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### Moved by modernity

*How development shapes migration in rural Ethiopia*

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## **CHAPTER 2. ETHIOPIA'S MIGRATION HISTORY**

This chapter reviews key trends in migration patterns within and from Ethiopia over the last century, with a particular focus on 1960 onwards when more national-level data is available. It shows that both gradual and dramatic shifts characterize Ethiopia's migration history. Regarding gradual shifts in the movement of populations within the country, Ethiopia shows a two-fold process of sedentarization of nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles alongside a slow but steady urbanization of migration trajectories. Alongside this, rising levels of international migration have diversified in terms of the composition and destinations of Ethiopian emigrants. Ethiopia's history also shows more punctuated and dramatic shifts in population movements over relatively short periods – a consequence of political conflict, famine, conscription, resettlement schemes, and/or development-induced displacement. At the same time that Ethiopians left their country in times of distress, Ethiopia was also an important destination for hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa. This chapter provides evidence for these trends, and considers how they relate to other processes of social change. This chapter sets the national context for the more focused, Wayisso-specific empirical analyses that follow.

### **Modernization in Ethiopia**

Like many countries, 'modernization' in Ethiopia has entailed several, interlinked shifts in the life of society (see Table 1): a demographic transition, as fertility and mortality rates fall and life expectancies increase; an economic transition, as Ethiopia's economy moves from a primarily rural, agricultural base to an urban economy grounded in the industry and service sectors, with notably rapid economic growth over the last two decades; an educational transition, as more children gain access to formal schooling, mostly at the primary level. 'Modernization' also precipitated certain shifts in the migration patterns of Ethiopia's population, including a gradual sedentarization of nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles, a slow but steady urbanization of internal migration trajectories, and the growth and diversification of international migration trends.

**Table 1. Indicators of Social Transformation in Ethiopia**

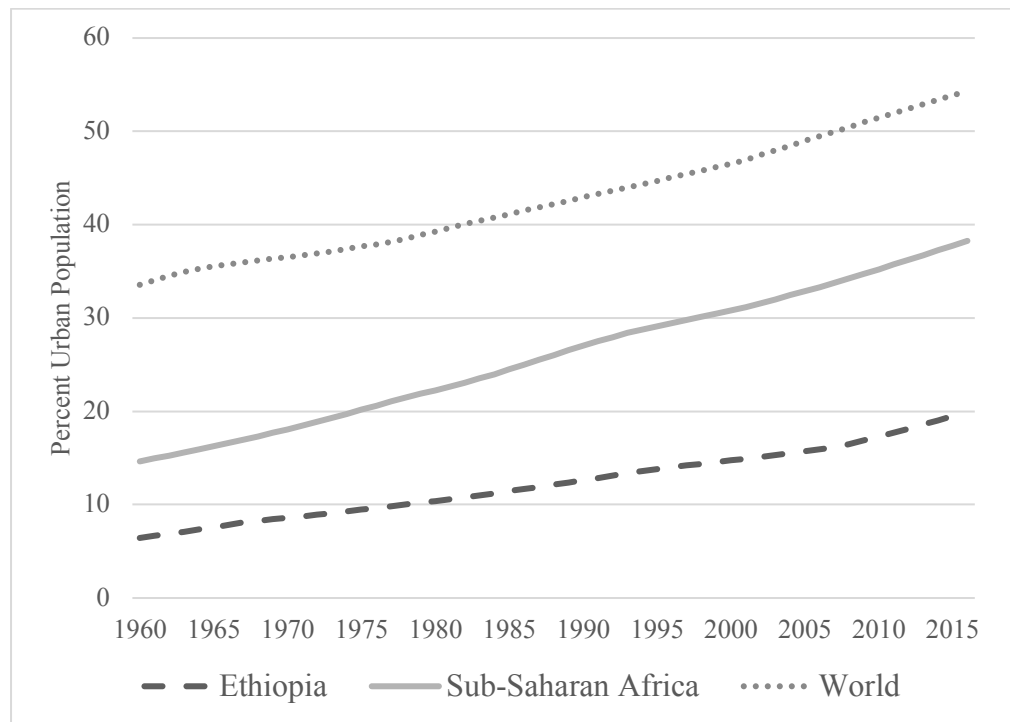
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Population (millions)	22.2	28.4	35.3	48.1	66.5	87.7	99.9
Fertility Rate (births per woman)	6.9	7.0	7.3	7.2	6.5	5.0	4.3
Life expectancy at birth (years)	38.4	42.9	43.7	47.1	51.9	61.6	65.0
Urban population (% of total)	6.4	8.6	10.4	12.6	14.7	17.3	19.4
Gross Domestic Product* (billions)	-	-	7.3 <sup>Δ</sup>	12.2	8.2	30.0	64.5
Primary school enrollment (% gross)	-	15.0 <sup>◦</sup>	33.8	35.1	54.4	91.8	101.9

Source: World Development Indicators | \*GDP in current USD | <sup>Δ</sup> data for year 1981 | <sup>◦</sup> data for year 1971

Several distinguishing characteristics make Ethiopia a compelling context to investigate the interconnections between development processes and migration patterns. First, as this chapter will show, relative to other countries at similar levels of economic and human development, Ethiopia has low levels of internal and international migration. Ethiopia remains overwhelmingly rural, with eight-three percent of its population living in rural areas and engaged in subsistence farming as of the last national census (CSA 2010; see Figure 3). Donnenfeld et al (2017) estimate that its urban population should be closer to thirty percent based on its GDP per capita. Nigeria and Egypt, the other high population countries in Africa, have some forty-five to fifty percent of their population living in urban centers (Donnenfeld et al 2017). International migration rates are also relatively low. Less than one percent of Ethiopia's population lived abroad in 2015, compared to a global average of three to four percent (UN 2015). Ethiopia thus provides an interesting case to examine the determinants of relative immobility, or why people do *not* migrate, an often-overlooked question in migration research (Schewel 2019).

Second, and perhaps relatedly, Ethiopia was never formally colonized by a European power. Fascist Italy invaded and occupied Ethiopia from 1936-1941, but because the invasion violated international law, the League of Nations never formally recognized the occupation. Italy never consolidated a lasting colonial administration in Ethiopia, and just five years after the Italians seized power, Emperor Haile Selassie I reclaimed his throne. This brief occupation had lasting ramifications for the political and economic trajectory of the country (Pankhurst 2001). However, it did not generate a 'migration system' (c.f. Mabogunje 1971; Kritz et al

1992) between Ethiopia and Italy, as colonization did between other African and European countries in the postcolonial era.



**Figure 3. Percentage of Population Living in Urban Areas**

Source: World Development Indicators (2017)

Third, because Ethiopia was never formally colonized, its pursuit of ‘modernization’ has largely been its own. “Whatever were the shortcomings of colonialism,” Shiferaw Bekele muses, “Africa—with the exception of Ethiopia—was initiated into modernization by white rulers. Unlike their brethren elsewhere on the continent, Ethiopians were guided into the modern world by their own rulers” (Bekele 2015: 179). Ethiopia’s rulers pursued three very different versions of modernity, or *zemenawinet* in Amharic, over the last century, under an empire, a communist regime, and a developmental state. Ethiopia’s history thus defies common assumptions that modernization is a one-way process, transplanted onto poorer countries by Western powers. Mirroring Ethiopia’s geographic position, its rulers carefully balanced the influence, advice and assistance of Eastern and Western powers with a steadfast defensiveness of its own sovereignty and distinctiveness. Ethiopia’s turbulent history — and its complex relationship to outside powers— is a story of “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 2000), shaped by ever-shifting domestic and international cross-pressures.

The first imperial regime, guided by Haile Selassie, looked to Japan as a model of modernization in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan drew on the economic and

technological advancements of the modern West while maintaining its sovereignty and tradition — not to mention authority within the hands of an all-powerful and sacred Emperor. Emperor Haile Selassie, as Prunier and Ficquet argue, “was probably the Ethiopian aristocrat of his time who had been the most exposed to Western education and values,” and yet, “his entourage consisted of intellectuals who were known as modernizers’ or ‘Japanizers’ since Japanese Meiji era was their model for Ethiopia.” (Prunier and Ficquet 2015: 9) Quick to welcome European and American advisors and assistance with his modernization agenda throughout his long reign, Haile Selassie was “genuinely convinced that significant reforms should be fostered—provided he remained the absolute ruler” (Prunier and Ficquet 2015: 9). His steadfast grasp on political power was ultimately his downfall. As Clapham (2015) argues, “It was his own dominance that made the abolition of the monarchy inevitable” (206), preventing any chance of any alternative political institutions to emerge, such as a constitutional monarchy.

The emperor’s downfall came in 1974 — what Prunier and Ficquet, “the year of destiny, the year when Ethiopia was suddenly thrown into the modern world” (2015: 1). By this, they mean that all semblance of continuity with the mythic, religious past that Haile Selassie sought to balance beneath his modernization pursuits was snapped when a military regime, founded in communist ideology, seized control and imposed an altogether different vision of modernity. During its 17-year reign, from 1974 to 1991, the model of modernity that inspired the revolution and subsequent reforms was Stalin, Lenin, and China — at the time, the alternative option of “modernity” for much of the world. Woube and Sjöberg (1999) argue that Ethiopia was one of the few African countries that actually imposed a Marxist-Leninist variety of socialism during the time of the Derg (also Prunier 2015). Although the Derg had grand ambitions for Ethiopia’s rural development, the Derg regime is more often remembered for its brutal and violent suppression of opposition and its failed policies than its genuine social reforms (Prunier 2015).

When the socialist regime was overthrown in 1991, a three-year process began to determine what the new state would look like. This time, its constitution looked to the West, and Ethiopian expatriates returned to help create the new charter (see Gidada and Lemma 2016). They devised the framework for a democratic, ethnic federalism that enshrined the rights of individuals and its diverse populations to self-determination. Although the new constitution was in many ways liberal, the implementation of the new state, spearheaded by its first Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, again looked to the East—to the development trajectories of South Korea and Taiwan (de Waal 2013). Meles Zenawi was unabashed and direct in his

explanation for functioning as a developmental state, much like China. He firmly opposed the neoliberal Washington Consensus prevalent at the time, arguing that under imperfect conditions of rent-seeking and patronage, development requires a strong state to create the conditions under which a healthy market and democratic order can function. Under his strong influence and after his death, Ethiopia reported unprecedented economic growth, yet not without political backlash. Frustrations over undemocratic rule and unequal access to the fruits of Ethiopia's progress led to widespread protests, beginning in earnest in 2005 and continuing after Meles Zenawi's death in 2012. The Oromo Protests began in 2015 and led to two states of emergency, the resignation of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and the appointment of a new reformist leader, Abiy Ahmed in 2018.

The following considers key trends in Ethiopia's migration history. Because of the widespread conflict and recurrent political instability – both within Ethiopia and in neighboring countries – it is tempting to characterize Ethiopia's emigration and immigration history as largely a story of “forced migration” (see Terrazas 2007). But this neglects deep and underlying shifts in the demographic, economic, technological and cultural realms that also played a role in shaping the size, composition, direction, and nature of different migration flows.

## Migration Trends

### *Sedentarization*

The Ethiopian population is made up of diverse groups of people pursuing very different livelihoods and patterns of movement. Most Ethiopian historians and geographers suggest that the structural configuration of Ethiopia's land explains a large degree of differentiation among its peoples and their livelihoods, particularly a “dualism” between “well-watered highlands and dry lowlands” that have “left a strong imprint on human activities and social organizations” (Prunier and Ficquet 2015: 4).<sup>12</sup> Agrarian settlements first emerged in the cool, humid highlands, while pastoral livelihoods persisted in the vast arid and semi-arid

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<sup>12</sup> In the first half of the 20th century, cultivation was common in the central and northern highlands, among the Agew and the Amhara-Tigrean peoples, as well as in the well-watered highlands of the South, where the Gurage, Sidamo, and Omo tribes were hoe-cultivators of ensete and other cereal grains. Nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism characterized the livelihoods of peoples living in the more arid and semiarid lowlands, which covers almost 50 percent of the country: the Afar and Somali in the east, the Oromo across the south, the Nuwer and Anyiwak in the West (Levine 1974; 2000; CSA, 2010). Of course, some populations resist categorization within this neat dualism. The Harari peoples, for example, were the only group to have developed an early agricultural and trading tradition centering on a single large urban center (Levine 2000: 38). Similarly, the Oromo, because of a long history of expansion, conquest and adaptation, are the most widely dispersed peoples in Ethiopia and the most diverse in terms of livelihoods, religion, and lifestyles.

lowlands (Trimingham 1951: 9). Given the historical prominence of nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples across Ethiopia's vast lowlands, to examine changing migration patterns requires looking beyond the typical definitions we use, namely a move in residence across an administrative boundary. On the contrary, in Ethiopia, 'modernization' over the last century entailed the settlement of populations that had historically been highly mobile. Quantifying the decline in nomadic lifestyles at the national level is difficult, because Ethiopian censuses often excluded nomadic or pastoralist areas.<sup>13</sup> The latest 2007 census, however, made a greater effort to include pastoral peoples (Randall 2015), and at this time, pastoralists numbered some 2.3 million, or 3.1 percent of the population (CSA 2007).

Despite issues in the reliability of national data, a range of more qualitative work on nomadic and semi-nomadic populations confirms that the rise of the 'modern' Ethiopian state has coincided with a decline in nomadic lifestyles across Ethiopia – from the Dasenech peoples who lived along the Omo River in Southern Ethiopia (Carr 1977) to the Somali pastoralists in the East (Devereux 2006) to the Afar peoples of the Northeastern drylands (Rettberg 2010). Political and economic marginalization, drought and food insecurity, the widespread loss of grazing-land and conflict over natural resources, and gradual integration into the market economy all play a part. Alongside this, more direct government development interventions, such as the expansion of irrigation agriculture, or land seizure for development projects (e.g. dams) or national parks, make nomadic lifestyles less and less viable (see Rettberg 2010; Devereux, 2006; Lautze et al 2006; Haggman and Mulugeta 2008; Pankhurst and Piguet 2009). Today, Piguet and Pankhurst (2009) assert, none of the pastoralists in Ethiopia subsist on the produce of their herds. An increasing proportion of their 'income' (an irrelevant concept for previous generations) derives from market-engagement and wage labor (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009). Development then, at least initially, brought a decline in the mobility of many Ethiopian peoples.

### *Internal Migration*

Alongside this process of sedentarization, Ethiopia experienced a steady increase in the percentage of its population living in urban areas. Given higher fertility rates in rural areas, this urban growth is in large part due to rural-urban migration. As Figure 3 shows, Ethiopia remains

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<sup>13</sup> The 1984 census, for example, covered about 81 percent of the Ethiopian population, omitting lowland areas with nomadic populations (see Randall 2015). The 1994 census did not cover the nomadic populations of Afar and Somali regions where pastoralists are dominant (Randall 2015).

far more rural than other Sub-Saharan African countries, yet its steady but slow growth in its urban population mirrors a global urbanizing trend in the modern period.

Urban growth in Ethiopia has been dominated by movement towards its capital city, Addis Ababa. Meaning “New Flower,” Addis Ababa was first settled by Emperor Menelik and Queen Taytu in 1886. Ethiopian kings had a long history of traveling with their entourages from place to place, and though many rulers had settled before —clearly manifest in the formidable castles of Gondar — the population of Addis Ababa grew more rapidly than any other historic town. By 1910, the population was estimated to have 70,000 permanent and 30-50,000 temporary inhabitants (Pankhurst 2001: 195). The combination of settlement and growing population density allowed for infrastructure development and labor specialization unprecedented in other areas of the empire. By the 1960s, Addis Ababa had grown to 644,190 residents, one third (33.4%) of the urban population in Ethiopia at that time (CSO 1968). As small towns and medium-sized cities have proliferated across Ethiopia in the decades since (see Table 2), the proportion of the urban population living in the capital city has decreased – to 28.5% in 1994 to 23.6% in 2007 (CSA 1998; 2010) – but still remains substantial.

**Table 2. Charting Urban Growth in Ethiopia by Town- and City-size**

Population-size of urban centers ('000s)	Number of urban centers by town- and city-size			Proportion of the urban population by town- and city-size (%)		
	1967	1984	2007	1967	1984	2007
2-5	101	186	357	16.5	13.2	10.5
5-10	36	75	245	12.9	11.8	14.5
10-20	15	38	115	10.6	11.9	13.4
20-50	8	14	61	14.0	9.4	15.9
50-100	1	10	14	2.9	15.1	8.7
100-500	1	1	10	9.2	6.3	13.5
500-1,000	1	0	0	33.9	/	/
1,000+	0	1	1	/	32.4	23.6
Total	163	325	803	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Urban Population				1,917,160	4,364,140	10,769,022

Source: Rafiq and Hailemariam (1987) for years 1967 and 1984; CSA 2010 for year 2007

Table 2 shows the growth of towns and cities across Ethiopia over the last half-century. The most dramatic increase over the last decades has been in the absolute number of urban localities across Ethiopia, from 163 towns and cities in 1967 to 803 in 2007. The distribution of the urban population across small, medium and large cities has shifted somewhat. In 1967, Ethiopia’s urban population was concentrated in the capital city (33.9 percent) or across small



towns with less than 20,000 people (40.0 percent). In 1984, Ethiopia’s urban distribution was still concentrated at both ends of the urban spectrum: 32.4 percent in the capital city and 36.9 percent in small towns. By 2007, a higher proportion of the urban population now lives in small towns (38.3 percent) – in fact, as much as one-fourth (24.9 percent) of Ethiopia’s urban population lives in towns of 10,000 or less – but a growing share also lives in larger cities outside Addis Ababa.

At the same time that towns develop, so too does the infrastructure that connects urban and rural places. This infrastructure development, particularly the construction of road networks across Ethiopia, is one important driver of internal migration trends. Roads bring rural areas into closer contact with urban areas, facilitating rural-urban connectivity and exposing rural people to goods, services, and basic facilities (electricity, for example), that may not be available in rural areas. It leads to the creation and transformation of new markets as more people access urban centers. Dorosh and Schmidt (2010) found that the number of people residing in or within three hours of a city of at least 50,000 rose from 15.5 percent of the population in 1984 to 48.5 percent in 2007. Growing connectivity lowers information and capability thresholds for those considering a migration project, whether to a nearby town, a more distant urban center, or abroad. Table 3 shows the steady growth of road networks in Ethiopia since the 1950s. Road expansion continues, making up about a quarter of the infrastructure budget. Foreign companies, primarily China, are playing a key role in road construction in recent years. By 2015, the road network had doubled to over 100,000 kilometers.

**Table 3. Road Network Development in Ethiopia**

Years	Growth in road network (km)	Total road network (km)
1951-1973	2760	9260
1974-1991	9757	19017
1992-2010	31019	49000

Source: Ethiopian Roads Authority (2010)

Within this overarching trend of gradual urban growth, there are large variations in the nature and direction of internal movements. For example, as Table 4 shows, almost all regions saw a growing share of their population living in urban areas between 1994 and 2007, but for some regions, like Gambella, Afar, or Tigray, this growth was more dramatic than others.

**Table 4. Urban Growth by Region in Ethiopia, 1994 and 2007**

Regional & City Administrations	1994				2007			
	Total Population		Total urban population		Total Population		Total urban population	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tigray	3,136,267	5.86	468,478	14.94	4,316,988	5.86	844,040	19.55
Afar	1,060,573	1.98	79,258	7.47	1,390,273	1.89	185,135	13.32
Amhara	13,834,297	25.87	1,265,315	9.15	17,221,976	23.38	2,112,595	12.27
Oromia	18,732,525	35.03	1,970,088	10.52	26,993,933	36.65	3,317,460	12.29
Somali	3,198,514	5.98	437,035	13.66	4,445,219	6.04	623,004	14.02
Benishangul- Gumuz	460,459	0.86	36,027	7.82	784,345	1.06	105,926	13.51
S.N.N.P	10,377,028	19.40	704,818	6.79	14,929,548	20.27	1,495,557	10.02
Gambella	181,862	0.34	27,424	15.08	307,096	0.42	77,925	25.38
Harari	131,139	0.25	76,378	58.24	183,415	0.25	99,368	54.18
Addis Ababa City	2,112,737	3.95	2,084,588	98.67	2,739,551	3.72	2,739,551	100
Dire Dawa City	251,864	0.47	173,188	68.76	341,834	0.46	233,224	68.26
Total	53,477,265	100	7,323,207	13.69	73,654,178	100	11,833,785	16.10

Source: CSA 1998; CSA 2010

Note. This table focuses on the 1990s onwards because of the administrative restructuring and regional-state creation that took place between the 1984 and 1994 census. The redrawing of boundaries makes it difficult to compare historical census data by region.

Within and across this regional differentiation, there are many other kinds of movements occurring over the last century that were not urban-centric. In fact, rural-rural movement has historically been the most common type of internal migration occurring over the last century, whether for land, work or marriage. For example, among the Oromo – a population that constitutes over one-third of the Ethiopian population – marriage traditionally entails the departure of a woman from her family to that of her husband. Historically, this was most often a rural-rural movement (between settled populations or semi-nomadic ones) that marked the lives of at least half of that population.

Likewise, internal labor migration has historically occurred from the more highly populated northern highlands towards the less densely populated south, southwest and east of the country (see Markos 2001). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was a kind of ‘frontier migration’; peasants left situations of land scarcity and low agricultural productivity in search of more fertile lands, and soldiers were often given land by the imperial regime as ‘tribute’ (World Bank 2007). In the 1950s, 60s and 70s, movement from the highlands to the lowlands continued but began to change in nature. Under Haile Selassie, ‘modernization’ entailed the growth of light industries like cotton, sugar, cement, leather, and printing factories. Commercial agriculture began under his rule in some areas of Ethiopia, often those accessible to the railway lines, and introduced new forms of paid employment to new populations. New services, like banking, insurance, hotels, restaurants, shops and trading companies were established in

emerging towns (Pankhurst 2001). The internal migration of peasants shifted from ‘frontier migration’ for better land to labor migration for wage-work with these new companies: for example, cotton and sugar plantations in the Rift Valley and Awash valley, coffee plantations in the south and southwest, and farms harvesting sesame, beans and oil seeds in the north-west (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009; Markos 2001). This movement was often seasonal, but over time, also led to the settlement of migrant laborers in these areas and the emergence of new towns (Blunch and Laderchi 2015; World Bank 2007). Even when many private- and foreign-owned enterprises were overtaken by the Derg, labor migration continued (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009). In fact, it often became state-sponsored: conscription was introduced by the Derg not just for military purposes, but also to fill labour shortages on state farms.

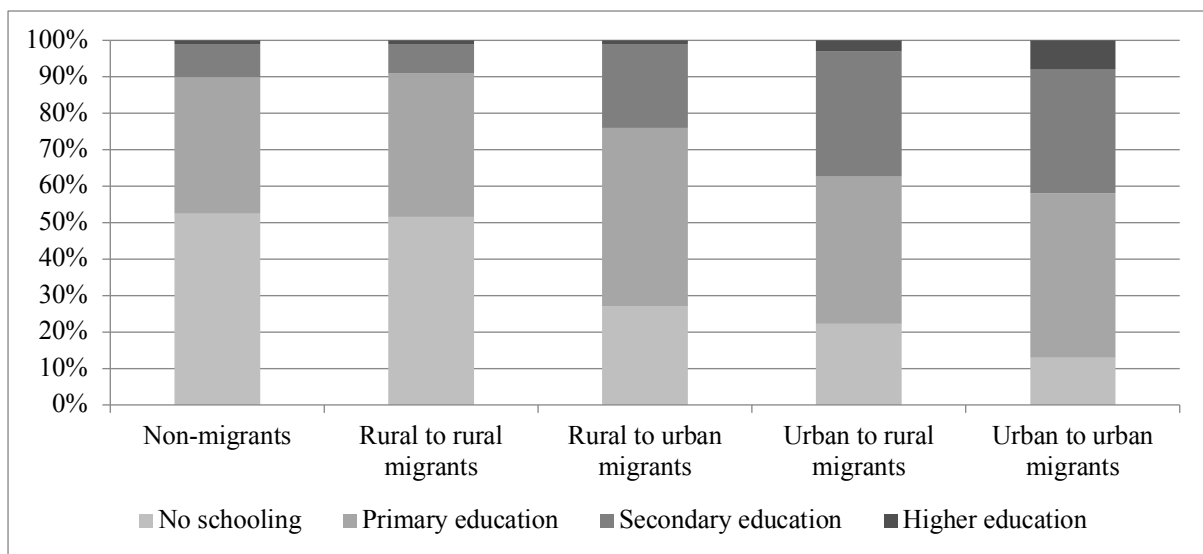
In recent years, however, the direction of labor migration has become increasingly urban-centric. Particularly since the 1990s, more foreign companies – from agricultural, floricultural or meat processing enterprises to manufacturing and industrial parks – are strategically established in regions surrounding Addis Ababa or easily connected to its airport through the main railways or highway routes. These companies’ proximity to the main roads, or the capital city, and the new opportunities for low-skilled employment have accelerated the growth of neighbouring urban areas (see Schewel 2018a; Piguet and Pankurst 2009). Likewise, the growth of towns and their market economies has led a growing share of the workforce to seek income through engagement in the formal and informal service sector. In one study, Schewel and Fransen (2018b), using Labor Force Survey data on internal migration rates across zones in Ethiopia, found that only recently did rural-to-urban migration replace migration between rural areas as the most common migration trajectory of internal migrants – even among women, for whom rural-rural migration was by far the most common type of migration as late as 2005 (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Migration Patterns by Gender: 1999, 2005 and 2013**

Migration patterns (%) of recent migrants	1999		2005		2013	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Rural to rural	31.19	39.14	35.70	41.97	24.08	22.32
Rural to urban	21.79	21.58	27.60	23.91	29.42	37.26
Urban to rural	21.65	13.08	16.02	11.09	23.15	14.79
Urban to urban	24.37	25.56	17.78	20.43	23.35	25.63
Total migration	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

*Notes.* Based on LFS data. Recent migrants are individuals who moved less than five years prior to survey data collection. Based on the population aged 15 and over. *Source.* See Schewel and Fransen (2018b), page 13.

Widening access to formal education, particularly under the current government, is one important factor to explain why internal migration is increasingly urban-oriented. The educational attainment of internal migrants appears to differ based on the internal migration trajectory. National representative Labor Force Survey data from 2013 captures migration across zones, and shows that the characteristics of those who stay and those who move to rural areas are very similar. At least half of this population has no formal schooling. However, migrants who move to urban areas – whether from a rural area or another urban area – have higher levels of education. Urban-urban migrants show the highest levels of education (see Figure 4). One reason urban to rural migrants also see higher levels of educational attainment is likely because these migrants are government workers who are sent to jobs located in rural areas. In recent years, they may also capture the movement of high-skilled workers to foreign companies or industrial parks that may be located in rural areas but sometimes build housing for their administrative workers.



**Figure 4. Educational Attainment by Migration Trajectory**

*Notes.* Based on Labor Force Survey 2013 data. Recent migrants are individuals who moved less than five years prior to survey data collection. Based on the population aged 15 and over. The sample includes 146,198 individuals | *Source:* Figure reproduced from Schewel and Fransen 2018a: 564.

Increased access to education appears to increase the likelihood of internal migration for several reasons: first, the nature of formal education in the modern period tends to teach students values, attitudes and skills that are oriented towards ‘professional’, urban employment (see White 2012; Maurus 2016); second, achieving higher education in Ethiopia often requires moving to an urban center, because schooling is simply not available in rural areas (Schewel and Fransen 2018a); third, higher educational attainment is a form of human capital that can

boost the expected economic returns of a migration project (Sjaastad 1962; Schwartz 1971; Blunch and Laderchi 2015); and fourth, modern labor markets concentrate skilled labor in urban areas.

### *Displacement and Resettlement*

Periods of drought, particularly when it gives rise to famine, have led to significant population movements within and from Ethiopia. During the 1983-4 famine, for example, as many as 2.5 million were internally displaced, and at least 400,000 people fled the country (Wolde-Giorgis 1989). However, it is important to note that the most vulnerable often remained trapped in the countryside, where poor road infrastructure and petty politics prevented them from receiving food aid or making their way to distant distribution centers. Under these circumstances, famine did not mean migration; it meant starvation. No one knows exactly how many died in the 1973-1974 famine, but estimates range from 200,000 to 1 million (van Santen 2010), and as many as 1.2 million died in the 1983-1984 famine (Gill 2010).

Whether drought leads to famine, and whether famine leads to migration (or death), depends on a number of factors beyond environmental conditions. What earlier famines clearly illustrated was that infrastructure is crucial to facilitate the provision of food aid and services to peripheral regions of the country where rural agriculturalists and pastoralists were suffering. Even more importantly, though, is politics, that is, whether the government feels compelled to take the necessary measures to prevent or alleviate the effects of drought. In this regard, Amartya Sen once argued that no famine has ever occurred in a functioning democracy (Sen 1999). Critics quickly pointed out that starvation and malnutrition remain widespread in many democracies, like India, and indeed, under the current regime in Ethiopia. In fact, famine has continued even under the current democratic government, most notably in 2003-2004. Nevertheless, the point that the state matters is a key one. One key strategy all three regimes have employed to combat the persistent problem of drought and food insecurity is resettlement.

Resettlement is a form of development-induced displacement, a less researched kind of migration that nevertheless carries significant implications for the lives of populations across Ethiopia and Africa more generally (Cernea 2005). State-led resettlement schemes have been a regular and contentious strategy of the national government over the last half-century. Over one million people have been resettled in Ethiopia over two phases: some 600,000 individuals (200,000 households) in 1985-86 under the Derg, and around 627,000 people (190,000 households) between 2003 and 2007 under the EPRDF (Pankhurst 2009). These resettlement

schemes often failed for lack of adequate planning and resources. Yet, they constitute a significant population movement, directed by the state.

Resettlement began as a few '*ad hoc* initiatives' started under Haile Selassie in 1966 and became a major government strategy of the communist Derg regime, culminating in the resettlement of over half a million people in 1985-1986 (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009: 9). Before the 1974 revolution, the Imperial regime had resettled some 10,000 households – constituting 0.2 percent of rural households at the time, as compared to 5 percent of rural households that migrated 'spontaneously' (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009: 9; citing Wood 1985). Under the Derg, the numbers and pace of resettlement increased. From 1974-1983, before the 1984 famine, some 46,000 households (187,000 people) were resettled in 88 sites across 11 regions (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009). In the aftermath of the 1984 famine, an "Emergency Phase" plan resettled over half a million people between October 1984 and January 1986, constituting "one of the most complex, ambitious and draconian measures ever attempted by the Ethiopian government" (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009: 10).

Resettlement, under the Imperial regime and the Derg, was pursued as a proactive strategy to address a wide range of social ills: to redistribute populations more efficiently, to develop less populated areas and increase agricultural productivity, to safeguard populations against the threat of famine, to provide land for the landless, to establish cooperatives, to "remove urban unemployed," to settle pastoralists and shifting agriculturalists, to rehabilitate repatriated refugees (Pankhurst and Piguet 2009: 9). But resettlement was never the magic bullet government planners hoped it to be. Due to inadequate planning, financial support, and experienced personnel to manage these projects, "the results were generally poor, the schemes tended to fail, and most settlers left the projects" (Piguet and Pankhurst 2009: 9).

Nevertheless, resettlement remains a common development and humanitarian strategy, even under the current government. From 2003 to 2005, for example, a plan of the New Coalition for Food Security resettled over half a million people across Oromia, Amhara, SNNPR and Tigray. However, these efforts also faced significant obstacles, namely lack of adequate housing, agricultural water or other resources for the resettled populations, and lack of consideration for the rights of pastoralists in areas of resettlement, exacerbating conflicts over environmental resources (World Bank 2007: 117).

Alongside resettlement schemes, the displacement of populations for development projects is another major form of population movement in Ethiopia's history – whether to support the creation of dams, agricultural development schemes, the creation of national parks or urban expansion (see Pankhurst and Piguet 2009). Some populations are directly displaced

and compensated by the government for their lands. Other local populations are indirectly marginalized by such projects, excluded from resources that had historically supported their livelihoods.

### *Emigration*

Rates of international migration from Ethiopia are low. Less than one percent of the Ethiopian population were emigrants in 2015 (Table 5). As is the case for internal migration, available data on rates and levels of international migration from Ethiopia is limited and fragmented (see Carter and Rohwerder, 2016), and official estimates are likely lower than actual migration rates. That acknowledged, as Table 6 illustrates, in addition to being one of the most rural countries, Ethiopia shows low emigration rates<sup>14</sup> relative to other countries at similar levels of human development. Only Nigeria and Madagascar show lower levels, although a higher share of their populations are living in urban areas (Table 6).

**Table 6. Emigration Rates by Human Development Ranking and Rural Population, 2015**

Country	Emigration rate	Human Development Index Rating	% Rural
Nigeria	0.0060	0.527	52.2
Madagascar	0.0070	0.514	64.8
Ethiopia	0.0075	0.451	80.6
Kenya	0.0097	0.587	74.3
Chad	0.0149	0.407	77.5
Djibouti	0.0172	0.470	22.6
Niger	0.0179	0.347	83.8
Uganda	0.0183	0.505	77.9
Guinea	0.0353	0.443	64.9
Cote d'Ivoire	0.0368	0.478	50.6
Yemen, Rep.	0.0376	0.483	65.2
Senegal	0.0392	0.492	54.1
The Gambia	0.0453	0.457	40.8
Sudan	0.0489	0.497	66.1
Guinea-Bissau	0.0575	0.449	57.9
Togo	0.0603	0.495	59.9
CAR	0.0970	0.357	59.7

Sources: HDI data from UNDP 2017; Emigrant Stock data from UNDESA 2015; Total Population & Percent Rural from WDI.

<sup>14</sup> Measured as emigrant stock divided by the total population.

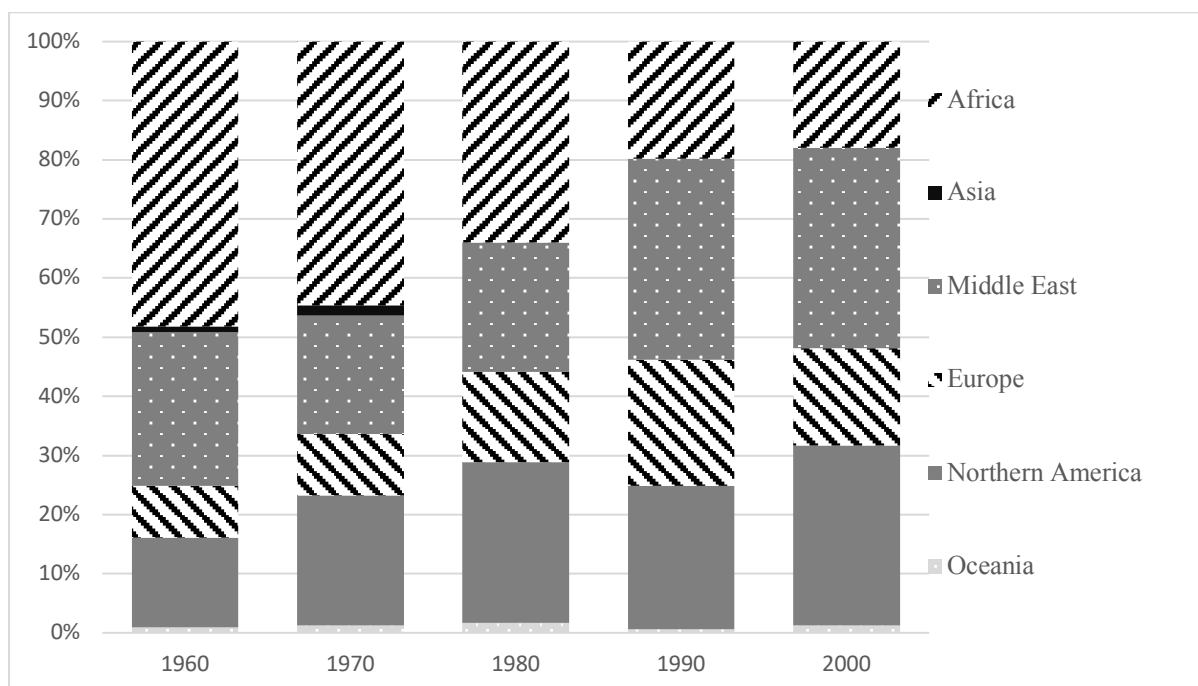
Most accounts of international migration from Ethiopia suggest that before 1974, during the period of Haile Selassie, international migration was largely the purview of the elite, who left for educational purposes and returned to high positions within the government. “The few Ethiopians who went abroad were elites who did so to study and then returned” (Terrazas 2007, 1; see Levine 1965). However, existing data on international migration shows that prior to the communist revolution, there was already relatively significant regional migration to neighboring countries: Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and Yemen, for example, which then accelerated under the Derg (see Table 7). Because it is based on census and population register data, the World Bank data cited in Table 7 likely underestimates the extent of international movement occurring over the period, but nevertheless highlights the already diverse destinations of international migrants during the time of the Imperial Regime and the Derg. Furthermore, according to the World Bank data, rather than being the primary destination of international migrants in earlier periods, it appears that North American and European destinations actually began to absorb a growing share of international migration over time, which had been mostly directed towards African (e.g. Djibouti, Sudan, and Kenya) and Middle Eastern (e.g. Israel and Saudi Arabia) destinations in the 1960s and 1970s (See Figure 5).

**Table 7. Top Ten Destination Countries (and Stock) of Ethiopian Emigrants, 1960-2000**

	1960		1970		1980		1990		2000
Djibouti	3442	Djibouti	6273	Djibouti	12632	USA	34983	USA	71578
Israel	2736	Kenya	4634	USA	10583	Israel	30337	Israel	66967
Sudan	1738	Canada	3671	Saudi Arabia	7513	Djibouti	19811	Djibouti	25437
USA	1415	Israel	3251	Canada	6828	Saudi Arabia	19573	Saudi Arabia	21174
Kenya	871	United States	2847	Kenya	6026	Germany	9555	Kenya	20332
France	661	Sudan	1658	Italy	5820	Kenya	7493	Canada	14075
Canada	651	France	1583	Israel	4389	Sweden	7464	UK	11796
Yemen, Rep.	444	Saudi Arabia	1473	Sudan	2126	Italy	6783	Sweden	11776
Zimbabwe	268	Netherlands	565	Netherlands	1563	Netherlands	4504	Netherlands	7455
Saudi Arabia	262	Yemen, Rep.	549	Sweden	1426	Sudan	2978	Italy	5587
Total Emigration	14605		31408		66628		158492		291249

Source: World Bank Global Migration Database (2018)



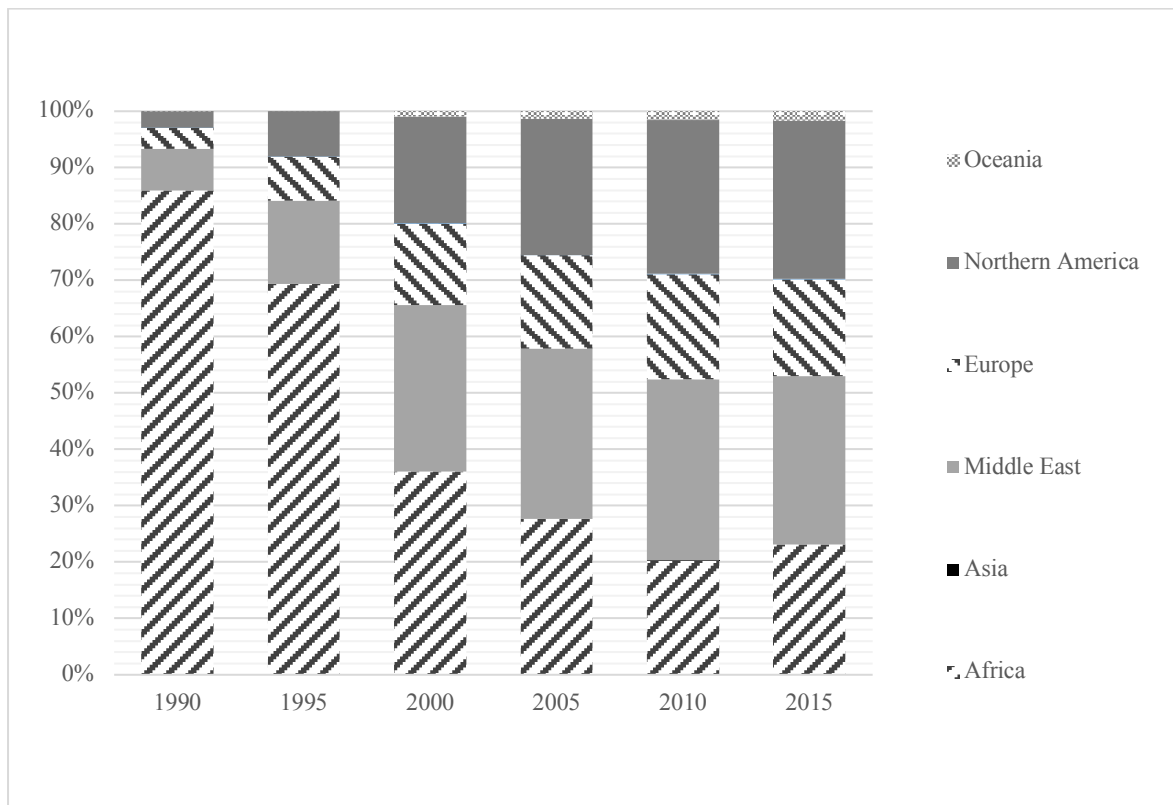


**Figure 5. International Migration from Ethiopia by Decade and Region of Destination**  
*Source:* World Bank Global Migration Database (2018) | *Note:* based on top 20 destinations, which includes over 95% of emigration.

Migration to Middle Eastern destinations is rooted in a long history of religious connections. One notable example is the movement of Jewish Ethiopians (Beta Israel), who began migrating to Israel as early as 1935. This movement increased after the newly created Israeli state offered citizenship to any member of the Jewish nation, often referred to as the Law of Return, in 1950. Over the coming decades, this religious ‘return’ migration often entailed dangerous journeys through Sudan or Kenya, but after the establishment of the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa, which facilitated legal migration of Jewish Ethiopians to Israel, this movement became more regularized and secure (Terrazas 2007). According to Israel’s Central Statistical Bureau, there were some 125,500 citizens of Ethiopian descent living in Israel in 2011. There is also a long-standing history of religious movement between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia for the purpose of pilgrimage. Muslims comprise over one-third (33.9 percent) of the Ethiopian population (CSA 2007), and Ethiopians have been going on the Hajj for centuries (Tibebu 2018).

After the overthrow of the Imperial regime and the rise of the communist regime in 1974, another form of migration became more prevalent: the movement of refugees fleeing political persecution and civil strife. The Derg formally closed Ethiopia’s borders soon after seizing power, yet international movement significantly grew during this period. This is the

period when people speak of the ‘Ethiopian diaspora’ being established in countries like the United States, many of whom were educated elites with some connection to the Imperial regime. However, most migrants leaving at the beginning or end of the military regime’s rule did not have the resources to embark upon such a long-distance asylum-seeking project (or were lucky enough to be selected from refugee camps for asylum in North America or European countries). By 1990, at the end of the communist government’s rule, the UN data notes 942,295 Ethiopians living in Sudan, 460,000 in Somalia, 26,695 in Kenya, 13,405 in Djibouti, and 1,284 in Eritrea (UNDESA 2015; see Figure 6).<sup>15</sup> These figures are much higher, and likely more accurate, than the World Bank data from Table 7. Most Ethiopians migrated within the Horn of Africa, a relatively small portion of whom received refugee status in the United States or Europe once registered in refugee camps (Terrazas 2007).<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 6. Regional Destination of Ethiopian International Migrants, 1990-2015**

Source: UNDESA 2015 | Note: Total migrant stock at mid-year

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank Global Bilateral Migration database presents United States, Israel, Djibouti, and Saudi Arabia as the top countries hosting Ethiopian emigrants in 1990 (see Table 6). However, these figures for 1990 from the World Bank are dissonant with those from the United Nations Population Division, who note much higher numbers Ethiopian emigrants in neighboring African countries.

<sup>16</sup> It appears that the UNDP data captures a large movement of populations to neighboring countries in Africa that is missed in the World Bank data. By 2000, however, the datasets are more comparable, though the UNDP dataset still captures more regional migration as well as higher migration numbers in other Western countries in 2000.

After the fall of the communist government in 1991 and the rise of the more market-oriented development state, emigration flows continued to increase in volume, diversity of destinations, and composition (see Figure 6). Today people continue to flee political persecution, reunite with family, or seek educational opportunities abroad; alongside this, the emigration of high- and low-skilled workers to destinations across Africa, Europe, North America, and the Middle East has become increasingly common (Kuschminder and Siegel 2014). The migration of women and men to the Middle East is one relatively new labor migration trajectories and represents the feminization of Ethiopian labor migration (Fernandez 2011).

The current migration of Ethiopians to the Middle East, including female domestic workers or illegal labor migration more generally, did not arise out of nowhere. Migration systems to the Middle East have long existed, initially for religious reasons, but the nature of movements within this migration system have transformed over time, such that today, much of the movement between Ethiopia and the Middle East is low-skilled labor migration.

### *Immigration*

Ethiopia has long been a destination country for international migrants. It was the destination of the First Hegira, an important moment in the early history of Islam, when Prophet Muhammad sent some of His first persecuted followers to seek refuge in the Christian Kingdom of Aksum. It was for centuries a destination of European travellers and Catholic envoys in search of “Prestor John,” the mythic king of a distant Christian nation. These early international links were also economic in nature. The Abyssinian empire had a long history of trade, including a long-standing slave trade with other kingdoms in Africa, the Middle East and across the Indian Ocean (Tibebu 1995). These religious and economic ties would give rise to new forms of international migration over the last century.

During the ‘Scramble for Africa’ between 1881 and 1914, when European powers conquered, divided, and colonized the African continent, Ethiopia was the only country that maintained its independence. Although the newly unified Kingdom of Italy had invaded Ethiopia during this period, the Ethiopian army successfully defeated them at the infamous Battle of Adwa in 1896, securing the Ethiopian empire’s sovereignty for another forty years. Unfortunately, in 1935, Italy invaded again, this time using mustard gas and heavy air-bombing that overwhelmed Ethiopian military forces and civilians alike (Pankhurst 2001). The Italians took Addis Ababa in 1936 and held the country under military occupation until 1941. During this time, many Italians moved to Ethiopia. By 1939, there were over 130,000 Italians in

Ethiopia, serving in administrative positions, working in infrastructure development, and settling new agricultural communities (Pankhurst 2001; Sbacchi 1977). The fascist vision was to settle hundreds of thousands of Italy's 'surplus population' in agricultural settlements across Ethiopia, but these hopes were never realized. The occupation was constantly challenged by guerilla warfare, shortage of funds, poor planning, and lack of infrastructure. After several years of conflict, Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa and seized power in 1941, many Italians left in the years thereafter, and a formal peace treaty was signed in 1947.

After this period of significant imperialist immigration, migration continued between countries in the Horn of Africa, and to some extent, further afield. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Ethiopia hosted some of the largest numbers of African immigrants. In a time of anti-colonial activism and newly independent states, the country played an important role in the pan-African movement and twentieth-century African politics, such that it was chosen as the permanent headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1958, the Organization of African Unity in 1963, which later became the African Union in 2001. These international ties facilitated the movement of people into Ethiopia. For example, Ethiopia gave refuge and military training to African activists, and dozens of scholarships to African students to study at Haile Selassie I University, the precursor to Addis Ababa University.

Over this same period, Ethiopia also experienced periods of significant conflict-induced immigration from neighboring states. Sharing a border with every other country in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia lies at the center of regional movements in a region unfortunately characterized by significant unrest over the last half-century. The same countries that hosted Ethiopian emigrants during periods of political turmoil in Ethiopia – Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti, for example – also sent many migrants into Ethiopia during these same years. For example, around 1990, the same years that Ethiopia experienced some of the highest rates of emigration, it also received the highest number of immigrants. In 1990, Ethiopia had a migrant stock of 1.15 million, 64.2 percent of whom were refugees. These numbers declined quite significantly over the 1990s and 2000s, before rising again in 2015 to over 1 million (see Table 8). Some estimate even higher number of migrant stocks, 1.7 million, in 2015 (Donnenfeld et al, 2017). These fluctuations correlate with civil war and political turmoil of neighboring states, including the collapse of President Siad Barre in Somalia and the ethnic conflict between the forces of the central government, President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Reik Macchare in South Sudan. Ethiopia's long-standing conflict with Eritrea – including the war for Eritrean independence from 1961 to 1991 and the Eritrean-Ethiopian war from 1998 to 2000 – meant many people have fled over this contentious border for decades.

**Table 8. Migrant (including Refugee) Stock in Ethiopia, 1990-2015**

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
International migrant stock at mid-year (both sexes)	1,155,390	806,904	611,384	514,242	567,720	1,072,949
International migrant stock as percentage of total population	2.4	1.4	0.9	0.7	0.6	1.1
Female migrants as percentage of international migrant stock	47.4	47.4	47.3	47.5	47.6	49.0
Estimated refugee stock at mid-year (both sexes)	741,965	393,479	197,959	100,817	154,295	659,524
Refugees as a percentage of international migrant stock	64.2	48.8	32.4	19.6	27.2	61.5

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: the 2015 Revision.

## Conclusion

The last century has witnessed both gradual and dramatic shifts in the movement of Ethiopia's population. Regarding gradual shifts, there has been a two-fold process of *sedentarization* of nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles alongside a slow but steady *urbanization* of internal migration trajectories. Over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, urban growth was dominated by the capital city and small towns. Only in recent decades are mid-size cities with populations over 100,000 emerging across Ethiopia.

Ethiopia also has a long-history of international migration within the Horn of Africa, to the Middle East, the United States and Europe, and the number of international migrants has increased over time – doubling each decade since 1970 (Table 7). Rooted in a history of religious, economic, and diplomatic ties, the nature and direction of this movement diversified over time. Ethiopians are moving to more countries in more varied ways than ever before. In recent decades, for example, a notable and rising trend is labor migration to African and Middle Eastern destinations for low-skilled wage-work.

Alongside these overarching processes of sedentarization, urbanization, and diversification in the nature of international migration, Ethiopia also experienced more punctuated and dramatic shifts in population movements over relatively short periods – often a consequence of political conflict, famine, conscription, resettlement schemes, and/or development-induced displacement. These numbers were significant, with long-lasting consequences. For example, the wave of refugees moving to North America in the wake of the communist revolution in the 1970s established a major Ethiopian diaspora overseas that would influence political and economic developments in Ethiopia in the decades to come. And at the

same time that Ethiopians fled to neighboring countries in times of distress, Ethiopia has hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from countries in the Horn of Africa.

A key characteristic of Ethiopian migration across the last century is that levels of internal and international migration have been and remain relatively low, relative to other countries at similar levels of economic development or population size. Only some twenty percent of the population live in urban areas, and less than one percent of the population are international migrants. One potential explanation is that high rates of poverty persist, and both internal and international migration projects often require significant financial, human and social capital to realize. Rather than stimulating migration, high rates of poverty in Ethiopia are likely a key explanation for why migration levels remain so low. Still, Ethiopia is less urbanized, and sees lower levels of international emigration, than other African countries at similar levels of economic development. Another potential explanation is low levels of educational attainment in Ethiopia; total educational attainment is nearly twenty percent lower than other low-income countries in Africa (Donnenfeld et al 2017). Even though primary enrollment rates rose from 40 percent in 2000 to 85 percent in 2014, secondary school enrollments remain low (12 and 15 percent in 2000 and 2014, respectively; Donnenfeld et al 2017: 76). With the rapid spread of primary education, its strongest impact on patterns of movement may be at the local and regional level, where secondary and higher education for rural students often requires migration to urban areas (Schewel and Fransen 2018a). A third potential explanation, mentioned in the introduction, is that Ethiopia was never formally colonized. The brief Italian occupation did not establish a ‘migration system’ between Ethiopia and Italy, as colonization did between other African and European countries in the postcolonial period.

The Wayisso case study that follows illustrates what these processes of sedentarization, urbanization, and rising international migration look like from the perspective of a single village – in fact, how these processes occurred one after the other. Some major drivers of migration in Ethiopia’s history – for example, the political conflict that galvanized international asylum-seeking movements, or the droughts that led to massive internal displacements or resettlements – are not part of Wayisso’s migration history. However, other features are similar to many other areas of Ethiopia. Rural-urban migration from Wayisso is primarily oriented towards neighboring towns. It thus illuminates the social processes driving small-scale urbanization, a widespread phenomenon across the country. And international migration from Wayisso is the domain of women, most often going to the Middle East as domestic workers, a rising and little-understood trend in the feminization of labor migration from Ethiopia.