identity and name after they leave the country and arrive at the transit and destination countries like Sudan, Libya, Egypt or other Muslim countries. In most cases the local brokers and smugglers advice the Ethiopian migrants to change their national identity to Eritrean national or their names to Muslim name. The reason why the migrants forced and advised to change their name and national identity is emanated mainly, due to the differential treatment of the irregular migrants based on their national identity and religious status by the Arab traffickers, governmental authorities, employers and border guards both at the transit and destination countries(returnee unaccompanied minor from Irob, 09/08/208).*

### **3.7. Consequences of Involvement in Irregular Migration**

Since irregular migrants are expected to travel crossing deadly deserts and seas it is risky and hazardous. Thus, the consequence of children's involvement in irregular migration is first so ghastly to the economic, personal and physical, security of the children migrants themselves. Again since the economic, personal and physical security context of the children's involved in irregular migrants have its own consequence on the situation of their families and the community at large.

#### **A. Deaths and Physical Injuries**

As discussed above, the extent of children's involvement in irregular migration is lofty in Easter Zone of Tigray especially in the localities of *Woreda Erob, Gulomekeda, Ganta Afeshum and Tsa'essie Tsaeda Emba*. Since the most commonly used channel of migration is illegal it common for such communities to seat in mourning for death of individuals involved in irregular migration. According to the informants view, it is weekly news for having reported death of children and youth migrants. Children migrants perish while crossing the border of transit and destination countries being travelling in jungles, the sea and desert routes. One key informant raised the physical and emotional abuses together with the absence of medical care that results serious physical injuries/disabilities such as broken legs/limbs, possible occurrence of mental health problems. Again migrants face violations to their fundamental right, dignity and wellbeing while leaving in the destination countries.

According to the view of the interviewed returned migrants, every migrant that involved in irregular migration process is the most likely to face threat, hunger, detention, torture, abuse or any form of physical injury either by the brokers, security guards or the employees at the destination state. In order to raise many the brokers/bandits deter, beat rape and abuse the migrants during the journey. As a result there are many reported cases of death and physical injuries of children in eastern zone of Tigray.

### **B. Family Crisis**

The FGD discussants recognize that, massive involvement of unaccompanied children in irregular migration has also devastating effects directly and indirectly on the family of migrants as well as the whole community experiencing massive irregular out flow. Interviewed key informants argued that, though family may feel the negative impact directly or indirectly but the fact is that, every aspect of the victim's adverse situation has an impact on the situation of migrants' family which is the very existence of the social unit. In eastern Tigray, family members support their children to be involved in irregular migration process in the expectation of their children will enrich working abroad and in turn support his/her parents at home. Thus, families are likely to sell their assets and borrow from other community members to raise money and finance the transportation cost of their children. As a result to the FGD discussants, families of migrants exposed for financial and moral crisis in case when their children is captured and exploited by the smugglers or traffickers in the process of the journey. Since migrants start the journey considering their families or friends at home/abroad as source of finance once they fall under the exploitation of the smugglers and traffickers, the families indebted to pay ransom for the traffickers or smugglers in bid of release of their children.

In case of worst incidents, families lose their lovely children's perishing in the seas and deserts once forever. Again when a migrant child's returned with an injury or under serious health condition, it is also an additional burden to the family. When men and women's leave home, some families remain without Care and support of their children at home. On the other hand, when father and mother leave home for migration children's left alone without necessary help and protection of their parents. The possible consequence is that, disintegration of family and marriage as well as increased vulnerability of young children and old parents left behind by their mothers or fathers and working children respectively.

### **C. Social Crisis**

The consequences of cross border irregular migration is not limited to the household/family level only; rather it also impacts greatly on the community experiencing massive out flow of residents at large. Due to the high extent of illegal migration among the children and youths in *Ganta Afeshum and Tsa'essie Tsaeda Emba* elders are living alone home. Sending their children abroad it is common to see elders keeping animals, fetching water and facilitating all agricultural activities. According to the focus group discussion in Ganta-Afeshum Worea, rural churches are closed lacking children servants. Since children and youths involve in irregular migration massively, every social responsibility is entrusted to the incapable elders.

The more discernible effects at societal levels are: loss of productive workforce, social problems arising from broken families and children growing up without a parent(s) care. The young men and women are perishing everywhere in the deserts and seas. Thus, the society is losing its succeeding generation to survive as community. Thus, the healthy functioning of the community is at risk because of massive irregular migration at each locality.

Most horrible the key informants reveal, child girls that are involved in irregular migration are most likely to be abducted and raped during the journey or up on their arrival at the destination states. Once the migrant reach the risky deserts and forests, the brokers or smugglers rape girls. Thus, the girls are vulnerable for different, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and unwanted pregnancy and end up being burden of their family and the community once they returned home. All in all hence the children are massively flooding the community is vulnerable to all forms of social calamity.

### **D. Poverty**

Interviewed respondents confirm that, families are source of fund for their child who is already involved in irregular migration. As a result parents lost their money and property. All of the interviewed returned migrants display that, financial exploitation of migrants or their families by the brokers, smugglers and traffickers is the prime consequence that emanates from the vulnerability situation of irregular migrants in the process. According to key informant interview in *Tabiya Sasun*;

*Most migrants especially children students start the journey without having sufficient money at hand. But once they leave Ethiopia and handed over the mercy of the brokers/smugglers they have to call their poor family to do whatever they can. At this time parents have no choice at all but to sell their asset or borrow money to save their child/daughter. And this in turn seriously damages the economy of the family. Again in case the migrants in question returns back with failed migration process without accumulating money or any asset the poverty at family level will sustain last long(Key informants interview from Sasun, 06/08/2015).*

Furthermore, returned migrants reveal that, in order to exploit fiancé money the brokers/smugglers detain the migrants and force them to bring money or call their parents. Thus, to save the life of their children families must raise the required money. As a result families sell whatever asset they have or borrow from someone or indebted from Banks/financial institutions.

### **3.8. Coping Mechanisms taken by Individuals**

According to the information gathered from most informants, the potential migrants try to utilize every opportunity at home country before they leave their home country. For instance most returned migrants reveal that, before they migrated somewhere else, most of them preferred to engage in different income generating activities like petty trade, construction, laborer, irrigation, small and micro enterprise activities. In relation to the coping mechanisms taken by individuals the following are views of returned respondents from *Haw'ele* and *Ra'ele Tabyas* of *Sassie Tsaeda Emba Woreda*.

*Before my journey to Saudi Arabia, I was thinking to change my life being engaged in small and micro-enterprise activities like metal and wood work in this mini-town. However I couldn't afford the payment of house rent and the tax that levied yearly. As alterative I asked the Tabia administrators if they can help me to get land where I can continue my work without rent for the time being. As usual they were reluctant. Thus, at this time I lost hope and decided to migrate irregularly.*

Here is also the view of another youth potential migrant from *Tabia Rae'le*

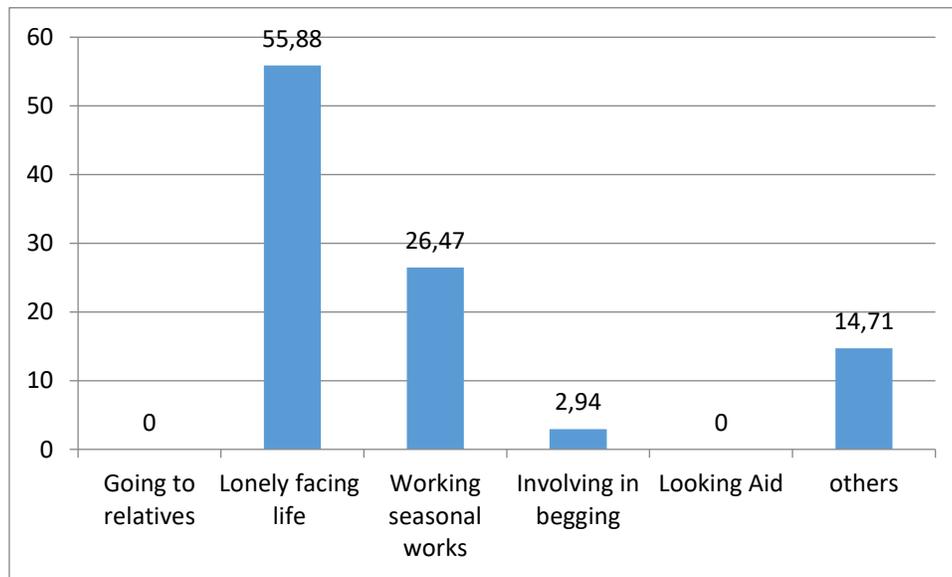
*Personally I need to live in my origin establishing some business, but I don't have enough initial capital rather, I requested to borrow some money from Dedebit micro-finance. It is 4 months since I request them but I found it very bureaucratic though am still hoping. If not successful am thinking migrate irregularly and see what will happen to me though even the worst is yet to come.*

Another female teenager from *Tabya May Mesanu* aged 17 shared her views as follow:

*Unluckily my father and mother are passed away because of natural death. Two of my elder brothers are already migrated to Saudi Arabia. Luckily they arrived safely. Staying home the source my yearly expenditure is the remittance from my brothers. But sometimes I feel lonely and unless either of them returned home I will join them if possible though regular migration process or the irregular one.*

In addition to the above respondents claim that, every one aspires to change his/her life working here but the challenges' are lack of initial capital, routine bureaucracy, bad governance, low payment and absence of free land and loan. Pertaining to the governance issue almost all the key informants, focus group discussants and interviewed youth respondents complain that, the existing local governance system is discouraging to the youth section of the society. Thus, unless these obstacles are rectified massive migration will possibly continue and the destiny of the children is gloomy.

**Graph 13. Individual Coping Mechanisms**



**Source: own survey (2018)**

As it is clearly seen in the graph above children attempt to prevent themselves from the horrors of migration though the roles of coping mechanisms employed are insignificant in reality in the ground. The respondents revealed that about (55.88%) of them face life lonely, 26.47% of them

face working seasonal works as daily laborers, 2.94 of them involve on begging and others use different coping mechanisms. However, qualitative findings obtained through interview revealed that efforts to engage on entrepreneurial activities are weak, the coping mechanisms to are ineffective.

### **3.9. Interventions Made by the Government**

Concerning the interventions made by the government to halt child migration and take some administrative measures there are contradictory views replied from both the government officials and informant youths, parents and the children.

Interviewed official at Zalambesa has pointed out that there is a package that intended to organize and support the youth and children. Our institution gives loan to the youth. However, the commitment and interest of the youths to work is very low. They get bored from the beginning to fill full the criteria to take loans. The criteria to take loan is 20% to 80%. One should save 20,000 Ethiopian Birr to get 80,000 Birr. And most youths and family cannot save 20,000 Ethiopian Birr because of the low level of saving habit. Thus, most youth seriously complain about pre-payment cash and requirement of bail to get loan from the government. In addition most respondents reveal that, those who take loans are not also successful in making sustainable business low skill in customer handling, poor resource management, and some who get loan used it to migrate irregularly elsewhere. Following this many parents of the children and youths visits to the nearby financial institutions to stop providing loan to their children with fear that, the child will uses the loan for financing his her illegal migration. Because of all this complicated and highly bureaucratic issues at the domestic children and youths prefer to irregularly migrate with the limited money they have at hand or borrowing from someone.

On the other hand residents claim that, considering the claims of the youth and the vulnerability of this community living at the border the government fails to devise viable and context specific measures though they know the overall administration systems of the local community is discouraging to the development and economic security of the youth section of the community. Still most of the local community of *Gulo-Mekeda*, *Irob Ganta Afeshum* and *Sassie Tsaeda Emba* is aid dependent, 15kg food staff support from the government in collaboration with international stake holders.<sup>2</sup> Most of interviewed children respond that there is no attempt that is intended to support the youth. One returnee unaccompanied children has responded this way:

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<sup>2</sup> Key informant interviewee5, Official working in Deant from Zalambesea 06/08/2018

*When we see it in general in Zalambesa there is no movement aimed at supporting the youth. Preparing package of education that creates awareness, organizing and giving finance and land that the youth can work is non-existent. If there are some they are given to the relatives of the officials. However, since I came with Molla Asgodem, the government has granted me 30,000 Ethiopian Birr. I now work here and there, I have relatively better life and bright feature.*<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the sustainable measures taken by the government so as to improve the livelihood of the wider community and the youth in particular, the findings reveal contradicting views. Thus, while most interviewed government officials argue that, the government is tirelessly working to the youth who are voluntarily organized to participate in different self-supporting economic activities; on the other hand the interview unaccompanied children and the parent of the children claim that that they are getting less support and emphasis from the government. The parents of the children added that considering the no war no peace situation the government is not giving a due emphasis to the wider suffering community.

All most all respondents have revealed that the government fails to launch a program that would help the youth and children to work in their home country. The respondents both the parents and unaccompanied children have replied that the government does not take effective measures in organizing the youth.. The actual achievement of organizing youth in to different job is not life changing or is nonexistent in some localities. Even the existing job opportunities are menial, because the areas is affected by the long lived Ethio-Eritrea “no war and no peace; situation that have adverse impact in market and investment. As a result most children’s do involve into domestic and international migration.

On the other hand interviewed officials from *Sobeya* confirm that to reduce the rate of irregular migration and unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration government authorities launch public awareness campaign in the form of public meeting, church congregation and other public gatherings. But the official assured that, such activities are not enough to handle the problem and demanded sustainable supports from government and non-government development oriented actors. Despite of these efforts from the government, however, the children and youths prefer to irregularly migrate because they need to bring a drastic change in their life than maintain the subsistence life of the community.

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<sup>3</sup> Key informant interviewee 4, Returnee Unaccompanied children from Zalambesea 06/08/2018

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 4.1. Conclusion

Nowadays irregular migration is a universal social problem. No part of the world is invincible or free of the predicaments of irregular migration; be it in the developed or developing countries, irregular migration is one of the most pressing agenda of the international community. Moreover in this migration process unaccompanied minors are also part and parcel of the migration crisis. Though the prevalence and complexity of unaccompanied minors involvement in irregular migration drastically differs from country to country; the Horn African sub-region is found to be notable for the massive involvement unaccompanied minors in irregular migration. As part and parcel of the migration crisis sub region, Ethiopia in general and Easter Zone Tigray in particular is known for massive involvement of unaccompanied minors' in irregular migration because of different thorny social, economic and intertwined problems.

Eastern Zone of Tigray is the most known for irregular migration at national level. In eastern Zone Tigray irregular migration is habitual practice involving widespread community engagement, community networks and massive youth out flow. The people inhabiting the area are of highly exposed to out migration. As a result the study reveals that, there is high degree of unaccompanied minor involvement in irregular migration. In the study area, unaccompanied minors (both male and female) are vulnerable to of the massive irregular migration out flow of the community.

The structural factors that motivate unaccompanied minors to be involved in irregular migration are; poverty, unemployment (unemployment affects their parents, older sibling and potentially they themselves), lack of access to land( their parents land is very small in size and their older brother have not land because of scarcity of arable land, then the minors does not have the hope to have land in their home in the near future as a solution they prefer to migrate), and lack of educational schools. In addition to the structural causes there are also trigger factors that push unaccompanied minors to participate in irregular migration. These include, family pressure (family of the children influence their children to migrate through direct and indirect act, directly families provide finance and indirectly they humiliate their children as lazy that does not compete with the neighbor children that has migrated and come with some asset), peer pressure, brokers, lack of

good governance/ bureaucratic administration and low level of societal awareness pertaining to the peril of irregular migration.

Having the above structural and trigger factors unaccompanied minors are forced to join the complex and risky irregular migration process. Being defenseless child, and bodily unable to face the risks/challenges of irregular migration process; significant number of unaccompanied minors from join the irregular migration routes. In their way to the destination states, unaccompanied minors are vulnerable to different risks and hazardous conditions emanated from the atrocious and long journey of crossing deserts, jungles and oceans. In the journey unaccompanied minors loss their live from thirty and hunger. In addition unaccompanied minors face detention, beating, financial and labor exploitation, abuse and all forms of violence to their right and dignity from the brokers/traffickers. Especially the female unaccompanied minors are more helpless and susceptible to sexual violence and harassment from traffickers, border guards and other migrants. Sometimes irregular migrants including unaccompanied minors lost their life in their attempt to enter the border of transit/destination states due to shoot to kill policy of border guards at the border.

Up on the arrival in the destination place; irregular migrants are not allowed to work at different conducive places due to the restriction policy of immigrants by the governments of destination states. Thus, irregular migrants face interception by the border guards during the entrance to the territory of the destination and can subject to beatings, detention in dismal conditions and deportation without accumulating the money spent for transportation cost. Separated irregular migrant children's' dignity is up to the tolerating condition of the governments, communities and moral conscience of the employer in the destination states. In most cases female children from Eastern Zone Tigray employed as house servants in various Arab Muslim countries they are asked to change their names into Muslim names and are told to learn the Quran and pretend to be Muslim. The non-Muslim domestic workers are often pressured to participate in religious practices of their employers. When the employers are evil they threat the economic, personal and physical security of the migrants. Thus, irregular migrants commonly expose to heavy workloads with no leisure, physical or sexual abuse, torture, restriction of movement, debt bondage, forced labour, underpayment or delayed payment of wages and threat of denunciation to authorities.

From the actual lived experiences of the returned irregular migrants, the researchers concludes that; abduction, extortion, extreme physical torture, enslavement, rape, human organ harvesting and trading are the most common risks that unaccompanied irregular migrants from Eastern *Tigray* community face during the journey of crossing borders, desert and sea of the Eastern and Western irregular migration routes as well as in the destination countries.

To escape the potential challenges and risks emanated from their involvement irregular migrants employ different unilateral coping mechanisms. To protect thirsty, hunger and violence irregular migrants need to have enough water, food and money respectively. To avoid all treats and risks emanated from barriers of language and other socio-cultural differences the potential migrants are obliged to learn and adopt Arabic and the Arabs religious and cultural practices. Even the Christian migrants have to change their name in to Muslim name, their dressing style to Arab dressing style and they have to pretend praying to Alah as the Islam believers do. For female migrants to escape rape and sexual harassment during the journey, they prefer to migrate with their brothers, husbands or close relatives.

Generally, the study concludes that, involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in Eastern Zone Tigray is pressing social problem that demands genuine intervention of the government and other concerned stakeholders.

#### **4.2. Recommendation**

The findings of this study show that, the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration is massively continuing in Easter Zone Tigray community. Potential child migrants are daily marching to the Western and Eastern migration routes. Thus, unaccompanied minors migrants, separated children, youths, families, and in general the community that is experiencing massive migrants out flow is at risk.

Thus, to mitigate the multifaceted problem of irregular migration and halt the colossal involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration, the study suggests the following specific and general recommendations to the public, government officials and other concerned stakeholders.

- The government and non-government stakeholders should invest on children and youth section of the society.

- Government in collaboration with NGOs(like CISP and others) should initiate social welfare for orphaned children and minors from low income families
- NGOs particularly CISP should continue their unreserved support to dig out such pressing social problems through research and community service.
- The government in partnership with NGOs like CISP should support the returned migrants in cooperation with other stakeholders during the re-integration process to ensure sustainable means of livelihood for the returnee.
- The government should come up with pro-youth land and housing policy.
- The government should create employment opportunities for the youths
- Many respondents reveal that, there is dreadful bureaucracy at the local administration to get loan, identity card and other services. Thus, the government should ease the bureaucratic channels.
- The government should support the returned migrants in cooperation with other stakeholders during the re-integration process to ensure sustainable means of livelihood for the returnee.
- The government, NGOs should initiate mass based awareness raising campaigns about the severity of unaccompanied children involvement in irregular migration and associated risks.
- The government together with the community should tighten the borders that are potentially serving migrants as exit from the country.
- As alternative the government should also allow the regular migration process. By doing this, the severe involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration can be minimized.
- Government and community should bring the brokers and smugglers who are perpetrators of irregular migration and trafficking in to justice in cooperation with other governments in the transit and destination states.
- So as to reduce the massive level of irregular migration from its root, the government allow easily affordable loans and technical assistance to the youths and thus, the youths can engage sustainable income generating activities like animal farming, beef farming, metal work and wood work.

- The policy that can reduce irregular migration of adults and children have to be context specific. For instance in areas such as Zalambesa small and micro enterprise that focus on metal work, wood work, beef farming, and urban farming have to be devised. In areas such as *Irob*, *Gantaafeshum*, and *Tsaesie Tsaeda Emba*, policy that encourages animal farming, irrigation, honey been production and some investment of industries will reduce the problem.
- All in all the government should ensure good governance and create massive job opportunities. So youths can have bright future in their home country than eying other states.

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# Appendix I

## Brief CV of the Team of Researchers

1. **Abreha Gebrearegawi, Lecturer**, College of Social Science, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies. He has obtained **MA degree** in Peace and Conflict Studies, **BA degree** in Civics and Ethical Studies and **Postgraduate Diploma** in Education. He is a Senior Lecturer of Peace and Conflict Studies. His Research interest areas include Conflict Resolution, federalism and conflict, power and conflict, Cross-Border Illegal Migration, Post conflict Reconstruction and Peace building etc.

### Previous research experience

- **The Quest for Combating Cross-Border Illegal Migration in Eastern Tigray**, Ethiopia: Assessing the Effectiveness of The Command Post Established in Tigray Regional State (Ongoing research funded by Adigrat University).
- **Conflict Resolution in Ethiopia: Assessing the Role of the Government** with a Special Focus in Gambella Regional State. (MA Thesis).

**Email:** [abrshkey@gmail.com](mailto:abrshkey@gmail.com) or [abrshkey@yahoo.com](mailto:abrshkey@yahoo.com) **Mobile:**  
+251914769269

2. **Shshay Yhdego**, Lecturer, College of Social Science, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies. He has obtained **MA degree** in Human Rights, **BA degree** in Civics and Ethical Studies and **HDP** in Education). He is a Senior Lecturer of Human Rights. His Research interest areas include: Refugees, Unaccompanied Refugee Children, Cross-Border Irregular Migration, Conflict and human rights etc.

### Previous research experience

- **Children in Exile: Exploring the Situation of Eritrean Unaccompanied Refugee Children**:-the Case of Mai-Ayni Refugee Camp, Northern Ethiopia
- **People in War Affected Border Areas**: Exploring the Socio-economic Rights Protection in *Gulomekeda woreda*, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia (Ongoing research funded by Adigrat University).

**Email:** [sisyh21@gmail.com](mailto:sisyh21@gmail.com) **Mobile:** +251919069902

3. **Gebregwergs Teklay**, Lecturer, College of Social Science, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies. He has obtained **MA degree** in Peace and Security Studies, **BA degree** in PSIR and **HDP** in Education). His Research interest areas include: Human security, Human Trafficking,

Refugees, Unaccompanied Refugee Children, Irregular Migration, Conflict and Conflict Resolution, federalism and conflict, power and conflict, Cross-Border Illegal Migration, Post conflict Reconstruction and Peace building etc.

**Previous research experience**

- **Effects of Cross Border Irregular Migration on Human Security:** The Case of Erob Wereda, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia
- **The Role of Hosting Eritrean Refugee Students in Promoting People to People Fraternity** among Eritrean and Ethiopians: The Case of Some Selected Northern Cluster Ethiopian Public Universities.

Email: [georgetek7@gmail.com](mailto:georgetek7@gmail.com)

Telephone: 0921001417

4. **Muuz Abrha, Assistant Professor** of Law, Dean School of Law (He has obtained LL.M in Taxation Law and Investment Laws and LL.B from Mekelle university):

E-mail address: [brhanatmuuz@gmail.com](mailto:brhanatmuuz@gmail.com).

Tel. 0962616214

5. Assefa Tesfay, **Assistant Professor** of Psychology, Dean College of Social Science and Humanities (He has obtained MA degree in Social Psychology and BED degree in History)

Email: [atse699@gmail.com](mailto:atse699@gmail.com)

Tel. 0912166265

6. Gebrekirstos Tewelde, Lecturer, College of Social Science, Department of Sociology  
He has obtained **MA degree** in Sociology **BA degree** in Sociology)

**Previous research experience**

**An Assessment of attitude of Households on their Solid waste Management:** The Case of Adigrat Town

Email: [g.krstos@gmail.com](mailto:g.krstos@gmail.com)

Tel. 0946893362

## Appendix II

### Informed Consent Form

#### Informed Consent Form

Dear informants, we are a Team of researchers and lecturers from Adigrat University. Dear Sir/Madam, This time we are conducting a research on **“The Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration in Eastern Tigray in collaboration with the Italian based NGO named CISP Eastern Tigray Branch.**

The aim of this research is to explore the Involvement of Unaccompanied Minors in Irregular Migration, the extent and severity of the involvement; determinant factors(root causes) for irregular migration; the conditions and risks (during and after decision making as well as the coping mechanisms or strategies adopted to protect unaccompanied minors in Eastern Tigray particularly in Gulomekeda, Erob, Ganta-Afeshum and Saesi’e-Tsaeda-emba. the Dear sir/madam, your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks and threats to you. There is also no direct benefits (incentives) to you for participating in this study. However, we expect the results of this interview and the entire research will help you and the society at large indirectly through designing appropriate policies and strategies that enable migration exposed sections of society receive special focus to improve their economic and social wellbeing in collaboration with governmental and none governmental organizations. Please, Feel free, you have the right to ask for clarification. And it is according to your consent for the interview being audio-taped or not. Hence, we kindly request you to assist us by providing genuine response to the questions prepared or raised. Your genuine ideas and participation, will contribute a lot to the success of the study without which it would be fruitless. We would like to assured that, any information you provide will be kept secret unless you allowed us to do so. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

I hereby confirm that the interviewer has informed me about the nature, conduct, risks and benefits of the study. I have read (or have had someone read to me) the above information regarding this study, and have had enough opportunity to ask questions. I declare myself willing to participate in the study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant’s signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix III

### Questionnaire

#### Potential respondents

Unaccompanied, separated and returned minors and children

##### I. Demographic data

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Kebele/village \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

1. Age category: A. below 5 B. 5-10 C. 11-17 D. 18-25
2. Sex: A. Male B. Female
3. Are you a student? A. yes B. no
4. If yes what is your category? A. Below four B. 5<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> C. 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> D. 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> E. College
5. If not why?
  - A. Drop out due to academic incompetence
  - B. Drop out due to lack of academic resources
  - C. Drop out due to inability to get food and other basic necessities of life
  - D. Drop out for family problems
  - E. Drop out due to peer pressure
  - F. Drop out seeking to go to abroad illegally

##### II. Family conditions

1. Are your parents alive now both or one of them? A. Yes B. no
2. If no, what happened to your parents? A. they are in Abroad B. Died of war or conflict  
C. died due to epidemics D. died due to other health problems E. died Due to natural hazards
3. What is the main source of livelihood for your parents? A. Agriculture or farming B. Petty Trade and commerce C. rearing animals D. technical and vocational activities E. civil service
4. What was the monthly income of your parents in Ethiopian Currency?
  - A. 500-1000 B. 1001-2000 C. 2001-3000 D. >3000
5. Is this money enough to support the family? A. yes B. No
6. If no, how do you supplement your livelihood?
  - A. From Remittance B. Loan from Dedebit C. Loan from individuals D. working seasonal work
7. With whom do you live? A. alone B. with brothers and sisters C. with legal guardian D. other
8. Is your brother/sister employed? A. Yes B. no
9. If yes what type of employment. A. Self employed B. privately employed C. government employee

### **Root Causes of Migration**

1. Have you ever migrated to abroad illegally? A. Yes B. No
2. If yes to where? A. to RSA, B. Sudan C. to the Gulf states D. to Europe through Libya
3. If your answer to q.1 is yes when in G.C?  
A. Before 2010 B. 2011-12 C. 2013-14 D. 2015-16 E. 2017-18
4. If your answer to q.1 is yes, what were the factors that you force/motivate you to migrate?  
A. Domestic push factors B. external Pull factors C. Other factors
5. If your answer to q.4 is A, then what are the factors that you push to migrate abroad?  
A. Poverty and poor living standard  
B. unemployment and underemployment,  
C. low wage and salaries  
D. Lack of arable land and scarce land accessibility  
E. condition of no peace no war  
F. political cases
6. What do you think are the triggering factors that exacerbate cross-border migration?  
A. Lack of patience and looking for short way to economic development  
B. lack of awareness C. Peer pressure D. Family pressure E. Bureaucratic impediment
7. If your answer to q.4 is B, then what are the factors that you motivate to migrate abroad?  
A. Ample job access B. high salary paying jobs C. family re-unification D. Deception of brokers
8. If your answer to q.7 is D, then what are the types/methods of deceptions used by brokers?  
A. The existence of ample job opportunity B. high salary paying jobs  
C. Safe transportation and easy way of arrival D. small and Affordable payment

### **Migration experience and associated Risks**

1. Have you faced any risks and hazardous conditions right since start of illegal migration? A. yes B. no
2. If your answer is yes, then what type of risks and hazards did you experienced?  
A. Physical harassment or other forms of coercion threatening safety and security  
B. fraud and deception  
C. Increase of ransom payment  
D. detention  
E. sexual abuse and exploitation  
F. forced labour and slavery or practices similar to slavery  
G. removal of organs

### **Coping mechanisms**

1. What type of coping mechanisms have you adopted to change yourself and improve your life at home than looking for migration?

2. What type of coping mechanisms have you adopted to relive yourself from the aforementioned threats during the journey?
3. Is there anything you would like to add?  
Thank you very much

#### **Appendix IV: Questionnaire**

##### **Potential Respondents**

##### **For Family members of the returned minor migrants, legal guardians and close parents**

###### **Demographic data**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Kebele/village \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

Educational level \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your relation with the migrant child \_\_\_\_\_
7. Age category: A. below 5 B. 5-10 C. 11-17 D. 18-25
8. What is your main source of livelihood?
  - A. agriculture (Traditional farming)
  - B. Pity Trade and commerce
  - C. Rearing animals
  - D. technical and vocational activities
  - E. civil service
9. What is the monthly income of your parents in Ethiopian Currency?
  - A. 500-1000 B. 1001-2000 C. 2001-3000 D. >3000
10. Is this money enough to support the family? A. yes B. No
11. If no, how do you supplement your livelihood?
  - B. From Remittance B. Loan from Dedebit C. Loan from individuals D. working seasonal work

###### **Root Causes of Migration**

9. Do you children ever migrated to abroad illegally? A. Yes B. No
10. If yes to where? A. to RSA, B. Sudan C. to the Gulf states D. to Europe through Libya
11. If your answer to q.1 is yes when in G.C?
  - A. Before 2010 B. 2011 C. 2012 D. 2013 E. 2014 F. 2015 G. 2016 H. 2017

12. If your answer to q.1 is yes, what were the factors that you force/motivate you to migrate?
- B. Domestic economic push factors
  - C. Domestic political push factors
  - D. external economic Pull factors
  - E. Other factors
13. If your answer to q.4 is A, then what are the factors that you push to migrate abroad?
- G. Poverty and poor living standard
  - H. unemployment and underemployment,
  - I. low wage and salaries
  - J. scarce land accessibility and fertility
  - K. condition of no peace no war
  - L. political cases
14. What do you think are the triggering factors that exacerbate cross-border migration?
- C. Lack of patience and looking for short way to economic development
  - D. lack of awareness
  - E. Peer pressure
  - F. Family pressure
  - G. Bureaucratic impediment
15. If your answer to q.4 is C, then what are the factors that you motivate to migrate abroad?
- B. Ample job access B. high salary paying jobs C. family re-unification D. Deception of brokers
16. If your answer to q.7 is D, then what are the types/methods of deceptions used by brokers?
- A. The existence of ample job opportunity
  - B. high salary paying jobs
  - C. Safe transportation and easy way of arrival
  - D. small and Affordable payment

**Migration experience and associated Risks**

3. Have you faced any risks and hazardous conditions right since start of illegal migration? A. yes B. no
4. If your answer is yes, then what type of risks and hazards did you experienced?
- H. Physical harassment or other forms of coercion threatening safety and security
  - I. fraud and deception

- J. increase of ransom payment
  - K. detention
  - L. sexual abuse and exploitation
  - M. forced labour and slavery or practices similar to slavery
  - N. removal of organs
5. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you very much

#### **Appendix V In-depth Interview Guideline**

**For District administrators, individuals working on Labor and Social Affairs, Youth Affairs heads, women affairs, IO, NGOs and other stake holders**

1. What is your current level of understanding of unaccompanied minors?
2. Are there significant number of unaccompanied minors and orphans who seek support?
3. How exposed they are to irregular migration?
4. What is your current level of understanding about the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration?
5. What seems the extent and pattern of involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration in your district? How prevalent and sever it is?
6. What are the root causes (push and pull factors) for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration?
7. What are the triggering factors for the involvement of unaccompanied minors in irregular migration?
8. What are the risks and hazardous conditions faced unaccompanied minors during the journey
9. What specific proactive measures/actions did you take or are you taking to prevent and protect unaccompanied minors and orphans from the horrible conditions illegal migration?
10. What specific coping mechanisms have you adopted to prevent and protect unaccompanied minors and orphans from the hazardous conditions of illegal migration as they are highly exposed?
11. Is there anything you would like to add?

***Thank you very much for your cooperation***