



**Migrant Women's Vulnerabilities:  
A research reconnaissance in Addis Ababa**

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## **Dedicated to:**

*Babye, who has been a great father; I shall always keep him in my heart.*

*Nebech who is a loving and caring mother*

*Mesi, for being a sweet sister and best friend at the same time*

*Gech and Dani, for being wonderful and cheerful brothers, always refreshing me with your humors.*

*Love you all!*

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## List of Acronyms

ALERT:	All Africa Leprosy
CBO:	Community-Based Organization
CRIN:	Child Rights Information Network
CSA:	Central Statistics Authority
CVI:	Common wealth Vulnerability Index
DPPC:	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
ETB:	Ethiopian Birr
EVI:	Environmental Vulnerability Index
HAPSCO:	Hiwot HIV/AIDS Prevention Care and Support Organization- Ethiopia
ILO:	International Labor Organization
NGO:	Non Governmental Organization
PADCO:	Planning and Development Collaborative International
PVI:	Prevalent Vulnerability Index
UNCHS:	United Nations Commission on Human Settlements
UN-INSTRAW:	United Nations agency for International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

## **Abstract**

A large number of rural young women are migrating every year to Addis. They migrate for various reasons- economic as well as non-economic (gendered). Regardless of the increasing figure of women migrants, sufficient attention has not been given in the literature to the experience of women migration; and the few studies done emphasizes on the economic aspect of migration, which is the remittance they send to their families. This paper tries to assess the vulnerabilities of women migrants giving the necessary attention to the gendered reasons of migration.

Migration makes women vulnerable in different ways. This paper is focused on exploring the migration experiences of young women migrants in relation to their vulnerabilities. The Asset Vulnerability Framework is used for the analysis. The study attempts to identify the coping strategies that migrant women use to reduce their vulnerabilities and the factors that helps or hinders them to become less vulnerable. The study was done by conducting an in-depth interview with sample of 15 women migrants residing in a particular area in Addis called Zenebework.

**Keywords:** Vulnerability, rural-urban migration, migrant women, urban poverty, domestic work, Addis Ababa



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Studies show that the number of women migrants has increased for the past few decades to reach half of total migrants. 'Female migrants constitute nearly 51 percent of all migrants in the developed world and about 46 percent of all migrants in the developing countries.' (Piper, 2008: 3)

With the rapid urbanization of developing countries there is an increase in rural-urban migration and urban poverty. It was forecasted by Wratten that the numbers of rural-urban migrants will keep increasing. 'In 1980 there were twice as many poor rural households as poor urban ones, by the year 2000 more than half of the absolute poor will live in towns and cities.' (Wratten, 1995: 127) Addis Ababa, as one of the rapidly urbanizing cities, is having a continuous increase in rural-urban migration and urban poverty; the former being a major contributing factor for the later. 'A study done by Dagne on rural-urban migration shows that although natural increase is high for both urban and rural areas, migration accounts for nearly half the annual rate of urban growth in Ethiopia.' (Dagne, 2002: 4) Addis Ababa is currently experiencing increase in poverty, with widening inequality.

'Poor people live in all zones of Addis Ababa. In many areas of the city the poor, the middle class and at times the rich live side by side. However, the majority of the poor live in densely populated parts where most of the housing units are constructed with local materials, the wall with wood and mud, and the roof with corrugated iron sheets. The floor in most cases is mud, and the roof with corrugated iron sheets.' (Bersoufekad, 1999: 9)

Unemployment being a major problem for migrants with less competitiveness and lack of access to obtain formal job, they are usually engaged in the informal sector. A disproportionate number of women are working in the informal sector than men for the reason that women are usually underprivileged with less educational performance than their male counter parts. According to Un-Habitat, 'unconfirmed estimates suggest that of the total economically active labor force employed in the informal sector in Addis Ababa, 70 percent are female.' (Un-Habitat, 2007: 25)

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Women belong in most societies are considered the under-privileged part. They are often affected in a negative way in rural areas by the cultural values, norms and social expectations in general. They are expected to obey societal rules and norms which are usually in favour of the male sex. These societal rules and norms includes forced or arranged marriage, lack of access to education, lack of access to health service, denial of their rights to property ownership, highly unbalanced responsibility to look after the family and the like. For these various reasons, they decide to migrate to an urban locality.

The problem they face is two-fold. On the one hand, they are denied of access to resources and to their basic human rights as a result of the highly entrenched societal beliefs and cultural practices. On the other hand, they have the burden of having the responsibility to look after the family which gives them less time to take care of their own needs and interests. 'It is clear from empirical evidence that time and energy constraints are particularly binding for poorer women because of the conflicting demands of making a living and caring for family.' (Kabeer, 1996: 19)

The urban area, as a destination place for the women migrants has many problems. As studies (for example, done by Wratten) show, there is an increase in poverty in urban areas. 'For economic and demographic reasons, during the 1980s and 1990s poverty has become increasingly concentrated in urban settlements.' (Wratten, 1995: 127) The case of Ethiopia is not different from this finding. A study conducted by Bigsten and Shimeles taking a sample period of 1994 to 1997 shows that, 'Poverty is more persistent in urban areas than in rural areas in Ethiopia. The proportion of people who remained poor throughout the sample period in urban areas was twice that of rural areas.' (Bigston and Shimeles, 2004: 21)

In relation to the increase urban poverty, there is lack of well paid jobs especially to migrants who have not achieved any educational performance or with some kind of skills and are thus less competitive in the job market. Besides, there is also housing problems and problems of security in urban areas. Regardless of the problems being manifested in cities, large number of women is migrating from rural to urban areas. 'In some regions of the world, women predominate among rural-urban migrants and may even comprise the majority of the urban population.' (Todaro and Smith, 2009: 340) Among studies done on migration, sufficient attention has not been given to the

realities of women's experiences of migration. 'While migration studies have expanded dramatically during the past decade, the experiences of female migrants remain under-theorized and this is despite the fact that women comprise more than 50 percent of the world's immigrants and refugees.' (Spitzer et al., 2003: 268)

Another gap that is noticed in the literature is regarding individual experiences of the migrants.

'Much of the literature on migration in Ethiopia fails to accord the livelihood strategies of migrants the attention it deserves. The overriding characteristic of much of the literature, is a preoccupation with "macro" level analysis, where the demographic characteristics and the push and pull factors of migration are analyzed.' (Berhanu, 2002: 22)

There is little research into female migration in Ethiopia. And usually this is silent about the gendered reasons of women migration, focusing on the economic factors. This paper emphasizes on these gaps by focusing more on the gendered factors, which influences women's choice or decision to migrate and also on their individual experiences in relation to the migration decision. In doing so, this study aims to fill the literature gap.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

The objective of this research paper is to scope the vulnerabilities of urban poor women in Addis where origins are in rural areas. More emphasis is given to new migrants from rural parts of the country as they are expected to be more vulnerable than those who have stayed in the urban locality for relatively longer period of time. It tries to identify the coping mechanisms, at both an individual and household level, used to prevent and tackle the different risks the migrants are exposed to in their day to day lives to set the scene for future research.

This paper also aims to assess the opportunities that the new migrants may get and/or the challenges they face to integrate into the new environment in terms of social relationships, housing and economic activities.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

**Main Research Question:** Which factors help or hinder rural-urban women migrants to make transition into better well-being in the shorter or longer terms?

### ***Sub- Questions:***

- How is migration of women related to vulnerability?
- What strategies do urban poor women use for their survival?
- What makes migrant women less vulnerable?
- What stops them moving to other areas?

## **1.5 Relevance and Justification of the study**

‘There are few studies that explore the poverty situation of urban households in Ethiopia both in a static and dynamic context (Disney and Kedir, 2003; Kedir 1999; Taddesse 1997; Taddesse and Dercon, 1997) and there are almost none that focus on the chronic aspect of poverty particularly in urban areas.’ (Kedir and Mckay, 2003: 2)

Therefore, I believe that this paper contributes to fill this gap by assessing the living condition and the survival mechanisms of urban poor women, more specifically, those who have migrated from rural areas of Ethiopia to the capital city Addis Ababa.

I believe that the findings of this study- as to how gender role affects the vulnerability of women to low well-being, gives an authoritative knowledge by bringing out gendered factors of migration. This paper could also be a useful source of information for policy making by the federal and regional government and interventions by governmental organizations, NGOs and CBOs.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the study:**

This study is conducted on a particular area in Addis which is chosen for the reason that it is known as a place where there are many migrants living. Besides, given the limited time that was available to do the field work, it was necessary to focus on only few women migrants so as to be able to get an in-depth understanding of their lives. Therefore, the conclusions made are based on the findings of the in-depth interviews made with 15 rural women migrants who have resided in the study area called Zenebework. I acknowledge the fact that it could be problematic to generalize the findings to rural-urban women migrants in general.

Due care was taken while selecting the sample study participants to make sure that it covers a range of experiences of the study population as much as possible, but there is no claim that this sample is statistically representative.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Women and Migration

Women have been part of migratory movements for many years with a continuous increase in their number. Studies show that migration of women has increased globally for the past few decades.

‘The 2003 ILO annual report states that global estimates by sex confirm that female migrants reached almost the same numbers as male migrants. By 1960, female migrants accounted for nearly 47 out of every 100 migrants living outside their countries of birth. Since then, the share of female emigrants among all international migrants has been rising steadily, to reach 48 percent in 1990 and nearly 49 percent in 2000. By 2000, female migrants constituted nearly 51 percent of all migrants in the developed world and about 46 percent of all migrants in the developing countries.’ (Piper, 2008: 3)

This increase in the number of women migrants together with the higher vulnerability of women migrants compared to their men counterparts makes the study of women migration deserving of more attention. Pedraza stated the fact that migration of women has not been given the appropriate attention in the literature until recently as ‘despite the overwhelming presence of women in migration flows, until recently the role of women in migration had been totally neglected.’ (Pedraza, 1991: 303) Besides, there is a need to study migration of women separately because ‘migration is a profoundly gendered process and the conventional explanations of men’s migration in many cases do not apply to women.’ (Kanaiaupuni, 2000: 1312)

Studies carried out on migration of women focuses more on the economic reasons, more specifically on the remittances they send back home to help their families. For example, the 2005 UN-INSTRAW working paper states that ‘women, as active participants of migratory movements, contribute to the maintenance of their households and to the development of their communities of origin through the sending of remittances.’ (UN-INSTRAW, 2005: 1) This paper argues that a solely economic explanation of women migration only provides a small part of the picture. The whole picture is much broader encompassing the very crucial non-economic reasons of women’s migration and their subsequent experiences. Therefore, proper attention

should be given to the highly gendered, non-economic reasons of migration as well, in order to fully understand the reasons and consequences of women's migration experiences in general.

There are two broad perspectives regarding factors affecting migration decisions; a structural perspective and an agency perspective which are inter-linked to each other.

'A structural perspective poses that migration is not simply an individual decision but rather involves individuals exercising options within constraints posed by structural forces. Once such structural poses are in place, particular individual factors operate to influence migration. On the other hand, an agency perspective highlights individual-level factors in that migrants are thought to respond to the pull of more affluent economies and the push from conditions of stagnation and underdevelopment in home countries.' (Ortiz, 1996: 461)

Migration decisions are influenced by both structure and agency. Thus, it is important to consider both perspectives in order to completely comprehend migration decisions and migration experiences. Women are part of a society usually considered as inferior in most societies, as a result they usually have very little power to exercise their agency and their decisions and choices are restricted to varying degrees by the societal norms and values. Generally, 'women's migration, both internally within developing countries and internationally across borders to neighboring countries or to developed countries, is inextricably linked to the situation and status of women in society.' (UN-INSTRAW, 1994: 1)

There are few developments in the migration theory literature. One is the recognition of structural factors affecting migration both in the origin and receiving communities.

'The fundamental importance of structural factors in the communities of origin and destination is now generally acknowledged. Such factors are particularly important in determining the migration propensities of women because they include not only economic factors but also the norms, values and cultural mores determining gender relations and gender roles.' (UN-INSTRAW, 1994: 41)

'Another direction in which migration theory has evolved is towards recognizing that in many (if not most) situations the migration decision is a family decision, involving aspirations and roles in decision-making of other persons as well as of the

migrant himself/herself.’ (UN- INSTRAW, 1994: 40) There has also been a focus on the interplay between migration decision, family and work as well.

‘Research on immigrant women in the last ten years has focused on developing a gendered understanding of the relationships among family, work and migration. From this emerges a view of women as active agents in the migration process- using migration as an economic option that deals with gender ideology and practice.’ (Ortiz, 1996: 460)

A recent study done by UN- INSTRAW has given awareness on the increasing number of women migrating independently against the commonly noticed marriage migration. ‘The feminization of labor migration more accurately refers to an increase in the number of women migrating independently in search of work, as opposed to women travelling as “dependent” family members.’ (UN-INSTRAW, 2008: 7)

Having said this about women and migration in general, the following section discusses on the relationship between the two concepts of rural-urban migration and urban poverty.

## **2.2 Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Poverty**

It is recognized in the literature that ‘there is an increase in rural-urban migration in Africa.’ (Todaro, 1995: 386) And this increase has become a major contributing factor for the increased urban poverty in most developing countries. Few studies like for example done by Wratten, 1995 stated that the increase in urban poverty is mainly due to natural population growth rather than in-migration. However, many studies conducted on developing countries particularly show that rural-urban migration is the major contributing factor for the increase in urban poverty in most developing countries.

According to Todaro 1995, ‘part of the increased growth is due to the rather rapid rates of over-all population increase in Africa, rates typically around 3 percent per annum. However, by far the most important contributing factor has been the massive increase in the number of migrants arriving from surrounding rural areas.’ (Todaro, 1995: 386)

Many studies done on Ethiopia confirmed the same result. For example, a study done by Un-habitant explained the higher contribution of rural-urban migration than natural population growth to the annual population growth in Ethiopia, in terms of

percentage. 'Migration has a higher impact on the increase of urban poverty than the natural population growth in Ethiopia, particularly the capital city Addis Ababa. From the annual population growth of 2.8 percent, the greater part is due to net in-migration (1.6 percent per annum) than to natural increase (1.2 percent per annum).' (Un-Habitat, 2007: 24) Another study conducted by Berhanu has revealed the same result. 'While it is true that natural birth rates are high for urban as well as rural Ethiopians, half of the increase in the urban population will be as a result of in-migration from the rural areas. Thus rural-urban migration is an important indicator of the social and economic developments that have been occurring in Ethiopia.' (Berhanu, 2002: 41)

The capacity of cities to accommodate the increase in population is limited. 'Internal migration from rural to urban areas can exert a lot of pressure on cities which may not have the capacity to absorb large population flows and to provide migrants with an adequate level of public goods.' (Lall et al, 2006: 7) Therefore the new migrants are more or less forced to reside in areas with poor infrastructure provision which, are called "slums" for the purpose of this research, and in very low quality housing.

'As a first stopping point for the immigrants, slums provide the low-cost housing that will enable the immigrants to save for their eventual absorption into better quality lives. They are adept at producing the services and commercial activities that the formal sector fails to provide through the mobilization of local enterprise and industry.' (Unchs, 2003: 57)

A study conducted by Mammo on migration and urbanization in Ethiopia states that 'the growth of urban populations as a result of inward migration puts pressures on the already inadequate infrastructures, social services, the job markets, etc, of cities.' (Mammo, 1994: 12) He discussed the impact of rural-urban migration on the social welfare and quality of life of people in the cities and towns of Ethiopia. And his analysis takes a mostly negative stance towards rural-urban migration. Women migrants could be more affected negatively by this pressure as they are mostly with low level (no) education, which gives them low chance of finding a formal job.

'Typically, women especially from rural areas have lower levels of education (a rational response by poor families wishing to maximize earnings is to send sons rather than daughters to school), long working hours (including domestic work such as water collection and fuel-gathering), responsibility for child care as well as



productive and community management roles, poorer diets and more restricted physical mobility than men.’ (Wratten, 1995: 24)

## **2.3 Vulnerability and Livelihood Strategies**

### ***Vulnerability***

‘Vulnerability refers to the insecurity of the well-being of individuals, households or ‘communities’ in the face of a changing environment such as ecological, economic, social or political. With these changes often come increasing risk and uncertainty and declining self-respect.’ (Rakodi, 1995: 14)

‘The concept of vulnerability, although often used as a synonym for poverty, is not the same. Poverty is essentially a static concept whereas, vulnerability is more dynamic and better captures change processes as people move in and out of poverty.’ (Moser 1998: 3) In addition to this, “the conventional conceptualizations of poverty are implicitly male-centered.” (Kabeer, 1996: 13)

‘The focus on vulnerability, as specific concept instead of poverty, implies identifying the threats and, more generally, the risks met by people in their daily lives. To examine their capability to react to these risks will give us the means to help them to overcome the corresponding social consequences.’ (Dubios and Rousseau, 1999: 1)

Even though the above mentioned risks are to both sexes, the extent differs and presumably is worse toward women as they are usually the underprivileged group in most societies. The same is true in the ease of recovery from damage.

### **Dimensions of Vulnerability**

Vulnerability is a broad concept which encompasses exposure to risks/threat of economic, health, social or cultural, sexual, and institutional in nature. *Economic vulnerability* is the dimension of vulnerability which is extensively discussed in the literature. People are said to be economically vulnerable when they face risk of falling into poverty. *Health vulnerability* is usually associated with the nutritional status of a person. It is also related with environmental hazards. This aspect of vulnerability is not widely addressed in the literature in relation to women unlike the former.

‘Arguably, one of the most inadequately studied areas from a gender perspective is the health and wellbeing of migrant populations, possibly because economic migration is characterized by the selection of populations that are young, healthy, of reproductive age, and capable of joining the workforce. It is thus important to understand the way in which gender interacts with other determinants, to explain how, why and when such populations’ health deteriorates and how to develop preventive mechanisms.’ (Llacer et al., 2007: ii6)

*Sexual vulnerability* is primarily women’s vulnerability, which has to do with their exposure to risks of, harassment, rape, sexual assault and the like. *Social vulnerability* is the risk of being alienated from the ‘community’ or having less social tie. Rural migrants having different culture and sometimes with different accent experience feeling of less confidence in talk and make friends therefore, they prefer to stick to those who are from the same locality with same standard and experience, which could give less room to share experiences. *Institutional vulnerability* has to do with risks related to war and political instability. This is beyond the scope of this study.

### **Measuring Vulnerability**

There is no one specific way of measuring vulnerability due to the difficult nature of measuring the concept. Donald and Marcus have listed the two conventional approaches to measure vulnerability: the Economic Approach and the Environmental & Development Approach.

‘The economics approach: measures vulnerability as the probability that a household (or an individual), whether currently poor or not, would find itself poor in the future. The environmental and development approach: includes three indices of measuring vulnerability developed by different organizations working on environmental sustainability in order to advance their course. These are: Common wealth Vulnerability Index (CVI), Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI) and Prevalent Vulnerability Index (PVI).’(Donald and Marcus, 2005: 20-23)

### **Urban Vulnerability**

‘In the urban context, poverty and vulnerability can be related to three distinctive characteristics of urban life: commoditization (reliance on the cash economy), environmental hazard (stemming from the density and hazardous location of settlements and from exposure to multiple pollutants), and social fragmentation

(lack of community and of inter-household mechanisms for social security, compared to those in rural areas).’ (Baharoglu and Kessides, 2002: 124)

The degree of a person’s vulnerability as a result of these factors depends on the extent of exposure to them and the ability of resisting them or capability. As Dubois and Rousseau stated, ‘the improvement of people’s capabilities could make them less vulnerable to the various risks they may encounter.’ (Dubois and Rousseau, 1999: 1)

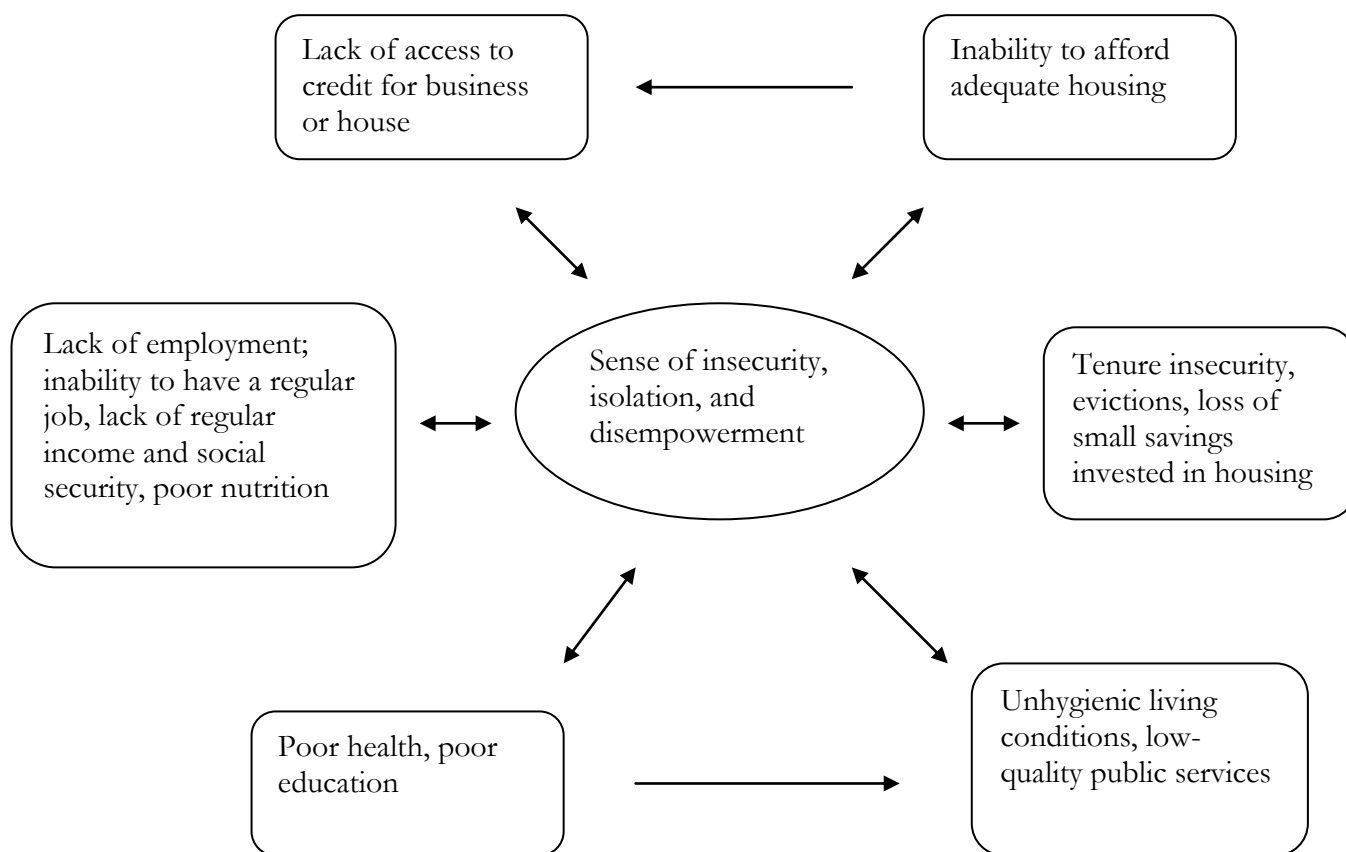
‘The urban study developed a classification of assets, appropriate for the urban poor identified in terms of an “asset vulnerability framework”. This includes well-known tangible assets such as labour and human capital, but is a more inclusive framework that comprises less familiar productive assets such as housing, and largely invisible intangible assets such as household relations and social capital.’ (Moser, 1998: 4) The fact that the poor do not have many of these assets makes them easily susceptible to risks.

‘Moser has summarized the assets as follows:

- *Labour*: commonly identified as the most important asset of poor people
- *Human capital*: health status, which determines people’s capacity to work, and skills and education, which determine the return to their labour
- *Productive assets*: for poor urban households the most important is often housing
- *Household relations*: a mechanism for pooling income and sharing consumption’ (Ibid: 4)

‘The asset framework goes beyond a “static” measuring of the poor, toward classifying the capabilities of poor populations to use their resources to reduce their vulnerability.’ (Moser, 1998: 14)

**Figure 1: Cumulative impacts of urban vulnerability**



Source: Baharoglu and Kessides 2002

According to Chambers, ‘vulnerability means not lack or want but exposure and defencelessness. It has two sides: the external side of exposure to shocks, stress and risk; and the internal side of defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss. Loss can take many forms – becoming or being physically weaker, economically impoverished, socially dependent, humiliated or psychologically harmed.’ (Chambers, 1995: 189) ‘Chambers points out that poor people have a horror of debt, and are more aware than professionals of the trade-offs between poverty and vulnerability.’ (Wratten, 1995: 17)

‘To understand the sources of vulnerability, Carney (1998) suggests that it is necessary to analyze trends (resource stocks, demographic change, available technologies, political representation and economic trends), shocks (the climate and actual or potential conflicts) and culture (as an explanatory factor in understanding how people manage their assets and the livelihood choices they make.’ (World Bank, 2000: 37)

### *Livelihood Strategies*

Rakodi has listed survival strategies used by the poor, on an individual and household level, as 'labour market involvement, savings, borrowing and investment, productive and reproductive activities, income, labour and asset pooling and social networking.' (Rakodi, 1995: 412) He also stated that 'whether a household is temporarily or permanently poor may be related to its resource endowments, its organizational capacity to manage and deploy its resources, its labour force position, the coping mechanisms available to it and external or family contingencies which affect it.' (Ibid: 412) Women, in relation to their inferior position in most society, have less livelihood strategies available to them which make it difficult to be able to reduce their vulnerabilities. 'Women are generally poorer than men because they lack the range of endowments and exchange entitlements which male members of their households tend to enjoy. They are less able than men to translate labour into income, income into choice and choice into personal well-being.' (Kabeer, 1996: 18) Kabeer further explained that 'the gendered practices in the labour market further affect the quantity and quality of women's participation.' (Ibid: 19)

The triple role of women is a constraint for them to peruse their personal well-being and quality of life. 'In most low-income households 'women's work' includes not only reproductive work (the childbearing and rearing responsibilities) required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labor force, but also productive work, as primary or secondary income-earners, in rural areas in agriculture, in urban areas in informal sector enterprises located either in the home (in sub-contracting or piece-rate work) or at the neighborhood level.' (Moser and Peake, 1987: 13) They have the burden of simultaneously balancing these roles.

In many literatures, vulnerability is explained in relation to the environment, mainly focusing on rural areas. That is, there is not much emphasis given to the link between urban poverty and vulnerability in relation to rural-urban migration. Thus, this study will help to understand the vulnerability of women migrants in relation to commoditization and fragmentation characteristics of urban life in addition to the prevailing environmental hazards in urban areas.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of my field work was to help to understand why rural women continuously migrate, what challenges they are faced with in the urban locality after migration, how they are dealing with them and how they think their future is likely to be. A detailed and careful study was done so as to be able to address the research questions and thus to achieve the research objective. The findings are based on an in-depth interview made with 15 interviewees all of whom migrated from rural areas of Ethiopia to Addis at different times. The age of the interviewees ranges from 18 to 35 with an average age of 26. They are all in their fertile age which makes them similar in this respect. Regarding their marital status, the majorities are single with few married, few divorced and few widowed. More specifically, of the 15 interviewees, 7 are single, 4 married, 2 divorced and 2 widowed. One other information worth mentioning here is that they have different levels of economic and social integration in their city lives and this is due to varying reasons that we are going to discuss in the findings chapter in detail.

The research methodology used for this paper is in-depth interview. A preliminary observation of the area was made first to be able to have general understanding of the specific locality, before engaging into the actual data collection. Key informant was very helpful for the success of the field work which helped me as an entrance point. Then the “snowballing sampling” technique was used.

The field work was done for 5 weeks from July 6- August 10. In most of the time I used to spend the whole day in the area going here and there, observing the neighbourhood, familiarizing myself with the area and the activities in the area, and conducting the actual interview. While doing most of the interviews, it was not as if I left after the interview, rather I spent much time with each of the interviewees even before and after the interview. I was able to build a friendship with them and I believe that this was important to get more genuine information about their past, present and future life. All the interviews were made either at places of their work or residence which enabled me to actually observe their daily lives and their housing conditions.

The interviews were semi-structured which gave the interviewees more freedom to narrate their story with flow. This has enabled me to get the general picture of their life trajectories. The life-history type of research technique is appropriate for this study and it is also stated by studies done on research techniques. 'The life-history research technique has proved indispensable in bringing out the subjective experiences of migrant women.' (Miles, 1993: 86) All of the interviews were done in two rounds except for three. The first round was to start with a general question of "tell me about yourself mentioning where you came from, why and when you decided to come here, what are you doing for a living and what do you think of your future." In this round I was simply listening carefully to their stories showing interest in the story with frequent nodding and eye contact. The second round was mostly by forwarding questions but giving the necessary attention once they start replying. Questions are formulated based on the story told during the first round. Exceptions are three of the interviews: one interview was made with three rounds and two with only one round. The reason for this is the availability of the interviewee in the first case and being unable to reach them after once in the second two cases.

The criteria for choosing the interviewees were age, place of residence in Addis, and obviously their sex. All the interviewees were at their fertile age who have come from rural parts of the country regardless of when, and they should be female. The first interviewee was chosen by chance as she was introduced by the key informant but she also fulfils all the above listed criteria as it was communicated to the key informant and she was chosen accordingly. The next three interviewees were introduced by the first interviewee. But after the first four interviewees, I had to make my personal judgment to make the composition heterogeneous in terms of their life trajectories. Therefore, I was deliberately looking for women who were engaged in different activities than the previous four and presumably with different life trajectories. Factors like the duration of stay in Addis, level of education, the availability of friends or relatives who have resided in Addis and the like were taken into consideration while choosing them.

I also made careful observation of their day-to-day lives by for example; frequently going to the area and spending some time in shops, tea rooms and on the streets and see how things are going on. I believe that this helped me a lot in understanding the circumstances of the people in that area; besides to the information I was able to receive from the interview.

### **3.2 Challenges of doing the research**

What I would like to emphasize here is that the field work was not an easy job at all, as it was also my first time I had to face many difficulties that didn't come to my mind in advance. I had to constantly remind myself that 'I can do it' so that I could actually do it. Among the difficulties I encountered, the first and foremost was the time it took me to be able to find an entrance point. I was hanging around in the area faced with the problem of choosing whom to talk to. But luckily, few days later, I found a woman who is a social worker in a local NGO who had contact with migrant women. She took me to one HIV patient woman who gets support by the NGO which made my field work come true.

The other challenge I faced was during my first interview. I was being emotionally touched by the story she was telling. As I give her the time and the attention, she became so immersed in the story and I was able to read her feelings from her look. I remember feeling tempted to cry and I had to resist myself. But I learned how to be detached from my personal feelings from that point onwards but still, I would like to acknowledge how difficult it actually was.

Being confronted by the interviewees as to the relevance of the interview to them was also another challenge. Some of the interviewees I found were questioning the importance of the study to them and were not willing at first to volunteer for the interview. As they explained, the reason for this is that they have had many interviews already by various agencies from governmental and nongovernmental organizations which has resulted them with nothing. They got tired of all the questions about their lives from somebody who is a complete stranger who provides them with no solution. They were strong in their positions therefore; trying to explain and persuade them required lots of effort and especially patience.

The other problem is that few of my interviewees were not willing to continue the interview for long time. I was trying to extend the conversation but they were resisting my questions and making a very brief response. One of my respondents, engaged in commercial activity, was suspicious about who I am and what I want. She suspected that I may be from taxing authority, so I had to explain myself politely, trying to increase her trust and deliberately left questions related to income until I gained her trust.



I wanted to give a good picture of the area of study and the interviewees themselves supported with photographs but I found out that photographing was considered by the interviewees as threatening and feeling of being unsecured. It also gives the impression that I am some outsider with more power which distracts the smooth relation with the interviewees. The same is true to voice recording the interviews. They felt secured and at ease without any recording machine therefore, I had to take a break between each interview to document all the conversation on paper immediately with my fresh memory.

The fact that I am young woman had both negative and positive sides for my field work. On the negative side, some of the women were not taking me serious which resulted in shorter interview time. On the positive side, I was able to get friendly approach by some of the migrant women which enabled me to stay for long period of time with them and hence have rich information about their lives and more specifically their vulnerabilities.

Last but not least, I also had difficulty in drawing the statistical figures from the Ethiopian Population and Housing census which belongs to the particular area studied. This is because rearrangement of the city divisions was made recently whereas; the population and housing census was reported based on the old division. Therefore, I found it very difficult to correctly trace the data which represents the specific area studied.

Coming out from the challenges and moving into what I consider as advantages, I am native speaker of Amharic which is the language of the migrants. Therefore, this places me in a good position in terms of conducting my field work –with no difficulty in communication and being able to understand their perception, as being told by their own language.

I have transcribed all the conversations into Amharic and translated only the general idea into English, believing that it would be better to refer to the original version for my analysis so that the data collected would not lose its originality.

### **3.3 Brief description of the interviewed women**

Here, I would like to briefly explain the characteristics of the migrant women interviewed together with my own impression upon them. I believe this would help to better understand their contexts in the description of the findings. They are listed below

in a descending order of duration of stay in Addis. All the names used are fictitious for the purpose of anonymity.

Abeba: is a woman who tries to fulfill the needs of her two children by selling *iebena*<sup>1</sup> in a small shop that she has been given by her brother. She moved to Addis to live with her aunt while she was very young, 22 years ago. She went to school only up to grade 9 which is the reason for her to be currently poor, as she explained it. She was later married and was entirely dependent on her husband, never exposed to outside work life until she lost her husband in death. Now she is faced with difficulty of survival to her family and is dependent for housing on her brother.

Mulu: is in her early 30s who has been residing in Addis for the past two decades. She is originally from a place called Gondor which is located to the north of Ethiopia. Physically, she is very thin, not well dressed and she lives in a very small room which is almost vacant. She is HIV carrier who receives support by an NGO called Hiwot HIV/AIDS Prevention Care & Support Organization (HAPSCO)--Ethiopia. Her life is mostly dependent on the monthly allowance she gets from this organization. She also rarely receives some support from a church where she attends Sunday School. She tries to support herself by selling things such as charcoal and *woyera*<sup>2</sup> she also makes and sells handcrafts. She was friendly and her face was full of smiles during the interview.

Aberash: is Mulu's neighbor who is living in a similar condition to Mulu. She is also HIV carrier and receives support from Hiwot HIV. She lives in a very small room with her husband and one-year old baby boy. She is in her late 20s but her look doesn't match to her actual age. She looks older than she is and she also appeared underweight. She is a friend with Mulu and they rely on one another during difficult times. For example, one cares for the other whenever they get sick. Both Mulu and Aberash came to Addis for the same reason, which is to move out of a married life at their early age that they were forced into by their parents. It has been 20 years since she came to Addis and never has had the opportunity to attend school.

Zeineba: is a woman with two sons, one of them is already living by himself in Addis working in a restaurant. She lived in Addis for a very long period of time, for about 15 years. She moved to Addis looking for a better life but she is still struggling to fulfill even her daily food consumption. She sells onions and potatoes on the streets out

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<sup>1</sup> Jebena is a special small pot used in Ethiopia to boil coffee.

<sup>2</sup> Woyera is type of plant where its stems and leaves are used as making essence.

of which she gets a very small amount of profit. She tries to live happily with all what she has though. I never forgot her smiling face during the entire interview.

Berri: is in her late 20s. She sells maize, pepper, and tomatoes for a living. She has a four-year old daughter. She moved to Addis because she heard that life there is good. She has lived in Addis for 10 years and she used to work as a domestic worker until she became pregnant. She has a sad look on her face when she talked about her life; it seems that life is not interesting to her. She also mentioned that she would not want to live if it were not for her daughter. She is one of the few interviewees I had a short stay with. I was trying to extend my stay with her for more than 30 minutes but she was not willing to talk anymore.

Aster: has been living in Addis for the last one decade. She came as a child with one of her relatives for the expectation of getting a paid job and to improve her life. She is young, in her early 20s, desperate to work here and there and make big money but this wish suddenly stopped when she become pregnant by one of her employers. She is now living with her 4 months old child in a very small room that she rented in her uncle's compound. She depends on the monthly allowance she gets from the baby's father for all her expenses.

Beletu: is in her late 20s who owns a small boutique. She is married and a mother to one child. Her husband also sells clothes at a different location. She is a hard working woman who wants to own one big boutique together with her husband. She is determined to increase her income so as to guarantee a good life both to herself and her family. She came to Addis 10 years ago from a place called Debre Markos, in search for a job.

Adey: is in her late 20s. She used to sell vegetables on the streets for 6 years but did not earn enough income therefore she decided to secure employment. But she is now fired from her job when I met her. She is back to selling vegetables but she is not happy about it. She was fined recently with 60Birr<sup>3</sup> by the police because she was selling without license. She looks desperate and disappointed. It has been 9 years already since she moved to Addis. She was inspired by the city life and that is her reason to migrate from the rural area called Dejen that she used to live with her parents.

Hareg: is sister of Aster who came two years later. She saw her sister making money which encouraged her to move to Addis. She followed the same trajectory to

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<sup>3</sup> Ethiopian Currency

her older sister. She had to stay with her uncle in Addis while looking for a job and moved out when she secured one. She has been working in different houses at different times until she became pregnant from one of her male employers and was fired. She is now living in her uncle's compound doing the domestic work for her cousin. She sent her child to her mother back in her rural place of origin. She is young and looks healthy.

Abebech: came from a rural area called Sebeta, which is very close to Addis. She is in her late teens. She came as a child 8 years ago with her aunt for the reason that she will go to school properly. She is studying and in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She is now employed as a sales person in a small boutique. She is one of the self-determined women I found during my interview. Abebech brings her books to the boutique and tries to study when there are no customers. She has future plans to succeed in her studies and own her own boutique.

Tiblet: is in her mid 20s. She came from Gondor about 5 years back. She works as a daily laborer in a public construction site. She moved to Addis in search for a paid job and improvement in her life. She already has a job but she is not satisfied with it. She explained that it is not easy to live with the income she makes. A short look at her face and physical appearance would give the same impression.

Tadelech: is Woinshet's friend. I found her while she came to Woinshet for help in finding a job. She is very young and has an open personality. She came from a place called Debre Markos, located to the north of Ethiopia. She has been working in different houses as a domestic worker since she migrated to Addis four years back. But she lost her job when she went back to visit her parents and currently dependent on her uncle in Addis until she finds a job. She is desperately looking for a domestic work but nothing different. She is not interested in other jobs even if she is not satisfied with the domestic work.

Zerfe: is Mulu's friend. She came four years back from the same place with Mulu, Gondor, but for different reasons which is to receive medical treatment, though she was also the victim of early marriage, which gave her fistula and that became the reason to move to Addis. She resided in Zenebework for proximity reason to the big referral hospital in the area. She already finished the treatment but she decided to stay in Addis. She makes handicrafts which a skill she learned from Mulu, for a living. She is in her early 20s. She never went to school.

Bertukan: is the youngest of all my interviewees, she is only 18 and she is shy. She came to Addis a year ago and has worked in two different homes as a domestic worker. She then secured a job as a daily laborer in a construction site. She is married and lives in a room which cost 250Birr per month.

Woinshet: is the one I found most motivated to work and improve her life from among all my interviewees. She is young and enthusiastic person. She is married and has one baby. It is her second time to come to Addis to live. She came 3 years ago but had to return home after six months because her mother was seriously ill. She came back to Addis a year ago when she lost her mother in death. She sells different things such as eggs, butter, charcoal and the like on the streets for a living. She buys them from an area outside Addis, called Muger, where she came from and makes a profit out of them. She looks happy and with a better future.

**Table 1: A summary of the profile of the 15 interviewees**

SN	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	No. of Children	No. of children after migr	No. of years in Addis	Place of origin	Reason to migrate	Previous exposure to Addis
1	34	None	Divorced	1	0	20	Gondor	Early marriage	No
2	32	None	Married	2	2	20	Bahir Dar	Early marriage	No
3	24	None	Single	0	0	4	Gondor	Medical treatment	No
4	30	Grade 9	Widow	2	2	22	Awassa	With relatives	No
5	24	None	Single	1	1	10	S. shoa	Inspired by city life	No
6	21	None	Single	1	1	8	S. shoa	inspired by her sister	No
7	21	Grade 6	Married	1	1	≈1	Muger	death of parents	Yes
8	20	Grade 1	Single	0	0	4	D/Markos	with her uncle	No
9	35	None	Widow	2	2	15	Gurage zone	looking for a job	No
10	28	None	Divorced	1	1	10	Tigray	looking for a job	No
11	25	None	Single	0	0	5	Gondor	Inspired by city life	No
12	18	None	Married	0	0	2	Wolayta	inspired by city life	No
13	28	None	Single	0	0	9	Dejen	Inspired by city life	No
14	19	Grade 8	Single	0	0	8	Sebeta	With relatives	No
15	27	None	Married	1	1	10	D/Markos	looking for a job	No

*Source: own fieldwork*

# Chapter 4

## Context and Area of the study

### 4.1 Women migration- the Ethiopian context

#### *Women migration to Addis Ababa*

According to the Ethiopian Central Statistics Authority, ‘close to a half of Addis Ababa's residents were born outside the city, having resided in the capital for varying lengths of time.’ (CSA, 1995: 1) ‘Of the 2,100, 031 persons, 1,119,523 (53%) were born in the city, 974,839 (46%) migrants and the remaining 5,669 (1%) were reported as not stated. And out of the 974,839 persons (both sex), 58% have migrated from rural areas.’ (CSA, 1995: 149) Addis Ababa continues to be an attractive place for people in different parts of the country. According to UN-Habitat report 2007, ‘Addis Ababa continues to attract 90,000 to 120,000 new residents every year. In general, it appears that much of this growth (probably up to 70 percent of the total), takes place in the slums and squatter settlements of the city.’ (Un-Habitat, 2007: 24).

It is indicated in the 1995 CSA report that the number of women migrants is higher than that of male migrants regardless of their origin: rural or other urban areas. ‘From 405,165 people who have migrated from urban areas 206,467 (59.4%) represents female and 198,698 are male migrants. Similarly, from 565,704 persons who have migrated from rural areas, 294,818 are female and 270,886 male, with the difference representing those who are not stated.’ (CSA, 1995: 149) In both cases women migrants are higher than that of male. An in-migrant is defined by CSA as ‘a person who has not been living continuously since birth in Addis Ababa. Return migrants are also considered to be migrants.’ (CSA, 1995: 148)

This study particularly focuses in one area in Addis which is known as Zenebework, located in Kolfe Keranio Kifle Ketema<sup>4</sup>. This area was chose because it is known as being one of the places in Addis with low standard of living. ‘In Addis Ababa squatter settlements are mainly located in the peripheral areas of the city.’ (Melesse, 2005: 1) and Zenebework is one of them which is located at the west extreme of the city. A study done by Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) has put the area as ‘one of the most destitute of the ten sub-cities of the capital.’ ([www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org))

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<sup>4</sup> name of the sub-city in Addis, which is the study area

## **4.2 Description of the study area- Zenebework/Kolfe Keranio sub-city**

### ***4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of migrants in Addis***

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is located at the centre of the country. It has six zones and 27 weredas<sup>5</sup> with total number of 305 urban kebeles<sup>6</sup> and 23 rural farmers associations. (CSA, 1995: 1) According to the 1994 Census, Addis Ababa's population was found to be 2,112,737, out of which 1,023,452 were males and 1,089,285 females, giving a sex ratio of 94.0. (CSA, 1995: 6) Out of 1,710,999 people sampled, 297,139 were found to be illiterate. (CSA, 1995: 93) According to CSA, those who are considered as literates are those who are attending a formal school during the census day or attended in the past and left school prior to the census day. A formal education is defined as education in which students are enrolled or registered regardless of the mode of teaching used. It included both 'regular school and university education' and 'adult education' (CSA, 1995: 75)

'Like any other major cities in Africa, Addis Ababa is presently suffering from a host of social and economic problems including widening income disparity, deepening poverty, rising unemployment, severe housing shortage, poorly developed physical and social infrastructure and the proliferation of slum and squatter settlements.' (Un-Habitat, 2007: 1) 'More than 60 percent of the households in Addis Ababa are estimated to have a monthly income of 60Birr. Nearly 75 percent are below the absolute poverty line. The meager income of households in turn entails low level of consumption, expenditure and asset creation thereby limiting the market size.' (Yehualashet, 1997: 24) 'The socio-economic situation of the city indicates that over 30% of the population lack adequate access to food, clothing, shelter and other amenities which are essential for life.' (Bersoufekad, 1999: 3)

### ***4.2.2 General background of the study area***

Kolfe Keranio sub-city is one of the 10 sub-cities found in Addis. It is located to the west of the city with total population of 261,235 and land coverage of 63.25 km<sup>2</sup>. ([www.addisababacity.gov.et](http://www.addisababacity.gov.et)). It consists of 10 kebeles. Melesse has explained the area as 'one of the major expansion areas of the city where the problem of development of squatter settlements is more prevalent.' (Melesse, 2005: 5)

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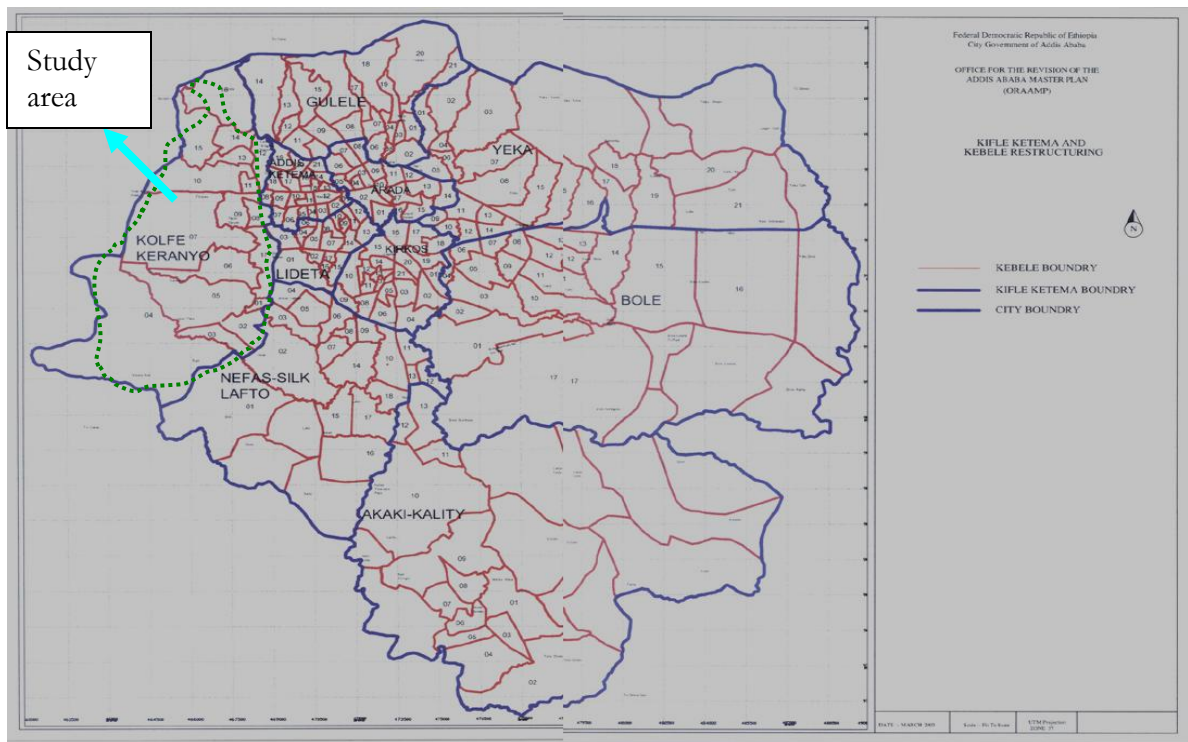
<sup>5</sup> an administrative unit which is smaller than zone

<sup>6</sup> the smallest administrative unit



The area is known for having many migrant people especially in relation to a big medical centre called ALERT Hospital located in the area. The hospital is a Non Governmental Organization originally established to provide Tuberculosis (TB) and Leprosy treatment and rehabilitation services but later, its service has expanded to various health treatments. Among them is treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. The hospital has its own contribution to the migration pattern in the area. People with Leprosy, HIV/AIDS, Fistula and other health problems come for medical treatment from different rural parts of the country and reside in the area for proximity reason. However, not only few decide to remain in Addis even at the completion of their treatment.

**Map 1: Administrative Region and Woreda Map of Addis Ababa**



Source: [www.dppc.gov.et](http://www.dppc.gov.et)

#### **4.2.3 Own impression of the area**

Zenebework is one of the many areas in Addis with a high number of people migrating from different parts of the country. The housing condition of the area is of varied, with relatively good houses, cafeterias and shops nearby the main road but crowded and low-standard houses behind the main roads with the majority of the people having the same low standard of living and housing condition.

These low standard houses have no toilets or are shared among many people living in a same compound. Those with no toilet have to use toilets outside in the neighborhood with a monthly fixed charge. Regarding the availability of water, most of the houses do have water supply within the compound except that the renters have to pay extra amount for the service, i.e. it is not included in the monthly rent for the room. Others have to travel to distant places to purchase water as they do not have the service in a nearby location. Electricity service is provided to almost all of the houses even though the service now a day is very poor in the country in general.

The crowd of houses and the insanitary condition of the area exposes the residents with various health threats. The unavailability of sufficient toilets together with their poor hygiene is risk to various contaminated diseases. Some of the neighborhoods in the area are also polluted with bad smell from garbage dumps and urination on the roads.

#### ***4.2.4 Overview of services and facilities:***

There are services of water, electricity, schools and hospitals in the study area but obviously, the mere existence of them does not guarantee that they are accessible to everybody; especially to the poor. For example, two of my respondents pay 2 Ethiopian Birr per month to get access to a toilet which has been constructed by a certain NGO for handicapped people living in the neighbourhood. The rest had to pay for water, electricity and toilet use together with their monthly rent which makes it more expensive.

The services and facilities of the study area is reported by the Ethiopian Statistics Authority as, ‘87% of the houses has walls made of wood and mud.’ (CSA, 1995: 181) ‘96% of the roofs made of corrugated iron sheets.’ (Ibid: 185) ‘70% of the floor made of mud. (Ibid: 188) 93% of all the housing units have tape water.’ (Ibid: 193) ‘65.8% has toilet, 33% has no toilet, and the rest is not stated.’ (Ibid: 197) ‘93% has no bathing facility. The average rent per housing unit is Birr 36.92.’ (Ibid: 210) ‘Sewerage networks are virtually non-existent in Ethiopian towns and cities, except for a tiny area in Addis Ababa.’ (Un-Habitat, 2007: 22)

‘The 1994 census shows that 87.03 percent of the housing units’ toilet facility exposes the population to hazardous condition because during the rainy season this type of facility is over run by flood and pollutes the environment.’(Bersoufekad, 1999: 15)

# Chapter 5

## Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

The structure of this chapter is that it first presents the general profiles of the study participants. It then presents the few migrant women who were found to be relatively successful in achieving lesser vulnerability, together with the factors which made them different from the rest of the group. What is followed is presentation of those who were not able to make it in comparison to the previous ones. The chapter ends with discussing on the livelihood strategies used by both groups of women in dealing with vulnerabilities.

### 5.2 Profiles

#### *Level of Education*

Among the 15 women interviewed, only one has reached to grade 9, 1 grade 8 and 1 to grade 6. All three of them discontinued schooling after that. The rest of the interviewees have never had the chance to attend school except one who attended only for the first grade and immediately stopped.

#### *Marital Status*

7 of them are single; 4 are married, 2 divorced and 2 widows.

#### *Number of children*

6 of them have no children; 6 have one child and the remaining 3 are with two children.

#### *Duration of stay in Addis*

One stayed in Addis for less than one year, four of them stayed between 1-5 years, three of them between 5-10 years, one between 10-15 years, three between 15-20 years and one stayed for 22 years.

#### *Source of income*

Donation/support from NGO, making and selling handcrafts, income generated from small shop, monthly allowance from the father of a child, domestic work, street vending, daily labourer, selling clothes, and employed in a certain boutique as a sales person are the various sources of living for the interviewed women. Among those lists, the most frequent type of

source of income is domestic work and almost all of them have worked as a house maid at one point in time.

### ***Housing condition***

Nine of them have rented a room in private houses. One is living in a kebele house where the rent is significantly low. Three of them live with relatives for free. One was given a separate room for her own to live with her two children but the other two live together with their relatives in the same house. One rented a room in a relative's compound and one lives with her employer as she is working as a full time house maid.

The interviewed women have mostly similarities and a few differences in their profiles. It is important to identify where their difference lies and try to draw a meaning from it. Few of them are found to be relatively successful and others with high vulnerability. A comparative analysis would enable us to identify the factors that may have helped the relative successful women to achieve a relative less vulnerability.

### **5.3 The relatively successful women**

Most of the interviewees are not happy about their lives and they have not sufficient resources to improve their condition. But there are four migrant women who are better-off; with a good motivation, actively engaged in income generating activities, feeling healthy, and having some hope in the future that everything is going to be alright soon. Below is the description on these women together with the analysis of the factors that may have contributed for them to be exceptions.

The first is Woinshet, who is 21, married and mother to one child. She is engaged in street vending; selling items like eggs, charcoal, butter and the like. The most contributing factor for her to be actively engaged in commercial activities is that she grew up in a family with the same background. Her father died when she was a child and her mother had to struggle to make sure that there is enough income for the family. She used to sell food and drinks and Woinshet, as the first child in the family, had a major contribution in helping her mother. This has given her the experience in how to interact with customers and how to make money.

Marriage is also found to be somehow an important factor in this regard. Taking the same example, Woinshet is married and her husband makes a considerable contribution to

the family income. This gave her a larger working capital compared to the others interviewed. In addition to this, her sister is also living together, making her own contribution to the family from her monthly income. Therefore, they benefit from 'economies of scale' in the major expenses such as accommodation, food and other similar expenses. This has freed them some extra money to use for investment.

The second is Beletu who is 27, married and mother to one child. She is engaged in selling clothes in a small place that she rented. According to her, there is an improvement in the monthly income she receives and that is because she always works hard. The benefit she had which is not the case in the other interviewees is that she had a considerable amount of initial capital from her parents when she started the business. In most of the other interviewees, they lack this opportunity as they are from a worse-off family. In addition to her family background, she mentioned marriage as a way of livelihood. She used the saying 'being two is better than being one'. This is also in line with the economies of scale advantage. She also has the plan to own a large shop with her husband in the near future.

The third is Bertukan who is only 18, married, who works as a daily laborer. She is relatively happy about her life as she shares the expenses with her husband whose monthly income is much higher than her. They help each other, try their best to improve their situation and she greatly hopes that the future is going to be better.

Last but not the least is Abebech, who is 19, single. She is in her grade 8 and she is employed in a boutique on a part-time basis. What makes her better-off than others is that she lives with her relatives therefore, not subject to the expenses like shelter and food. The only expense she covers herself are clothes and school expenses. Therefore, she is able to save some money every month. In addition to that, and the most important one, is that she is attending her school and she hopes that she will succeed in her school performance. She is content with her life and has the plan of owning a boutique in the future.

This group of women have better livelihood strategies which made them to be less vulnerable than the rest of the study participants. The specific livelihood strategies used will be explained at the end of this chapter.

## 5.4 The highly vulnerable women

Other than the above listed interviewees all the rest are in conditions where they don't get sufficient amount of money to cover even their basic necessities. Besides, they don't think that the future will be different. Analyzing their profile gives some picture on why this is happening to them. Now let's make a detailed explanation on the possible reasons why they are in a poor condition.

The case of Mulu and Aberash is similar in the sense that they are both victims of HIV/AIDS, which made them to think that they don't have much life left to them and no need to run to improve their income. In addition to this, they do not look physically strong to actively engage in labor works which pays a higher wage. This is because they do not obtain sufficient amount of food necessary to be able to endure the side-effects of the antiretroviral drugs they are taking. This is what is commonly called as the vicious circle of poverty. That is, being undernourished as a result of poverty resulting in being unable to work and generate enough income to be able to be properly nourished which leads back to poverty.

The case of Zerfie is also somehow related. She is a fistula patient and receiving the necessary treatment. She is now getting better but still she cannot perform intense activities. She currently sticks to handcrafts which she can perform while seated in her room. She doesn't make enough money for survival and often borrows money from her friends. She is not happy about her life and the future doesn't seem to promise her anything good. She was thinking of moving back to her parents but she has to return to her husband if she does so. Therefore, she prefers to stay in Addis no matter what. For her, nothing is worse than moving back to her husband whom she married at her early age and become the reason for her ill health. Her reason for migrating is obviously other than an economic one, which is the negative sexual practices prevailing in the society. She is situated close to the hospital like Mulu and Aberash and does not want to move to another location because of ease of access to the hospital due to geographical proximity and sense of security.

The case of Abeba is different in a sense that she was a woman who entirely depended on her husband for a living. Life has become dark as she lost the father of her two children by death. She explains that life was easy and simple with her husband but suddenly changed completely. They had no savings thus has to start from a scratch. She is now selling iebena in

a small shop she temporarily got from her brother but she is not making enough money out of it. Her capital couldn't enable her to have varieties of things to offer to her customers which left her with only few customers. She doesn't hope that the future will be better either. This is a result of the traditional gendered division of labor: women working the domestic work and men working the 'productive' work.

Aster and Hareg are sisters with the same life trajectories. They both came to Addis being inspired by the city life, especially Hareg, being encouraged by her older sister Aster. However, they didn't get life in Addis as pleasant as they have expected. They both became pregnant from their employers while working as domestic workers and now have to rely on their uncle for a living. They don't want to return home because of the social exclusion they may face due to giving birth outside marriage.

Zeineba and Berri are both engaged in same activity which is selling vegetables. They don't have sufficient capital therefore had to rely on small borrowings from someone they know. They do not have access to credit from local microfinance groups because of their very low financial status which made them to be excluded from group formations. They do not have varieties of items which could attract more customers as a result their profit is limited. Lack of reasonably sufficient capital is their common problem.

## **5.5 Livelihood Strategies: Dealing with the vulnerabilities**

Assessing the strategies that the interviewed migrant women use for reducing their vulnerabilities gave the following results.

### ***Labour market involvement***

Their labour market involvement is restricted to the informal sector. None of the migrant women were able to join the formal economy. It is found in the case of construction workers that their daily wage was less by 2Birr than their male counterparts.

### ***Savings***

Saving is impossible for most of the interviewees. Only few who are small entrepreneurs could make a small saving and they use it for an investment on more goods for sale. Strategies to increase resources, is one of the mechanisms they use for survival and betterment of their well-being. But the most important strategy for them that they can use is a reduction in their consumption.

### ***Borrowing and Investment***

Borrowing from relatives and friends is one livelihood strategy applied by the migrant women. Zeineba and Berri buy their goods from money they borrowed and they pay back the portion of their debt from the small profit they make. They could not make large profit to pay out all their debts therefore; they still depend on borrowing for their small investment.

Helping each other is another livelihood strategy they use. For example, when I went for the second round interview, I found Mulu looking after Aberash's baby boy while his mother was washing clothes. Another example is Mulu and Zerfie. Zerfie had to rely on Mulu to get all the necessary support until she adapted the new environment. Being fistula patient as she first came, she had to spend some time in a hospital. But once she was better and moved out from hospital she shared the very small room of Mulu until she was able to rent on her own. She also attended training on how to make handcrafts from Mulu which now became the source of her livelihood.

The same is true to all the rest. They had to rely on their relatives for help one way or another especially at times of their very entrance to Addis and at times they are fired from their job.

### ***Income, labour and asset pooling***

Income, labour and asset pooling is also used as another strategy. Woinshet allowed her two sisters to live with her family so that they can pool their income, labour and other assets. One sister helps in the domestic work and the other sister works outside the house and earns money. They are able to reduce their rent expense had they been living separately. They also benefit from their food and other expenses from the benefit of pooling their resources.

### ***Social networking***

Social networking is the less used strategy among these migrant women. They are not socially integrated even if some of them have lived for reasonably long period of time.



# Chapter 6

## Analysis

### 6.1 Analysis

The economic base in Addis, similar to cities in many least developed countries, is very weak which offers migrant women a limited supply and variety of jobs. The most accessible job is domestic work and 80% of the women I interviewed have worked or are still working as a house maid. On the one hand, this domestic work helps the women by decreasing their economic vulnerability because it is relatively easily accessible but on the other hand it becomes a threat to them by increasing their sexual vulnerability by their male employers. It highly exposes them to sexual vulnerability as most of the women interviewed have migrated independently without a male partner to protect them.

My analytical framework is based on the interplay between vulnerability, lack of access to assets, urban poverty and rural-urban migration. I will use the concepts of commoditization, environmental hazard and social fragmentation pointed out by Baharoglu and Kessides, 2002 as characteristics of urban life, to analyze the extent to which the migrant women interviewed are affected by them (see figure 5.1). 'In the urban context, poverty and vulnerability can be related to three distinctive characteristics of urban life: commoditization (reliance on the cash economy), environmental hazard (stemming from the density and hazardous location of settlements and from exposure to multiple pollutants), and social fragmentation (lack of community and of inter-household mechanisms for social security, compared to those in rural areas).' (Baharoglu and Kessides, 2002: 124)

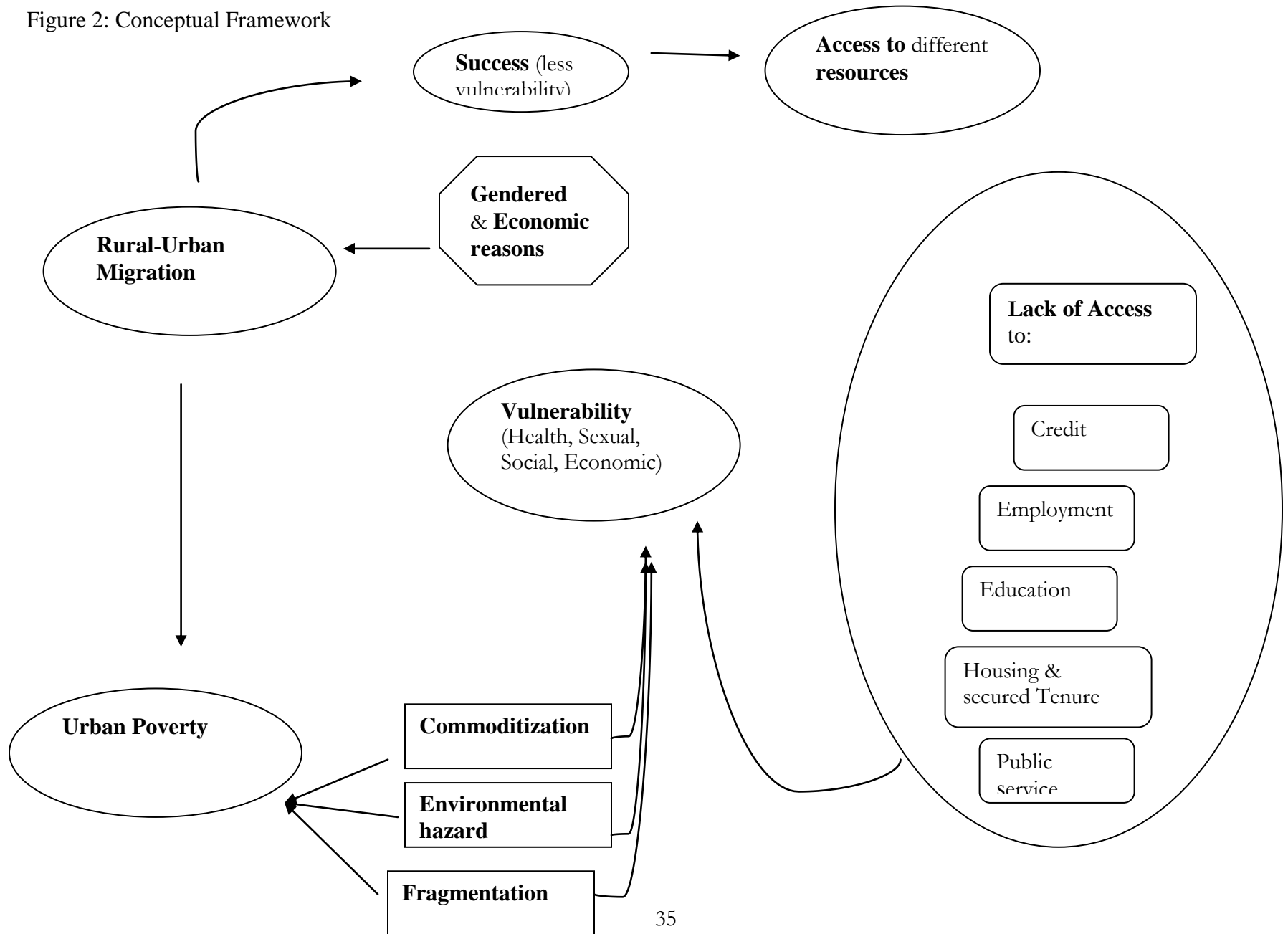
#### ***Commoditization:***

The high commoditization nature of urban life makes income generating activities very crucial for one's survival. This is different from what the women experienced in the rural area of their origin, where they usually rely more on nature for their survival. Money is needed for everything in their urban life starting from water, electricity, toilets, medicine to school fees. Having the need to engage themselves in cash generating activities but with no or very few access and experience to it makes it difficult to fulfill their wishes. To be able to generate cash with no formal education, no sufficient capital to start small entrepreneurship,

or lack of experience to work outside the house is very difficult which is the case for almost all of the interviewed women.

Woinshet is exception here in this regard since she was selling food and drinks with her mother back in the rural place of origin. Unlike most of the rural people in Ethiopia, their source of income was not agriculture but rather small entrepreneurship. This has been a good background experience for her life in Addis.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



### ***Environmental hazard***

The poor infrastructural facilities available in the study area where the interviewed women work and live brings hazard to health. Overcrowded houses, the muddy alleys which makes walking almost impossible in the rainy season (that was when I did the field work), garbage dumps everywhere and the like makes the area very unhealthy and unattractive to live. The bad smell in the neighbourhood from the garbage dumps together with some people urinating on the roads becomes a cause for the creation of sicknesses. In general, there is inadequate access to sanitation, poor structural quality of housing, no sewerage system and thus people living there are highly vulnerable in terms of their health. Yehualashet has explained about environmental problems as ‘among the multi-facet environmental problems, shelter, spacing or zoning, disposal systems, traffic congestion are some.’ (Yehualashet, 1997: 24)

Vulnerabilities caused by environmental hazards are found to be similar to both groups of the migrant women. However, the relatively successful women have managed to reduce their vulnerability by renting a room with relatively good hygiene.

### ***Fragmentation:***

Social relation is very important especially for the poor as they cannot rely on themselves for everything; they greatly rely on one another. This social tie is looser in urban areas. Many of the interviewed women expressed that they do not have many friends since they came to Addis. And their contact is mostly limited to their relatives and/or migrants from the same origin. Therefore, they experience feeling of insecurity in their urban lives associated with loneliness and detachment from the ‘community’. In general, ‘Social problems mainly as the consequence of unemployment and the drowning of income earnings, social disintegration become casual factors for dissatisfaction.’ (Yehualashet, 1997: 25)

Association with people is not extended to the extent of getting in touch with people who were born and raised in Addis. This is true for both the more vulnerable and the relatively successful women. The later have more persons, usually relatives, in touch with whereas; the former have very limited friends or relatives to rely on at bad times.

The interviewees experience vulnerability partly caused and re-enforced by the above explained factors. The following section discusses on the different dimensions of

vulnerability that the migrant women are experiencing: economic, sexual, environmental and social vulnerabilities.

### ***Economic vulnerability***

The women I interviewed are economically vulnerable to varying extents. This has to do with the commoditization nature of urban life discussed above which makes high engagement in economic activities necessary to ensure less economic vulnerability. The main challenge they face after migration is that they need to fully support themselves economically which is not necessarily the case back home as they depend on family or husbands in exchange to the domestic work they do. The other challenge is that they are expected to help their parents financially as cities are considered to be offering good deal of money. In the meantime, these women have difficulty finding cash generating jobs for the main reasons such as low availability of jobs in the supply side and being less competitive in the demand side of the formal job market, lack of access to credit to start small entrepreneurship, and the like.

There are few among them who have somehow managed to achieve less economic vulnerability. There are few but different factors that helped them to make this transition into economic activities. The first and foremost is financial help from their relatives. Those with a relative, living in Addis, and especially if he/she is in a better living condition, have managed to get some money (refundable or non-refundable) as an initial capital for starting small business of their own. However, not all women with relatives were given support. For example Tadelech has an uncle living in Addis with a good job and monthly income but he did not provide assistance to her.

‘He always tells me that I am too young to start a business of my own. He rather prefers if I work as a domestic worker. I listen to whatever he says because he knows what is good for me better than I do. Besides, he is my uncle and I have to obey him.’

That was her reply when I asked her if she has thought of a job like street vending, same to her friend Woinshet. From this, we can see that whether she is in a rural area or urban locality, she has little say on her own life. The patriarchal system still operates even after moving to a new environment.

The other important factor that helped to make smooth transition to economic activities is previous exposure to commercial activity. One good example is Woinshet who used to sell items with her mother back in the rural area of origin.

‘Selling is all about gain or loss, there is always a risk; there are times I gain some and there are times that I lose a lot. But one thing is for real that there is always some gain at the end as long as you keep struggling, even if the gain could be so small. This doesn’t discourage me though; I keep on struggling because I know how it is in making business.’

Considering their situation, being able to fulfil the basic necessities can be regarded as being successful. Saving money was even unthinkable for most of the interviewees because of the very limited income they get. Some of them send some money from the small amount they get which have resulted them not to be able to save money and secure reasonable sustainability for their future income. They also share what they have among friends who are worse of which makes saving even more difficult. ‘Even the successful ones find it difficult to accumulate capital under the imperative of sharing prevalent in the moral economy of the poor.’ (Berner et al, 2008: 1)

### ***Sexual vulnerability***

The experience of the women that I interviewed is similar in terms of exposure to sexual vulnerability. Most of the women migrated as independent, without male partner accompanying them, which makes them exposed to sexual assault. The exposure is high because most of them work as house maids. They are subject to physical and psychological abuses mainly coming from their male bosses. Working as a house maid for men (especially if he is single) exposes them to be highly vulnerable to risks of rape, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and majority of my respondents have experienced and are experiencing at least one of those risks.

Looking at the number of children each of them has, some have no children, some have one and some have two. The fact that none of them have more than 2 children is related to their relatively young age. What is surprising in this finding is that all of them with at least one child, except one, have given birth after they migrated and this is regardless of the age they migrated at. Four of the interviewees, three with one child and one with two, have worked or are still working as a domestic worker and they became pregnant by their

employers. When domestic workers live in their employer's house, they are exposed to sexual abuses. The high dependence of domestic workers, for a living, on their employers makes them to sacrifice their rights and to please their employers.

What is revealed from this study is that even if a woman was sexually assaulted during the first day, she tends to continue her relation either in fear of losing her job or attracted by the increased temporary benefit that she gets afterwards. Therefore, they want to sacrifice their sexual well-being for the sake of reducing their economic vulnerability. But even their economic vulnerability increases once again when they become pregnant and are fired from their jobs. This is for two reasons; one is she will not fit the job physically but the most important is that the employer does not want to be held responsible in raising the child and does not want to have a long standing relation with the mother. Therefore, she has no other choice than facing the problem by herself. What is common among them is to look for someone they know and seek for help until giving birth. Two of my interviewees, Hareg and Aster have experienced this and they both received help from their uncles who live in Addis.

Life becomes completely different after becoming a mother. She cannot be competitive enough for domestic work as most employers tend to prefer someone without a child. Even if she secures a job as a house maid, no one will be willing to let her live inside the house together with the child. Therefore, she will have extra expenses like rent for a room, water and electricity bills. For example, Hareg was not able to get a job after having a child therefore her cousin hired her to do the domestic work to help her and Aster couldn't still get a job.

In addition to the economic problems explained above, they also have difficulty of raising a child. Giving birth outside marriage is considered (especially in the rural parts of Ethiopia) as culturally bad. Therefore, they don't want to go back to their parents in the rural area. They want to struggle and try to make it by themselves. They think it is a shameful thing if they go back with no money saved but with their child. Especially those who run away from marriage have offended their parents in the first place and things become worse if they go back with a child from outside marriage. Aberash did not want to go back even when life was very challenging in Addis for the above reason. But Hareg was the exception who gave her baby to her mom back in the rural area. It was easier for her to do so because she was not married in the first place.

The other problem associated with rape and sexual assault is the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Some of them have not been to health facilities for a check-up but Aberash has already found out that she is HIV/AIDS carrier.

The relatively successful women are less sexually vulnerable for two reasons: none of them are currently working as house maid, and all except one are married which to some extent could give protection against sexual vulnerability. The single women migrant is living with her relatives which give her protection unlike others who are living alone.

### ***Health vulnerability***

Health vulnerability has to do with health risks both arising from the environmental hazards and also sexual vulnerability, both explained above. The poor infrastructure in the area with muddy road and no sewerage system makes the neighbourhood very difficult to access especially during the rainy season when the field work was done. 'A survey by PADCO showed that in 1996 a rather large proportion of the housing units in the city had no direct access to sanitary infrastructure or services, nor to roads.' (Un-Habitat, 2007: 34)

Mulu fall on the slippery muddy road which caused her problems on the left side of her rib cage. She was on bedrest for number of weeks which prevented her to do something of an income generating activity. Having no savings she had no money to buy food and thus she could not get better soon.

Proximity to the big hospital is one advantage in terms of getting quick health treatment. Access to the hospital is limited with the ability to pay for the service. However, the very poor can get the service for free with a proof of their inability to pay from their kebele office. Two of the interviewed women with HIV/AIDS are getting free treatment with the help of Hiwot HIV. The relatively successful women have a complete access to the hospital since they are able to pay for the service.

### ***Social vulnerability***

Social vulnerability is related to one of the characteristics of urban life put by Baharoglu and Kessides, 2002 which is social fragmentation. Some of them have problem of adapting to the new environment with only few people they have contact with and sometimes with no one to rely on at difficult times which makes them vulnerable. What I have observed from this study is that they lose the social tie they had back home and as a result they feel helpless.



'Research suggests that migrants who maintain strong ties only with a small group of people, mainly relatives, may well be socially disadvantaged.' (Ryan, 2007: 298) This was revealed in my study that most of the women migrants stick to their relatives and don't have connection with other people and this leads to limited access to different things.

It is clear that the ability or opportunity to get connected to social networks is very crucial to the success and easy transition to a better source of livelihood and sense of feeling security. This can be proven by considering those interviewees who have managed to be successful than others. The chance of getting a job easily and also getting a better job with a relative security depends on the kind of person that someone has contact with. The same is true in surviving times of high felt vulnerability of the different kinds.

## **6.2 Lack of Access**

It is indicated in the literature that access to credit, employment, education, quality housing and secured tenure, and quality public service is very important for a good living condition and well-being. However, the sampled migrant women have not enjoyed any of this access with few exceptions which are explained below.

Access to credit of small amount was possible for some of them from persons they know well, usually relatives. Employment opportunity is also higher with the help of relatives. The unskilled nature of their job makes personal relations very important to successfully finding a job.

Only one has access to a relatively secured tenure as she is having a kebele room where, she can stay as long as she wishes. The rest suffers from continuous increase of rent (sometimes unreasonable) by the landlords and they have to constantly look for another room.

Access to toilet in a close-by to where they live is a problem to some of the interviewed women. Two of them have to walk for 3-5 minutes to get to the toilet and are required to pay some monthly fee for the service.

One finding that surprised me is that I had the assumption that those who have stayed in Addis for longer period of time would be better placed than more recent migrants. But what I have found in the study is that those who have stayed for much longer period of time

are not in a better situation both in terms of economic activities and social integration than the late comers.

Another finding of this study is that most of the women migrated independently rather than in marriage relationships. This is in line with the study carried out by UN-INSTRAW 2008 which shows an increase in the number of women migrating independently in search of work, as opposed to women travelling as “dependent” family members. There is no one from among the 15 interviewees who migrated together with her husband except one who has migrated with a man whom she later married. But even her case cannot be considered as marriage migration.

From the four relatively successful women three are married, all after migration. One met her husband while working in the same construction site, the other from living as neighbours, and the third was married to the man who helped her to migrate to Addis. Generally, migration was taken as a marriage avoidance decision for most of the migrant women. As a result, most of the women migrated independently rather than in marriage relationships.

## Chapter 7

### Looking Towards Future Research

The analysis has identified *the factors that may have helped the rural-urban women migrants to make transition into better well-being*, in comparison to those who have not made it. It revealed the following factors as helpful to make the transition.

The first factor is access to relatives in Addis. Support of any type: material or non-material has made the migrant women with this access better-off in terms of integration into the urban society and improvement of their living situation in addition to a relatively better economic condition, by being able to reduce their long term vulnerabilities relatively easy.

*Marriage* is also found to be another factor by increasing the family source of income. The benefits of asset pooling and economies of scale are obtained by combining their income with that of their husband's.

A third factor is *previous experience in commercial activity*. This is found to be vital which helped the migrant women to be able to actively participate in small entrepreneurship in Addis and earn higher income to secure the basic necessities and make some saving as well, even if the amount is very small.

A combination of those factors has made some migrant women even less vulnerable. However, the lack of the above mentioned factors is found to hinder migrant women from making transition into better well-being and hence remain vulnerable.

When considering *migration and women's vulnerability* to find out if and how they are related, we see that migrating out from their place of origin has made the rural women migrants vulnerable in many regards. Their *sexual vulnerability* has increased as most of them have migrated independently, which exposed them to experience high sexual vulnerability. Their *health vulnerability* also increased in relation to the environmental hazards and sexual vulnerability. *Social vulnerability* increased as a result of fewer social ties. *Economic vulnerability* increased from the commoditization nature of urban life and a few opportunities of securing formal employment with stable source of income. Therefore, it becomes clear with this study that the concept of multi-dimensional vulnerability is related to migration of women.

Considering *the strategies that poor women in general and migrant women in particular use for survival*, we see that the following strategies are being employed. *Sharing* what they have,

usually food items, is the most commonly practiced livelihood strategy. *Helping each other in different ways* (for example, looking after one's child when the mother goes to work, giving the necessary treatment at times of ill health and the like) is also their other livelihood strategy. Another livelihood strategy is *reducing consumption* particularly, consumption of clothes and shoes. *Minimizing expenses* through various ways such as: buying food and other things in smaller amount to avoid finishing it earlier if bought in mass, *sharing rooms* and *changing the household composition*.

Unlike findings in the literature as one way to long term sustainable livelihood strategy, educating their child was not found to be the case for these women. Only two have mentioned that they want to send their children to a good school for the reason that they don't want the same thing to happen to their children

When considering *the factors that made the relatively successful migrant women less vulnerable*, we can list them as follows. They are exposed to less sexual vulnerability when they live in their own room unlike staying in their employer's house like the case of most migrant women working as house maids. They are also less vulnerable when they are married than being single. Being able to make many friends and having interaction with various people vis a vis making connection only with migrants from the same origin is found to make the women less socially vulnerable. Economic vulnerability was lessened by being able to generate an income which is at least a bit higher than their expenses for basic necessities. To be able to save a very small amount lowers their economic vulnerability to some extent. Living in a place where there is toilet and water provision within the compound has reduced their health vulnerability.

Regarding their *mobility between locations of residence in Addis*, there is an interesting finding. Even from among those who stayed in Addis for a relatively long period of time, there is no one who has moved to another location in Addis except one who has come to the study area from a different location of Addis (where she initially stayed at the time of rural-urban migration). They stuck to Zenebework for the whole period of their stay in Addis. The reasons for this are: One is fear of loneliness. They know the ins and outs of the area after a certain period of stay and going to another area makes them to experience the feeling of loneliness and they want to avoid that by remaining in the same area. The other but the most important reason is that, they (especially those with health problems) do not want to move

away from the hospital which is located in the area. It is found that the geographical proximity to the hospital is one major reason for them to stick to the area. They feel secure in living close to the hospital as they require frequent checkups and treatments. The migrant women with health problems have preferred to stay there even if some of them had a recent rent increase for their room.

A comparison was made between those who are recent migrants with that of earlier migrants to find out if there is any significant difference in their well-being and degree of vulnerabilities. The finding shows that those who have stayed for longer period of time are not necessarily in a better situation both in terms of economic activities and social integration than the late comers. There is no regularity in the relation between period of stay and well-being in terms of better source of income and less felt vulnerability. It appears that there is no automatic escalator for women as their time in urban areas increases. Therefore, duration of stay is less relevant factor than access to resources provided by others that have helped some migrant women to improve their well-being. Generally, achieving improvement in well-being seems very difficult to attain by “boot-strapping” oneself independently of “external” support-livelihood assets.

The findings of this study are restricted not only to the very small sample taken (15 rural women migrants) but also to the specific area of study (Zenebework). Due to the limited period of time available to conduct the field work, it was necessary to limit the sample size and narrow the study area. Therefore it is not possible to make generalizations, on the basis of the findings, about the migration experiences of migrant women in urban areas in general. Taking a large sample from various locations of the city would give a range of experiences and as a result more rich findings.

It has been shown that different migrant women have significantly different but highly gendered experiences and I believe that there is a lot more than this in the lives of these women that should and could have been explored had there been enough time span. Not only the number of sampled women but also the conceptual framework applied to this study was narrowed for the same reason.

Further research looking at the political dimension, that is how migrant women are involved in collective decision making, and also more in-depth analysis into their access to public goods and services as indicated by the significance of the hospital in several

respondents' decisions on location, would enrich the findings. This study could also be a base for further research looking into and assess any initiatives (being) taken by NGOs and/or other agencies regarding reducing vulnerabilities by empowerment of young rural-women migrants.

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