

# The Reintegration Needs of Illegal Migrant Returnees to Omo Nada District Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

Despite the reintegration needs of the returnee there is important to design reintegration program, reintegrate and enable them to become independent and productive members of the community; the identification of these needs are often neglected in academic studies. The objective of the study was to explore the reintegration needs sought by returnees to Omo Nada district after return. To this end, I conducted a resourceful study in Omo Nada district in 2017. I collected the data by means of in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. I used thematic analysis to analyze the findings. The study identified the need for support in the form of health services, counselling, housing, employment, skills training, finances, loans and social support as the major reintegration needs sought by the study participants. Despite the many needs identified, the returnees could not get reintegration support. Due to this, they were not able to reintegrate into their communities. Returning to the pre-migration conditions which drove them to migrate 'illegally' in the first place, with no hope of any reintegration assistance, led some returnees to intend re-migrate illegally.

**Key words:** Illegal migration; returnees; reintegration; human trafficking; migrant smuggling; Omo Nada;

## 1. Background and Justification

Reintegration is a process of recovery, and of the economic and social inclusion following a trafficking experience. It includes the settlement of the returnee in a stable and safe environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, mental and physical well-being, opportunities for personal, social and economic development and access to social and emotional support (Surtees 2010:24; Velazco 2011:26). It involves reunifying the returnee to his/her family, community of origin and institutions. A central aspect of successful reintegration is the empowerment of the returnees by supporting them develops skills toward independence and self-sufficiency (Surtees 2010:24).

One of the central aspects of anti-trafficking endeavours is the assistance and protection given to trafficked persons that includes various reintegrations supports (Surtees 2010:19). Reintegration of illegal migrants, who faced abuse and exploitation, is central to efforts made by governments around the world to prevent, protect, assist and reintegrate the victims in social life (Muco 2013:1857).

The multifaceted abuses and exploitation experienced by the returnees under illegal migration call for holistic and successful reintegration which requires the provision of need-based assistance, services and follow-up to help them recover and restore from the harms they encountered (UNODC 2008:87). The traumatic, exploitative and abusive condition they experienced coupled with the rejection, stigma and discrimination they often face from family members, relatives and community upon return necessitates the need for reintegration assistance and support. Without effective reintegration schemes, returnees often face re-traumatisation, feel violated, unsafe, invalidated, misunderstood, rejected, become helpless and hopeless. These in turn increase the vulnerability of the victims to re-trafficking (Johnson 2012:370).

Reintegration support is not only necessary for those returnees who are trafficked from the very beginning but also it is important for those who were smuggled and experienced abuse, exploitation and deportation. Smuggling can result in trafficking despite its initial voluntary nature. Smuggled persons may also encounter various forms of abuse and maltreatment. Reintegration support and assistance, therefore, become crucial for the smuggled returnees as well.

Cognizant of the need for returnee reintegration, Article 6 of the United Nations (2000) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children urges the signatory States to take various measures. Article 6(3) of the Protocol states that each State Party shall consider implementation measures aimed at the provision of appropriate housing, counselling and information, medical, psychological and material assistance; legal protection, employment, educational and training opportunities for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims.

Currently, there are many Ethiopian illegal migrants deported from various countries especially Saudi Arabia and returned to the country. The fact that there are many returnees of illegal migration in the country itself justifies the need for reintegration. The reintegration efforts that aim at the recovery, rehabilitation, socio-economic inclusion and creation of a safe environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, and opportunities for personal, social and economic development of the returnees are essential. Generally, the returnees need a range of reintegration support from the community to overcome the illegal migration related abuses and exploitation they experienced. Hence, the reintegration needs they sought, the ways in which the government and the community responded to reintegrate them, and the extent to which efforts made so far have served the reintegration needs of the returnees require empirical evidence-based studies as there is scant information on the topic.

Although its importance is undeniable, the reintegration of returnees got little attention from research on human trafficking. Lyneham (2014: 1) points to the fact that victims' experiences of return and reintegration are often missing from research on human trafficking, partly because it can be difficult to locate victims once they have returned and because often, the return and reintegration process is complex and not well understood. Research on reintegration is virtually non-existent in the academic world.

Despite its unquestionable importance, the return and reintegration process is not always a priority issue in policy or research literature and is 'often absent from the core anti-trafficking themes of prevention, protection, and prosecution' (Schloenhardt & Loong 2011: 143).

This situation also holds true in Ethiopia. No studies on illegal migration (migrant smuggling and human trafficking) conducted in Ethiopia have focused on the reintegration of returnees. The available studies have focused mainly on the causes and consequences of illegal migration. For

instance, a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO 2011) in Ethiopia explores the situation, process, impact, pull and push factors for human trafficking; the expectations and perceptions of victims and families; the causes and consequences; the trafficking routes and processes; the techniques and trends in the operation of traffickers; and the nature of exploitation victims face. Similarly, a study conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2010) in Ethiopia also investigated the extent and character of domestic trafficking as well as factors affecting efforts to combat the problem. Yoseph, Meberatu and Belete (2006) analysed the extent and character of human trafficking within and from Ethiopia to identify gaps in policy, legislation and capacity affecting efforts to combat trafficking.

None of the above-mentioned studies has addressed the reintegration needs of returnees. There is a dearth of information regarding the reintegration of illegal migration returnees' in the country in general and in the Omo Nada district in particular. This study, therefore, intends to address the existing knowledge gap by examining the illegal migrant returnees' reintegration needs with particular emphasis on returnees in Omo Nada District, Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia.

Jimma Zone is one of the areas where illegal migration is widely practiced in Ethiopia (International Labour Organization 2011:21). This zone also received the largest number of the returnees from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries in 2013. Of the districts in the zone, Omo Nada district, where this study was undertaken, received 899 of the returnees (Jimma Zone Labour and Social Affairs Office Report 2014). Most of the returnees were deported to return home involuntarily. This implies that their reintegration needs worth studies in order to come up with empirical based evidences that may serve concerned bodies as a bench mark for planning reintegration programs to help them independent life. In tandem with this, the study attempted to answer a research question "what are the reintegration needs of the returnees?". The study tried to investigate the returnees' reintegration needs using ecological perspective. The ecological perspective states that reintegration needs is a complex phenomena and it ranges from micro to macro level issues.

## **1.2. Research objectives**

### **1.2.1. General objectives**

The general objective of this study is to investigate the reintegration needs of the illegal migration returnees to Omo Nada District, Jimma Zone, Oromia Region, Ethiopia.

### **1.2.2. Specific objective**

- To investigate the reintegration needs of the returnees

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1 Study population, sample size and sampling technique**

The population within this study was the returnees of illegal migration from Saudi Arabia in 2013 to Omo Nada District. I applied the concept of data saturation and conducted 20 in-depth interviews with returnees of illegal migration. I used the purposive sampling technique to select 20 study participants from returnees deported by the Saudi Arabia and returned to Omo Nada in 2013. Of these, 16 (sixteen) were males and only 4 (four) were women. Men constitute the majority of the returnees to Omo Nada compared to women. The District Labour and Social Affairs Office, which works closely with returnees of illegal migration, identified a number of returnees to Omo Nada District. I purposively selected and interviewed returnees who were voluntarily. In addition to their willingness to participate, other criteria used to select the participants were their age and time of their return. Due to the added vulnerability of child returnees, I selected only participants above the age of 18 to participate in the study. In terms of the time of return, as a large number of migrants officially returned to Ethiopia by Saudi Arabia in 2013, they were included in the study. This helped the researcher get many voluntary participants.

### **2.2 Methods of data collection**

Profoundly interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were the qualitative research methods I have used to undertake the study. I interviewed twenty participants. The sample size of the study participants for the in-depth interviews was determined based on the concept of the data saturation point. The interviews lasted between 27

minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. I used a digital voice recorder to record the interviews.

I also conducted five key informant interviews with one expert in each of the following offices: Omo Nada District Labour and Social Affairs Office, Youth's Affairs Office, Women and Children's Affairs Office, Police Office and one non-government organization working on returnee reintegration. Finally, I conducted two focus group discussions (1 all- male and 1 all- female) discussions separately, which each consisted of 12 individuals. The participants of the focus group discussions were community leaders, religious leaders, elders, men and women. I selected the FGD participants based on the depth of their knowledge about the reintegration responses made for the returnees and the returnees' current reintegration situation.

### **2.3 Methods of data analysis**

After the data was transcribed and coded, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. I developed the themes based on the research objectives and repeated patterns of meanings in the data. Pseudonyms are used in order to keep the study participants' confidentiality wherever narrations are directly quoted.

### **2.4 Trustworthiness of the data**

Morrow (2005: 252) argues that one of the mechanisms to achieve credibility in qualitative study is prolonged engagement with the study participants. For this purpose, I spent five months in the field site. This helped me become familiar with my study participants and gain an understanding of their experiences and the contexts in which they lived.

The other technique suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985:314-16) is member checking. Member checking is a process whereby a report of specific descriptions is taken back to the participants to confirm its accuracy (Creswell 2009: 191). To ensure trustworthiness of the data in this regard, I went back to the study site after data collection and transcription to read the transcribed data to the study participants to validate the data.

Shenton (2003: 71) advises that in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the researcher should report in detail the process of the study, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same result. To this end, I tried to document clearly and presented all the procedures I followed to carry out the study to ensure

the dependability of the study. I hope that this can pave the way for the replication of the study by somebody else.

### **3. Findings and analysis**

#### **3.1 The reintegration needs of the returnees**

The reintegration needs of the returnees are discussed in this section as follows based on themes developed from the data collected from the study participants.

##### **3.1.1 Need for accommodation**

Accommodation and housing appeared to be the primary need for returnees. Access to housing would enable returnees to settle down, recover from their debilitating illegal migration experiences to become stable and think about how to improve their lives. As understood from the study participants, successful reintegration is unthinkable for the returnees without getting a home of their own. Many of the returned migrants sought housing support at least to settle down. Abdulbasit described his problem with getting an affordable home:

*Accommodation is one of the many worries I faced after I returned to the community. I had no house to live in as my ex-wife divorced me, sold our previous house and remarried another person while I was in Saudi Arabia. I had nowhere to settle down, recover the exhausting journey home and think about my future life and that of my children. I stayed with a friend for three days upon my return and immediately started to search for a house where I could least settle down and plan for a future life. I requested that Nada town administration give me a house with an affordable rent from the government houses under its ownership. But the administration could not help with this request for support. Now I am currently forced to rent a small house at a high cost for myself and my family, my new wife and three children from my ex-wife. It is difficult to ensure the daily survival of my family and improve myself as a large proportion of what I am earning from the laundry service goes for the house rent (Abdubasit, male 37 years old).*

Getting a house does not only fulfil the basic need for accommodation. Access to housing has meaning beyond the necessities of life for the returnees. Getting a house is also a means by which the returnees are reinserted into the community of origin, acquire a permanent address and once again become members of the community from which they were dislocated due to illegal migration. It is difficult for returnees to become

members of the community to which they returned and be eligible for various services (including reintegration support) without having a permanent address. Mensur described how the lack of permanent residential address hindered his access to information for employment as follows:

*I do not have my own house. I live in a rented home. As the cost of housing is more than I can afford, I have frequently changed my residential address to search for an affordable place. But the frequent change of my residential address has been hurting me in many ways, for instance, by hindering my access to essential information for reintegration. The concerned bodies cannot easily access me whenever they want to provide me job support. For instance, the project staff from Food for Work Project at Omo Nada district once wanted me for a three-month temporary wage employment. But they could not get hold of me as I had already changed my address when they came to my previous village to give me the information. Consequently, I missed the opportunity. This means I may continue to miss other similar opportunities in the future, as I have no permanent residential address. I need housing support not only for accommodation but also to have permanent address that enables me get access to other reintegration information and support (Mensur, male 32 years old).*

Having a permanent address or home is also a pre-requisite for the returnees to get residential identity cards, which is a pre-condition for getting reintegration supports like loans from micro finances, making contractual agreements with other members of the community and moving from one place to another within the country for various purposes. Study participants described the extent to which lack of a permanent address or home restrained their social interaction as well as hindered their successful reintegration into the community after their return:

*I have faced many challenges since I returned to a situation where I have no permanent residential home. Sometimes I live with my friends. Other times I live with my relatives who are rather far away from here. Whenever daily labour is available, and I get some money, I rent a house in a squatter settlement at a low cost. I have no permanent address because I have no home. I live by moving here and there. The frequent change of my address due to the lack of a home has negatively affected my reintegration efforts into the community. For instance, I could not get a residential identity card from the kebele (the smallest government administrative structure at the grass roots level) as this requires having a permanent home address as a pre-condition. Inability to get an identity card limited my freedom of movement from place to place and my engagement in different economically gainful activities elsewhere. I cannot move outside this*



community, as I cannot even rent a bed elsewhere for a single night without an identity card let alone to engage in economically beneficial activities. Moving from one place to another place without an identity card results in serious punishment like imprisonment as the security forces suspect a person without an identity card of being a member of opposition political parties. Getting housing support is an urgent need for me as it is restricting my identity and freedom of movement for economic and social purpose (Siraj, male, 21 years old).

Yahya and Abdushukur experienced similar problems due to the lack of a permanent home and address:

*I wanted to be a member of micro- and small-scale enterprise to get credit to start my own income generating activities. However, I could not do so because I have no residential identity card. A person must have a permanent residential address or house number registered at the "kebele" to get an identity card, which is a requirement to be a legitimate resident who is eligible for various services and support from government bodies. I could not be registered with the micro- and small-scale enterprise and get credit to start a business due to the lack of a permanent home address, which is a pre-condition to secure an identity card. For this reason, I am badly in need of housing support now. I know that it is difficult for the government to give me a ready-made house. But if I get a legally recognized small plot of land, I can beg for other support from the community and construct at least a small hut (Yahaya, male 24 years old).*

*The dilapidated house in which I left my family and migrated is now on the verge of fallen apart. I lack money to buy iron sheet, nails and wood to repair it. I need financial and in-kind support from anybody to renovate the house. Otherwise, I will be homeless and left on empty space without a home very soon (Abdushukur, male, 38 years old).*

From the experiences of the study participants described above, it is evident that housing support is one of the urgent reintegration supports sought by the returned migrants. The returnees require housing support as a basic need to protect themselves from harm that results from homelessness. Housing is also required for insertion into the community, to get recognition and acceptance as a full member of the community. However, they lacked financial and other resources needed to construct their own houses. Thus, they need external support from the community and the government. The key informant from the Labour and Social Affairs Office of the district also confirmed that the returnee have critical housing needs but the government lacks a budget to provide housing support for them right now.

The FGD participants on the other hand did not agree with the justification given by the key informant from the Labour and Social Affairs Office concerning lack of resource. Their view was that although the government lacks financial resources to provide housing supports for the returnees, it could provide other resources needed *kebele* (a small government administrative unit) owned house at affordable rent price, land to construct their own houses and mobilize financial and material resources from the community to support the returnees as it has been doing for other purposes. According to both the focus group discussion participants, most of the returnees returned to their family and relatives. The relatives and families are providing accommodation for such returnees. Nevertheless, there are also returnees who have no families and relatives. These returnees are mainly homeless at this time and they need support from the government and the community.

### **3.1.2 Need for health services**

Most of the returnees had experienced severe abuse both on the migration journey and by employers in Saudi Arabia. These conditions made them susceptible to health problems, which required health service support. Fedila, Zubeda and Seman described the health support they sought when they returned:

*I came back home immediately after I endured a serious physical injury and my left hand was broken. Upon my arrival at Bole International Airport, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society took me directly to the hospital, treated me at hospital for seven days and then sent me to my place of origin. I had recovered little; I was fully healed when I reached home. I got relief from the pain after the treatment. I am better now but still the pain has not left me totally. I am still badly in need of further medical treatment but I cannot get further treatment because I have no money. Somebody took me from where my employer threw me out and sent me home immediately by the Ethiopian Embassy. I did not even have time to bring my money and baggage. I need health support from the community (Fedila, female, 35 years old).*

Zubeda also described the health problems she is experiencing and the need for treatment:

*Generally, I do not feel good. I often do not sleep properly since I returned home. I do not have a good appetite. I have a continuous headache, pain in my back and weakness. It started me when I was in Saudi Arabia, but it became severe afterwards. A physician diagnosed me at Omo Nada District Health Centre and*

prescribed me drugs after I returned home. I took all the drugs as per the prescription of the health professional, but my health did not improve. I then went for a diagnosis for the second time and the health centre referred me to Jimma University Specialized Hospital, which is about 95km away from here. It cost me 1000 to 2000 ETB for transportation, accommodation, diagnosis and treatment to go to Jimma University Specialized Hospital. As I have no relatives there, so I had to cover all my expenses. I want to go to the hospital for medical treatment, but I do not have money. I came back with little money, which I have been using for my daily survival. I would like it if the government or other bodies would arrange free health treatment for me and financial support for treatment (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).

Seman also describes the difficulty to get access to medical treatment due to financial constraints as:

*I have been experiencing a continuous cough and pain in my chest ever since I returned home. I feel weak and cannot do hard jobs. I lost my appetite and felt tired. I should visit a health institution and get medical treatment, but I have no money. As I was paying a debt to the brokers who arranged for me to get jobs, and the fact that the cost of living there was very high, and my employer was deducting my salary without reason, I could not accumulate adequate money. I came back home with little money, which I used for my family's basic needs, and have used up it now. As I have no money now, I need support from the government and community for medical treatment (Seman, male, 36 years old).*

The findings from the FGD participants and key informants also corroborate that of the returnees. Both the female and male FGD participants describe that some of the returnees came back with severe injuries and illness. Hence, they need medical treatment but they have no financial capacity to pay for the service as most of them returned to their families empty handed. Most of them also returned to their poor families who cannot support them. Similarly, the key informant from the Labour and Social Affairs of Omo Nada district described that some of the returnees need health treatment to recover from the health problems they have. The key informant added that these returnees with health problems need external support to get the treatment as they have no money but the office has no budget allocated to give such support for them.

According to the key informant from the Omo Nada Labour and Social Affairs Office, the returnees could not get health support because the government did not allocate a budget for this purpose. The Ethiopian government lacks the finances for development activities and the provision

of public services to the community in general. According to this informant, this is the reason for the failure of the government to allocate any resources to address any needs of the returnees.

The focus group participants, however, expressed the view that the inability of the government to provide need-based health support for the returnees is not only due to the lack of finances but rather due to less focus and commitment from the government to respond to the needs of the returnees. It can provide free health services for the returnees as it has been doing for the other poor people in the community. The above findings indicate that some of the returned migrants were in pressing need of health services.

### **3.1.3 Need for employment**

Economic need is the outstanding factor that leads to the illegal migration of many people (ILO 2013:43). The lack of employment was the major driving factor behind the decision of returned migrants to migrate abroad illegally. Almost all of them also returned to the same conditions before their migration. Therefore, the need for economic reintegration has become paramount for most of the returnees due to these reasons.

Economic reintegration refers to the insertion of the returnees into the economic system of his or her country of origin and the ability to earn his or her own living (IOM 2011:5). Economic reintegration involves helping the returnees to engage in socially acceptable economic activities to earn income and to sustain their livelihoods. This is possible through direct employment in the existing government, non-governmental organizations and private sectors or through self-employment.

Tayib told of his expectations of being able to earn and save money and the exploitation he experienced in Saudi Arabia:

*Unemployment was one of the main reasons that forced me to migrate. My expectation before the migration was to get better employment with better pay, which would help me to save enough within a short period of time and return to my country to create my own business. But the situation in Saudi Arabia was not the one I expected. I could not get any job that enabled me to accumulate the money I expected. I was working for long hours with little pay. The payment I was earning did not go beyond my daily expenses. As a result, I returned empty handed. I have no job now. Therefore, I need whatever type of employment support to earn an income for myself and my family's daily survival and housing support. I*

wish I were employed in a government organization on whatever available jobs I can do (Tayib, male 35 years old).

The difficulty in obtaining a government position was related by Siraj:

*I migrated to Saudi Arabia because I was forced to do so due to poverty. Migration was the only option I had, but it did not help me to get out of the situation I was in before migration. Now I have come back empty-handed and I need the support of all to get employment. I do not need free financial support because I do not want to be dependent on anybody else. I have to work and fulfil at least my essential needs for survival. I need employment support for this purpose. I often see vacancies advertised by government organizations to recruit guards. I believe I can fulfil all the criteria requested by such vacancies. However, the government should be fair and give equal opportunities for all applicants irrespective of political background. I say this because I became the victim of prejudicial treatment based on my political views before I migrated to Saudi Arabia (Siraj, male, 21 years old).*

Some participants expressed the desire to become self-employed rather than to seek a job but could not get any support. Fares told of the difficulties he experienced when trying to start a business:

*I was in dire poverty due to lack of a regular job before I migrated. Of course, I tried hard to improve my situation before I migrated. For instance, I tried to run my own retail business before I migrated. But I was forced to shut down because I could not afford the high government tax and finally decided to migrate. I came back home without achieving my ambition to escape poverty and I wanted to restart that business again. I need support from all concerned bodies to create my own business and become self-employed. I mainly need financial and workplace support to run the business. I also need tax exemption support from the government until my business gets strong (Fares, male, 45 years old).*

Mishel also expressed the desire to start a business of her own, and the type of support she would need:

*I migrated illegally due to poverty. But I could not get a better job with better pay in Saudi Arabia. So I could not achieve my dream to overcome poverty. Still I believe that I should work hard to come out of poverty. I need employment support from anyone for this purpose. In addition to skills training, a sewing machine and start up loan support, I need the support of all the concerned bodies to start my own business. As it is difficult for me to get employment in organizations, I want to be self-employed (Mishel, female, 27 years old).*

Similarly, Abdulatif expressed a similar desire to start his own business.

*Even though I came back without achieving my goal to accumulate a lot of money, I still believe that I can change my situation if I get some forms of support.*

*I do have a little experience in wood working. If I get a little training to upgrade my skills to produce quality products, financial support in the form of credit and working area, I want to set up my own woodworking enterprise instead of expecting others to give me a job. I need the support of everybody to create my own business and realize my dreams (Abdulatif, male, 28 years old).*

Getting employment plays a crucial role in the successful reintegration of the returnees into the community. Getting the opportunity to become productive members of the community and earn income has many advantages for them, such as, access to the necessities of life for their physical and psychological recovery. Sustainable employment is also the means to help the returnees compensate for the economic exploitation they experienced under illegal migration. Economic reintegration such as employment allows the returnees to interact with different segments of the community, share their concerns, seek solutions and access the resources they need to reintegrate. One of the returnees explained as follows:

*I am badly in need of employment support because if I get an employment opportunity, it means I get everything. For instance, I get the opportunity to interact and meet people. This gives me the chance to exchange information on other available opportunities for work and improve myself. Apart from its financial gain, I hope to forget many of the things I have been regretting as a result of my unsuccessful migration. When I sit idle, I worry about being unemployed and poor. That is why I need help to get a job though I have not got any support yet (Abdushukur, male 38 years old).*

Income-generating activities that allow returnees to meet their and their dependent basic needs are very important to reintegrate into the community successfully (IOM 2015:13). Lyneham also noted as economic problems like lack of employment and income are the most commonly faced obstacles by both male and female returnees, enabling them to get employment opportunity is very important (Lyneham 2014:6). The findings from both FGD and key informant participants also indicated that as unemployment is one of the major factors that drove the returnees to migrate illegally, thus, economic reintegration is one of the basic reintegration supports they needed upon return especially in a situation where most returnees return empty handed to similar situation before migration.

### 3.1.4 Skills training needs

One of the major factors that contributed to the illegal migration decisions of the study participants was the lack of knowledge and skills, which prevented them from obtaining employment in the existing markets. The returnees frequently expressed the need for vocational skills training. Hence, the provision of contextually relevant vocational skills training is the basis for economic reintegration of the returnees into the community as it help them acquire marketable skills, widens their opportunity for employment and financial independence. Seifu, Abdulatif and Mishel described the types of skills training they sought after return:

*I wanted to get training in repairing cars and search for employment in a garage somewhere. If I get this training, I am sure I can get a job. But there is no organization which provides such kind of training in the district. Such training is only available in big towns like Jimma, 95 km from here. I wanted to attend the training in Jimma town. But I could not do so because I lacked money. I could not get support from my family and relatives, as they are poor. Neither did I get any support from the community. Now I am sitting idle and life is so difficult. I need someone or an organization to sponsor me (Seifu, male 25 years old).*

In addition to enable the returnee to get better employment, skills training could also increases business entrepreneurship skills and increases the returnees' opportunity to create their own business. Abdulatif stated that:

*I do not want to waste my time searching for employment somewhere else as it is difficult to obtain. Instead, I want to get skills training in woodworking to establish my own business. I have applied to the district technical and vocational training centre for this purpose. I have been waiting for their response for the last seven months, but they have not responded to me yet (Abdulatif, male, 28 years old).*

The findings from the one of the key informant also confirmed that it is crucial to provide skill trainings for the returnees for the returnees in order to enable them secure employment or start their own businesses.

### 3.1.5 Need for financial support

The returnees sought financial support for a number of reasons: for their daily survival needs, to start their own businesses and to repay the money they borrowed to pay for the brokers and smugglers to facilitate their journey to Saudi Arabia.

Bilal described the struggle to survive without any money:

*The Ethiopian government paid my airfare to return home. Upon my arrival at Bole International Airport, the government also gave me 900ETB to use for transportation and accommodation to get back to my local area. I thank the government for the support. Had it not been for the support of the Ethiopian government, I would have been left there and suffered from the punishment that follows failure to leave the country within the given time. After I reached home, I faced many challenges due to the lack of money - even for my daily bread let alone other things. The first two weeks after I returned home, I forgot shame and begged my local community to help me financially for my daily survival. A few individuals contributed a little money, which helped me survive (Bilal, male 32 years old).*

Zubeda sought financial support in the form of loan to establish her own business, but also to repay the loan she took to pay the brokers and smugglers.

*In addition to medical treatment, I have currently no means of getting income for daily survival. I should get income for my necessities of life. I should also repay the loan I took to pay the brokers and smugglers. To do this, I want to engage in income generating activities, which do not require much labour to generate income for survival. I have a plan to participate in small trade like selling of potatoes, tomatoes, onions and garlic. I need at least 5000-7000ETB to start such a business. But there is no organization which provides financial support for illegal migrant returnees in the community. There is only a single micro-finance body, which provides a credit service for the community. It is difficult for the returned migrant to get a loan from the micro-finance because one should at least first deposit twenty percent of the loan into micro-finance first. As I have no money, I could not save and get a loan. I need financial support from the community but cannot get it (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).*

Even though some returnees came back with a small amount of money, this was not enough to help them start their income generating activity. Fatuma needed a loan to start her own business but encountered many obstacles:

*I came back with some money and I wanted to start a lady's boutique. But the money I had was not enough to allow me to start the business. I tried to get financial support in the form of a loan. But I could not get it from my family, friends or relatives as they do not have the money to support or lend me. There are also no special arrangements for returned migrants from the government to get credit to start their own business. There is one micro finance institution which provides saving and credit services for the community in our district. But it is very difficult for the returned migrants to get credit from the micro finance as it needs*



*collateral like a house map and plan to lend money. Otherwise, one first needs at least to save twenty percent of the total amount of money he/she needs to borrow from the micro finance to get credit. This is also difficult for most returnees, including me, as we have no income to save. This means it is impossible for me to get credit and start a business as I have no house for collateral or income to save the twenty percent at the microfinance first before borrowing* (Fatuma, female, 27 years old).

Due to the inability to get decent employment with better pay and economic exploitation in the destination country, the returnees could not come back with adequate money they expected before migration. Like other reintegration supports needs, financial support becomes one of the most types of urgent reintegration sought by the returnees after they return home to engage in income generating activities.

In the same manner, the findings from other sources confirm that financial support is one of the major types of reintegration assistance the returnees need. According to the male FGD participants, the returnees need financial support for two main reasons. The first reason is that most of them returned empty handed. Thus, they need temporary financial support even for their daily basic needs particularly in the absence of family or relatives who support them. Second, they need financial support to engage in different activities and generate sustainable income for their future lives. However, there is no financial support provided for the returnees from the government and the community as revealed by the participants.

Likewise, the key informant from Omo Nada Labour and Social Affairs Office described that the returnees' need for financial support is unquestionable and it is normal. However, the problem is that it is difficult for the returnees to get credit service from the micro finance institution operating in the country as they lack collateral, which the institution requires as criteria to get the service.

From the findings, it is understood that the need for financial support or start-up capital was revealed to be one of the most crucial types of reintegration support sought by the returnees. Vocational and entrepreneurship skills training would build the returnees' capacity to create new businesses for themselves, but the provision of skills training cannot be an end in itself. Seed money is necessary to translate skills and knowledge into practical and sustainable projects. Access to start-up capital in the form of loans facilitates access to the inputs they need to start their own business.

### 3.1.6 Support for social reintegration need

Social reintegration is need is another important the returnees frequently raised to be reintegrated into the community successfully. Social reintegration refers to the “re-incorporation of the returned migrant into the social structures of his/her country of origin” (IOM 2004:17). It is a means by which the returnees get acceptance from their families and community. Social acceptance, especially acceptance by the family, plays a vital role in the reintegration of the returnees into the community. The more family, relatives and the community accept them, the more opportunities the returnees will have to interact with different segments of the community accept the returnees. Good social interaction with the community implies the development of social relationships and networks crucial to access other reintegration supports and resources they require for their reintegration needs. Some of the returnees revealed that their families accepted them warmly upon their return:

*My family warmly accepted me. All of them bowed down and thanked God (Allah) for my return home in peace. I am lucky to have such a family (Sherif, male, 32 years old). My family accepted me without reservation. Although I came back empty handed, they did not reject me. I did not really expect such a welcome. I thank my family for allowing me to return home (Seifu, male, 32 years old). My family welcomed me upon my return. They were happy to see me alive (Tahir, male, 34 years old). My family welcomed me warmly. My wife and children have been supporting me since my return. Alhamdulillah! (Thanks to my creator) (Sheki, male, 49 years old).*

The warm welcome and acceptance of the returnees by their families contributed greatly to the recovery and successful reintegration of the returnees. However, this was not everyone’s experience. Some of the returnees revealed that they were rejected by their families because they did not come back home with the financial rewards their families expected from their migration. Families borrowed money to finance the illegal migration to Saudi Arabia in expectation of remittances. When the returnees came back empty-handed, the families went into debt. This made some families feel angry and hate the returnees for their failure to succeed financially. Financial support to restore their relationship with their families and ultimately with the community was essential.

Yahiya relates the reaction of his family as follows:

*On the first day I returned home, my family accepted me warmly. They were so pleased and thanked Allah for my returning home safely and getting the*

*opportunity to see them alive. They paid a lot of money for the brokers and smugglers to send me to Saudi Arabia. They borrowed the money from relatives expecting that they would pay back the loan with remittances I would send them. They assumed that I would come back home with money. Unfortunately, I came back empty handed. When they saw that I came back with no money, everybody in the family started to avoid me to the extent that they even refused to greet me. I wish I had died there (Saudi Arabia) instead of returning home empty handed and offending my family. I need the support of others to restore my relationship with my family (Yahaya, male, 24 years old).*

Fatuma also expressed the need for support to repair the broken relationship between her and her family:

*My family paid a lot of much money for the brokers and smugglers in expectation of the remittance I would send back to them after I reached Saudi Arabia. They (my parents) borrowed the money from somebody. But I could not send them enough money to pay back the loan as I was earning too little. I came back home with little money upon my return, too. As a result, I could not help them to pay back the loan and they fell in to debt. A few weeks after my return, everybody in the family started to blame me. I left home, rented a room and am currently living in Nada town. I have had no communication with them for two years and this is really hurting me. I regret making my parents bear the burden of debt and spoiling my relationship with them. I want the support of somebody to be reconciled with my family (Fatuma, Female, and 27 years old).*

The rejection of the returnees by their families engendered sense of blame and guilt, which further compromised reintegration into the community. Fatuma added that:

*Everybody circulated rumours about me. Wherever I go, I hear people gossiping about me saying, "Look at the lady who came back from Saudi. She left her parents in debt and rented a home for herself in town. She is enjoying town life at the expense of her parents. What a selfish woman she is." I am always troubled whenever I hear such rumours. People simply judge me without understanding my condition. I often feel ashamed to interact with people. I am detached from the community (Fatuma, female, 27 years old).*

Not only did some of the returnees experience isolation, they also experienced discrimination from the community. Women, especially, bore the brunt of this discrimination because the community suspected them of having been sexually abused and infected with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Zubeda described her neighbour's discomfort, and touches on the need for awareness raising in the community:

*I have never told anyone that I encountered rape during the journey. But people suspected me of contracting HIV/AIDs. The fact that I have been facing health problems since I returned has added to their suspicion. I am free from the disease and I do not care about their rumours. But their false rumours have been affecting me a lot because my neighbours do not feel comfortable about having coffee with me. Because I know they suspect me of having HIV/AIDs, I do not feel good about going to their home and let alone to eat and drink with them. Generally, the community has the wrong perception about returned migrant women. I think that the government should at least support the returnees by providing awareness creation for the community to avoid such mistaken perceptions in the community and help the returnees to have a good relationship with the community (Zubeda, female, 25 years old).*

Fatuma also described the stigma against women suspected of sexually abused as:

*Being an illegal migration returnee has many negative social consequences, particularly for a woman. For example, I want to marry and establish a family. But getting married is unthinkable for me here because the community emphasises virginity and sexual purity of a woman for getting married. It is generally accepted in the community that a woman involved in illegal migration has been exposed to sexual exploitation. So she fails to fulfil the already established criteria set out by the community to get married. I am one of those unfortunates to have had such a social relationship and rejected. I call for the support of the concerned body to change the community's attitudes towards returned women migrants (Fatuma, female 27 years old).*

Some of the returned migrants voiced the need for returned migrants to form their own association as part of social reintegration support: Fares and Abdushukur emphasized the importance of forming such an association for reintegration into the community:

*We need to establish an association of returnees because it has many advantages for us. It would help us present our reintegration needs to the government and other concerned bodies in an organized way. Being together will help us to exert influence on concerned bodies. As we are scattered here and there, we are losing the power to exert pressure. In addition, being together helps us to exchange ideas, resources, show direction and share our burden with each other. Because of this, we want to form our own association and need support from the Omo Nada District Labour and Social Affairs Office for this purpose. We specifically need expertise support on how to establish bylaws, get registered and become a legal entity (Fares, male, 45 years old).*

Abdushukur also recognized the collective power of a group:

*The more we (the returnees) are organized, the more we can stand together to put pressure on the government. For example, a number of unemployed youths who organized into a group have been getting many benefits like land, financial assistance and jobs from the government. If returnees are organized into an association, I believe we can get the assistance and responses we need for reintegration into the community. Since we are disorganized, nobody is listening to our problems. Therefore, we need support to form an association which voices our problems and interests (Abdushukur, male 38 years old).*

By the same token, the focus group discussion participants confirmed that some returnees had been facing social relationship-related challenges with their families and the community. Similarly, the key informant from Labour and Social Affairs Office emphasized that social support is extremely important for reintegration of the returnees into the community. Social relationship with other returned migrants and the community itself are important for the returnees to share their problems, experiences, resources and help each other. These findings indicate that the returnees have numerous social needs to be addressed.

### **3.1.7 Need for counselling support**

Counselling supports also emerged as a need from returnees. Two, in particular, explained that the abuse and exploitation they had experienced on the migration journey left them with feeling of helplessness and rejection. This in turn made them worry about how to continue their future life. In this regard, the IOM (2011: 13) informs that returnees of illegal migration often return home with feelings of shame, loss, failure, disorientation, anxiety, insecurity and stress which hinder the process of reintegration.

Fedila explained the effect of the abuse she faced saying that:

*I do not trust males since I experienced that bad event [rape] in Yemen. It seems to me that every man committed that kind of injury against me. I am afraid to have any social relationships with men since then. That event left an unforgettable image in my mind. I cannot remove it from my mind. I wish I had somebody who could help me to overcome such suspicion and fear of men (Fedila, female, 35 years old).*

Siraj also explained the feelings of rejection he experienced:

*In our community, everybody likes you whenever you succeed financially in whatever field you are engaged in. On the other hand, everybody rejects you if you fail. I did not gain anything from migration to Saudi Arabia. I simply wasted my*

*time, energy and the money I paid for the brokers and smugglers. I am not a valued person in my family, let alone the others due to my failure. That is why I am moving here and there because I have nowhere to live. I feel rejected. I often worry and blame myself for everything that happened to me. I need somebody with whom I can share all my worries and get support on how to forget them (Siraj, male, 21 years old).*

Returned migrants have the feelings of shame, loss, failure, disorientation, anxiety, insecurity and distress, which hinder their reintegration process. Poor economic prospects and security worries further destabilizes the psychosocial wellbeing of the returnees. Under such circumstances, having a social network provides the returnees with emotional support, information and social capital, which assist them to re-adjust to the difficult situations (IOM 2015:13). Counselling support is important for needy returnees based on their demands for the support. However, such services were not available in the community at all as understood from the key informants from Labour and Social Affairs Office of the district.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study explored the reintegration assistance sought by the returnees. Accordingly, it has found out that the foremost reintegration needs revealed by the study were the need for accommodation/housing, financial assistance, employment, skills training, healthcare, social support, and counselling.

The findings are in line with the ecological perspective, which states reintegration needs range from micro to macro level issues. For instance, the returnees need for accommodation, skill training, counselling, health and financial supports are some of the needs, which involve intervention at micro (individual level). Similarly, the need for social support to fix the broken relationship among returnees and their family as well as the need to organize into self-help groups and associations involve me so level intervention. Some of the returnees need macro level assistance such as tax reduction to encourage them to establish their own businesses and legal measures to ensure their safety from external threats. Despite the many needs identified, the returnees could not receive reintegration support. Due to this, they were not able to reintegrate into their communities.

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