

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAPACITY AND PRACTICE OF RECRUITMENT  
AGENCIES IN ETHIOPIA TO PROTECT THE SAFETY AND RIGHTS OF  
MIGRANT WORKERS**

**By**

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**February 2026**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the millions of resilient Ethiopian men and women who embark on the challenging journey of labour migration.

It is, above all, dedicated to those who, in their pursuit of economic dignity, have been subjected to the injustices and suffering revealed in this study: the victims of contract substitution, wage theft, and exploitation in the Middle East and other destination countries.

May their immense sacrifice not be in vain, and may this research contribute a constructive voice toward the creation of a migration governance system that is truly safe, orderly, and protective of their fundamental human rights.

And to my family and loved ones, for their unwavering support and patience, which made the completion of this work possible.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AU – African Union

COC – Certificate of Competency

CREC – College Research and Ethics Committee

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

EAC – East African Community

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

ECSA – Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency

EOEAF – Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GCM – Global Compact for Migration

IDPs – Internally Displaced People

IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority on Development

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

KIIs – Key Informant Interviews

LDCs – Less Developed Countries

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation

MGI – Migration Governance Indicators

MiGOF – Migration Governance Framework

MoFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MoLS – Ministry of Labour and Skills

MoLSA – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MRAs – Migrant Recruitment Agencies

NELM – New Economics of Labour Migration

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

NIE – New Institutional Economics

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OEPs – Overseas Employment Promoters

OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

POEA – Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

PrEAs/PEAs – Private Employment Agencies

RAM – Research, Assessment, and Monitoring

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNISA – University of South Africa

WFP – World Food Programme

## **ABSTRACT**

The escalating outflow of Ethiopian labour migrants, predominantly women in search of domestic work in the Middle East, is persistently followed by reports of severe exploitation, contract deception, and human rights violations. This thesis critically examines the operational capacity, ethical conduct, and accountability of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia, assessing their practices against the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Proclamation (No. 1389/2025) and international standards. Anchored in New Institutional Economics (NIE) and benchmarked against the IOM Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) and SDG Target 10.7, the study employs a mixed-methods design combining surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. This approach provided both quantitative insights into agency structures and processes, and qualitative perspectives from migrant workers, government officials, civil society organizations, and employers. The study setting was Addis Ababa, with participants drawn from registered recruitment agencies and related institutions.

Findings reveal systemic institutional failure within Ethiopia's recruitment ecosystem. Widespread deception and cost-shifting practices undermine the "Employer Pays" principle, leaving migrants vulnerable to debt bondage, contract substitution, and abandonment post-deployment. PrEAs face critical capacity and enforcement gaps, with weak organizational structures, limited grievance mechanisms, and inadequate government monitoring that allows non-compliant agencies to re-register and evade penalties. Policy misalignment further exacerbates risks, as Ethiopia's recruitment practices diverge from global norms for safe and responsible migration. The thesis concludes that the current system prioritizes recruiter profit while externalizing risks onto workers, severely compromising their safety and rights. To address these challenges, the study proposes a reform agenda focused on mandatory ethical certification and professionalization of PrEAs, centralized and fee-free grievance and repatriation mechanisms, and strengthened government oversight through verifiable and decentralized recruitment processes. These reforms are essential to align Ethiopia's migration governance with international standards, protect migrant workers' dignity and rights, and contribute to the achievement of SDG Target 10.7 for safe, orderly, and responsible migration.

Keywords: Labour Migration, Ethiopia, Private Employment Agencies, Fair and ethical Recruitment, Migration Governance, SDG 10.7, Contract Substitution, Institutional Failure

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of the study is to analyse the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to fulfil their duties for a safe and orderly emigration of Ethiopian citizens. In the sections that follow, an overview is provided of the background to the research problem, problem statement, research objectives and research questions. This is followed by an outline of the scope, limitations, and rationale of the study as well as a summary of the research methodology and ethical aspects. Lastly, a summary of the literature review and an introduction to the theoretical/conceptual framework is provided concluding with a summary of the outline of the proposed chapters.

Migration has become a prominent feature of the global landscape. According to the International Organization for Migration (2020), an estimated 281 million international migrants were living outside their country of origin in 2020. The reasons for migration are diverse and complex, ranging from economic, political, social, and environmental factors. Globalization has increased the mobility of people seeking employment, leading to a rise in the demand for migrant workers. This demand has resulted in the growth of the recruitment agency sector, which plays a vital role in facilitating the movement of workers across borders.

Recruitment agencies have become an essential constituent of the global labour market and a vital role player in the search for employment, linking job seekers with prospective employers (UNDP 2018). The migrant recruitment agency or Private Employment Agency is a term used to refer to private companies involved in the recruitment and placement of workers for overseas employment. These companies are essential because they play a crucial role in sourcing employment opportunities, connecting employers with potential employees (Demireva 2019). The development of the recruitment agency industry can be attributed to the increasing mobility of people seeking employment, leading to the need for more specialized and advanced services. Due to globalization, recruitment agencies have evolved into an effective medium for processing and conveying employment opportunities (UNDP 2018). In the context of the global employment scenario, many employers rely on recruitment agencies to

identify suitable talent. The role of recruitment agencies in creating a bridge between employers and job seekers is crucial. They help match job seekers with employers and facilitate the hiring process, including sourcing, screening, and selecting candidates. On the one hand, recruitment agencies have been credited with providing job opportunities and improving the livelihoods of migrant workers. However, on the other hand, recruitment agencies' practices have been subject to criticism. There are reports of exploitation, abuse, human trafficking, and labour violations perpetrated by unscrupulous recruitment agencies. These practices pose a threat to the rights of workers in the employment arena (UNDP 2018).

In light of the era of unprecedented mobility, the imperative to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration has gained paramount importance. This necessity has been underscored by the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the positive contributions of migrants to inclusive growth and development. Migration is intricately woven into several Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, including the cessation of modern slavery and the mitigation of the vulnerability of migrant workers. Notably, Target 10.7 of the SDGs aims to facilitate "orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (UN 2015).

The incorporation of Target 10.7 into the 2030 Agenda has driven the need to delineate "planned and well-managed migration policies." In response to this need, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) in 2015. This framework presents a succinct overview of an ideal approach that enables a state to determine the necessary components to effectively govern migration in a manner suited to its specific circumstances. Notably, the MiGOF was embraced by IOM Member States in the same year, signifying its endorsement as a valuable tool for guiding migration governance efforts (UN 2015).

To operationalize the MiGOF, IOM collaborated with The Economist Intelligence Unit to develop the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI). This standard set of approximately 90 indicators was designed to assist countries in evaluating their migration policies and to advance the discourse on the practical manifestations of well-governed migration. Through the MGI, countries are equipped to assess the

effectiveness of their migration policies and to identify opportunities for enhancing their governance of migration (UN 2015).

Ethiopia, as a source, transit, and destination country for migrants, grapples with the complexities and challenges associated with migration governance. Understanding the alignment of migrant recruitment agencies with the principles outlined in the MiGOF and the SDGs is pivotal in advancing the protection and well-being of migrant workers within and beyond Ethiopia's borders. Consequently, this study seeks to critically examine the role of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia within the framework of the MiGOF and the SDGs, with a focus on enhancing the safety and rights of migrant workers in alignment with global standards and best practices.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Ethiopia is a country that has experienced significant labour migration in recent years, with an estimated 1.8 million Ethiopians living and working overseas in 2020. According to data from the World Bank Data Portal (2026), with an estimated population of nearly 138.9 million, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa. The population of the country is also particularly young: 40% of Ethiopians are under 15, while almost 30% are between 15 and 29. According to the International Labour Organization (2019), Ethiopia's youth bulge results in significant labour market pressure with an annual influx of 3 million new entrants. In Ethiopia, private employment agencies are developing and playing an increasingly important role in the labour market and the migrant recruitment agency sector has become a significant player in the Ethiopian labour market, providing job opportunities for many Ethiopians but also facing challenges (IOM 2020). This also applies to migrant recruitment agencies, in a context where labour migration has expanded in the last decade (ILO 2018). The Ethiopian migrant recruitment agency industry plays a crucial role in facilitating job opportunities for individuals seeking employment outside their home country (IOM 2020) and has experienced rapid growth in recent years, becoming a reliable source of employment for many Ethiopians (Esete 2017). These agencies offer a range of services to migrants, including job placement, visa assistance, and language training (International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2018).

The governance of migration in Ethiopia is undergoing rapid evolution in response to shifting migration dynamics. This whole of government multi-dimensional governance

framework encompasses a wide array of policy areas and involves numerous stakeholders. Notably, the country has identified several migration governance issues that demand further attention. Over the last two decades, Ethiopia has considerably improved its labour migration governance. Ethiopia's migration governance structure involves multiple levels of governance with interconnected actors both vertically and horizontally. In line with the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) signed in 2018, the Ethiopian government has initiated the development of a National Migration Policy, which is currently in progress. Aligned with the country's national development plan, this upcoming policy is focused on job creation for nationals through industrialization and enterprise development. It is expected to address integration, reintegration, and protection for vulnerable migrants, spanning across various ministries, agencies, and organizations.

The adoption of the 1998 proclamation established private employment agencies to protect the rights, safety and dignity of Ethiopians employed abroad (ILO 2021). The Ethiopian government adopted the Employment Exchange Services Proclamation 632/2009 in 2009 and the Overseas Employment Proclamation 923/2016 in 2016 (ILO 2021). The latter was amended in May 2021 with the objective to create overseas employment opportunities in various countries and sectors while protecting the rights of Ethiopian workers. The revised proclamation clearly defines PrEAs and recognizes the key role they play in the identification of employment opportunities abroad. Licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Skills, they also have the responsibility to protect the rights, safety, and dignity of the workers at all stages of the migration process (ILO 2021). The government has also established legal frameworks primarily targeting irregular migration, human trafficking, and smuggling. For instance, the Overseas Employment Proclamation (923/2016) aims to regulate migration from Ethiopia. In response to the growing number of labour migrants and reports of abuse against Ethiopian migrants, the Employment Exchange Service Proclamation 632/2009 was revised and later amended as 1246/2021, relaxing education requirements for overseas employment (GoE 2016). Presently, the Anti-Trafficking Task Force stands as the singular inter-departmental body addressing migration issues.

Additionally, the Ministry of Labour and Skills is tasked with monitoring migrant recruitment agencies, registering employment contracts, and ensuring the protection of migrant workers. Migrant recruitment agencies are required to have representative

consular offices in destination countries, offering temporary food and shelter to migrants upon arrival. They also provide pre-employment orientations and counselling services. The Ministry of Labour and Skills conducts regular pre-employment and pre-departure awareness sessions for citizens interested in overseas employment (GoE 2016).

To address irregular migration and provide protection to migrants, the Ethiopian government introduced legal documents and regulations, including the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No. 909/2015, later amended as 1178/2020. This was developed in response to abuses experienced by low-skilled migrant workers in the Middle East, particularly female domestic workers. The proclamation defines human trafficking and smuggling and outlines penal codes for such crimes (GoE 2020).

The National Reintegration Directive (No 65/2018) was also drafted to provide a framework for return and reintegration programs. This comprehensive framework serves to address the varied complexities and challenges associated with migration governance in Ethiopia, providing valuable insights into the country's migration governance landscape and offering a nuanced understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement (GoE 2018).

Recruitment agencies in Ethiopia play a significant role in facilitating the migration of workers, particularly to the Middle East and Gulf States. They serve as intermediaries between job seekers and employers in destination countries, and facilitate the recruitment and placement of workers, particularly in the domestic work sector. These agencies also play a crucial role in coordinating the migration process, including documentation, travel arrangements, and initial employment placement. The agencies act as a bridge between job seekers in Ethiopia and potential employers abroad, aiming to match labour supply with demand in destination countries (Wondimagegnhu, 2023).

Despite the essential role of recruitment agencies, there are significant challenges and notable problems associated with the practice and protection of migrant workers' rights. There are widespread reports of exploitation and abuse faced by Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East and Gulf States. These challenges include exploitative practices where many recruitment agencies and individual sub-agents

command high fees and charges from migrant workers, often misrepresenting the salary or working conditions that prospective migrants can expect. This exploitative practice places financial burdens on the workers and may lead to deceptive recruitment practices. The lack of protection is another challenge when regulatory frameworks often focus on the procedural aspects of labour export, rather than prioritising the protection and rights of migrant workers. This results in a lack of effective protection mechanisms and accountability for recruitment agencies' misconduct (Magesa, 2023).

Ethiopian migrant workers, particularly female domestic workers, are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, hazardous work conditions, and physical and psychological abuse in destination countries. The existing regulatory regimes suffer from vagueness of responsibilities, ineffective implementation, and enforcement processes and the recruitment process does not adequately address the protection of workers' rights and well-being. This often led to systemic misconduct within the recruitment industry, creating conditions for abuse and exploitation of migrant workers (Abdulrahim 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a rights-based and migrant-centered approach to governance, focusing on the protection, well-being, and rights of migrant workers throughout the recruitment and migration process (Asian Journal of International Law 2016).

The ILO's assessment of private employment agency service provision in Ethiopia report provides insight into the labour market challenges facing the country. According to the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency, the unemployment rate among the youth was 25.3% in 2018 (ECSA 2018). In this context, creating economic opportunities and improving the performance of the labour market are priorities for the Ethiopian government. As they provide labour market information and ensure effective job matching, recruitment and placement, private employment service providers play an essential role for intermediation (Government of Ethiopia (n.d.). However, the regulation and management of the industry in Ethiopia are currently problematic (Hailemariam 2017).

Several studies have shown that the Ethiopian government faces challenges in regulating and managing the industry, leading to several problems including lack of protection for the rights of Ethiopian migrant workers in destination countries. For

instance, the industry is associated with labour exploitation, human trafficking, and corruption, among others (Hailemariam 2017). It is against this background that this study will analyse the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to propose guidelines to ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety within the Sustainable development and Migration Governance framework. It is foreseen that the study will contribute to the understanding of the current state of the industry through an analysis of capacity, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Ethiopia has a long history of migration, largely due to factors such as famine, conflict, political instability, low agricultural productivity, poverty, and ethnic diversity leading to ethnic-based violence. The country has become a significant labour-sending country worldwide, with an unknown number of Ethiopians having migrated abroad (ILO 2017). The Middle East especially, has become a primary destination for Ethiopian migrants, with both regular and irregular migration flows intensifying. According to an IOM report, at least 400,000 Ethiopians crossed to the Arab Peninsula between 2017 and 2020 (IOM 2020).

While in the past, migrants have sought refuge abroad to escape from conflict and instability, the trend has recently shifted towards economic migration (Devereux 2021; Economist Intelligence Unit 2018; UNHCR 2000; FAO 2020; World Bank 2021; US Department of State 2021). Ethiopian migrants play a significant role in the country's economy. According to World Bank, Ethiopia received approximately 6.4 billion USD in remittance in 2020. Socio-economically migrants can contribute to the labour force and increase labour productivity, which can have positive effects on income per person and overall economic growth. Migrants often fill low-skilled jobs in various sectors, and their presence can shape industry structures. Additionally, migrants can play an increasing role in high-value-added sectors. Migration has potential effects on income distribution and the well-being of both migrants and the local population (IMF 2016).

Despite the prospect of higher wages, many migrants face abuse and violations of their rights in their destination countries. This has led to an increase in awareness of the risks associated with migration, particularly irregular migration, and the role played by migrant

recruitment agencies (IDRI 2018). In 2013, the Ethiopian government issued a temporary ban on low-skilled labour migration to the Middle East following a violent crackdown and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers (HRW 2017). The ban was lifted in 2018 after revisions to the legal framework.

Overall, Ethiopia's efforts to protect its migrant workers are commendable, and the country has made progress in regulating private overseas employment agencies and building functional labour migration governance. However, the recent amendment to the Overseas Employment Proclamation raises concerns as the amendment allows employment agencies to collect a portion of the worker's salary over four payment periods. This goes against international labour standards on fair and ethical recruitment practices, including the prohibition of excessive fees. It is important for the government to reconsider this move and ensure that its efforts to protect its migrant workers remain aligned with international labour standards. (Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016; Overseas Employment (Amendment) Proclamation No. 1246/2021; International Labour Organization 2018).

Although migrant recruitment agencies play a significant role in facilitating overseas migration from sub-Saharan African countries, including Ethiopia, there has been increased concern about the risks associated with migration, particularly irregular migration, and the role played by migrant recruitment agencies in recent years (IDRI 2018). The formal and informal channels of migration facilitated by recruitment agencies emphasizes the need for regulating this industry to protect the rights of migrant workers and create job opportunities. In this regard, regional cooperation such as the African Union and regional economic communities like (ECOWAS, IGAD, and EAC, can play a significant role in closing the regulatory gap and improving conditions for low-skilled migrant workers. Streamlining the operations of the recruitment agency industry is seen as a practical step towards achieving regional responses and addressing the challenges faced by Ethiopian migrants and other African migrant workers in the Gulf and Middle East countries (ECDPM 2020).

According to ILO (2018), several studies have identified challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, including a lack of capacity and resources, weak regulation and oversight, a lack of coordination among stakeholders, and unethical practices, such as charging excessive fees and providing false information (ILO 2018).

Furthermore, various research studies (see ILO 2018; International Dialogue on Relocation and Integration 2018; Araya 2019; Overseas Development Institute 2020) emphasise that there is still a need for more comprehensive data and research on the practices of recruitment agencies, and the role of government and other stakeholders in regulating and monitoring migration to ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety. The sector faces numerous challenges, that affect its capacity to protect the rights of migrants as well as working in line with the overseas employment proclamation 923/2016 and its amendment 1246/2021. According to Khadria (2019: 96-99), the present lack of knowledge about the industry's capacity and challenges hinders the development of policies that would promote the welfare of job seekers and workers. It is against this background, that this research study aimed to evaluate and understand the migrant recruitment industry's capacity and practice to conduct their business in line with Proclamation 923/2016 and its amendment 1246/2021, as well as ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention 1997 (No. 181).

## **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **1.4.1 Primary objective**

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers.

### **1.4.2 Secondary objectives**

To achieve the above primary objective, the following secondary objectives are set:

1. To investigate the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia including the processes involved in recruiting migrants, the methods used and the institutional framework.
2. To explore the gaps, problems and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.
3. To examine the practices of migrant recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrants and their families.
4. To determine the effectiveness of legal and regulatory policies and framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.
5. To develop guidelines to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.

### **1.4.3 Research questions**

Considering the problem statement and the research objectives of this study, the following research questions are posed:

1. What is the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia?
2. What gaps, problems and challenges are faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia?
3. What practices do migrant recruitment agencies implement to protect the safety and rights of migrants and their families?
4. How effective is the legal and regulatory policies and framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia in promoting safe, fair and ethical migration?
5. What guidelines can be developed to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.

### **1.5 RATIONALE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The recruitment of migrant workers is an important global issue that has received increasing attention in recent years due to its complex and dynamic nature (IOM 2018). In Ethiopia, the recruitment of migrant workers has become a significant aspect of the labour market, contributing to economic growth and development. However, the recruitment process has been associated with a range of challenges and problems, including the exploitation of migrant workers, fraudulent activities of recruitment agencies, and a lack of legal protection for migrants.

Despite the growing magnitude of the recruitment process in Ethiopia, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in the country that also impact the safety and rights of migrants. The existing literature tends to focus mainly on the experiences and challenges of migrant workers, with little attention paid to the role and practices of recruitment agencies. Thus, there is a need for research to explore the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia (Gebre-Michael & Berhe 2020). For instance, a report by IOM highlights the need for improved monitoring and regulation of

recruitment agencies to safeguard the rights of migrant workers (IOM 2009). Similarly, a study by Ethiopian Development Research Institute identifies the challenges faced by migrant workers due to the practices of some recruitment agencies and recommends measures to improve the recruitment process (EDRI 2017). Moreover, a report by Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat emphasizes the role played by unregulated recruitment agencies in causing problems for stranded migrants and calls for improved oversight and regulation of these agencies (RMMS 2014). A report by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2021) also highlights the challenges faced by migrant workers due to unethical practices by some recruitment agencies and emphasizes the need for improved regulation and monitoring of these agencies.

Gebre-Michael and Berhe (2020) highlight that there are several gaps and limitations in the existing research on the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. First, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the recruitment sector, including the number and types of agencies operating in the country, as well as their practices and outcomes. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and interventions, or to identify areas for improvement.

Second, most studies have focused on the experiences and perspectives of migrant workers, rather than the capacity and practices of recruitment agencies themselves. While this is an important perspective, a more nuanced understanding of the role and responsibilities of recruitment agencies is needed to develop effective policies and interventions (Gebre-Michael & Berhe 2020; Kuschmider & Siegel 2018; Wahba & Gocmen 2013). Furthermore, the existing literature has mostly focused on the challenges and limitations of the recruitment sector, rather than the opportunities and potential benefits. As such, there is a need for research that explores innovative and ethical models of recruitment and identifies best practices and success stories in the sector (Gebre-Michael & Berhe 2020).

A study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2014 also highlights the need for capacity building of private employment agencies in Ethiopia. The study found that most PrEAs lack basic organizational and management skills, and do not have the capacity to provide quality services to job seekers and employers. The study recommends the need for capacity-building programs that focus on improving the skills, knowledge and capacity of PrEAs. Another study by Abebe et al.

(2018) examined the capacity of private employment agencies in Ethiopia in terms of their human resource management practices. The study found that most PrEAs lack appropriate human resource management practices, which affects their ability to recruit and retain quality staff. The study recommends and substantiates the need for capacity-building programs that focus on improving the human resource management practices of PrEAs.

A study conducted by Gebre-Michael and Gebrehiwot (2018) explored the job seeker and employer perspectives on private employment agencies in Ethiopia. The study found that job seekers prefer to use PrEAs as they provide them with access to a wider range of employment opportunities. However, the study also found that most employers do not trust the competencies of PrEAs and prefer to recruit staff through their own networks. The authors recommend the need for capacity-building programs that focus on strengthening the trust and confidence of employers in the services provided by PrEAs.

This research study seeks to address this gap in the literature by exploring the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The study analysed the role of recruitment agencies in the recruitment of migrant workers, evaluated the effectiveness of the legal framework and regulation of the recruitment process, and identified the challenges and problems associated with the recruitment process. Addressing these gaps is essential in improving the capacity, accountability, and ethical practices of recruitment agencies, informing policies and practices aimed at improving the recruitment process and promoting safe and ethical migration in Ethiopia and beyond (Araya 2019).

The study plays a significant role in shedding light on the capacity and practice of recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. While some research exists on this topic, several gaps in knowledge have been identified which needs further research. This includes the understanding of the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia; the processes and methods involved in recruiting migrants; the gaps, problems and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia; the practices of migrant recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrants; and the effectiveness of the legal and regulatory framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.

Tesfaye and Nsolo (2019) argued that the lack of regulation and oversight in the Ethiopian migrant recruitment sector has allowed for the proliferation of unethical and abusive practices. They suggested that increased government involvement and stronger regulation could help improve the capacity and accountability of the sector. There is still a need for more comprehensive data and research on the practices of recruitment agencies, and the role of government and other stakeholders in regulating and monitoring migration to ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety. It is against this background that the study aimed to analyse the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, and to propose guidelines to increase the capacity of agencies and address the effectiveness of legal and regulatory policies and framework to regulate and monitor migration to ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety.

This research contributes to filling the gap in existing knowledge in the regulation and management of this industry. Given the importance of the migrant recruitment agency industry in the protection of the rights of migrant workers and creating job opportunities for Ethiopians, it is necessary to research and streamline its operations and propose guidelines to ensure the legal protection and promoting safe and ethical migration.

Addressing the secondary research objectives, this research study developed a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, providing insights into ways migrant recruitment agencies can strengthen their capacity to facilitate effective, safe and responsible migration to address the plight of migrants. The results provided key insights into the challenges faced by the industry in Ethiopia, and potential solutions to address them. Additionally, by identifying successful practices implemented in other countries, policymakers can learn from international best practices, in turn stimulating a more efficient and effective regulation of the migrant recruitment agency industry in Ethiopia.

The research will specifically inform policy and practice in Ethiopia and contribute to the wider discourse on the recruitment of migrant workers. It is foreseen that the study's findings will have several implications for the government, migrant recruitment agencies, policymakers, labour rights organizations, and other stakeholders involved in regulating the migrant recruitment agency industry. Through a mixed-methods

approach, this study aimed to provide insights into the recruitment process and contribute to the promotion of safe and ethical migration in Ethiopia.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study is an analysis of the capacity and practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. The study specifically focussed on the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies, the processes involved in recruiting migrants, the methods used and the institutional framework; the gaps, problems and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia; the practices of migrant recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrants and their families; and the effectiveness of the legal and regulatory framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.

The study is limited to the Ethiopian context and did not include migrant recruitment agencies outside the country. The study covered the period from 2015 to 2023 to capture changes in policy and practice related to migrant recruitment during this period. The target population included only migrant recruitment agencies operating in the country. The study setting was primarily the city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the study population comprised migrant recruitment agencies registered with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Skills. The study used a mixed-method approach that included document analysis, survey, interviews and focus group discussions with recruitment agencies, migrant workers, government officials, and civil society organizations. The study's population included one-fourth of migrant recruitment agencies operating in Ethiopia, which was established at 400 in December 2023, and the research assessed their capacity and challenges. Capacity refers to the migrant recruitment agencies' ability to provide effective services in line with Proclamation 923/2016 and its amendment 1246/2021, as well as ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention 1997 (No. 181), including protection of the rights of migrant workers. Challenges, on the other hand, refer to the obstacles that agencies encounter in discharging their duties effectively.

One potential limitation of this study could have been the challenges of bias in the information provided by recruitment agencies and other stakeholders, which could have affected the accuracy of the findings. Recruitment agencies may be hesitant to

share negative information or may provide incomplete information that does not accurately reflect their practices. However, these limitations were addressed by using multiple sources of data and engaging multiple stakeholders to ensure that the findings are comprehensive and balanced. Furthermore, the study used a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate the multifaceted nature of the research problem (Creswell 2014). The use of quantitative methods served to establish patterns and trends while qualitative methods provided a more in-depth understanding of the factors and perspectives that contribute to those patterns and trends. The use of the mixed-methods approach in this research study was particularly useful to provide a more inclusive and thorough understanding and insight into the research phenomenon by allowing the researcher to gather and analyze both numerical and narrative data.

Additionally, the study was limited to the Ethiopian context and may not be applicable to other countries or regions. Migration policies and practices may vary widely across different countries, and the findings from this study may not be generalizable to other migrant-sending countries.

Finally, the execution of the study had a limited timeframe from 2023 to 2026, which imply that longer-term trends or changes in migration policies were not captured. Therefore, the study may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia over time.

Overall, it was important for the researcher to acknowledge the limitations of the study and their potential impact on the validity of the results. This ensures that the study is conducted in a transparent and rigorous manner, and that the findings are accurately interpreted in the context of the limitations.

## **1.7 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is founded on the integration of various frameworks and theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of migration and the factors influencing the effectiveness of these agencies. The conceptual framework highlighted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the holistic approach to labour migration, the human rights framework, and migration

governance. These frameworks emphasize the need for orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, the protection of migrant workers' rights, and the collaboration among various stakeholders to achieve sustainable development (IOM 2022; ILO 2019; IIED 2018; OECD 2021).

The theoretical framework delved into relevant migration theories, including Neoclassical Macro Theory, New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), Dual Labour Market Theory, World Systems Theory, Social Network Theory, and Institutional Theory. Each theory offered unique insights into the dynamics of migration, from economic drivers to social networks and institutional influences (Lewis 1954; Ranis & Fei 1961; Harris & Todaro 1970; Todaro 1976; Stark & Levhari 1982; Stark 1984; Stark & Bloom 1985; Piore 1979; Wallerstein 1974; Portes & Walton 1981; Hugo 1981; Taylor 1986; Massey 1990; Koser & Papademetriou 2017; Gibney & Hansen 2018).

By applying these frameworks and theories, this study aimed to provide a nuanced analysis of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The multi-theoretical approach adopted in this study ensured a thorough examination of the complex factors at play, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights (Schutter & Matzke 2018; IOM 2021). Chapter 3 provides a full discussion of the conceptual and theoretical framework applied in this study.

## **1.8 RESEARCH MEHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The chosen research paradigm for the study on the analysis of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers was pragmatism. Pragmatism was an appropriate paradigm for this study as it recognized the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The paradigm acknowledged that the capacity of these agencies is shaped by various factors, including the social, economic, and political context in which they operate, such as government policies, market demands, and the changing needs of migrant workers (Mekonnen & VanWassenhove 2019:3116).

This study employed both descriptive and exploratory research and utilized a mixed-methods research approach. The mixed-methods research design guided the entire research process, from selecting the study population and designing the survey and interview questions to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and the factors that impacted their effectiveness and practice to promote safe, fair, and ethical migration in Ethiopia (Scribbr, 2023). The study approach involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. A random sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the research methodology, including research approach and design; study setting and target population; sampling procedures and sample size; data gathering methods and procedure; and data analysis.

This study adhered to the ethical principles set by the College of Human Science Research Ethics Committee at Unisa as well as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the College of Development Studies at Addis Ababa University (AAU). A primary ethical consideration was to ensure protection of research participants' rights to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Steps were taken to ensure that all participants' sensitive information was kept confidential, and participants were fully informed about the risks and benefits of participating in the study. Participants were assured they could participate without fear of their identities being revealed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and all identifying information was removed prior to publishing the data. The study also upheld the principle of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, the research methodology, and the potential risks and benefits of their participation. See Chapter 4, Section 4.8, for a detailed description of the ethical principles.

## 1.9 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

The key terms identified and defined in the study are as follows:

- **Capacity:** This refers to the specific ability of migrant recruitment agencies to deliver effective services that comply with Proclamation 923/2016 as well as its amendments 1246/2021 and 1389/2025. It also encompasses adherence to the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention 1997 (No. 181), with a particular

focus on the agencies' capability to protect the fundamental rights and safety of migrant workers throughout the recruitment and employment process.

- **Challenges:** These are the various obstacles and impediments that agencies encounter while attempting to discharge their duties effectively. These challenges can be internal, such as limited staffing or resources, or external, such as regulatory gaps, unethical practices in destination countries, and the influence of informal brokers.
- **Migration:** The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines this as the movement of people across international borders or within a country. It is further described as leaving one's home country to live abroad, regardless of the individual's legal status.
- **Migrant Recruitment Agencies (MRAs) / Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs):** These are private companies involved in the recruitment and placement of workers for overseas employment. They serve as a bridge between job seekers and prospective employers by sourcing opportunities, screening candidates, and facilitating the hiring process.
- **Institutional Failure:** Within the context of this study, this refers to a systemic breakdown in the recruitment ecosystem where the governing structures and regulations fail to protect workers, leading to issues like debt bondage and the abandonment of workers.
- **Contract Substitution:** A practice where the terms of employment a worker agreed to before departure are changed to less favourable conditions upon arrival in the destination country.
- **Fair Recruitment:** This term refers to recruitment practices that align with international standards, such as the "Employer Pays" principle, ensuring that migrant workers are not charged illegal fees and are protected from exploitation.
- **Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF):** A framework developed by the IOM to help states determine the necessary components to effectively govern migration according to their specific circumstances.
- **Practice:** In the context of this study, practice refers to the actual operational conduct and methods employed by Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in their daily activities, including how they source, screen, and prepare workers for overseas employment.

- **Safe and Orderly Migration:** This term aligns with SDG Target 10.7 and refers to a migration process governed by well-managed policies that minimize risks such as exploitation, debt bondage, and human rights violations while ensuring the dignity and legal protection of the worker
- **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 10.7:** A specific global target that aims to facilitate "orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people" through well-managed policies.

## 1.10 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1 introduces the study by outlining the background to the research problem, the problem statement, objectives, rationale, scope, limitations, and the conceptual and theoretical framework. It also presents the research methodology and ethical considerations, clarifies key terms, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, beginning with the global and historical context of migration, followed by an examination of migrant recruitment agencies, their functions, responsibilities, and challenges in Ethiopia. It also reviews international standards, global best practices, and identifies critical gaps in the literature that the study seeks to address.

Chapter 3 discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the study. It elaborates on the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights perspectives, and migration governance frameworks, before presenting and applying relevant migration theories to the research problem.

Chapter 4 explains the research methodology, including the paradigm, approach, study setting, population, sampling, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. It also addresses validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents and analyses the quantitative findings, covering agency characteristics, recruitment processes, pre-departure preparation, support during employment, and challenges faced by migrant workers abroad. It concludes with a summary of quantitative results.

Chapter 6 provides qualitative findings from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. It explores participants' perspectives, challenges, and stakeholder roles, followed by a comparative analysis of FGDs and KIIs, and a synthesis of qualitative insights.

Chapter 7 synthesises the study's findings, discusses them in relation to the literature and theoretical framework, and highlights the significance of the results. It presents recommendations and policy changes, areas for future research, and the original contributions of the study before concluding.

### **1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an overview of the background to the study and problem statement. It clarified the research objectives and questions followed by an explanation of the scope and limitations of the study. It also highlighted the conceptual and theoretical framework underlying the study, the research methodology and ethical principles. Furthermore, it emphasised the rationale and contribution of the study. The upcoming chapter (Chapter 2) provides an overview of relevant literature and explains migration as a phenomenon. It also pays attention to the conceptual understanding of migrant recruitment agencies (MRAs) and their role in Ethiopia. Furthermore, it highlights global best practices in regulating and managing the recruitment process. The chapter concludes with an overview of the current state of migration and its impact on Ethiopian society and the critical gaps in the existing literature that the study seeks to address.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature and firstly explains migration as a phenomenon in terms of historical context, contemporary patterns, and a global overview of migration. Secondly, this chapter explains the conceptual understanding of migrant recruitment agencies (MRAs) and their role in Ethiopia by paying attention to their functions, responsibilities, challenges and regulatory framework. The third section highlights global best practices in regulating and managing the recruitment process. The chapter concludes with an overview of the current state of migration and its impact on Ethiopian society and the critical gaps in the existing literature that the study seeks to address.

The review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Ethiopian migration landscape, the regulatory framework governing MRAs, and the systemic issues that hinder their effectiveness (IOM 2022). By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to contribute to the development of policies and practices that enhance the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety (ILO 2021).

### **2.2 MIGRATION AS A PHENOMENON**

The IOM (2019) defines migration as the movement of people across international borders or within a country. Endale (2019) describes it as leaving one's home country to live abroad, regardless of legal status. A broader definition by William Robert Avis (2017) encompasses crossing political or administrative boundaries for a specific period, acknowledging the ongoing debate about the precise definition of "migrant." The UN (2005) convention defines a migrant worker as "a person who is to be engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national." Thet (2012) identifies mortality, fertility, and migration as the three components of population change. De Haas (2021) offers a framework based on aspirations and capabilities, arguing that migration is driven by individual agency and influenced by macro-structural changes.

Migration is driven by a variety of factors. Helms et al. (2019) and Segal (2017) suggest that people migrate to improve their living standards, escape conflict, or seek

economic opportunities. These factors can be broadly categorized as political, economic, social, environmental, and demographic (Castelli 2018; Simpson 2017; European Asylum Support Office 2015). Political instability and conflict are major drivers of migration (Dessalegn, Nicol & Debevec 2020; Helms et al. 2019; Castelli 2018). Economic factors like poverty, wage disparities, and lack of opportunities play a significant role in migration decisions (Helms et al., 2019; Castelli, 2018; Simpson, 2017; European Asylum Support Office 2015). Social factors include the desire for better education and healthcare, as well as the influence of social networks (Helms et al. 2019; Castelli, 2018; European Asylum Support Office 2015; Dawit 2015).

Defining international migration presents challenges due to its various forms (ILO 2018; IOM 2014). "Regular" migration follows established legal processes, while "irregular" migration occurs outside these norms, often involving unauthorized border crossings and lack of documentation (IOM, 2004; UN, 2000; Kuschminder, de Bresser & Siegel, 2015). Endale (2019) and Thet (2014) distinguish between internal migration (within a country) and international migration (across borders). Wickramasinghe (2016) categorizes international migration by motivation: labour migration, asylum migration, chain migration, return migration, and forced migration. Projections for international migration have consistently increased. The IOM (2018) highlights the growing numbers, with UN DESA (2019) reporting 271.6 million international migrants in 2019 (3.5% of the global population). International migration within and from Africa is also increasing (Litchfield, 2018; Belaid, Geneva & Slany, 2018). Africa also hosts a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers (IOM & AU 2020).

### **2.2.1 Historical Context**

Human migration is an ancient and enduring phenomenon that traces its origins to the African Rift Valley between 1.5 million and 5000 BC, noting subsequent mass migrations during the Greek colonization, Roman expansion, and European population movements. The forced transportation of enslaved Africans during the 18th and 19th centuries across the Atlantic, Indian, and Mediterranean (Koser 2007) represents one of history's largest forced migrations. Fisher (2014) reinforces the long history of migration, linking it to social and environmental degradation from the time of Homo sapiens (approximately 200,000 BCE) through early civilizations in Africa, Eurasia, and the Americas.

African migration is deeply intertwined with historical injustices like the slave trade and colonialism (Bilger & Kraler 2005). These historical factors continue to influence contemporary migration patterns, alongside factors like dependence on colonial-era economic structures and social and human security issues (Bilger & Kraler 2005). As early as the twelfth century, the Horn of Africa was connected to the Middle East, the Arab Gulf, and South Asia by trade networks. Those trade routes soon became migratory routes as well, with people and goods moving across the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea. However, under Arab and European domination, the Horn was also connected with the rest of the world by the East Africa slave trade (Fides 2021). The gradual illegalization of slave trading in the late 19th and early 20th century temporarily halted those movements of people. Beauchemin (2018) highlights the significant flow of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, with approximately 3 million residing there since 2000. Political instability and the pursuit of self-determination also contribute to forced migration in the region (Moyo 2017). These factors often lead Africans to cross borders, seeking refuge or better opportunities. Scholars like Marchand et al. (2016) point to poor economic development and political conflicts, including violence, unrest, and persecution, as major challenges driving migration from Africa. The consensus among researchers is that a confluence of social, economic, political, security, and environmental factors contributes to African migration.

Ethiopia stands as the second most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, boasting a population of over 110 million people, with a significant portion residing in rural areas (World Bank 2021) and is both a source of migrants and a host country for refugees (Ogahara & Kuschminder, 2020). Migration has historically been a fundamental aspect of Ethiopian society, as many citizens seek work opportunities in neighbouring countries and beyond. Ethiopia's migration history dates to the 1930s (Watkins, Valley & Alley, 1990; Van der Wolf, 2020). The IOM (2017) identifies several phases of Ethiopian migration, linked to political regimes, conflicts, and environmental challenges.

Although Ethiopian migration numbers are relatively lower compared to other African countries, they are increasing (UN DESA, 2019), driven by political, economic, and environmental factors (Dessalegn, Nicol & Debevec 2019). Since the late 20th century, instability, poverty, and ethnic violence caused migration from Ethiopia to increase. Recent estimates suggest that there are approximately 1.3 million international

migrants from Ethiopia (UNHCR 2022). This trend reflects both the quest for better economic prospects and the broader socio-economic dynamics influencing migration patterns. Since the mid-1970s, Ethiopia has been a source of diverse, substantial labour migration flows. The effect of globalization on the configuration of modern labour markets has increased opportunities but also the pressure on individuals to migrate in search of employment elsewhere. The RMMS (2016) report describes Ethiopia as a major source of mixed migration in the Horn of Africa. Large Ethiopian diasporas exist in the Middle East, Europe, North America, and other African nations. A significant portion of Ethiopian migration to the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, is irregular (Fernandez, 2017; Shewamene et al., 2022; Marchand et al., 2017; Busza et al., 2023). This irregular migration is often facilitated by deceptive practices of agencies and brokers (Shewamene et al., 2022). The Kafala system in Gulf countries poses risks to migrant workers, including potential exploitation and abuse (Khan & Harroff-Tavel, 2011; Richards, 2014; Fernandez, 2018; Qadri, 2020).

Over the past decade, new migration trends have emerged, including the migration of higher-skilled workers, the expansion of international migration from rural areas of the country, and a growing number of young women migrants (Adugna 2019). Those who leave Ethiopia generally follow one of three migration corridors: East to the Gulf States and the Middle East, South to South Africa, or North to Libya (Adugna 2019). Most who follow these paths do so to work as domestic workers, cleaners, construction workers, or security guards (Walk Free 2019). Overwhelmingly, those who leave Ethiopia are driven by economic factors (IOM 2019).

The role of migrant recruitment agencies in facilitating labour migration is critical, as they bridge the gap between employers and migrant workers (IOM 2022). These agencies are responsible for job matching, documentation, pre-departure training, and ensuring compliance with labour laws (ILO 2021). In Ethiopia, MRAs play a crucial role in facilitating labour migration by acting as intermediaries between employers and migrant workers, especially in the overseas employment sector, which is a key strategy for addressing unemployment and generating foreign exchange through remittances (IO, 2022). Despite their importance in addressing unemployment and generating foreign exchange through remittances, the sector faces significant challenges such as exploitation, corruption, and inadequate regulatory oversight (Busza, Shewamene & Zimmerman 2022). The capacity and practices of migrant

recruitment agencies to protect the rights and safety of migrant workers remain understudied, highlighting the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to ensure ethical recruitment practices (Samuel Hall 2021). By addressing these challenges, Ethiopia can enhance the protection of its migrant workers and improve the overall effectiveness of MRAs in the overseas employment sector (ILO 2021).

## **2.2.2 Global overview and Contemporary Patterns**

The global landscape of overseas employment has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and demographic shifts. Increased interconnectedness of economies has led to a substantial rise in international labour migration, with individuals seeking employment opportunities beyond their countries of origin. Migration continues to shape the world. The International Organization for Migration emphasizes its transformative impact on present and future global landscapes, identifying economic and social factors as key drivers (IOM 2020). Remittances, resources transferred between migrants and their home communities, reflect migrants' social participation and efforts to maintain social capital (Grieco, 2004, cited in Zewudu, 2014). Remittance flows from overseas workers remain a crucial source of foreign exchange for many developing countries, including Ethiopia (World Bank 2021). However, remittance flows are influenced by global economic conditions and exchange rates, requiring strategic planning to mitigate risks associated with economic fluctuations (IMF 2020).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020) estimates approximately 281 million international migrants globally, of whom 169 million are migrant workers employed across diverse sectors, including healthcare, technology, and agriculture (ILO, 2019). Developed nations, such as Canada, Germany, and Australia, have adapted their immigration policies to attract skilled workers and address labour shortages (OECD 2021). Similarly, countries like Japan face demographic challenges that necessitate attracting foreign talent. The rise of remote work has further facilitated international job mobility, highlighting the critical importance of regulated overseas employment services to protect workers' rights and ensure fair labour practices (ILO 2021).

Despite the expanding opportunities in overseas employment, significant challenges persist, particularly for developing countries. These nations often experience brain drain as skilled workers emigrate in pursuit of better prospects (World Bank 2019). ILO reports have documented the exploitation, discrimination, and inadequate legal protection frequently faced by migrant workers in host countries. These issues underscore the urgent need for stronger legislation and support systems to safeguard workers' rights (ILO 2021).

Jemal (2015) categorizes migration by scale: intercontinental, intracontinental, interregional, and internal. "Chain migration," where remittances facilitate further migration within a network of family and community, is also a significant pattern. Irregular migration, particularly intercontinental, has increased dramatically in recent decades. Ethiopia's complex migration history includes serving as a source, destination, and transit point for both voluntary and involuntary migrants (Fransen & Kuschminder, 2009). In more recent times, this has been further encouraged by the oil-driven economic growth of the neighbouring Gulf monarchies, which have become an attractive destination for cheap and unskilled labourers from Ethiopia (Al-Zirky 2017). A growing number of Ethiopians are embarking on dangerous migratory journeys, often through Yemen, seeking a better future in the Gulf. However, many of those migratory flows between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are illegal in character, taking place beyond the routes and mechanisms allowed by countries of destination and countries of origin. The reasons why many migrants have been choosing irregular channels of migration are mainly connected to the limited options for regular migration as well as the administrative challenges associated with those few options (e.g., strict exit-entry control procedures, limited issuance of travel documents, bureaucratic and administrative barriers). As East African nationals embark on irregular channels of migration and resort to migrant smuggling to reach the Arabian Peninsula, they often find themselves exploited by ruthless human traffickers along their journeys towards the Gulf monarchies (Brown 2020).

Furthermore, the growing youth population faces extreme pressure to find work yet must contend with high levels of competition amid an underdeveloped private sector and weak labour market institutions (Global Alliance 2019). The regional conflicts, political persecution, and climate disasters that have afflicted the country have also forced many migration decisions among the population, with some traveling overseas

if possible and others ending up internally displaced. As of June 2023, there were approximately 4.39 million internally displaced people (IDPs) across 3,393 assessed sites in Ethiopia. The primary causes of displacement were conflict, affecting about 2.9 million IDPs (66.41%), and drought, impacting 810,855 IDPs (18.49%) (IOM 2023).

It is estimated that between 60-70% of the thousands of Ethiopians who migrate each year do so through informal, illegal, or irregular means, often using brokers, traffickers, or personal connections to facilitate their journeys, at great risk (Migration out of Poverty 2019). Looking at the identities of workers who migrate through legal mechanisms, such as via migrant recruitment agencies or who are hired directly by employers, the majority are women. This is primarily due to the growing number of regularized pathways available for those who seek to be employed as domestic workers, a traditionally feminized profession (Demissie 2017). Men, on the other hand, are far more likely to travel irregularly and commonly work in construction and farming or as drivers and security guards in destination countries (DRC 2016). In addition, for many Ethiopians overseas, migration status does not remain static; many people who travel abroad through legal mechanisms become irregular once they are in the country of destination for a multitude of reasons (Katrin Marchand et al. 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further reshaped the landscape of international labour migration. Travel restrictions, lockdowns, and economic downturns have disrupted migration flows and exposed the vulnerabilities of migrant workers. Many faced job losses, wage theft, and inadequate access to healthcare and social protection (ILO 2021). The pandemic highlighted the essential role of migrant workers in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and logistics, prompting some countries to reconsider their immigration policies to ensure a steady supply of labour (OECD 2021). However, the crisis also exacerbated existing inequalities and led to increased xenophobia and discrimination against migrants (UN 2020). As the world recovers from the pandemic, there is a growing recognition of the need for more resilient and inclusive migration systems that protect the rights and well-being of migrant workers (IOM 2021).

Global migration trends are on the rise. The IOM (2020) reports increasing migration flows, driven by a complex interplay of factors. The global demand for migrant labour remains robust, driven primarily by demographic shifts in high-income countries (OECD 2019). Aging populations and labour shortages in sectors like healthcare,

construction, and hospitality create a persistent need for foreign workers, presenting significant opportunities for Ethiopians (World Bank 2022). However, this demand is not uniform across all skill levels (ILO 2018). A notable shift is occurring towards a preference for skilled and semi-skilled labour. While demand for unskilled labour persists, particularly in certain regions, many countries actively seek professionals with specialized technology, engineering, and healthcare skills (OECD 2019). This trend necessitates focusing on upskilling the Ethiopian workforce to meet evolving global demands (McKinsey Global Institute 2018). Furthermore, technological advancements are transforming the recruitment and placement process. Online platforms and digital tools connect employers and workers directly, reducing the reliance on traditional intermediaries. However, agencies leveraging technology can gain a competitive advantage by streamlining operations, improving matching efficiency, and ensuring transparency (Cappelli 2019).

Migration policies and bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries significantly influence overseas employment. Favourable policies and agreements can enhance access to overseas labour markets and ensure better protection for overseas workers, increasing the overall potential for income generation (Betts 2011). The role of international organizations and multilateral agreements in shaping migration policies has become increasingly significant. Organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) work collaboratively with governments to develop frameworks that promote safe, orderly, and regular migration. These efforts include the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which aims to address the challenges associated with migration and enhance cooperation on international migration governance (UN 2018). Additionally, regional agreements, such as the African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa, provide guidelines for member states to harmonize their migration policies and protect the rights of migrants (AU 2018). These international and regional initiatives play a crucial role in ensuring that migration contributes to sustainable development and that the rights and welfare of migrant workers are upheld. The emphasis on ethical recruitment practices and worker rights is intensifying (ILO 2019). International organizations and governments are implementing stricter regulations to combat exploitation and human trafficking, demanding greater transparency in fees and working conditions. Compliance with international labour standards is paramount for building trust and securing contracts (Anderson 2010).

Worker welfare is increasingly becoming a key consideration (ILO 2019). Workers are demanding better working conditions, access to healthcare, family reunification opportunities, and protection against exploitation. Agencies prioritizing worker well-being are more likely to attract and retain skilled workers, enhancing their overall value proposition.

## **2.3 CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRANT RECRUITMENT AGENCIES**

### **2.3.1 Functions and Responsibilities**

Recruitment agencies play a vital role in the labour market by connecting employers with potential employees, facilitating the hiring process, and managing various logistical aspects of employment such as documentation and compliance with labour laws. These agencies are essential in sourcing candidates, screening applicants, and matching them with job openings, thereby streamlining the recruitment process for employers (ILO 2016). The private employment agency (PrEA) industry has expanded globally. In 2019, an estimated 162,000 PrEAs operated worldwide, generating an estimated €495 billion in revenue (WEC, 2019). In Ethiopia, overseas employment plays a crucial role in mitigating unemployment and generating foreign currency (IOM 2022). In Ethiopia, over 600 PrEAs are registered, although the actual number, including informal agencies, is likely higher (ECDPM, 2021).

Furthermore, recruitment agencies are instrumental in fostering partnerships with foreign employers and governments. These partnerships are crucial for creating a reliable and sustainable pipeline of job opportunities for migrant workers. Agencies often engage in bilateral agreements with destination countries to ensure that the rights and welfare of migrant workers are safeguarded. These agreements can include provisions for minimum wage standards, working hours, and access to social protection (ILO 2016). By establishing strong partnerships, recruitment agencies can enhance the overall migration experience for workers and contribute to positive outcomes for both sending and receiving countries.

In addition to their core functions, recruitment agencies are increasingly leveraging technology to improve their services. Digital platforms and online recruitment tools have revolutionized the way agencies operate, making the recruitment process more efficient and accessible. These technologies enable agencies to reach a wider pool of

candidates, streamline application processes, and provide real-time updates to both employers and job seekers (Cappelli 2019). Moreover, technology can enhance transparency and accountability by allowing for better tracking of recruitment activities and ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

The role of recruitment agencies, however, extends beyond the initial placement of workers. They are also responsible for providing ongoing support to migrant workers throughout their employment. This support can include regular check-ins, assistance with workplace issues, and access to legal and social services. By maintaining a continuous relationship with workers, agencies can address any challenges that arise and ensure that workers' rights are upheld (Fernandez 2013). This ongoing support is particularly important for vulnerable groups, such as women and low-skilled workers, who may face higher risks of exploitation and abuse.

When it comes to migration, recruitment agencies are responsible for several key functions that are particularly significant for migrant workers. One of their primary roles is to facilitate international mobility by helping prospective migrants navigate the complex processes of obtaining visas, work permits, and other necessary documentation. This support is crucial, given the often-intricate immigration laws and requirements that vary by country (ILO 2016). Additionally, recruitment agencies provide critical information about job opportunities abroad, including details regarding the nature of the work, salary, working conditions, and legal rights. This information empowers migrants to make informed decisions about their employment and migration prospects (ILO 2016). Moreover, many agencies offer pre-departure support that prepares migrants for their new environments. This orientation typically covers important topics such as cultural adaptation, legal rights, and available support networks, which can significantly ease the transition for migrants as they move to a new country (ILO 2016).

### **2.3.2 Role of Migrant Recruitment Agencies in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, migrant recruitment agencies play a crucial role in the country's overseas employment, which aims to address high unemployment rates and generate foreign exchange through remittances (Fernandez 2013). The Ethiopian government has recognized the potential of labour migration as a development strategy, leading to the

establishment of a regulatory framework for private employment agencies (PEAs) involved in overseas employment (Abebaw 2018).

Ethiopia has been a significant source of diverse labour migration flows since the mid-1970s. Globalization's influence on modern labour markets has simultaneously expanded opportunities and intensified pressure on individuals to seek employment abroad. Recent migration trends include the emigration of highly skilled workers, increased international migration from rural areas, and a growing number of young women migrants (Adugna 2019). Ethiopian migrants typically follow one of three routes: eastward to the Gulf States and the Middle East, southward to South Africa, or northward to Libya (Adugna 2019). Most of these migrants work as domestic workers, cleaners, construction workers, or security guards (Walk Free Foundation 2019).

Economic factors are the primary drivers of Ethiopian emigration (IOM 2019). The country's growing youth population faces immense pressure to find employment but must contend with high levels of competition within an underdeveloped private sector and weak labour market institutions (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women 2019). Regional conflicts, political persecution, and climate disasters have also forced migration decisions, with some individuals seeking opportunities overseas while others become internally displaced (as of 2020, there were over 1.8 million IDPs in Ethiopia, primarily due to conflict, drought, and flash flooding) (IOM 2020). PrEA users increasingly come from poorer rural areas (ILO 2019). Low education levels among girls, which limit their employment opportunities, combined with generally high youth unemployment and declining household incomes, put pressure on young women to consider migrating overseas to supplement household income through remittances (Kebede 2002). The IOM (2019) reports that only 12% of Ethiopian women have a source of income at home, compared to 25% of men.

An estimated 60-70% of the thousands of Ethiopians who migrate annually do so through informal, irregular channels, often relying on informal recruiters, traffickers, or personal connections, which exposes them to considerable risks (Migrating out of Poverty 2019). Men, conversely, are more likely to migrate irregularly and find work in construction, farming, or as drivers and security guards in destination countries (Danish Refugee Council 2016). Furthermore, migration status can be fluid; many Ethiopians who initially migrate through regular channels become irregular migrants

once they reach their destination country for various reasons (Marchand et al. 2017). Regular migration channels, such as through PrEAs or direct employer hiring, are predominantly used by women seeking employment as domestic workers, a traditionally feminized occupation (Demissie 2017).

Aging populations and the large-scale development of service sectors in key destination countries, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have significantly increased demand for low-skilled foreign laborers, who can be paid lower wages than national staff and are easily recruited through PrEAs (Kebede 2002). While overseas work offers potential opportunities for both men and women who use PrEAs, it also involves substantial risks. Migrant workers, especially women, are vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and abuse at every stage—from recruitment and travel to living and working abroad. The prevalence of rights violations reported by workers in Gulf states led the Ethiopian government to ban all contract labour and unskilled migration to the region in 2013 (BBC 2013). This ban resulted in the repatriation of thousands of Ethiopians and severely impacted the overseas employment sector, leading to agency closures and increased irregular migration facilitated by covert networks and informal recruiters (ILO, n.d.). Recognizing the counterproductive effect of the ban, which fuelled dangerous irregular migration, the government lifted it in 2018 and implemented measures to better regulate the private overseas employment sector and protect migrant workers. However, shortly after the ban was lifted, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global labour migration. Movement restrictions and border closures prevented both departures and returns, while thousands of Ethiopian migrant workers abroad were laid off, faced abuse and detention, and were at increased risk of infection (Marks 2020).

The Ethiopian government has implemented regulations to oversee the activities of recruitment agencies, aiming to protect workers from exploitation and ensure ethical recruitment practices. These regulations include licensing requirements, financial guarantees, and mandatory reporting (Abebaw 2018). Key functions of recruitment agencies in the Ethiopian context include:

1. Job Matching and Placement: Agencies identify job opportunities abroad and match them with suitable Ethiopian candidates. This process involves screening applicants, verifying qualifications, and ensuring that workers meet the requirements of foreign employers (Zewdu 2017).

2. Documentation and Legal Compliance: Agencies assist migrants in obtaining necessary documents such as passports, visas, and work permits. They also ensure compliance with both Ethiopian and destination country regulations, which is crucial given the complex and often changing nature of international labour laws (Abebew 2018).
3. Pre-departure Training and Orientation: Many agencies provide pre-departure training to prepare workers for their overseas employment. This training typically covers job-specific skills, cultural orientation, language basics, and information about workers' rights and responsibilities in the destination country (Fernandez 2013).
4. Contract Negotiation and Worker Protection: Agencies often negotiate employment contracts on behalf of workers, aiming to secure fair terms and conditions. They are also expected to monitor the well-being of workers abroad and provide support in case of disputes or emergencies (Zewdu 2017).
5. Information Dissemination: Agencies serve as important sources of information for potential migrants, providing details about job opportunities, working conditions, and living costs in destination countries. This role is particularly important in Ethiopia, where access to accurate information about overseas employment can be limited (Abebew 2018).
6. Repatriation and Reintegration Support: Some agencies offer services to assist returning migrants in reintegrating into the Ethiopian labour market, although this aspect of their role is less developed compared to other functions (Zewdu 2017).

Finally, recruitment agencies play a critical role in the reintegration of returning migrants. Effective reintegration programs are essential for helping migrants' transition back into their home communities and re-enter the local labour market. These programs can include skills training, job placement services, and psychosocial support (Zewdu, 2017). By providing comprehensive reintegration services, recruitment agencies can help returning migrants leverage their overseas experience and contribute to the development of their home country.

In conclusion, recruitment agencies play a multifaceted and crucial role in facilitating labour migration from Ethiopia. Their functions extend beyond simple job placement to encompass a range of services that support migrants throughout the migration process. As Ethiopia continues to engage in labour export, the role of these agencies

is likely to remain significant, necessitating ongoing attention to regulation and ethical practices in the sector.

### **2.3.3 Challenges in the Ethiopian Context**

Despite their important role, recruitment agencies in Ethiopia face several obstacles, and challenges remain in enforcing government regulations and ensuring that all agencies operate within the legal framework. These include competition from informal and illegal recruiters, difficulties in verifying the legitimacy of foreign job offers, and the need to constantly adapt to changing regulations in both Ethiopia and destination countries (Fernandez 2013; Zewdu 2017). Notwithstanding these essential functions, the effectiveness of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia is often negatively impacted by various obstacles. A significant issue is inadequate organizational capacity, and many agencies lack the necessary management skills and operational frameworks to deliver quality services (Sadiq et al. 2019). This shortcoming can lead to substandard practices and diminished protections for migrant workers. Furthermore, there is widespread non-compliance with existing laws and regulations, as many agencies operate without proper oversight. This lack of regulation allows for unethical practices to proliferate. Corruption and exploitation are pervasive challenges within the recruitment sector. Often agencies engage in corrupt practices by charging excessive fees that exceed legal limits, which not only exploits vulnerable migrants but also perpetuates a cycle of debt bondage (Bales et al. 2019). Reports indicate that some agencies withhold wages or confiscate travel documents, further entrenching workers in exploitative situations (Lelissa 2018).

The consequences of these challenges can be severe for migrant workers. Many find themselves in precarious circumstances, facing exploitation, discrimination, and even human trafficking. The lack of transparency and accountability within the recruitment process, coupled with the absence of robust regulatory frameworks, significantly undermines the rights of workers. Research has shown that Ethiopian migrant workers frequently encounter fraudulent practices, such as being misled about job conditions and requirements (Okiro & Asfaw 2016).

Moreover, the socio-cultural context in Ethiopia presents additional hurdles for effective recruitment. The traditional views on migration often stigmatize those who seek work abroad, limiting the support networks available for migrants (Yohannes

2019). Additionally, there is a lack of awareness among potential migrants regarding their rights and the legal obligations of recruitment agencies. This knowledge gap can further exacerbate the exploitation faced by migrant workers, as they may not be able to identify or resist unethical treatment (Beyene 2020). Also, the economic pressures faced by families in Ethiopia can compel individuals to overlook potential red flags in recruitment processes, leading to hasty decisions that result in adverse outcomes (Mekonnen & Nigussie 2021). This is compounded by limited access to credible information about legitimate recruitment agencies, which can prevent migrants from making informed choices. Economic pressures and social factors drive many individuals to seek employment overseas, often through informal and unregulated channels (Mekonnen & Nigussie 2021).

To address these issues, there is a need for stronger regulatory mechanisms, improved oversight of recruitment agencies, and enhanced protection measures for migrant workers. The Ethiopian government has made strides in this direction with the introduction of the Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1246/2021, which aims to regulate the practices of recruitment agencies and protect migrant workers' rights (Samuel Hall 2021). However, effective implementation and enforcement of these regulations remain a challenge.

The complex socio-cultural and economic context in Ethiopia requires a multi-faceted approach to ensure the protection and safety of migrants. Public awareness campaigns can educate potential migrants about their rights and the legal obligations of recruitment agencies, helping them make informed decisions. Economic development initiatives that create job opportunities within Ethiopia can reduce the pressure to migrate and improve the overall well-being of the population. Furthermore, capacity building initiatives for recruitment agencies are crucial to ensure they have the necessary skills and resources to operate ethically and efficiently. Training programs on ethical recruitment practices, compliance with labour laws, and the use of technology can help improve the overall functioning of the recruitment sector (IOM 2022). Additionally, collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies can enhance the regulatory framework and provide support for migrant workers.

By addressing these challenges and implementing comprehensive regulatory measures, Ethiopia can enhance the protection of its migrant workers and improve the effectiveness of recruitment agencies in the overseas employment sector.

### **2.3.4 Regulatory Framework**

The Ethiopian government has consistently demonstrated a commitment to mitigating the inherent risks associated with overseas employment, evidenced by its ongoing efforts to strengthen its regulatory frameworks and refine institutional processes. This commitment is often realized through collaborative partnerships with international organizations, notably the International Labour Organization (ILO), and through bilateral engagements with destination country governments (ILO 2017). Ethiopia's early recognition of the pivotal role played by private employment agencies (PrEAs) in labour migration is underscored by its ratification of the 1997 Private Employment Agencies Convention (No. 181) in 1999 (ILO 1999). This initial step laid the groundwork for a series of legislative developments; each aimed at bolstering the protection of Ethiopian migrant workers.

A watershed moment in this regulatory evolution was the enactment of the Employment Exchange Services Proclamation No. 632/2009. This proclamation superseded the initial PrEA proclamation of 1998, ushering in a more robust regulatory environment. It provided clearer definitions of the roles and responsibilities of PrEAs and significantly strengthened monitoring mechanisms. Notably, it empowered the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to approve and register contracts between agencies and their clients, ensuring a degree of transparency and accountability (Ashine, 2017). This proactive approach aimed to minimize exploitation and ensure that contractual agreements were adhered to.

Subsequent progress was marked by the promulgation of the Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016. This proclamation placed a heightened emphasis on safeguarding the “rights, safety and dignity of Ethiopians who are willing to take-up overseas employment” (ILO, 2019). Key provisions introduced by this legislation included the imperative for bilateral agreements with destination countries to establish a framework for labour rights protection, the introduction of mandatory grade eight education and vocational training requirements for prospective migrant workers, the empowerment of MoLSA to develop model contracts with standardized working

conditions and wages, and the imposition of limits on agency fees (ILO, 2017). These measures aimed to enhance the preparedness of migrant workers and ensure fair and equitable employment conditions.

However, an ILO analysis (2017) revealed a critical gap between the ambitious aspirations of the 2016 proclamation and its practical implementation. The analysis highlighted a deficiency in clear enforcement mechanisms and insufficient in-country monitoring capacity, which hindered the effective realization of its objectives. In response to these identified shortcomings, the government amended the proclamation in May 2021, resulting in the Overseas Employment Amendment Proclamation No. 1246-2021. This amendment sought to rectify the deficiencies of its predecessor and provide enhanced protection for the rights of migrant workers. The Ethiopian government's 2016 amendment to the Overseas Employment Proclamation (923/2016) was, in part, a direct response to the repercussions of the earlier ban on labour migration to the Gulf region, including the mass expulsions from Saudi Arabia. However, certain regulations within 923/2016 met with resistance from PrEAs, who perceived them as detrimental to the sector and as inadvertently promoting irregular migration (Migrant Rights 2017). This led to the promulgation of Overseas Employment Proclamation 1246/2021 in June 2021. This new proclamation aimed to address the legal gaps in 923/2016 and revitalize the sector following the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had drastically reduced the demand for overseas labour, leading to the closure of numerous PrEAs (ILO 2019). Proclamation 1246/2021 introduces significant changes in three key areas: licensing and ownership, recruitment requirements, and monitoring and oversight. Regarding licensing and ownership, while previously only Ethiopian citizens were eligible to own and operate a PrEA, 1246/2021 now extends this opportunity to Ethiopian-born foreign nationals and foreigners, provided that 75% of their employees are Ethiopian nationals and that Private Limited Company (PLC) shares are predominantly (80%) owned by Ethiopian nationals (Proclamation 1246/2021, Article 22). This expansion aims to attract investment and expertise into the sector.

Acknowledging the historical challenges faced by overseas PrEAs, it is evident that significant adjustments will be necessary to ensure compliance with the new amendment. To evaluate the capacity and practices of these agencies and their ability to fulfil the requirements of both Proclamation 923/2016 and the 2021 amendment, the

ILO commissioned Samuel Hall to undertake a comprehensive study. This study aims to provide actionable recommendations to the ILO, MoLSA, and PrEAs, facilitating the effective implementation of the proclamation and ensuring the well-being of migrant workers (Samuel Hall 2021).

In terms of recruitment requirements, perhaps the most significant change welcomed by PrEAs is the removal of the requirement for prospective migrants to possess a certificate proving they completed 8th grade. Agencies had strongly opposed this requirement, arguing that it unnecessarily restricted the market by excluding individuals with practical experience but without formal education, potentially pushing them toward irregular migration. Under 1246/2021, those seeking domestic work employment only need to present a competency certificate from a recognized licensing authority. Individuals with substantial experience or prior training are only required to show a Certificate of Competency (COC), rather than repeat training (Proclamation 1246/2021, Article 7). The new proclamation also legalizes the provision of private overseas employment services for skilled, semi-skilled, and professional workers. Agencies are allowed to charge skilled workers up to one month's salary for their services. Agencies have expressed positive feedback on this provision, anticipating increased profits and a smoother process than sending domestic workers (Proclamation 1246/2021, Articles 3 & 7). This adaptation reflects a move towards recognizing practical skills alongside formal education.

Concerning monitoring and oversight, MoLSA is now authorized to establish a dedicated overseas employment inspectorate to monitor agency compliance, replacing the more general 'labour inspector' role under the previous proclamation (Proclamation 1246/2021, Article 20). The proclamation also establishes a dedicated overseas employment board, replacing the national coordinating committee and task force. Unlike the previous committee, which primarily focused on preventing trafficking, the new board will be solely dedicated to overseas employment matters, with a clearer mandate to protect workers' rights and raise public awareness (Proclamation 1246/2021, Article 15). This specialization of oversight mechanisms underscores the government's commitment to effective enforcement.

Finally, regarding fair recruitment standards, national and international law mandate that overseas PrEAs ensure fair recruitment practices, which should be “grounded in

labour standards, developed through social dialogue and ensure gender equality” (ILO, 2021). The recruitment stage is crucial in ensuring safe and decent work opportunities. Migrant worker recruitment takes various forms and patterns, affecting men and women differently. The intermediation landscape is complex due to the fragmented global governance of labour migration and the numerous actors involved, from public and private employment agencies to sub-agents. Public and private employment agencies, when properly regulated, play a vital role in efficient and equitable labour markets by matching jobs with qualified workers, particularly where information is lacking (ILO 2021). Recruitment standards for PrEAs are determined by regulations in the country of origin, while destination country governments are responsible for setting decent work standards and ensuring employer compliance. In today's globalized economy, workers increasingly seek opportunities abroad for decent work and better livelihoods. However, concerns exist regarding abusive practices by unscrupulous recruiters and employers globally, including charging recruitment fees, deception about job nature and working conditions, passport retention, illegal wage deductions, threats against workers who wish to leave their employers, and, in some cases, physical and sexual violence. Effective, fair, and ethical recruitment depends on a transparent legal framework, a comprehensive approach involving government and society, robust social dialogue, and effective monitoring and enforcement. Accountability of involved institutions and businesses is essential (ILO 2021).

## **2.4 GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN REGULATING AND MANAGING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

### **2.4.1 International Standards**

The regulation and management of migrant recruitment agencies are critical components in safeguarding the rights and welfare of migrant workers. Globally, best practices have emerged that provide valuable frameworks for ensuring ethical recruitment and protecting workers from exploitation. Central to these practices are the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Migration for Employment Convention (1949) and the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). These foundational documents establish essential principles for protecting migrant workers' rights and outline the responsibilities of both sending and receiving countries.

Countries that have successfully implemented these conventions demonstrate the importance of comprehensive regulatory frameworks, robust monitoring mechanisms, and clear accountability structures for recruitment agencies. For example, the Philippines has developed stringent regulations that require all recruitment agencies to be registered and licensed, thereby ensuring compliance with established labour standards. These regulations are backed by a legal framework that mandates transparency in the recruitment process, including the disclosure of fees and job conditions (ILO 2016). This approach not only protects workers but also fosters a culture of accountability among recruitment agencies.

In addition to the Philippines, other countries have also adopted similar measures. For instance, Canada has implemented a rigorous licensing system for recruitment agencies, coupled with regular audits and inspections to ensure compliance with labour laws (Ontario.ca, 2024). This system includes provisions for the protection of migrant workers' rights, such as the prohibition of recruitment fees and the requirement for clear, written contracts outlining job conditions and wages. These measures help to create a fair and transparent recruitment process, reducing the risk of exploitation and abuse.

Countries like Germany have also established comprehensive frameworks to regulate migrant recruitment agencies. The German government has implemented strict licensing requirements and regular inspections to ensure compliance with labour standards. These measures include the prohibition of recruitment fees and the requirement for transparent contracts that clearly outline job conditions and wages. Germany's approach emphasizes the importance of protecting migrant workers from exploitation and ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process (Bund.de, 2023).

Similarly, Australia has developed robust regulations to manage migrant recruitment agencies. The Australian government mandates that all recruitment agencies must be licensed and adhere to strict ethical standards. This includes regular audits and inspections to ensure compliance with labour laws. Australia's framework also prohibits the charging of recruitment fees to migrant workers and requires clear, written contracts that detail job conditions and wages. These measures help to create a

transparent and fair recruitment process, reducing the risk of exploitation and abuse (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2024).

In New Zealand, the government has implemented a rigorous system to regulate migrant recruitment agencies. This includes mandatory licensing and regular inspections to ensure compliance with labour standards. New Zealand's regulations prohibit the charging of recruitment fees to migrant workers and require transparent contracts that outline job conditions and wages. These measures are designed to protect migrant workers from exploitation and ensure fair treatment throughout the recruitment process (Employment New Zealand, 2025).

#### **2.4.2 Awareness Programs**

Awareness programs also play a crucial role in mitigating exploitation. By educating migrants about their rights and the services offered by recruitment agencies, these programs empower workers to make informed decisions and advocate for themselves. In the Philippines, such initiatives have proven effective in reducing instances of abuse and exploitation, as migrants are better equipped to recognize and report unethical practices (IOM 2016). This proactive approach to migrant education is a model that Ethiopia could adopt to enhance its regulatory framework and better protect its migrant workers.

The ILO offers resources and training modules designed to educate both migrants and employers about the legal frameworks protecting worker rights (ILO 2017). These resources include comprehensive guides on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers, as well as practical advice on how to navigate the recruitment process safely. Additionally, community-based organizations have developed tailored programs to help migrants understand the potential risks associated with overseas employment and the importance of engaging with reputable recruitment agencies.

Research shows that awareness programs that include peer-to-peer education are particularly effective in building trust and disseminating vital information among migrant worker communities (Katz 2018). These initiatives create networks of support, where experienced migrants can share their knowledge and experiences with newer workers, further enhancing overall awareness and understanding of the recruitment process. Such collaborative efforts contribute to a culture of awareness and

accountability in which all stakeholders are invested in the promotion and protection of migrant workers' rights.

Moreover, technology can play a significant role in enhancing awareness programs. Mobile applications and online platforms can provide migrants with easy access to information about their rights, available services, and the legal requirements for recruitment agencies (IOM 2025). These digital tools can also facilitate the reporting of unethical practices and connect migrants with support networks and legal assistance. By leveraging technology, awareness programs can reach a broader audience and provide timely, relevant information to migrant workers, further empowering them to protect their rights and well-being.

### **2.4.3 Collaborative Efforts**

In addition to the Philippines, countries such as Canada and Australia have implemented best practices that emphasize the importance of collaboration between government agencies, civil society, and recruitment agencies. For instance, Australia's regulatory system includes strict licensing requirements for recruitment agencies and regular audits to ensure compliance with labour laws. The Australian government also works closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide support services for migrant workers, including legal assistance and access to resources that inform them of their rights (Migrant Workers Centre 2020).

The experiences of countries such as the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan provide valuable insights into the functioning of migrant recruitment agencies and the protection of migrant workers' rights. In the Philippines, the government has established a robust framework for regulating overseas employment through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The POEA plays a pivotal role in licensing recruitment agencies, ensuring compliance with ethical recruitment practices, and protecting the rights of migrant workers. One of the key principles upheld by the POEA is that no fees should be charged to the workers; instead, costs should be borne by the employers. This approach has been instrumental in reducing the incidence of exploitation and debt among migrant workers (POEA 2020).

Similarly, Nepal has made strides in regulating the recruitment industry through the Foreign Employment Act, which mandates the registration of recruitment agencies and

the establishment of a framework for monitoring their practices. The government has recognized the need to regulate intermediaries, as many unlicensed brokers have exploited migrant workers. Efforts to formalize recruitment through the establishment of a licensing system have been aimed at curbing illegal practices and protecting the rights of migrants. For instance, the Nepalese government has introduced provisions that require recruitment agencies to provide clear information about job offers and associated costs, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in the recruitment process (Nepal Ministry of Labour 2021).

In both the Philippines and Nepal, the emphasis on ethical recruitment practices and the protection of migrant rights has led to the establishment of grievance mechanisms that allow workers to report abuses and seek redress. These mechanisms are crucial in addressing the challenges faced by migrants and ensuring their rights are upheld throughout the recruitment process (ILO 2020).

The Sri Lankan experience underscores the significant role recruitment agencies play in the migration process, from recruitment to grievance handling. The effective regulation of these agencies is critical to prevent exploitative practices and ensure the safety and rights of migrant workers. The National Labour Migration Policy in Sri Lanka emphasizes the necessity of regulating the recruitment industry to enhance governance and protect migrant workers. This involves tightening licensing requirements and establishing standards for recruitment practices. Despite regulatory frameworks, challenges such as illegal recruitment, high costs, and a lack of oversight persist. These issues highlight the importance of robust enforcement mechanisms within the regulatory system. Collaboration between governmental bodies, recruitment agencies, and international organizations is vital for creating a transparent and accountable recruitment process. The Sri Lanka case is an example of best practices from other labour-sending countries, suggesting that Ethiopia could benefit from adopting similar frameworks that prioritize the protection of migrant workers' rights (ILO 2013).

The recruitment industry in Pakistan has evolved to include licensed overseas employment promoters (OEPs) and unlicensed intermediaries. While OEPs are expected to manage recruitment processes, many have limited their roles to merely processing documents, leading to a reliance on intermediaries for securing job offers.

The presence of unlicensed intermediaries has increased due to the disconnect between OEPs and prospective migrant workers, particularly in rural areas where access to information about legal recruitment channels is limited. Intermediaries often serve as the first point of contact for migrants seeking overseas employment. Intermediaries typically charge fees to both migrant workers and OEPs, which can lead to exploitation. The lack of regulation and oversight of these intermediaries often results in malpractices such as overcharging and providing inadequate information about the recruitment process. The Pakistan case shows the need for a robust regulatory framework to manage the activities of recruitment intermediaries in Pakistan. This includes the potential registration and regulation of intermediaries to ensure they adhere to fair recruitment practices as outlined in international labour standards. Similar challenges are observed in other South Asian countries, where intermediaries play a significant role in the recruitment process, often outside of formal regulatory frameworks. The experiences from Pakistan can provide useful insights for Ethiopia as it seeks to enhance its capacity to protect migrant workers (ILO 2020).

Moreover, effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are essential to uphold these regulations. Countries that prioritize regular inspections and establish penalties for non-compliance create an environment where recruitment agencies are held accountable for their practices (ILO 2021). This not only deters unethical behavior but also builds trust in the recruitment process among potential migrants.

By examining these examples, Ethiopia can draw lessons on the importance of regulatory frameworks, ethical practices, and support systems in enhancing the capacity of recruitment agencies to protect migrant workers' rights. Implementing similar strategies could help mitigate the risks faced by Ethiopian migrants and promote safer labour migration practices. Adopting these global best practices could significantly enhance Ethiopia's efforts to regulate migrant recruitment agencies. By establishing stringent licensing requirements, implementing awareness programs, and fostering collaboration between various stakeholders, Ethiopia can create a more robust regulatory environment that protects its migrant workers. As the country continues to navigate the complexities of labour migration, learning from successful models worldwide will be crucial in addressing the challenges faced by its citizens abroad.

## **2.5 OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATE OF MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY**

Ethiopia's legal framework addressing migration is multifaceted, although gaps remain. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution (1995) prohibits human trafficking. Furthermore, Ethiopia has demonstrated commitment to combating transnational organized crime by signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocols on trafficking in persons (especially women and children) and smuggling of migrants (UNODC 2018). This commitment is further evidenced by the implementation of Proclamation No. 909/2015, addressing the prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

While Ethiopia acknowledges international migration regulations, it has yet to ratify key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, specifically No. 97 (1949) concerning migration for employment and No. 143 (1975) on migrant workers. Similarly, the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (1990) remains unratified. This highlights a potential disconnect between acknowledging general migration principles and fully embracing the specific rights of migrant workers.

Despite these gaps, the Ethiopian government actively supports and facilitates both emigration and return migration. A key aspect of this support involves securing foreign employment opportunities for Ethiopian citizens through bilateral labour agreements. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA 2020) reports several such agreements with African nations, including Sudan (2009) and Equatorial Guinea (2018), and Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia (2017), Qatar (2012), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (2018), and Kuwait (2009). These agreements provide a framework for labour migration, with the IOM (2017) noting that migrant deployment often occurs within these established bilateral arrangements.

Beyond facilitating emigration, the Ethiopian government has also played a crucial role in repatriating stranded migrants. Negotiations with African and Middle Eastern countries have led to the return of over 366,000 individuals between 2017 and 2020 (IOM, 2020; MoFA, 2019, 2020). Financial support for returnees has also been provided, with MoFA (2019) reporting a budget allocation of Birr 89,000,000.00 in 2019 for transportation costs for stranded citizens returning from Africa and the Middle East.

However, the reintegration programs for returnee migrants require further development. The Ethiopia Migration Profile (2017) highlights the numerous challenges faced by returnees and the difficulties encountered by local governments and communities in providing adequate support, particularly in areas like finance, housing, employment, and healthcare. The "Migration Governance in Ethiopia" report (2019) further underscores the country's complex migration profile, encompassing emigration, refugees, return migrants, and internal displacement. While the Ethiopian government collaborates with international organizations and NGOs to improve migration governance, the absence of a comprehensive national migration policy remains a significant gap. The development of such a policy is crucial for effectively addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities presented by migration.

The Ethiopian government has recognized the potential of labour migration as a strategy for economic growth and poverty alleviation. By encouraging citizens to seek employment abroad, the government aims to enhance remittance flows, which can significantly contribute to national income and individual livelihoods. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), remittances from Ethiopian migrants are vital for many families, providing essential support for education, healthcare, and other basic needs (IOM 2020). However, this migration process is fraught with challenges that can lead to severe consequences for workers, including exploitation and human trafficking.

To address these issues, the Ethiopian government has implemented various legal frameworks aimed at protecting migrant workers. One of the most notable initiatives is the Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016, which was designed to regulate private recruitment agencies and safeguard the rights of migrant workers. This landmark legislation set out to ensure ethical recruitment practices, limit the fees charged to workers, and establish mechanisms for monitoring and accountability (ILO 2018). However, subsequent amendments to this proclamation have raised concerns among stakeholders. The Overseas Employment (Amendment) Proclamation No. 1246/2021 introduced provisions that allowed for recruitment fees and relaxed certain requirements, which could potentially undermine the protections established in the original legislation. Critics argue that these changes may facilitate exploitative practices, making it easier for unscrupulous agencies to charge exorbitant fees and engage in unethical behavior (Sadiq et al. 2019). This shift has sparked debate about

the efficacy of the government's migration policies and their implications for the safety and rights of migrant workers. Moreover, the complexities of the migration landscape are compounded by the socio-political context within Ethiopia. Internal conflicts, economic challenges, and natural disasters have prompted unprecedented events, further complicating the migration dynamics in the country (National & International Migration Policy in Ethiopia 2022).

In summary, this literature review examined migration as a phenomenon, focusing on its historical and contemporary patterns, the role of MRAs, and the challenges they face in Ethiopia. It also explored global best practices in regulating MRAs and highlights critical gaps in the existing literature (World Employment Confederation, 2018). The review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Ethiopian migration landscape, the regulatory framework governing MRAs, and the systemic issues that hinder their effectiveness (IOM 2022). By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to contribute to the development of policies and practices that enhance the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety (ILO 2021).

### **2.5.1 Internal Displacement**

As of June 2023, there were approximately 4.39 million internally displaced people (IDPs) across 3,393 assessed sites in Ethiopia. The primary causes of displacement were conflict, affecting about 2.9 million IDPs (66.41%), and drought, impacting 810,855 IDPs (18.49%) (IOM, 2023). Internal conflicts, economic challenges, and natural disasters have prompted unprecedented levels of displacement, both within the country and across borders. According to the UNHCR, the number of displaced people in Ethiopia has surged, further complicating the migration dynamics as individuals and families seek safety and better opportunities (UNHCR, 2022). The impact of these displacements is twofold: on one hand, it exacerbates the existing pressures on the labour market, while on the other, it increases the vulnerability of those displaced, pushing them towards irregular migration routes.

In exploring the ramifications of internal displacement, it is crucial to consider the socio-economic implications of this phenomenon. Scholars have pointed out that the sudden influx of IDPs can strain local resources and public services, leading to heightened tensions within host communities (Jacobsen, 2016). The pressure on housing, education, and healthcare systems can result in competition for limited

resources, further marginalizing especially vulnerable populations, such as women and children. Furthermore, IDPs often face significant challenges in integrating into local labour markets, compounding their vulnerability and exposure to exploitation and international migration (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2011).

The economic impact of internal displacement is also intertwined with issues of livelihood and self-sufficiency. While some IDPs may possess skills that could benefit host communities, systemic barriers, including legal restrictions and discrimination, can hinder their access to employment opportunities and economic advancement. Effective policy responses and targeted support mechanisms are therefore essential to mitigating these adverse effects and fostering a more inclusive environment for both IDPs and host populations (Kälin & Schillig, 2019).

Moreover, the psychological impact of displacement cannot be overlooked. Many IDPs experience trauma and stress due to the sudden upheaval and loss of their homes and livelihoods. This psychological burden can further hinder their ability to integrate into new communities and access opportunities for economic and social advancement. Addressing these psychological needs through counselling and support services is crucial for the overall well-being of displaced individuals (WHO 2021).

In addition to these challenges, the displacement crisis in Ethiopia has highlighted the need for robust data collection and monitoring systems. Accurate data on the number and needs of IDPs is essential for effective policymaking and resource allocation. International organizations, such as the IOM and UNHCR, play a vital role in providing this data and supporting the Ethiopian government in its efforts to address the displacement crisis (IOM 2023).

In conclusion, internal displacement in Ethiopia is a complex issue with far-reaching socio-economic and psychological implications. Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that includes effective policy responses, targeted support mechanisms, and robust data collection and monitoring systems. By learning from successful models worldwide and fostering collaboration between various stakeholders, Ethiopia can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for its displaced populations.

### **2.5.2 Socio-Economic Impacts**

Migration significantly influences Ethiopian society, with remittances playing a crucial role in family livelihoods, education, and healthcare. Many families rely on money sent back home by relatives working abroad, which is essential for covering daily expenses and investing in the future. However, the risks associated with migration, including exploitation, human trafficking, and unsafe working conditions, remain critical concerns that can overshadow the potential benefits of remittances. The structural inequalities in society can manifest in various forms; for instance, youth from wealthier families may have access to education and resources that facilitate legal migration, while those from lower-income backgrounds may find themselves trapped in exploitative networks that promise migration opportunities but deliver disappointment and hardship (Kassaye 2020).

This phenomenon raises critical questions regarding the distribution of remittances and the extent to which they can alleviate poverty on a broader scale. Research indicates that remittances can disproportionately benefit households that are already better off, rather than those most in need (World Bank 2020). Furthermore, the impact of remittances on local economies can be mixed; while they can stimulate consumption and investment, they may also lead to inflation and dependence on external sources of income, undermining local production and self-reliance in the long term (Mazzucato et al. 2015). Recent trends illustrate that while migration can lead to improved economic conditions for some, it can also perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality, especially for those who are unable to migrate or who face obstacles in accessing legal migration pathways. The disparity between those who can afford to navigate the complexities of legal migration and those who resort to irregular means often leads to further marginalization of vulnerable populations.

In terms of social dynamics, migration can reshape family structures and community relationships, often leading to the feminization of migration patterns, where women increasingly become the primary migrants due to changing demand in labour markets or redefined gender roles (Kälin 2019). This shift can empower women economically but may also result in social strain as traditional family structures are disrupted, highlighting a complex interplay between economic benefits and socio-cultural changes (De Haas 2010).

Moreover, the psychological impact of migration on families left behind is significant. Children growing up without one or both parents may face emotional and developmental challenges, while the elderly may lack adequate care and support. These social costs must be considered alongside the economic benefits to fully understand the impact of migration on Ethiopian society. Ultimately, while remittances can spur economic growth and provide immediate relief for many families, addressing the underlying systemic issues associated with migration is essential for fostering sustainable development and ensuring that the benefits are equitably distributed within Ethiopian society. This includes creating more opportunities for legal and safe migration, improving local economic conditions to reduce the need for migration, and implementing policies that protect the rights and well-being of migrants and their families. By taking a holistic approach, Ethiopia can better harness the potential of migration to contribute to its development goals.

### **2.5.3 Gender Dimensions**

The gender dynamics of migration in Ethiopia are also noteworthy. A significant number of women migrate for domestic work, often facing higher risks of exploitation and abuse than their male counterparts. The feminization of migration, particularly to Gulf countries, raises serious concerns about labour rights and protection mechanisms. Women are often subjected to harsh working conditions, and many face challenges in accessing legal recourse or support networks while abroad.

Notably, the International Labour Organization (2018) highlights that women make up a substantial percentage of migrants in the domestic work sector, making them particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Furthermore, studies reveal that the lack of gender-responsive policies exacerbates these vulnerabilities and limits women migrants' ability to negotiate favorable working conditions (Kälin and Kunz, 2020).

The risks faced by women migrants are multifaceted. During the migration journey, women are often exposed to physical and sexual violence, and upon arrival in destination countries, they may encounter exploitative employers who subject them to long working hours, low wages, and poor living conditions. The lack of legal protections and support services in many destination countries further compounds these challenges, leaving women migrants with limited options for seeking help or justice (Globalization and Health 2025).

This multifaceted impact of migration on Ethiopian society underscores the necessity for comprehensive strategies that address the challenges migrants face, while also leveraging the economic potential of remittances and labour mobility for national development. Effective strategies must include the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies that specifically address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women migrants. These policies should ensure that women have access to safe migration pathways, legal protections, and support services both in Ethiopia and in destination countries (ILO 2025).

In addressing these issues, it is crucial for policymakers to ensure that the rights and needs of women migrants are integrated into national and international migration frameworks. This would include enhancing legal protections and providing support services tailored to women's specific circumstances (Zemach, 2021). For example, establishing bilateral agreements with destination countries can help ensure that women migrants are treated fairly and have access to legal recourse in cases of abuse or exploitation. Moreover, community-based organizations and international agencies play a vital role in supporting women migrants. These organizations can provide essential services such as legal aid, counselling, and safe shelters for women who have experienced violence or exploitation. They can also offer training and education programs to help women develop skills that enhance their employability and economic independence (ILO 2022).

In conclusion, addressing the gender dimensions of migration in Ethiopia requires a holistic approach that combines policy interventions, legal protections, and support services. By focusing on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women migrants, Ethiopia can create a more equitable and supportive environment for all migrants, ultimately contributing to the country's social and economic development.

## **2.6 CRITICAL GAPS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE THAT THE STUDY SEEKS TO ADDRESS**

Despite the expanding body of literature on migrant recruitment agencies, significant gaps persist that hinder a comprehensive understanding of the sector, especially within the Ethiopian context. Much of the existing research has concentrated on documenting the exploitative practices of recruitment agencies and the myriad

challenges faced by migrant workers. However, there is a notable lack of thorough studies evaluating the effectiveness of Ethiopian regulations governing these agencies as well as the overall capacity and performance of the agencies themselves. This oversight leaves a critical void in our understanding of the sector's dynamics and the efficacy of current interventions.

For instance, Singh et al. (2020) emphasize that while there are policies in place aimed at protecting migrant workers, empirical data assessing the implementation and real-world impact of these regulations is scarce. This absence of data presents a critical barrier to understanding how well these policies function in practice and whether they truly safeguard the rights of migrants. The need for rigorous evaluations is essential for identifying gaps in policy enforcement and areas where migrant workers continue to be vulnerable. Furthermore, the absence of quantitative measures to assess regulatory impact means that policymakers struggle to make evidence-based decisions. This lack of robust data impedes the development of effective strategies to mitigate exploitation and improve migrant worker protection.

Additionally, studies such as those conducted by Okiro and Asfaw (2016) have highlighted various fraudulent practices among recruitment agencies, including the charging of excessive fees and the misrepresentation of job conditions. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often stop short of exploring the systemic issues that enable such exploitative practices to persist. Understanding the root causes such as lack of oversight, inadequate regulatory frameworks, and economic pressures on agencies—requires further investigation. Recent work by Kebede and Alemayehu (2021) has begun to address these systemic issues, pointing to the role of corruption and weak institutional capacity in perpetuating exploitative practices. However, their findings remain preliminary, and more in-depth research is needed to explore the interplay between economic incentives and regulatory failures. It is not enough to document the symptoms; the underlying causes must be dissected to develop sustainable solutions. Specifically, the relationship between government corruption and the proliferation of unethical agencies deserves greater scholarly attention.

Furthermore, Tesfaye and Nsolo (2019) argue for increased government involvement and regulation in the recruitment sector. However, their recommendations lack specificity regarding the mechanisms and strategies that could be employed to

enhance regulatory effectiveness. There is a pressing need for research that not only identifies the gaps in current regulations but also proposes actionable strategies for improvement. This includes examining the roles of various stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, and the recruitment agencies themselves, in creating a more accountable and ethical recruitment environment. Recent contributions by Mekonnen and Yohannes (2023) have attempted to address this gap by proposing a multi-stakeholder approach to regulation, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between government agencies, international organizations, and local communities. However, their framework remains untested, and further empirical studies are required to assess its feasibility and effectiveness. This study will build upon this framework by providing concrete examples of successful multi-stakeholder collaborations in other contexts and adapting them to the Ethiopian setting.

The existing literature also often overlooks the voices and experiences of the migrant workers themselves. Qualitative studies that delve into the lived experiences of migrants can provide crucial insights into the challenges they face and the effectiveness of existing protections. By integrating these perspectives, researchers can paint a more holistic picture of the recruitment landscape and identify practical solutions that address the needs of migrant workers. Recent studies, such as those by Getachew and Tadesse (2022), have begun to incorporate migrant narratives, revealing the psychological and social toll of exploitative recruitment practices. These findings underscore the need for a more human-centered approach to policy formulation and implementation. For instance, detailed case studies can reveal the specific vulnerabilities experienced by female migrant workers, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive policies. Moreover, by incorporating the voices of migrants who have successfully navigated the recruitment process, best practices can be identified and disseminated.

This study aims to fill these critical gaps by analyzing the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. By conducting a thorough examination of both the regulatory environment and the operational realities of these agencies, this research seeks to propose guidelines that contribute to the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety. Specifically, this study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of regulatory compliance with qualitative

interviews of migrant workers, agency operators, and government officials. Ultimately, the findings will be situated within the broader framework of sustainable development and migration governance, aiming to create a more equitable and just system for Ethiopian migrants. This research will contribute to the development of evidence-based policies that promote ethical recruitment practices and ensure the well-being of migrant workers.

## **2.7. CONCLUSION**

Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review on migration as a phenomenon, focusing on both historical and contemporary patterns. It explored the role of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, highlighting their functions, responsibilities, and the challenges they face. The chapter also examined global best practices in regulating and managing the recruitment process, emphasising the importance of ethical recruitment and protection of migrant workers' rights. Additionally, it discussed the socio-economic impacts of migration on Ethiopian society, including the significant role of remittances and the gender dimensions of migration. The review identified critical gaps in the existing literature, particularly the need for more empirical data on the effectiveness of Ethiopian regulations governing migrant recruitment agencies and the overall capacity and performance of these agencies. By addressing these gaps, the study aims to contribute to the development of policies and practices that enhance the protection of migrant workers' rights and safety.

Chapter 3 focuses on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, which deal with the guiding principles of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the conceptual and theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The primary focus is on how these agencies protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. The study is grounded in a robust foundation of relevant theories and concepts, which are essential for understanding the multifaceted nature of migrant recruitment and the various factors influencing it. To achieve a thorough understanding, the chapter integrates and applies a range of frameworks, theories, and concepts. The conceptual framework addresses key frameworks such as the SDGs, which recognize the contribution of migration to sustainable development, and the holistic approach to labour migration, which integrates various elements to ensure the well-being of migrant workers. It also includes the human rights framework, emphasizing the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, and the migration governance framework, which encompasses the policies, laws, and practices that govern the movement of people across borders. The theoretical framework outlines various theories of migration, including Neoclassical Macro Theory, New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), Dual Labour Market Theory, World Systems Theory, Social Network Theory, Institutional Theory and New Institutional Economics Theory. These theories offer different lenses through which to understand the initiation and perpetuation of migration, from economic drivers to social networks and institutional influences.

These perspectives will provide the conceptual and theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of migration and the factors influencing the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. By integrating these frameworks and theories, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. This approach will ultimately contribute to the development of evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights.

The chapter is structured into two main sections:

1. Conceptual Framework:

- This section delves into the foundational concepts that guide the study. It addresses several key frameworks:
  - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): These goals provide a comprehensive framework that recognizes the contribution of migration to sustainable development. They emphasize the need to leave no one behind, including migrants, and highlight the importance of facilitating orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration (IOM 2022).
  - Holistic Approach to Labour Migration: This approach integrates various elements to ensure the well-being of migrant workers and their positive contribution to both origin and destination countries. It involves collaboration among governments, employers, trade unions, civil society organizations, and international bodies to implement policies that prioritize the protection of migrant workers' rights (Zhang 2021).
  - Human Rights Framework: This framework emphasizes the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, asserting that they are entitled to certain fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination. It serves as the foundation for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international human rights instruments (UN General Assembly 1948).
  - Migration Governance Framework: This framework encompasses the policies, laws, and practices that govern the movement of people across borders. It includes key concepts and theories from fields such as political science, international relations, and migration studies, providing a basis for assessing the factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia (Koser & Papademetriou 2017).

## 2. Theoretical Framework:

Following the conceptual framework, this section outlines the theoretical perspectives that will be employed in the study. It discusses various theories of migration and their relevance to the analysis of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The theoretical framework provides the guiding principles for the study, ensuring a structured and

systematic approach to understanding the dynamics of migration and the factors influencing the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies.

## **3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.2.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework that recognizes the contribution of migration to sustainable development and emphasizes the need to leave no one behind, including migrants. Migration is acknowledged as a powerful driver for sustainable development and is considered a cross-cutting issue throughout the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (IOM 2022). The SDGs encompass targets and indicators relevant to migration and mobility, with a core principle to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (ILO 2019). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also underscores the importance of addressing the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face at different stages of migration by respecting, protecting, and fulfilling their human rights, while also acknowledging the legitimate concerns of states and communities (IIED 2018). Furthermore, the agenda aims to create conducive conditions that enable all migrants to enrich societies through their human, economic, and social capacities, thereby facilitating their contributions to sustainable development at local, national, regional, and global levels (OECD 2021).

The link between migration and development is crucial in understanding the economic contribution of labour migration to developing countries, both at the destination and origin (ILO 2021). The economic, social, and cultural impacts of migration on development are multifaceted and require a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between migration and sustainable development (ECLM 2021). Additionally, the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration” outlines 23 objectives aimed at reducing the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face, addressing the concerns of states and communities, and creating conditions that enable migrants to contribute to sustainable development at various levels (UN 2018). The Compact emphasizes the need to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of migrants and provides a framework for addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with migration in the context of sustainable development (European Parliament 2019). The

integration of migration into the 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to improve migration data, understand migration trends within the SDGs, and assess the impact of the 2030 Agenda on migration data, thereby enhancing the overall understanding of the relationship between migration and sustainable development (OHCHR 2022).

In a nutshell, SDGs recognize the rights of migrants, emphasize the responsibilities of governments in implementing rights-based migration policies, highlight the supportive role of international organizations, underscore the link between migration and development, and stress the importance of robust data collection and monitoring in understanding and achieving the goals. Overall, the SDGs provide a holistic framework that recognizes the rights of migrants, emphasizes the responsibilities of governments and agencies in protecting these rights, and underscores the potential of migration to contribute to sustainable development

### **3.2.2 Holistic Approach to Labour Migration**

A holistic approach to labour migration encompasses a comprehensive framework that integrates various elements to ensure the well-being of migrant workers and their positive contribution to both origin and destination countries. A holistic approach, in general, refers to a method that considers the whole system, including all its parts, rather than focusing on individual components in isolation. In the context of labour migration, this means addressing the multifaceted nature of migration, which includes economic, social, legal, and ethical considerations. This approach involves considering not only the economic aspects of labour migration but also the social, legal, and ethical dimensions that impact the lives of migrant workers.

According to Zhang (2021), a holistic approach to international migration requires coordinated action at structural, national, and societal levels to address the pressing issues of forced displacement and irregular migration. This approach emphasizes the importance of peace and economic development in origin countries to facilitate voluntary return of migrants and reduce the structural causes of irregular migration. The ILO emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to labour migration, recognizing the need to address challenges and harness the opportunities associated with labour migration for sustainable development (ILO 2019). This approach involves the implementation of policies and practices that prioritize the protection of migrant workers' rights, including fair and ethical recruitment, decent working conditions, access to social protection, and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace (ILO

n.d.). Goss and Lindquist (1995) highlight the need for a structuration perspective in understanding international labour migration, which integrates functional and structural approaches to address the theoretical impasse in migration studies. This perspective considers the social, cultural, political, and institutional dimensions of migration, rather than reducing it to an economic logic.

Moreover, a holistic approach to labour migration requires collaboration and coordination among governments, employers, trade unions, civil society organizations, and international bodies to ensure the effective implementation of labour migration policies (ILO 2019). This collaborative effort aims to enhance social dialogue, promote gender equality, prevent human trafficking, and facilitate the integration of migrant workers into the labour market and society (ILO n.d.). Additionally, the holistic approach to labour migration emphasizes the need for evidence-based policymaking and data-driven decision-making to address the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant workers (ILO 2019). Robust data collection and monitoring mechanisms are essential for understanding the impact of labour migration on both the migrant workers and the economies of origin and destination countries, thereby guiding the development and implementation of effective labour migration policies (ILO n.d.). Furthermore, research suggests that a holistic approach to the governance of labour migration should take into account long-term trends of migrant labour supply and the role of immigration status on entry and socio-economic assimilation (Comparative Migration Studies, 2014). This approach involves evidence-based policymaking and data-driven decision-making to address the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant workers.

In summary, a holistic approach to labour migration involves a multi-dimensional framework that prioritizes the protection of migrant workers' rights, fosters collaboration among stakeholders, and emphasizes evidence-based policymaking to ensure the sustainable and ethical management of labour migration.

### **3.2.3 Human Rights Framework**

This framework emphasizes the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals and asserts that they are entitled to certain fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination. It serves as the foundation for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international human rights instruments, including the

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948), all individuals are inherently born free and equal in dignity and rights. They possess reason and conscience and should treat one another with a sense of brotherhood. These rights and freedoms, as outlined in the Declaration, are entitled to everyone without any form of discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted in 1990, builds upon these principles and establishes comprehensive standards for safeguarding the rights of migrant workers and their families during the entire migration process (UN General Assembly 1990). The Convention applies universally, ensuring equal treatment and non-discrimination for all migrant workers, regardless of their category, and aims to address issues related to irregular migration and unfair labour conditions (UN General Assembly 1990).

The human rights of migrants are increasingly recognized as essential in addressing the complex challenges faced by migrant populations. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families underscores the need for comprehensive standards to safeguard these rights throughout the migration process (UN General Assembly, 1990). This includes addressing issues such as irregular migration and unfair labour conditions, ensuring that migrant workers receive equal treatment and non-discrimination (UN General Assembly 1990). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, remains a cornerstone of international human rights law. It asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (UN General Assembly 1948). This declaration has inspired numerous human rights treaties and continues to serve as a guiding principle for protecting fundamental freedoms globally (UN General Assembly 1948).

Migration and human rights are closely intertwined, with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) emphasizing the need for a human rights-based approach to migration. The OHCHR was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 to promote and protect human rights

globally and is responsible for coordinating human rights activities across the United Nations system. This role involves advocating for the protection of human rights, providing technical assistance to governments, and supporting the work of human rights treaty bodies and special procedures (OHCHR 2023).

A human rights-based approach to migration, as advocated by the OHCHR, places migrants at the center of migration policies and governance, ensuring their inclusion in national action plans and strategies (OHCHR 2023). It aims to protect migrants from human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, and denial of economic, social, and cultural rights (OHCHR 2023). In the context of political theory, the ethics of movement and membership explore the human right to immigrate. This right is grounded in essential interests that protect individuals' ability to make important personal decisions and engage in politics without state restrictions (Carens 2013). While not absolute, the human right to immigrate demands that basic liberties be awarded the same level of protection across borders as within borders (Carens 2013).

Joseph Carens (2013) argues that freedom of movement is a fundamental human right because it is essential for individuals to pursue their life plans and exercise autonomy. This perspective is rooted in the liberal egalitarian tradition, which emphasizes the moral equality of all individuals and their entitlement to equal respect and consideration. Carens contends that restrictions on immigration are morally problematic because they limit individuals' opportunities based on arbitrary factors such as birthplace.

David Miller (2016) offers a contrasting view, suggesting that while there is a human right to emigrate, the right to immigrate is more limited. Miller argues that states have the right to control their borders and regulate immigration to preserve social cohesion, protect cultural identity, and maintain public order. He acknowledges that states should not impose arbitrary or discriminatory restrictions, but he maintains that they have legitimate interests in managing immigration.

Kieran Oberman (2016) challenges Miller's position by asserting that the right to immigrate should be considered a basic human right. Oberman argues that the freedom to move and settle in different countries is crucial for individuals to escape persecution, seek better economic opportunities, and reunite with family members. He

emphasizes that the right to immigrate is essential for protecting individuals from severe harm and ensuring their well-being.

The ethics of movement and membership also involve considerations of justice and fairness in the distribution of opportunities and resources. Scholars like Sarah Fine (2016) highlight the importance of addressing global inequalities that drive migration. Fine argues that wealthier countries have a moral obligation to admit migrants, particularly those fleeing poverty and violence, as a way of addressing historical injustices and contributing to global justice.

In summary, the human right to immigrate is a complex and contested issue in political theory. While some scholars emphasize the importance of freedom of movement and equal protection of basic liberties, others highlight the legitimate interests of states in regulating immigration. A comprehensive understanding of the ethics of movement and membership requires balancing these competing considerations and addressing the underlying causes of migration.

### **3.2.4 Migration Governance Framework**

Migration governance refers to the policies, laws, and practices that govern the movement of people across borders. It encompasses a range of actors and institutions involved in migration, including governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, and private actors such as migrant recruitment agencies (Koser & Papademetriou 2017). A theoretical or conceptual framework for migration governance would provide a structured approach to understanding the complex governance arrangements that shape migration flows and the experiences of migrants. This framework would typically include key concepts and theories from fields such as political science, international relations, and migration studies, and would provide a basis for assessing the factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia (Gibney & Hansen 2018).

International migration governance principles and frameworks are designed to manage migration in a way that respects human rights, promotes safe and orderly migration, and fosters international cooperation. These principles include the protection of migrants' rights, the promotion of regular migration pathways, and the prevention of irregular migration and human trafficking (IOM 2021). The framework

involves various international agreements and conventions, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which aims to enhance international cooperation on migration issues (IOM 2021). The Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) outlines three essential principles: adherence to international standards and the fulfilment of migrants' rights, the formulation of policy using evidence and a whole-of-government approach, and engagement with partners to address migration and related issues (IOM 2021). These principles ensure that migration is managed in a humane, orderly, and beneficial manner for both migrants and society. By promoting good governance principles and recognizing the importance of considering the diverse aspects of migration, this framework aims to support the development of policies and actions that uphold the dignity and well-being of migrants while fostering social and economic development (IOM 2021).

In the context to analyse factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia, the migration governance framework would be relevant because it would help to identify the various factors that impact the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies to operate effectively within the governance arrangements that shape migration flows. Specifically, such a framework would help to identify the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern migrant recruitment and the role of actors such as governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations in shaping these frameworks and influencing the practices of migrant recruitment agencies.

By using the migration governance framework, this study can provide a structured and systematic analyses of factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia and offer recommendations for improving their capacity to operate effectively within the complex governance arrangements that shape migration flows. It could also be used to analyze how the factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia affect the recruitment process and promotes safe, fair and ethical migration in Ethiopia (Research question 4) (Schutter & Matzke 2018). Social protection for migrant workers is a critical aspect of ensuring their rights and well-being. The ILO has developed specific instruments and recommendations aimed at safeguarding the social protection rights of migrant workers, acknowledging the importance of providing comprehensive protection to this vulnerable group (ILO 2019).

The ILO's Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) are among the key instruments that apply to migrant workers, emphasizing the need to facilitate international migration for employment and combat clandestine and irregular migration while respecting the basic human rights of migrant workers (ILO 2019). Additionally, the ILO's Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86) and the Migrant Workers Recommendation, 1975 (No. 151) provide further guidance on promoting and protecting the rights of migrant workers (ILO 2019).

Despite the existence of these instruments and the acknowledgment of the importance of social protection, many migrant workers and their families worldwide continue to face challenges in exercising their rights (ILO 2019). The ratification and enforcement of these international instruments are crucial steps towards providing more comprehensive protection to migrant workers, requiring strong political commitment to make the right to social security a reality for all, regardless of their origin, race, gender, or age (ILO 2019).

In conclusion, these instruments and recommendations play a vital role in shaping the framework for social protection theory for migrant workers, emphasizing the need for comprehensive protection and the importance of strong political commitment to uphold the rights of migrant workers.

### **3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section outlines the theoretical framework employed to analyse the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, focusing on their role in protecting the safety and rights of migrant workers. Building upon the conceptual framework outlined in the preceding section, which addressed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a holistic approach to labour migration, the human rights framework, and migration governance, this section delves into the foundational theories that will underpin the study's analytical approach.

### 3.3.1 Relevant Theories of Migration

Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by economic, social, political, and institutional forces. Acknowledging this complexity, the study recognizes the contributions of various migration theories that have historically explained the initiation and perpetuation of migration. Frameworks such as the Neo-classical Macro Theory, New Economics of Labour Migration, Dual Labour Market Theory, and World Systems Theory provide valuable insights into wage differentials, household strategies, labour market segmentation, and global structural inequalities. While these perspectives enrich the broader literature, they are not adopted as the primary theoretical anchors of this thesis. Instead, they are referenced in the literature review to contextualize Ethiopia's migration dynamics.

This study is explicitly anchored in two principal theoretical frameworks: Social Network Theory and New Institutional Economics (NIE). These frameworks were selected for their direct relevance to Ethiopia's migrant recruitment system, offering both structural and relational lenses for analysis.

- *Social Network Theory*: Scholars like Hugo (1981), Taylor (1986), and Massey (1990) highlight the importance of social networks in migration. These networks, consisting of ties with relatives, friends, and community members, facilitate migration by providing information and support to migrants. Once migration streams begin, they tend to perpetuate themselves through network connections. Social networks play a crucial role in facilitating migration by providing support and resources to migrants.

Graeme Hugo's work, "Village-Community Ties, Village Norms, Ethnicity and Social Networks: A Review of Evidence from the Third World" (1981), explores how social networks in village communities influence migration decisions. Hugo argues that social networks provide crucial information about migration opportunities, help migrants navigate the complexities of moving to a new location, and offer emotional and financial support. These networks reduce the risks associated with migration and make it more feasible for individuals to move (Hugo 1981).

Edward J. Taylor's research, particularly his article "Differential Migration, Networks, Information and Risk" (1986), examines the role of social networks in reducing the risks and uncertainties of migration. Taylor posits that social networks act as a form of "migration capital," providing migrants with valuable information about job opportunities, living conditions, and the migration process itself. This information helps migrants make informed decisions and increases their chances of success in the destination area (Taylor 1986).

Douglas S. Massey's work, including his article "The Social and Economic Origins of Immigration" (1990), highlights the self-perpetuating nature of migration streams facilitated by social networks. Massey argues that once migration begins, it creates a network of social ties that continuously support and encourage further migration. These networks provide resources such as housing, employment, and social integration, making it easier for new migrants to settle and thrive in the destination area. This cumulative causation of migration leads to sustained migration flows over time (Massey 1990).

Social Network Theory also emphasizes the role of social capital in migration. Social capital refers to the resources and the support that individuals can access through their social networks. Migrants rely on social capital to overcome barriers to migration, such as financial constraints and lack of information. By leveraging their social connections, migrants can find jobs, secure housing, and integrate into new communities more effectively (Massey et al. 1998).

In summary, Social Network Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how social networks facilitate migration. By highlighting the importance of social ties, information exchange, and support systems, this theory offers valuable insights into the dynamics of migration and the role of social capital in shaping migration patterns.

- *New Institutional Economics (NIE)*: It provides the principal theoretical lens for this study. NIE extends classical economics by emphasizing the role of institutions—formal rules, informal norms, and enforcement mechanisms—in shaping economic behaviour (North 1990; Williamson 1985). Unlike traditional

economic models that assume frictionless markets, NIE highlights how institutions reduce uncertainty and transaction costs, but also how institutional weaknesses can generate systemic vulnerabilities.

Central to NIE are the concepts of transaction costs and institutional failure. Transaction costs refer to the hidden costs of economic exchanges, including information asymmetry, monitoring, and enforcement (Williamson 1985). In the Ethiopian recruitment context, these costs are disproportionately borne by migrant workers through illegal recruitment fees, debt bondage, and contract substitution. Such practices undermine the internationally recognized “Employer Pays” principle and expose migrants to heightened pre-departure risks (ILO 2016).

Institutional failure occurs when regulatory bodies lack the capacity or will to enforce rules, allowing recruitment agencies to externalize risks onto migrants. In Ethiopia, weak regulatory enforcement, poor monitoring, and loopholes in licensing enable non-compliant agencies to continue operating with impunity. This failure is compounded by limited government resources for grievance management and oversight, creating a governance vacuum that perpetuates exploitation (Alemayehu 2021).

Applying NIE to this study highlights how weak governance structures and poorly enforced regulations create systemic vulnerabilities within Ethiopia’s recruitment ecosystem. Recruitment agencies maximize profit by shifting costs and risks onto workers, while the absence of effective monitoring perpetuates exploitation. By theorizing institutional failure and transaction costs, NIE provides a rigorous framework for analyzing how structural deficiencies compromise migrant safety and rights.

This perspective directly informs the research questions and empirical analysis. Quantitative findings on agency capacity gaps and qualitative evidence of migrant experiences are interpreted through NIE, demonstrating how institutional weaknesses systematically externalize risks. The framework thus moves beyond description to provide analytical depth, linking institutional structures to migrant outcomes and situating Ethiopia’s recruitment practices within broader debates on migration governance and fair recruitment.

### 3.3.2 Application of Selected Theories

For the purpose of this study, a multi-theoretical approach is adopted to provide a more nuanced analysis of the complex factors influencing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The study draws primarily from Social Network Theory, New Institutional Economics Theory, and the Human Rights-based approach to migration, supplemented by the elements of Migration Governance Framework

- **Social Network Theory:** This theory is used to understand how social networks influence migrant workers' decisions to migrate and how they obtain information about job opportunities abroad. It also helps to analyse the role of social networks in facilitating or hindering the protection of migrant workers' rights.
- **New Institutional Economics (NIE):** This theory is particularly relevant for examining institutional failure and transaction costs within Ethiopia's recruitment ecosystem. The concept of institutional failure is applied to explain how weak regulatory enforcement, poor monitoring, and loopholes in licensing allow non-compliant agencies to continue operating. Transaction cost theory highlights the hidden costs borne by migrant workers, including recruitment fees, debt bondage, and contract substitution, which undermine the "Employer Pays" principle. By applying NIE, the study demonstrates how institutional weaknesses systematically externalize risks onto migrants, thereby compromising their safety and rights.
- **Human Rights-based Approach to Migration:** Given the study's focus on the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights, a human rights-based approach is essential. This approach ensures that the study prioritizes the fundamental rights of migrants and examines how recruitment agencies uphold or violate these rights. It also informs the analysis of the legal and policy frameworks that govern migration in Ethiopia, ensuring that they align with international human rights standards.
- **Migration Governance framework:** This approach is employed to examine the broader context within which recruitment agencies operate, including the policies, laws, and practices that govern migration in Ethiopia. It also facilitates

an analysis of the various actors involved in migration governance and how they influence the practices of recruitment agencies.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, we have explored the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The integration of various frameworks and theories has provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of migration and the factors influencing the effectiveness of these agencies.

The conceptual framework highlighted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a holistic approach to labour migration, the human rights framework, and migration governance. These frameworks emphasize the need for orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, the protection of migrant workers' rights, and the collaboration among various stakeholders to achieve sustainable development (IOM 2022; ILO 2019; IIED 2018; OECD 2021). The theoretical framework delved into relevant migration theories, including Social Network Theory and New Institutional Economics Theory. Each theory offers unique insights into the dynamics of migration, from economic drivers to social networks and institutional influences (Lewis 1954; Ranis & Fei 1961; Harris & Todaro 1970; Todaro 1976; Stark & Levhari 1982; Stark 1984; Stark & Bloom 1985; Piore 1979; Wallerstein 1974; Portes & Walton 1981; Hugo 1981; Taylor 1986; Massey 1990; Koser & Papademetriou 2017; Gibney & Hansen 2018).

By applying these frameworks and theories, this study aims to provide a nuanced analysis of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The multi-theoretical approach adopted in this study ensures a thorough examination of the complex factors at play, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-

based recommendations for enhancing the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights (Schutter & Matzke 2018; IOM 2021).

In summary, the integration of conceptual and theoretical perspectives in this chapter has laid a solid foundation for understanding the intricate dynamics of migrant recruitment in Ethiopia. This comprehensive approach guides the subsequent analysis and discussions, ensuring that the study addresses the critical issues and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies and the migrant workers they serve.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the research methodology followed in the execution of this research study.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter outlines the methodological approach underlying this study. It provides a brief on the choice of research design and rationale for the selected methodological procedures. This study employed a mixed-methods research design to conduct an analysis of the capacity and practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. In the sections that follow, the research paradigm and design, research methodology, study setting and population, sampling process, data collection instruments and analysis is unpacked. Finally, the chapter addresses the measures taken to ensure data validity, reliability and adherence to ethical standards.

### **4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The chosen research paradigm for the study on the analysis of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers was pragmatism. This paradigm combines the principles of both positivist and constructivist research paradigms (Proofed 2019:4). Pragmatism acknowledges that reality is constantly changing and evolving, and that knowledge is generated through practical experience and experimentation. Reality is continuously interpreted and negotiated against the ever-changing backdrop of unpredictable situational research questions. As such, it recognizes that the social, economic, and political context in which the study is conducted shapes the knowledge produced (Proofed 2019).

Pragmatism was an appropriate paradigm for this study as it recognized the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the capacity and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The paradigm acknowledged that the capacity of these agencies is shaped by various factors, including the social, economic, and political context in which they operate, such as government policies, market demands, and the changing needs of migrant workers (Mekonnen & VanWassenhove 2019:3116). Furthermore, pragmatism informed the research process by acknowledging that the analysis of factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies are shaped not only by internal factors such as resources, skills, and technology, but also by external

factors such as government policies, market demands, and changing needs of migrant workers. This paradigm applies a problem-solving approach to understanding the phenomenon being studied and aims at producing actionable insights (Mekonnen & VanWassenhove 2019). The pragmatist paradigm recognizes that the researcher's experiences and practical knowledge shape the research process and the knowledge produced. By recognizing the complexities of the research topic, pragmatism allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln Lynham & Guba 2011).

In summary, the pragmatist paradigm was suitable for the study as it recognized the context-dependent and dynamic nature to analyze the capacity and practice of emigration agencies in Ethiopia (Kolawole 2019).

#### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN**

The research design is crucial for ensuring that the evidence obtained from a study effectively addresses the research problem. It provides a comprehensive framework that encompasses several facets, including the research question, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, the research question guides the selection of appropriate data collection methods and analysis strategies.

This study employed both descriptive and exploratory research and utilized a mixed-methods research approach. This approach is mostly relevant when there is a need to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding and nuanced explanation of the research problem, which in this case was the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The decision to use a mixed-methods approach was driven by the complex nature of the research questions, which required both breadth and depth of analysis. In this study, the mixed-methods research approach was specifically applicable because the research questions necessitated a holistic approach that could capture both numerical data and the subjective experiences of stakeholders. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of factors that influence the practices and capacities of emigration agencies in Ethiopia (Datta & Ntayi 2020).

The study utilized a two-pronged approach, involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

- **Quantitative Data Collection:** On the quantitative side, surveys were designed and administered, primarily targeting Ethiopian migrant recruitment agencies. These surveys provided numerical data on the current state of the agencies, including their number, size, and distribution. They also gathered information on the agencies' roles and responsibilities, such as the services they offered and the procedures they followed. Furthermore, the surveys collected data on the challenges faced by these agencies, such as those related to regulation and training.
- **Qualitative Data Collection:** For the qualitative aspect of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to gain in-depth perspectives on the practices and challenges observed. These interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of the context surrounding the quantitative findings. In addition, focus group discussions were held to capture shared experiences, group dynamics, and underlying beliefs regarding migrant recruitment. These discussions provided rich contextual data and facilitated the identification of emergent themes.

By integrating the findings derived from the quantitative and qualitative methods, the study aimed to gain a richer and more holistic understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing the practices and capacities of Ethiopian migrant recruitment agencies. This integration allowed for a more robust and valid interpretation of the results and was instrumental in strengthening the research findings. The combination of different methods allowed for:

- **Triangulation:** Strengthening the validity of the findings by cross-validating information from multiple sources.
- **Expanded Data Collection:** Broadening the scope of data collection to capture both numerical trends and rich contextual details.
- **Contextual Insights:** Providing insights into participant attitudes, beliefs, and values, which are essential for understanding the underlying motivations and behaviours.
- **Increased Validity and Reliability:** Enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the research by employing complementary methods.

The key characteristics of the research approach included:

- **Data Collection:** Collecting both quantitative data (through surveys) and qualitative data (through interviews and focus group discussions).
- **Data Analysis:** Analysing the data in a complementary manner, using both statistical analysis for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data.
- **Data Integration:** Integrating the findings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

In this research, the quantitative part of the study assessed the state, role, and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, as well as the gaps, problems, and challenges faced by these agencies. Concurrently, the qualitative part of the study explored the subjective experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders involved (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2017).

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings was a crucial aspect of the study, as it enabled the researcher to provide a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. By combining the statistical trends and patterns identified from the quantitative data with the in-depth explanations and contextual understanding derived from the qualitative data, the study gained a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that influence the practices and capacities of these agencies. This integrative approach enhanced the richness and validity of the research outcomes.

The rationale for employing the mixed-methods approach was multifaceted:

- **Holistic Understanding:** The research questions demanded a holistic approach capable of capturing both numerical data and the diverse subjective experiences of stakeholders. The mixed-methods approach was particularly well-suited to fulfil this requirement.
- **Complementary Insights:** The quantitative and qualitative data provided complementary insights, offering a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the research problem than either method could achieve alone.

- **Enhanced Validity and Reliability:** The use of multiple methods enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings. Triangulation and cross-validation of data were made possible, increasing the confidence in the results.

Overall, the mixed-methods research approach proved to be well-suited for this study, as it facilitated a more comprehensive, in-depth, and rigorous understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.

#### **4.4 STUDY SETTING, TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

To achieve the primary research objective of analysing the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers, the study setting, population, and sampling techniques were carefully considered to enable the collection of accurate and reliable data.

The categories of respondents included were essential to thoroughly investigate the research problem, achieve the study's objectives, and answer the research questions. To achieve the primary objective, it was necessary to gather data from various stakeholders with direct involvement and knowledge of the recruitment process and its impact on migrant workers.

The research aimed to assess the gaps, problems, and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. Therefore, the inclusion of key stakeholders such as representatives from the Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF), migrant recruitment agencies, migrants themselves, government officials, trade unions, employers, organizations, and civil society organizations was crucial. These stakeholders provided valuable insights into the current state of migration, the role of recruitment agencies, and the experiences and perspectives of both the agencies and the migrant workers. By including representatives from different stakeholder groups, the research gathered diverse perspectives and opinions, which facilitated the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the recruitment agencies and a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights.

Additionally, the research aimed to identify areas for improvement and formulate concrete recommendations to enhance the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies.

The inclusion of various stakeholders allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the capacity and practice of these agencies. It also aided in identifying potential strategies and interventions to address the challenges and gaps identified during the study. Overall, the inclusion of diverse categories of respondents in the research design was justified as it aligned with the focus of the research and facilitated the achievement of the objectives and the answering of the research questions by providing a holistic understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.

#### **4.4.1 Study Area**

The study setting was Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where migrant recruitment agencies are highly prevalent. Addis Ababa served as the primary study area due to its concentration of both national and international recruitment agencies, making it a central hub for migration-related activities in the country. Focusing on Addis Ababa allowed for efficient access to a significant number of agencies and stakeholders, maximizing the scope and depth of the research.

#### **4.4.2 Target Population**

The main population of interest was migrant recruitment agencies operating in Ethiopia, including both national and international agencies. These agencies play a crucial role in facilitating the recruitment and movement of migrant workers, and their capacity is essential to ensure that migrant workers are protected and their rights are respected.

#### **4.4.3 Sampling and Sample Size**

##### *Quantitative Survey Sample: Migrant recruitment agencies*

The stratified random sampling technique was applied to select the sample of recruitment agencies for the quantitative aspect of the study. The sampling frame was obtained from a list of migrant recruitment agencies registered with the Ethiopian government, Ministry of Labour and Skills, Private Employment Agencies Licensing Department. The stratification was based on the location of the agencies, ensuring representation from all regions of the country. The sample size for the survey was determined based on the number of registered migrant recruitment agencies in the

country, which was estimated to be around 400 at the time of the study. The sample size was 100 agencies, with proportional representation from each region.

The sampling process for the survey was conducted through a rigorous three-step stratified random sampling technique. First, the stratification phase involved dividing the total population of 400 registered migrant recruitment agencies into distinct subgroups, or strata, based on their official regional locations within Ethiopia. This ensured that agencies from different administrative areas were categorized separately.

Second, a proportional allocation strategy was applied to maintain the geographic integrity of the data. A sampling fraction of 25% (calculated as  $100/400$ ) was applied uniformly across each regional stratum. This step was critical to ensure that the final sample of 100 agencies accurately mirrored the actual distribution of the population, preventing any single region from being over- or under-represented.

Finally, the random selection phase was executed within each individual regional list. Every agency in a specific stratum was assigned a unique identification number. Using a random number generator, the researcher selected the specific agencies to be included in the survey until the proportional quota for that region was met. This objective selection method ensured that every eligible agency within a region had an equal probability of being chosen, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the reliability of the study's findings.

To maintain the scientific rigor and validity of the study, clearly defined eligibility criteria were established for the survey respondents. These criteria ensured that the data collected originated from legally recognized and active entities within the recruitment sector.

For the Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) participating in the survey, the inclusion criteria required that each agency be formally registered with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS). Specifically, they were required to possess a valid, current license to facilitate overseas employment. This requirement was applied universally across the sector, ensuring the study captured a broad perspective regardless of the agency's specific size or the number of years they had been in operation.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were designed to filter out agencies that lacked current legal standing. Any agency that had failed to renew its operational license for the current Ethiopian budget year was excluded from the study. This was

a critical distinction, as the failure to renew a license meant the agency's legal capacity to practice was technically suspended, and including such entities would have compromised the integrity and relevance of the institutional analysis.

The formula used for determining the sample size is as follows:

$$n = (Z^2 * p * q) / E^2$$

Where:

- $n$  = required sample size
- $Z$  = Z-score, which is a measure of how many standard deviations an element is from the mean
- $p$  = estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic of interest
- $q = 1 - p$
- $E$  = margin of error

To ensure proportional representation, the agencies were stratified based on their regional locations. The distribution of the target population and the resulting sample is summarised in the table below.

*Table 4.1: Regional Distribution of Registered Agencies and Sample Respondents*

| <b>Region</b>      | <b>Total Registered Agencies (N=400)</b> | <b>Sample Respondents (n=100)</b> | <b>Selection Method</b> |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Addis Ababa</b> | 320                                      | 80                                | Stratified Random       |
| <b>Oromia</b>      | 32                                       | 8                                 | Stratified Random       |
| <b>Amhara</b>      | 24                                       | 6                                 | Stratified Random       |

| <b>Region</b>        | <b>Total Registered Agencies (N=400)</b> | <b>Sample Respondents (n=100)</b> | <b>Selection Method</b> |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>SN NPR</b>        | 12                                       | 3                                 | Stratified Random       |
| <b>Other Regions</b> | 12                                       | 3                                 | Stratified Random       |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>400</b>                               | <b>100</b>                        |                         |

### *Qualitative Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions*

For the qualitative phase of the study, which comprised 40 Key Informant Interviews (KIs) and six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the establishment of precise eligibility criteria was paramount. These inclusion and exclusion criteria were strategically defined to ensure that the participants possessed the necessary expertise and lived experience to provide high-quality, relevant data regarding the recruitment landscape in Ethiopia.

The inclusion criteria were tailored to specific stakeholder groups to guarantee a comprehensive multi-perspective analysis:

- **Government Officials:** Eligibility was restricted to individuals holding active regulatory or policy-making roles specifically related to labour migration within the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS). This ensured the data reflected current legislative and oversight realities.
- **Migrant Workers:** To ensure the relevance of the data to current legal frameworks, participating workers must have utilised a registered Private Employment Agency (PrEA) for overseas employment within the last five years. This timeframe was selected to capture experiences relevant to the most recent proclamation and administrative procedures.

- Participants from the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF), trade unions, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were required to have a minimum of two years of professional experience within the migration sector. This threshold ensured that respondents possessed a seasoned understanding of the industry's systemic challenges and practices.

On the contrary, strict exclusion criteria were applied to maintain the depth and integrity of the qualitative findings. Individuals who lacked direct professional or personal experience with the formal recruitment process—specifically those who engaged with unlicensed brokers or worked in unrelated administrative departments—were excluded. By filtering out participants without first-hand exposure to the practices of licensed PrEAs, the study mitigated the risk of gathering anecdotal or irrelevant evidence, thereby strengthening the credibility of the research findings for academic examination.

In alignment with the eligibility criteria, the study utilized specialized non-probability sampling techniques to identify and recruit participants for the qualitative phase. This approach was essential for accessing high-level expertise and sensitive personal experiences that probability sampling might fail to capture.

First, Purposive (Judgmental) Sampling was strategically employed to select key informants and FGD participants. These individuals were handpicked based on their specific professional expertise and influential roles within the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) and various migrant recruitment agencies. By targeting those deemed most knowledgeable about the sector's regulatory and operational challenges, this method ensured that the resulting data was grounded in expert institutional insight.

To complement this, Snowball Sampling was utilized to engage participants who are typically hard to reach through formal channels, such as returned migrant workers who had experienced rights violations. In this process, initial contacts within the migrant community acted as gatekeepers, referring the researcher to other eligible individuals within their own social and professional networks. This "referral chain" was instrumental in uncovering diverse lived experiences and sensitive narratives that are often hidden from official registries or government databases. By combining these two techniques, the qualitative aspect of the study achieved a deep, multi-layered understanding of the recruitment landscape, balancing institutional oversight with the authentic voices of those most affected by agency practices.

The participants in the Key Informant Interviews were distinct individuals from those who participated in the FGDs. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the categories of respondents and data collection techniques followed by an explanation of the importance of each category of respondents for the successful collection of relevant and valid data.

*Table 4.2: Category of Respondents and Data Collection Techniques*

| <b>Category of Respondents</b> | <b>Sampling Technique</b>     | <b>Number of Respondents</b> | <b>Data Collection Technique</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Migrant Recruitment Agencies   | Stratified Random Sampling    | 100                          | Quantitative Survey              |
| Government Officials           | Purposive Sampling            | 10 (4F&6M)                   | Key Informant Interview          |
| Migrant Workers                | Purposive & Snowball Sampling | 10 (F10)                     | Key Informant Interview          |
| EOEAF                          | Purposive Sampling            | 5 (1F&4M)                    | Key Informant Interview          |
| Trade Unions                   | Purposive Sampling            | 5 (1F&4M)                    | Key Informant Interview          |
| Employers                      | Purposive Sampling            | 5 (2F&3M)                    | Key Informant Interview          |
| Civil Society Organizations    | Purposive Sampling            | 5 (3F&2M)                    | Key Informant Interview          |

|                             |                               |           |                        |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Ethiopian Government        | Purposive Sampling            | 6 (1F&5M) | Focus Group Discussion |
| EOEAF                       | Purposive Sampling            | 6 (1F&5M) | Focus Group Discussion |
| Migrant Workers             | Purposive & Snowball Sampling | 6 (5F&1M) | Focus Group Discussion |
| Employers                   | Purposive Sampling            | 6 (2F&4M) | Focus Group Discussion |
| Trade Unions                | Purposive Sampling            | 6 (2F&4M) | Focus Group Discussion |
| Civil Society Organizations | Purposive Sampling            | 6 (3F&3M) | Focus Group Discussion |

The primary objective of the study focused on analyzing the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. To achieve this objective, specific secondary objectives and research questions were set to investigate the current state, role, and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, as well as the processes, methods, and institutional framework they employ in recruiting migrants. Thus, data from various stakeholders who are directly involved in the recruitment process and have knowledge about its impact on migrant workers were essential. Information from the agencies themselves provided insights into their organizational structures, management skills, and operational procedures related to the recruitment and placement of migrant workers. This data facilitated the assessment of the capacity and practices of the agencies, directly addressing the first objective of the study.

Government officials play a significant role in regulating and overseeing migrant recruitment agencies. Their perspectives were essential in understanding the effectiveness of legal and regulatory policies and frameworks governing these agencies. By interviewing government officials, the study assessed how these policies

and regulations promote safe, fair, and ethical migration. This information was crucial for achieving the fourth objective of the study.

Migrant workers are at the center of this research study, and their experiences and perspectives are vital for understanding the practices of recruitment agencies in protecting their safety and rights. Including migrant workers as respondents allowed for the gathering of first-hand information about their experiences, the challenges they faced, and their perceptions of the capacity and practices of the recruitment agencies. This data directly contributed to achieving the third objective of the study.

The Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF) represents the collective interests of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. Their participation in the research provided insights into the collective efforts and initiatives taken by these agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. The data obtained from the EOEAF assisted in identifying gaps, problems, and challenges faced by the recruitment agencies, directly addressing the second objective of the study.

The employers refer specifically to recruitment-linked employers based in destination countries where Ethiopian migrant workers are commonly placed. These include employers in the Gulf States. Employers were purposively sampled through Ethiopian Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) that maintain established placement contracts with these destinations. This approach ensured that the selected employers were directly engaged in the recruitment and employment of Ethiopian migrant workers, thereby providing relevant insights into institutional practices and worker protection mechanisms. Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were conducted with employer representatives to capture their perspectives on recruitment processes, contractual obligations, and worker welfare. In addition, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized with PrEA staff and returnee migrants to triangulate employer perspectives with the lived experiences of workers and the operational realities of agencies. This multi-source approach strengthened the validity of the findings by integrating employer viewpoints with agency practices and migrant experiences.

Trade unions, and civil society organizations are important stakeholders in the migration process. Including representatives from these groups in the research

allowed for a broader perspective on the practices of recruitment agencies and their impact on migrant workers. Their input shed light on the role of these agencies in promoting safe, fair, and ethical migration. This data was instrumental in achieving the fifth objective of the study, which was to develop guidelines to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies.

In summary, the inclusion of different categories of respondents, such as migrant recruitment agencies, government officials, migrant workers, the EOEAF, trade unions, employers, and civil society organizations, was essential to achieve the research objectives. The data obtained from these stakeholders provided a comprehensive understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and informed recommendations for enhancing the protection of the safety and rights of migrant workers.

In conclusion, the study setting, population, sampling techniques, and sample size formed a critical part of this study. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, coupled with the details presented above, provided a comprehensive understanding of the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, including the factors that contribute to their capacity or lack thereof.

While there were some potential limitations to the study, such as the possibility of non-response bias, efforts were made to ensure that the sample was representative and that responses were collected from a diverse range of agencies and key informants.

#### **4.5 DATA GATHERING METHODS AND PROCEDURE**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, strategically combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. As elaborated in Section 4.3, this approach was chosen to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic. Secondary data was gathered through a comprehensive literature review. This review involved a thorough examination of documents and publications to establish a strong theoretical and contextual foundation for the study. Specifically, the literature review focused on several key areas: the conceptual understanding of migrant recruitment agencies and their role within the Ethiopian context; an overview of the current state of migration and its broader impact on Ethiopian society; a review of global best practices related to regulating and managing the recruitment process; and the identification of relevant theoretical models and

concepts that could inform the analysis. This secondary data collection provided a crucial backdrop for the primary data collection and analysis.

Primary data collection for this study was conducted using a combination of methods, including surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. To gather quantitative data, a survey was administered using a structured questionnaire. This instrument, see Appendix 1, was designed to collect numerical data from a relatively large sample of respondents, enabling the researcher to identify statistical trends and patterns. In contrast, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews consisting of open- and close ended questions (see Appendix 3), were employed to explore participants' individual experiences and perspectives in depth. This method allowed for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that key research questions were addressed. The use of open-ended questions facilitated rich and detailed responses, enabling the researcher to probe into specific areas of interest and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' views. Focus group discussions (see Appendix 2 for topic guide) on the other hand, were utilized to investigate social processes and collective viewpoints. By bringing together groups of participants, these discussions allowed for the examination of group dynamics, shared experiences, and the social construction of meaning related to migrant recruitment. The interactive nature of focus group discussions provided valuable insights into how participants' views were shaped and influenced by social interaction.

The strategic use of multiple data collection methods, including survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, was a key aspect of the study's methodology. This approach, known as triangulation, significantly enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, the study achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, leading to more accurate findings, deeper insights, and more robust conclusions.

To ensure the effective collection of data, specific procedures were followed for both quantitative and qualitative methods. For quantitative data collection, the initial step involved compiling a comprehensive list of registered migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, which served as the sampling frame for the study. Subsequently, the

questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample of respondents. The questionnaire includes various question types to collect both factual information and qualitative insights, and primarily uses Declarative, Open-Ended and Metacognitive Questions. This pre-testing process was crucial for ensuring that the questionnaire was clear, comprehensible, and effective in eliciting the necessary data. The researcher played a central role in overseeing the quantitative data collection process, which included training and supervising survey enumerators, implementing quality control measures to (i) ensure data consistency and accuracy, and (ii) effectively managing and organizing the data. The actual data collection involved contacting the selected migrant recruitment agencies through various channels, including phone calls, emails, and in-person visits, to request their participation in the survey. Data was collected through a combination of online surveys and hard-copy questionnaires, with the mode of data collection determined by the preferences and accessibility of the participating agencies.

Qualitative data collection, consisting of key informant interviews and focus group discussions, was conducted directly by the researcher. Prior to commencing data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary permissions from Ethiopia Ministry of Labour and Skills as well as from the Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation. Participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses were strictly assured. Key informant interviews were conducted either in person or online, depending on the availability, preferences, and geographical location of the participants. Focus group discussions were held in locations that were convenient and comfortable for the participants, creating an environment conducive to open and honest dialogue.

In summary, the data collection methods and procedures employed in this study were carefully designed and implemented to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the data collected, while simultaneously upholding the highest ethical standards in the treatment of all research participants. The specific ethical considerations that guided the research are detailed in Section 4.8.

## 4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed comparative analysis, a research methodology that involves comparing and contrasting two or more cases or phenomena to identify similarities and differences. This methodology is often used to understand the causes and consequences of social phenomena and to develop theories about how and why they occur (Ragin 2014).

Instead of a cross-national comparison, this research focuses on within-case comparisons across two distinct analytical pillars: The first, Regulatory vs. Operational Reality (The Compliance Gap): The primary comparison was conducted between the legal benchmarks established in the *Ethiopian Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016* and the actual operational practices documented among the 100 sampled agencies. This allowed the researcher to pinpoint exactly where institutional capacity fails to meet legislative mandates.

The second Pillar is Divergent Stakeholder Perspectives (The Experience Gap): The study compared and contrasted the qualitative narratives of migrant workers against the self-reported practices of recruitment agencies. By analysing these two distinct viewpoints, the researcher identified critical discrepancies in how "safety" and "rights protection" are perceived versus how they are experienced on the ground.

By applying these specific comparative lenses, the analysis transcends simple description. It provides a structured basis for understanding the specific factors—such as regional oversight or stakeholder misalignment—that influence the capacity of Ethiopian agencies to protect migrant workers. This approach directly informs the theoretical framework by identifying the "causal links" between agency practice and worker outcomes.

Rather than a generic sociological overview, this study specifically applies the Multi-Stakeholder Governance Framework as the primary analytical lens. This framework, as established by Mekonnen and Yohannes (2023) (refer to Chapter 3), provides the systematic structure required to analyse the interdependent roles of the state, private agencies, and civil society. By applying this framework, the study evaluates how the intersection of these actors influences the protection of migrant workers' rights.

Specifically, the research utilizes Process Tracing (Bennett & Checkel, 2021) as a methodological tool within this framework to map the recruitment "chain." This allows the researcher to analyse the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) to monitor agencies versus the actual self-regulation practices of the PrEAs. This application moves beyond general theory to pinpoint exactly where coordination between stakeholders fails during the recruitment process.

It also helped to identify similarities and differences between migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and those in other contexts or countries. This enabled the researcher to identify best practices in other contexts that could be adopted by Ethiopian migrant recruitment agencies, or to highlight unique challenges facing Ethiopian migrant recruitment agencies that required tailored solutions. It also provided a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence recruitment practices of emigration agencies in Ethiopia and offered recommendations for improving their performance and effectiveness (IOM 2015).

In summary, the analytical framework undergirding this study integrates the Multi-Stakeholder Approach with the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) benchmarks (IOM, 2015). These theories were used to explain the factors affecting agency capacity by categorizing them into three analytical dimensions:

1. Regulatory Compliance: Using the Proclamation No. 923/2016 as a baseline to measure the "De Jure" versus "De Facto" practices of agencies.
2. Institutional Synergy: Applying Mekonnen and Yohannes' approach to determine if the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF) and trade unions effectively bridge the gap between government policy and worker safety.
3. Accountability Mechanisms: Identifying whether the failures in worker protection are due to individual agency negligence or systemic weaknesses in the multi-stakeholder oversight model.

By specifically linking these frameworks to the data collection instruments, the study ensures that the "nuanced understanding" mentioned previously is grounded in the specific socio-legal context of Ethiopia rather than broad international generalities.

#### **4.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

The data obtained through the structured questionnaire was entered into the statistical software program SPSS for analysis. The data was cleaned by checking for errors and inconsistencies. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the data. Bivariate and multivariate analyses, such as chi-square, ANOVA, regression analysis, and factor analysis, were used to test hypotheses and determine relationships between variables. For quality assurance, the processed data was validated by a competent statistician and an independent expert. The results were then presented in tables, charts, and graphs for clarity and easy interpretation.

#### **4.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The data obtained through the key informant interviews and focus group discussions was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcript data was coded for emerging themes and patterns, followed by the identification of patterns and connections between the different themes. A combination of Creswell's six-step approach and Tesch's 8-step model was used to guide the process. Creswell's six-step approach to qualitative data analysis is a systematic method for organising and interpreting qualitative data, often used in research to derive themes and patterns with each step as it applies to the described process:

1. **Transcribe Verbatim:** The first step involves converting all audio recordings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions into written text, word for word. This ensures accuracy and provides a complete textual record for analysis.
2. **Organize and Read Through the Data:** Once transcribed, the researcher reads through all the textual data to get a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning. This initial immersion helps in understanding the breadth and depth of the responses.
3. **Code the Data:** This is where the researcher begins to identify segments of text (phrases, sentences, paragraphs) that relate to a similar idea or concept. These segments are then assigned a "code" – a short word or phrase that captures

the essence of that segment. In this context, the transcript data was "coded for emerging themes and patterns."

4. Develop Descriptions and Themes: After initial coding, the researcher groups similar codes together to form broader categories or themes. Themes are typically more abstract than codes and represent recurrent ideas or patterns across the data. This involves looking for connections and relationships between the codes.
5. Representing the Findings: This step involves presenting the findings of the analysis. This can be done through narratives, tables, figures, or matrices, which visually illustrate the themes and their interconnections.
6. Interpreting the Findings: Finally, the researcher interprets the meaning of the themes and patterns identified. This involves explaining why certain themes emerged, what they imply in relation to the research questions, and how they contribute to existing knowledge (Creswell, J.W. 2013).

Tesch's 8-step model for qualitative data analysis includes the following steps which was applied to double check the organisation and analysis of qualitative data (Van der Velden & Els 2020):

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report
7. Sharing and reflecting on the analysis
8. Drawing conclusions.

The researcher assessed the data obtained through both quantitative and qualitative methods to integrate and contextualize the findings while ensuring compatibilities existed.

In conclusion, the data analysis strategies for the study aimed at obtaining an accurate representation of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia by discovering patterns, relationships, and essential factors contributing to the capacity of the agencies.

#### **4.7 ENSURING RIGOUR: VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

In this study, ensuring that the data collected was valid, reliable, and accurate was paramount. To achieve this, several data verification methods were employed.

To ensure data validity, the researcher took steps to confirm that the data collected through the surveys and interviews was reliable and unbiased. Validity checks included conducting a pilot study to test the structured questionnaire, interview guides, and topic guides. The researcher also used triangulation, which involved the use of multiple data sources and methods, to ensure that the findings were consistent across different data sources (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

To ensure reliability, the researcher implemented inter-rater reliability, where two or more researchers independently coded the data to check for consistency. Consistency was also checked by maintaining a detailed record of the coding process used during the thematic analysis. Furthermore, regular meetings were held with the supervisory team to ensure that the research process remained on track (Creswell & Creswell 2018; Hoy, Johnson, & Tschannen-Moran 2015). To prepare for data collection, enumerators received thorough training covering conceptual survey objectives, ethical protocols, and technical proficiency to ensure they were familiar with the survey protocols and design. This training ensured that all members of the field team had a comprehensive understanding of the survey procedures through mock interviews and standardized simulations. Additionally, all protocols were piloted well in advance of data collection. The research team also ensured that all enumerators fully understood the questions in the survey instrument and were proficient in using the designated data collection tools, whether tablets for computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) or paper forms for pen-and-paper personal interviews (PAPI).

Credibility, referring to the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the reality of the phenomenon being studied, was established using multiple data sources, triangulation of data, member checking, and researcher reflexivity (Shenton 2004).

Transferability, or the extent to which the research findings can be generalized to other contexts, was supported by providing rich descriptions of the study context, a selection of representative cases, and detailed descriptions of the research methodology (Shenton 2004). Dependability, referring to the consistency and stability of the research findings over time, and confirmability, the neutrality and objectivity of the research findings, were ensured through reflexivity, an audit trail, peer debriefing, member checking, and inter-coder reliability (Shenton 2004; Creswell 2013; Morse et al. 2002). By adopting these measures, the study maintained high quality and produced reliable and valid results.

The mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to integrate and compare quantitative and qualitative data. This integration helped to uncover new insights, validate findings from each research method, and provide a more robust and comprehensive analysis. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis ensured that potential limitations in one method were addressed by the other, ultimately enhancing the overall validity, reliability, and accuracy of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

The following specific methods were also employed to ensure data verification:

1. Member checking: This involved presenting the research findings to the participants to verify the accuracy and validity of the collected data.
2. Peer debriefing: The research process, findings, and methodology were presented to colleagues or experts in the field to critique the research process and improve the study's overall rigor.
3. Triangulation: Data obtained through different methods was compared to ensure consistency and accuracy of findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

In conclusion, the study utilized several approaches to ensure that the data collected was valid, reliable, and accurate. These approaches included employing various data verification models, pilot studies, inter-rater reliability checks, and triangulation. The mixed-methods approach facilitated a thorough evaluation of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, providing reliable and valid evidence to inform decisions by policymakers and stakeholders.

## **4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this study, adhering to ethical considerations when engaging research participants was crucial. Throughout the entire data collection process, the researcher adhered to strict ethical guidelines. These guidelines were implemented to protect the well-being and rights of all participants involved in the study.

Several ethical considerations were applied throughout the research to ensure it was conducted legally and ethically. The Ethical Clearance Certificate received conditional approval from the UNISA College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (CHS CREC), followed by full approval from the relevant local authority, Addis Ababa University College of Development (See Appendix 5). Additionally, informed consent forms and participant information sheets (see Appendix 4) were used to ensure ethical compliance. Permission letters (see Appendix 7) were obtained where necessary to gain access to research sites or participants.

A primary ethical consideration was ensuring that research participants' rights to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were protected. Participants needed to be confident that their private information would not be disclosed without their consent. Steps were taken to ensure that all participants' sensitive information was kept confidential, and participants were fully informed about the risks and benefits of participating in the study (Grady 2015). Participants were assured they could participate without fear of their identities being revealed. Informed consent, which is annexed, was obtained from all participants, and all identifying information was removed prior to publishing the data (Smith & Schwartz 2020). Furthermore, survey enumerators were required to complete and sign a confidentiality agreement before commencing the survey (see Appendix 6).

The study also upheld the principle of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, the research methodology, and the potential risks and benefits of their participation. Participants were protected from any form of harm, whether physical or mental, throughout the research process. If any harm should have occurred, the researcher

was prepared to take immediate and appropriate steps to address the situation (NSECHR, 2007).

In addressing specific contextual factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the study adhered to guidelines provided by UNISA and the Ethiopian government. Measures were implemented to minimize the risk of virus transmission, including the enforcement of social distancing, the provision of sanitizing facilities, and the distribution of personal protective equipment, such as masks, to participants. The research also considered the pandemic's potential impact on recruitment agencies and their clients and how these impacts might influence the study's findings.

Potential ethical risks, such as data breaches, loss of confidentiality, and harm to participants, were carefully considered and mitigated. Risks were minimized by obtaining informed consent and ensuring that all collected data, both qualitative and quantitative, was de-identified. Data was securely stored in a password-protected environment, and access was strictly limited to the research team. Enumerators were required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Participants were informed about debriefing arrangements and provided with contact information for follow-up inquiries. Debriefing sessions offered participants an opportunity to ask questions, and the researcher provided answers or directed them to appropriate resources for support when necessary. In some instances, informants requested further information about government contacts, and the researcher facilitated these connections. These sessions served as a crucial ethical measure, ensuring transparency and participant well-being post-participation.

#### **4.9. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Chapter 4 has meticulously outlined the robust methodological framework underpinning this study, ensuring its scientific rigor and ethical integrity. The mixed-methods research design guided the entire research process, from selecting the study population and designing the survey and interview questions to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the capacity of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and the factors that impacted their effectiveness and practice to promote safe, fair, and ethical migration in Ethiopia. The study approach involved both quantitative

and qualitative methods. The study setting was primarily the city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the study population comprised migrant recruitment agencies registered with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Skills. A random sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. In the context of this research study, the methodology ensured that the study was valid and reliable (Neuman 2016). This was achieved by adopting various measures that enhanced the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings (Shenton 2004).

The study rigorously adhered to all relevant ethical considerations, aligning fully with UNISA's stringent ethical policies. The researcher prioritised obtaining informed consent, maintaining participant privacy, ensuring voluntary participation, and diligently minimizing any potential risks. Through this unwavering commitment to ethical conduct, the study not only aims to provide valuable and trustworthy insights into how migrant recruitment agencies operate to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers but also upholds the highest standards of research integrity and safeguards the rights and well-being of all participants.

In summary, the methodology of the research study employed a mixed-methods research design that combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. This allowed for a detailed exploration and analysis of the factors that affected the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The study was guided by a pragmatist research paradigm.

Building upon the robust methodology established in Chapter 4, the forthcoming Chapters 5 and 6 transition into the core findings of this research. The chapters are dedicated to the comprehensive presentation and in-depth analysis of the results derived from both the quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts.

## **CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the comprehensive presentation and in-depth analysis of the results derived from the quantitative data collection efforts to investigate the capacity and practice of recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. This scrutiny of the data aims to provide a robust, evidence-based understanding of the current practices, challenges, and patterns within the migrant recruitment sector in the country. The chapter's ultimate goal is to furnish a data-driven foundation for the study's conclusions and recommendations, ensuring they are grounded in empirical evidence from the field. The data offers critical insights into various foundational aspects of these agencies' operations, including their year of establishment, employee numbers, declared mission and core values pertaining to migrant worker protection, and the diverse methods they employ for reaching out to potential migrant workers. Each subsequent graph and table provides a clear visual representation and statistical summary of these key characteristics, collectively contributing to a foundational understanding of the current landscape, structural attributes, and operational capacity of these agencies within the Ethiopian labour migration sector.

### **5.2. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

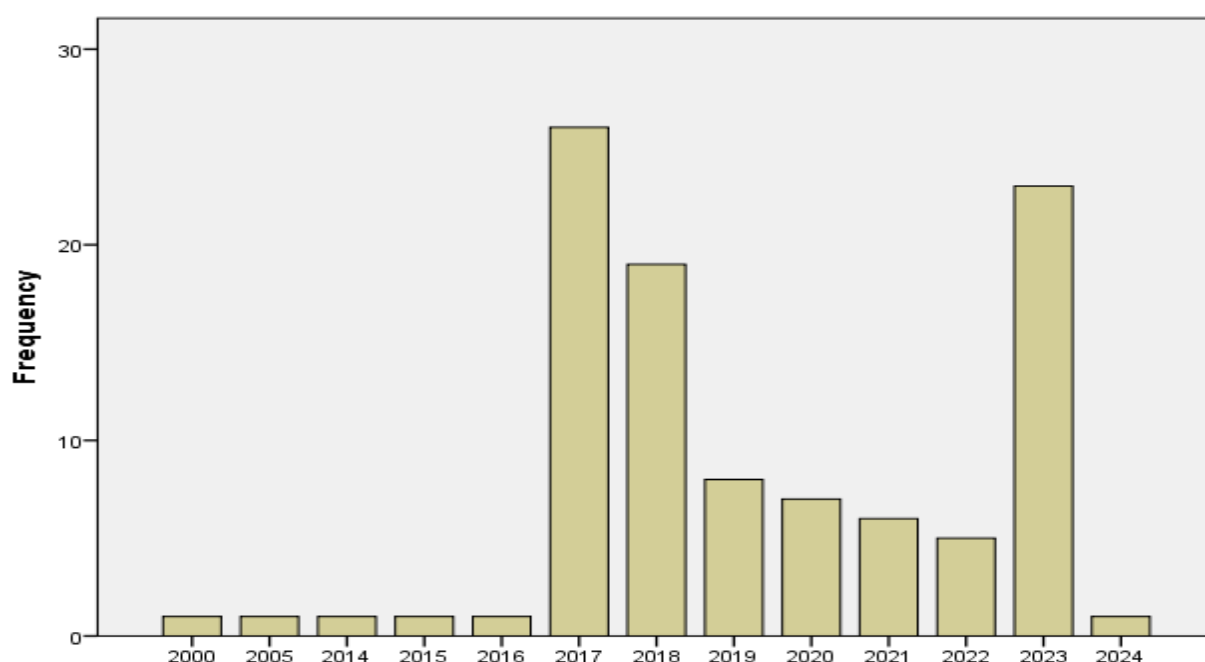
The following sub-sections (5.2.1 to 5.2.6) provide empirical data addressing Research Objective 1 and Research Question 1, which seek to investigate the current state, roles, and institutional frameworks of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The section presents the quantitative findings of the study, derived from the survey questionnaires (see Appendix 1) administered to 100 migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The data analysis took place in terms of the questions posed and offers critical insights into various foundational aspects of these agencies' operations, including their year of establishment, employee numbers, declared mission and core values about migrant worker protection, and the diverse methods they employ for reaching out to potential migrant workers. Each subsequent graph and table provides a clear visual representation and statistical summary of these key characteristics, collectively contributing to a foundational understanding of the current landscape,

structural attributes, and operational capacity of these agencies within the Ethiopian labour migration sector.

### 5.2.1 Year of Establishment

As per the response of 100 sampled migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia for Part 1, question 3 in the annexed questionnaire of Appendix 1, the distribution of the year of establishment for migrant recruitment agencies is depicted in the following histogram. Figure 5.1 illustrates the frequency of agencies established in different years, providing an overview of the industry's growth and maturity over time. Understanding the establishment trends can shed light on regulatory changes, market demands, or other external factors that have influenced the formation of new agencies.

*Figure 5.1. Year of Establishment*



The study revealed a diverse range of establishment years among migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, indicating varying levels of experience and market presence within the sector. The visual representation of the histogram suggests periods of increased agency formation. For example, there appears to be a noticeable increase in establishments from 2017 onwards, with more agencies emerging in recent years such as 2018 and 2023, compared to earlier periods like 2000 or 2005. This trend

could signify a growing demand for overseas employment services in Ethiopia, possibly driven by economic factors, changes in migration policies, increased awareness among potential migrant workers. The presence of both older and newer agencies suggests a dynamic market where established players coexist with emerging entities, potentially influencing the competitive landscape and service delivery standards. The oldest agency shown in this distribution was established in 2000, while the most recent establishments are in 2024, indicating continuous activity and evolution in the sector.

### 5.2.2 Number of Employees

The following table (Table 5.1) illustrates the frequency distribution of the number of employees within the surveyed 100 migrant recruitment agencies. This data is crucial for understanding the scale and human resource capacity of these agencies, which can directly impact their operational efficiency and ability to manage the complexities of international labour migration.

*Table 5.1. Number of Employees*

| <b>Number of employees</b> |           |         |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| No. of employees           | Frequency | Percent |
| 1                          | 22        | 22.0    |
| 2                          | 19        | 19.0    |
| 3                          | 32        | 32.0    |
| 4                          | 10        | 10.0    |
| 5                          | 8         | 8.0     |
| 6                          | 1         | 1.0     |
| 7                          | 4         | 4.0     |
| 8                          | 2         | 2.0     |
| 12                         | 1         | 1.0     |
| 25                         | 1         | 1.0     |
| Total                      | 100       | 100.0   |

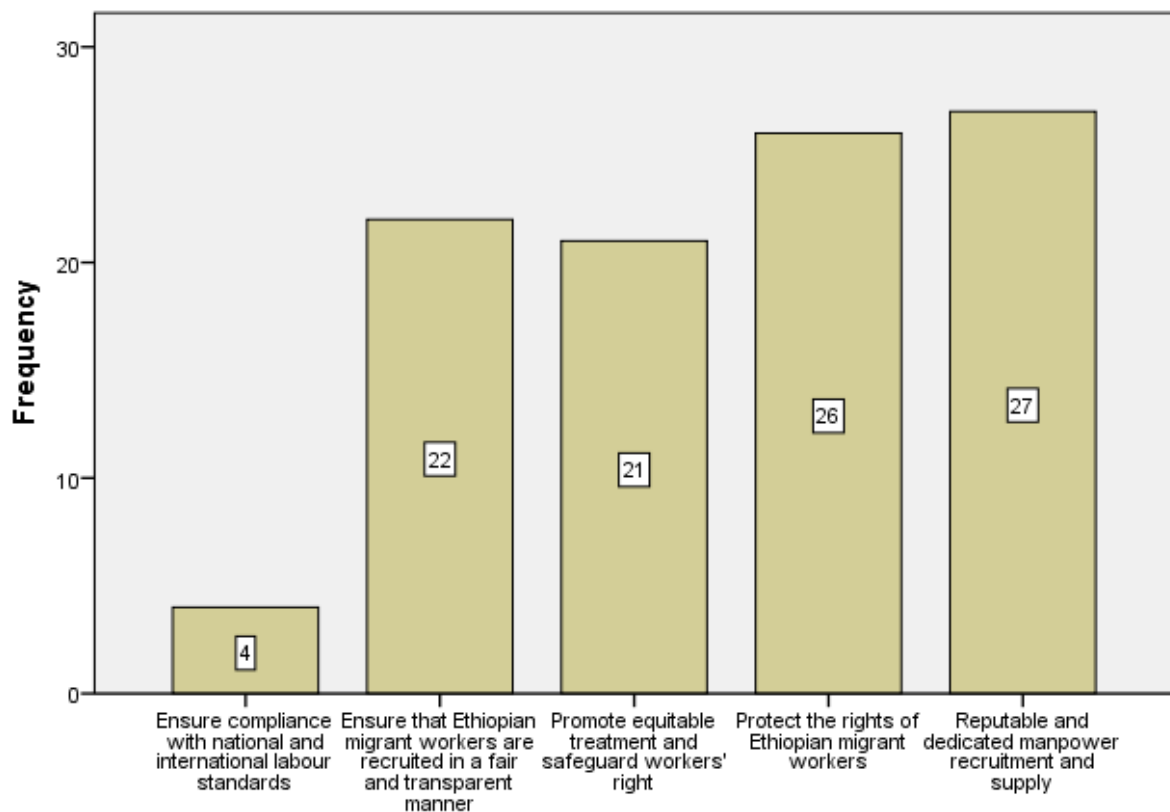
The data on the number of employees reveals that a significant portion of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia operate with a relatively small workforce. The most frequent number of employees is 3, with 32% of agencies falling into this category, indicating that a substantial segment of the industry comprises small-sized operations, as per Regulation No. 526/2022, organisations which have up to 5 employees are considered micro-organisations (Regulation No. 526/2022, Session 3.1). Agencies with only 1 employee also represent a considerable portion, accounting for 22% of the total. Cumulatively, 73% of the agencies employ 3 or fewer staff members, highlighting a prevalent characteristic of limited human resource capacity across the sector.

While the majority of agencies from the surveyed 100 agencies have a small employee base, there is also a tail of agencies with a slightly larger workforce, though less common. For instance, 10% of agencies employ 4 people, and 8% employ 5 people. A very small percentage of agencies (1% each) reported having 6 or 12 employees, suggesting that larger operations are outliers. The relatively low number of employees across most agencies could have implications for their operational efficiency, capacity to handle high volumes of migrant workers, and ability to provide comprehensive support services, including pre-departure training and post-arrival assistance. This finding also raises questions about whether the current staffing levels are adequate to effectively manage the complex legal, administrative, and ethical responsibilities associated with international labour migration, especially concerning the protection of migrant workers' safety and rights.

### **5.2.3 Agency Mission and Core Value**

The bar chart below (Figure 5.2) presents the stated mission and core values of the surveyed 100 agencies (refer to Part 1 Metacognitive Question in Appendix 1). This visualisation helps in understanding the primary objectives and ethical commitments that guide these organisations. It highlights the emphasis placed on various aspects such as compliance with labour standards, fair recruitment practices, and worker protection.

*Figure 5.2. Agency Mission and Core Value*



The bar chart illustrates that the primary focus of migrant recruitment agencies' stated missions and core values heavily leans towards the protection of migrant workers' rights and being a reputable manpower provider. Specifically, the highest frequencies are observed for "Protect the rights of Ethiopian migrant workers" and "Reputable and dedicated manpower recruitment and supply," with both categories showing frequencies above 25. This indicates that agencies largely articulate a commitment to safeguarding the interests of migrants and establishing themselves as trustworthy entities in the recruitment sector.

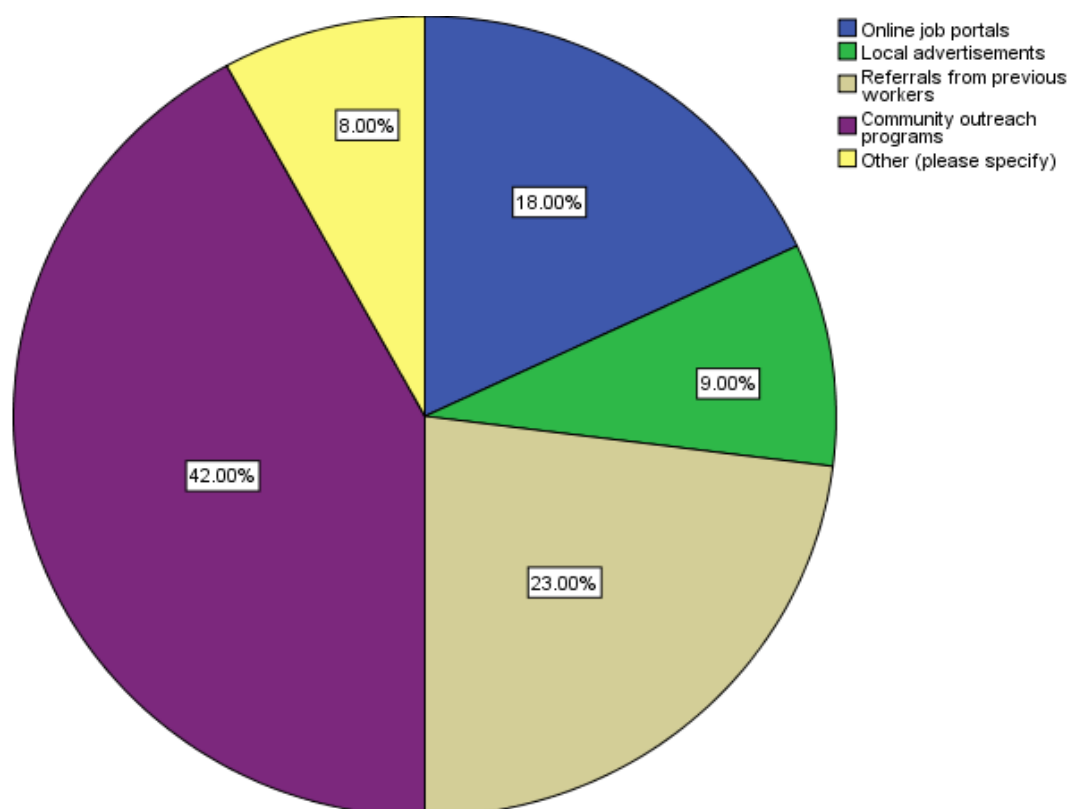
Following these, "Ensure that Ethiopian migrant workers are recruited in a fair and transparent manner" and "Promote equitable treatment and safeguard workers' rights" also have significant frequencies, both appearing to be around 20-22. This suggests that agencies are also aware of and aim to uphold principles of fairness, transparency, and equity throughout the recruitment process. In contrast, "Ensure compliance with national and international labour standards" has the lowest frequency, appearing to be around 4-5. This relatively lower emphasis on compliance with formal labour standards, compared to the other stated values, could be an area of concern, potentially indicating a gap between espoused values and comprehensive adherence to legal frameworks, or perhaps a perception that compliance is implicitly covered by other broader values like protecting rights and ensuring fair treatment. Overall, the

data suggests that agencies understand the importance of worker protection and ethical recruitment, but the varying levels of emphasis on specific aspects like formal compliance warrant further attention.

#### 5.2.4 Methods to Reach Potential Migrant Workers

The pie chart that follows (Figure 5.3) details the various methods employed by migrant recruitment agencies to reach potential migrant workers (refer to Part 2 Declarative Question 2.1 in Appendix 1). This includes approaches such as online job portals, local advertisements, referrals, and community outreach programs. Analysing these methods provides insight into the strategies used to attract and engage with prospective migrants, and their relative prevalence in the recruitment process.

*Figure 5.3. Methods to Reach Potential Migrant Workers*



The data on methods used to reach potential migrant workers reveals that "Community outreach programs" are overwhelmingly the most preferred and utilised method by agencies, accounting for 42% of responses. This indicates a strong reliance on direct engagement with communities, which can be effective in building trust and reaching individuals who may not have access to digital platforms or formal advertisements.

"Referrals from previous workers" also play a significant role, with 23% of agencies using this method. This highlights the importance of word-of-mouth and the established networks of returned or currently employed migrant workers in attracting new candidates, underscoring the impact of successful placements on future recruitment.

"Online job portals" are used by 18% of agencies, suggesting a moderate adoption of digital recruitment strategies. This indicates that while technology is utilised, it is not the primary channel for reaching the majority of potential migrants, possibly due to varying levels of internet access or digital literacy among the target population. "Local advertisements" are the least used formal method, with only 9% of agencies relying on them. The remaining 8% fall under "Other (please specify)," which encompass a variety of less common or specialised approaches such as referral from other agencies and Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS). The heavy reliance on community outreach and referrals points to a recruitment model that values personal connections and grassroots engagement, which, while effective, might also present challenges in ensuring standardised information dissemination and preventing the proliferation of informal or unregulated recruiters.

Table 5.2 below illustrates the perceived effectiveness of the different methods used by agencies to reach and recruit migrant workers (refer to Part 2, Metacognitive Question 2.1 in Appendix 1). This information helps to assess which channels are most successful in candidate acquisition.

*Table 5.2. Effectiveness of Recruitment Methods*

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Percent |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Other                       | No, there was a direction from Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) to facilitate potential migrant workers directed (referred) from them (MoLS), but the lack of data quality has made this approach less effective in attracting diverse and highly qualified candidates for international job opportunities | 8.0     |
| Comprehensive approach      | Our comprehensive approach ensures we attract diverse and highly qualified candidates for international job opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                      | 14.0    |
| Online job portals          | Our online job portals via TikTok and other social media outlets help us reach a broad and diverse audience, ensuring we attract qualified candidates from various backgrounds                                                                                                                                 | 18.0    |
| Community outreach programs | We find that referrals from previous workers and community outreach programs, specifically via brokers, are particularly effective in attracting well-informed and diverse candidates                                                                                                                          | 60.0    |
|                             | Total                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 100.0   |

The data on the perceived effectiveness of recruitment methods clearly indicates that community outreach programmes and referrals are overwhelmingly considered the most effective method, accounting for a significant 60% of responses. This high percentage suggests that positive experiences shared by returnees or currently employed individuals serve as powerful motivators and validators for prospective migrants. This underscores the strength of social networks and trusted intermediaries in the recruitment process.

The category "Online job portals" comes in second, with 18% of agencies finding it effective and shows a growing recognition and utilisation of digital platforms for recruitment. The agencies' detailed response indicates, "Yes, it is effective. Our online job portals via TikTok and other social media outlets help us reach a broad and diverse audience, ensuring we attract qualified candidates from various backgrounds." This is also the case with the comprehensive approach which is deemed effective by 14% of agencies. "Our comprehensive approach ensures we attract diverse and highly qualified candidates for international job opportunities". This reflects that a holistic strategy, encompassing various recruitment and attraction elements, is beneficial, as

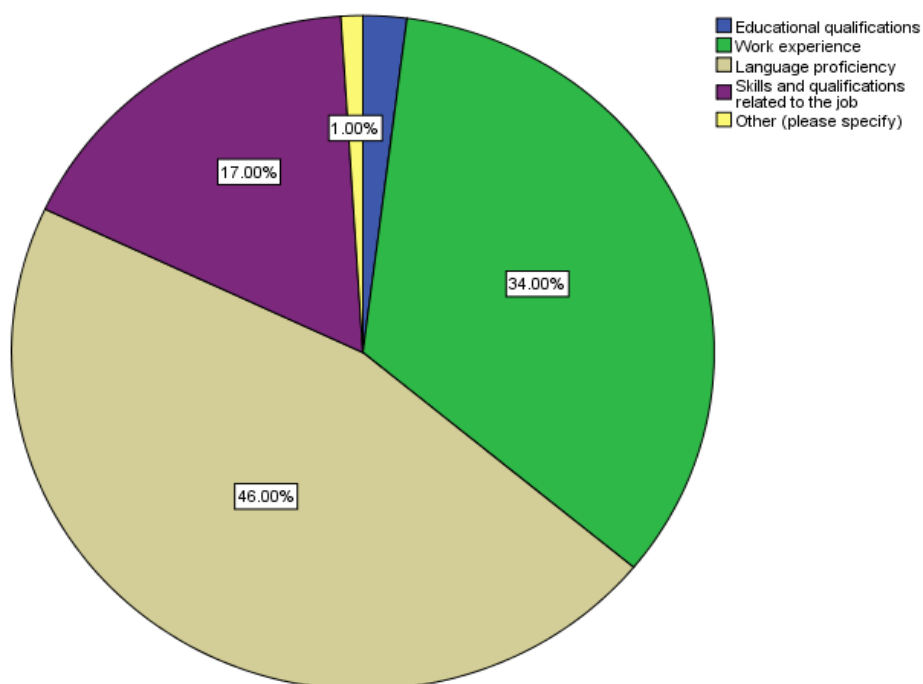
described by the agencies, and that agencies are adapting to modern communication channels to broaden their reach and candidate pool.

The Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) in Ethiopia is responsible for overseeing the recruitment of migrant workers. However, its directive for recruitment agencies to facilitate overseas employment for potential migrants referred by MoLS is impractical. Issues like poor data quality and ineffective operations undermine this approach, resulting in difficulties in attracting a diverse and highly qualified pool of candidates for international jobs. Consequently, many agencies tend to disregard this directive, despite government expectations. Eight percent (8%) of respondents reported that they disregard this directive due to practical limitations. The detailed explanation for this category states, "No, it is not effective, there was a direction from MoLS to facilitate potential migrant workers directed from them, but the lack of data quality has made this approach less effective in attracting diverse and highly qualified candidates for international job opportunities." This suggests that while there may be official directives to source candidates through certain government channels, practical challenges like data quality issues can significantly hinder their effectiveness from the agencies' perspective. Overall, the findings underscore that personal networks, digital engagement, and comprehensive strategies are seen as the most potent tools for candidate acquisition, while certain mandated approaches face practical limitations.

### **5.2.5 Most Important Factors in Selecting Migrant Workers**

Figure 5.4 below illustrates the most important factors considered by agencies when selecting migrant workers (refer to Part 2 Declarative Question 2.2 in Appendix 1). This includes criteria such as educational qualifications, work experience, language proficiency, and job-specific skills. Understanding these selection criteria is vital for evaluating the agencies' focus on migrant worker suitability and preparedness for overseas employment.

*Figure 5.4. Most Important Factors in Selecting Migrant workers*



The data on the most important factors in selecting migrant workers clearly shows a strong emphasis on work experience and communication abilities. "Language proficiency" emerges as the most critical factor, with 46% of agencies considering it paramount. This highlights the necessity for migrant workers to effectively communicate in the destination country, not only for job performance but also for their safety, social integration, and ability to seek assistance if needed.

"Work experience" is the second most important factor, preferred by 34% of agencies. This indicates that agencies prioritise candidates who already possess practical skills and a proven track record, which likely makes them more appealing to foreign employers and potentially reduces training needs upon arrival. "Skills and qualifications related to the job" are also important, selected by 17% of agencies. This category directly links to the specific requirements of the overseas jobs being filled.

In stark contrast, "Educational qualifications" are considered the least important factor, with only 2% of agencies prioritising them. This suggests that for the types of jobs

Ethiopian migrants typically pursue (often in sectors like domestic work or construction), formal academic credentials are less valued than practical experience, specific job-related skills, and crucial language abilities. A small percentage (1%) falls under "Other (please specify)" which includes religion, age and physical appearance. The overall findings underscore a pragmatism in agency selection criteria, focusing on attributes that directly facilitate job placement and adaptation in a foreign work environment, especially communication skills.

### 5.2.6 Agency Standardised Recruitment Process Steps

Table 5.3 in this section outlines the various steps involved in the agencies' standardized recruitment processes (refer to Part 2 Declarative Question 2.3 in Appendix 1). This includes activities such as screening applications, conducting interviews, verifying references, and performing pre-employment medical examinations. This data provides a detailed understanding of the procedural integrity and thoroughness of the recruitment process undertaken by these agencies.

*Table 5.3. Agency Standardized Recruitment Process Steps*

|                                                | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| No standardised recruitment process            | 19        | 19.0    |
| Screening of applications and documents        | 24        | 24.0    |
| Individual and/or group interviews             | 12        | 12.0    |
| Verification of references and work experience | 8         | 8.0     |
| Pre-employment medical examinations            | 35        | 35.0    |
| Other (please specify)                         | 2         | 2.0     |
| Total                                          | 100       | 100.0   |

The data on standardised recruitment process steps reveal interesting insights into the operational procedures of migrant recruitment agencies. The most frequently performed step is "Pre-employment medical examinations," with 35% of agencies including this as a standard part of their process. This high percentage underscores the importance placed on the health suitability of migrant workers, likely driven by destination country requirements and a desire to ensure workers can fulfil the physical demands of their jobs.

"Screening of applications and documents" is the second most common step, adopted by 24% of agencies. This highlights the foundational importance of verifying credentials and suitability at the initial stage of recruitment. Interestingly, a significant portion of agencies, 19%, reported having "No standardised recruitment process". This finding is concerning as it suggests a lack of systematic and consistent procedures across a notable segment of the industry, which could lead to inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and potential vulnerabilities for migrant workers due to non-uniform vetting and preparation.

Other steps, like "Individual and/or group interviews" are performed by 12% of agencies, and "Verification of references and work experience" by only 8%. The low frequency of these verification-focused steps, especially reference checks, could indicate a less thorough vetting process for candidates beyond initial document screening and medical fitness. A small percentage (2%) reported "Other (please specify)" steps. The prevalence of medical examinations and initial document screening, coupled with a notable lack of standardised processes and less emphasis on robust background checks, points to a recruitment approach that might prioritise speed and compliance with basic health requirements over comprehensive assessment of candidate suitability and ethical due diligence.

#### **5.2.7. How Agencies Ensure Fair and Transparent Recruitment Processes**

The data in sections 5.2.7 to 5.2.10 relates to Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3, delving into the specific practices implemented to safeguard the rights and safety of migrants. This section analyses the responses from migrant recruitment agencies regarding how they ensure fairness and transparency in their recruitment processes for potential migrant workers (refer to Part 2, Open-ended Question 2.3 in

Appendix 1). The data reveals the most common strategies employed by agencies to uphold ethical standards and maintain clear communication. See Table 5.4.

*Table 5.4. How Agencies Ensure Fair and Transparent Recruitment Processes*

|                                                                                          | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Conducting regular audits and monitoring of recruitment practices                        | 26        | 26.0    |
| Offering training to staff on ethical recruitment and addressing any complaints promptly | 16        | 16.0    |
| Providing clear information about job opportunities and maintaining open communication   | 44        | 44.0    |
| Strictly adhering to national and international labour laws                              | 14        | 14.0    |
| Total                                                                                    | 100       | 100.0   |

The data reinforces that "providing clear information about job opportunities and maintaining open communication" remains the most significant strategy employed by agencies to ensure fairness and transparency, with a strong 44% of responses. This high percentage underscores the agencies' primary reliance on direct, comprehensive, and continuous dialogue with potential migrant workers. This approach is fundamental to empowering migrants with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions and to feel that the process is open and understandable, aligning with best practices in ethical recruitment where transparency is key to preventing exploitation.

The second most prominent method is "conducting regular audits and monitoring of recruitment practices," which accounts for 26% of responses. This indicates a substantial portion of agencies are engaging in internal oversight mechanisms to

ensure their processes remain compliant and ethical. This suggests a growing awareness or implementation of proactive measures to identify and rectify any deviations from fair practices, thereby reinforcing accountability within the recruitment process.

"Offering training to staff on ethical recruitment and addressing any complaints promptly" is cited by 16% of agencies. This highlights the agencies' commitment to human resource development aimed at fostering ethical conduct among their employees and establishing responsive mechanisms for grievance redressal. Staff training is crucial for embedding ethical principles into daily operations, while prompt complaint resolution demonstrates a genuine commitment to addressing worker concerns and improving trust.

Finally, "strictly adhering to national and international labour laws" is reported by 14% of agencies. While still an important factor, its ranking as the least frequently cited method, compared to direct communication and internal monitoring, might suggest that agencies perceive adherence to laws as a foundational requirement rather than a primary *active* strategy for ensuring fairness and transparency, or perhaps they assume it's implicitly covered by other stated practices.

In summary, the data reaffirms that direct and open communication with migrant workers is the cornerstone of agencies' efforts toward fairness and transparency. The increased emphasis on internal audits and monitoring also indicates a move towards more robust self-regulation. While legal adherence and staff training are recognized, their relative positioning suggests that agencies primarily focus on practical information dissemination and oversight to ensure an equitable and clear recruitment journey for all potential migrant workers.

#### **5.2.8. Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation**

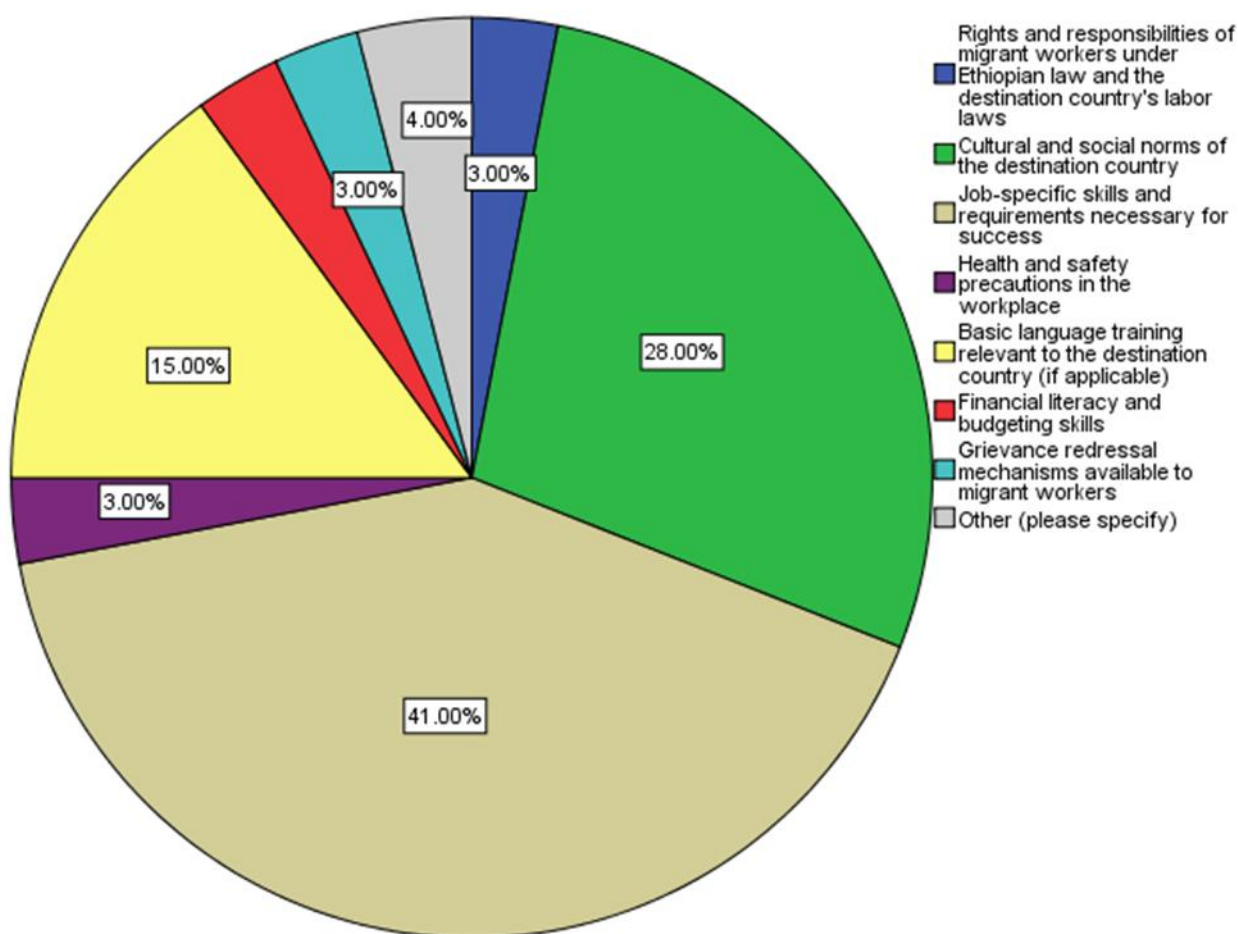
The response to the question posed on "pre-departure and orientation" (refer to Part 3, Declarative Question in Appendix 1) indicates that all 100% of the surveyed migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia confirm that they offer pre-departure orientation and training programs for migrant workers. The crucial accompanying detail is that this is considered a "mandatory process."

This finding suggests a high level of compliance with a key regulatory requirement designed to prepare migrant workers for their overseas employment. The mandatory nature of these programs means that agencies are legally obligated to provide them, which is a positive step towards ensuring workers receive essential information before migrating. The following section explains the key topics of Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation.

#### *5.2.8.1 Key Topics Covered in Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation Programs*

This section analyses the key topics covered in the pre-departure orientation and training programs offered by migrant recruitment agencies (refer to Part 3, Declarative Question in Appendix 1). This provides insights into the areas that agencies prioritise in preparing migrant workers for overseas employment (see Figure 5.5)

*Figure 5.5. Key Topics Covered in Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation Program*



The data reveal that pre-departure orientation programs primarily focus on practical aspects directly related to the job and cultural adaptation. The most emphasised topic is "Job-specific skills and requirements necessary for success," accounting for 41% of responses. This indicates that agencies largely prioritise equipping migrant workers with the technical competencies needed to perform their roles effectively in the destination country, aiming to ensure successful placements and reduce instances of job mismatch.

The second most covered topic is "Cultural and social norms of the destination country," with 28% of responses. This significant emphasis on cultural orientation suggests that agencies recognise the importance of preparing migrant workers for the social environment they will encounter, which can help in smoother integration and reduce cultural misunderstandings.

"Basic language training relevant to the destination country (if applicable)" is covered by 15% of programs. While important for communication and integration, its lower

emphasis compared to job-specific skills and cultural norms might indicate varying needs based on destination, or perhaps that agencies expect some prior language proficiency.

A concerning finding is the very low emphasis on crucial protective aspects. "Rights and responsibilities of migrant workers under Ethiopian law and the destination country's labour laws," "Health and safety precautions in the workplace," "Financial literacy and budgeting skills," and "Grievance redressal mechanisms available to migrant workers" all received only 3% of responses each. This suggests that while agencies focus on job readiness and cultural adaptation, critical areas concerning worker protection, welfare, and avenues for seeking help are significantly underrepresented in pre-departure training. This stark imbalance could leave migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and financial difficulties, as they may be unaware of their rights, how to protect themselves, or where to seek redress if problems arise. A small percentage (4%) falls under "Other (please specify)," which mentions topics such as Laws and Consequences Regarding Illegal Activities, Coping with Homesickness and Psychological Well-being and Legal Documentation and Procedures.

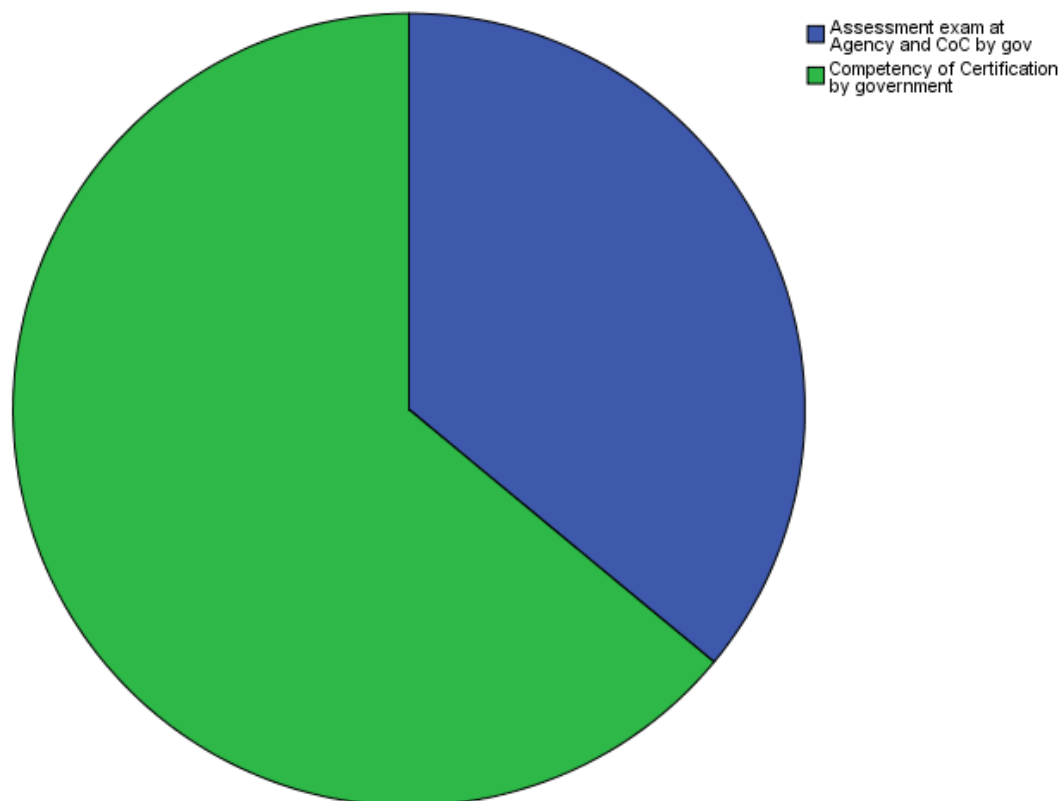
In summary, the current pre-departure orientation programs prioritise job readiness and cultural adaptation, which are undoubtedly important for successful migration. However, the minimal coverage of essential topics related to legal rights, workplace safety, financial management, and grievance mechanisms represents a significant gap. This imbalance suggests that the current training, while mandatory, may not adequately equip migrant workers with the comprehensive knowledge and tools necessary for their overall safety, well-being, and protection from potential risks in destination countries.

#### **5.2.9 How Agencies Ensure Full Understanding of Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation Programs**

This section analyses the methods migrant recruitment agencies employ to ensure that potential migrant workers fully comprehend the information provided during pre-departure preparation and orientation training programs (refer to Part 3, Open-ended Question in Appendix 1). This is crucial for verifying the effectiveness of the training and ensuring workers are adequately prepared. The data reveals two primary

methods used by agencies to ensure migrant workers' full understanding of pre-departure information, with a significant emphasis on government certification (see Figure 5.6).

*Figure 5.6. How Agencies Ensure Full Understanding of Pre-departure*



The most prevalent method, accounting for a dominant 64% of responses, is "Competency of Certification by government." This indicates that most agencies rely on a formal government-issued certification process as the primary means to validate a migrant worker's understanding. This suggests that the government plays a central role in assessing the preparedness of migrant workers before their departure, likely involving standardized tests or evaluations to ensure a baseline level of knowledge. While this provides a structured and official verification, its singular dominance might also imply that agencies themselves have limited direct internal mechanisms for comprehensive understanding checks, or they delegate this critical function almost entirely to governmental bodies.

The second method that includes both "Assessment exam at Agency and CoC by gov" (referring to Certificate of Competency by government), is used by 36% of agencies. This approach combines an internal assessment conducted by the agency itself with the government's certification process. This dual-layered verification potentially offers a more robust method of ensuring understanding, as agencies can tailor their assessments to specific job roles or destination country nuances, while the government certification provides an overarching validation. The fact that this method is less common than solely relying on government certification might point to resource limitations within agencies for conducting their own thorough assessments, or a strong reliance on the government's official validation.

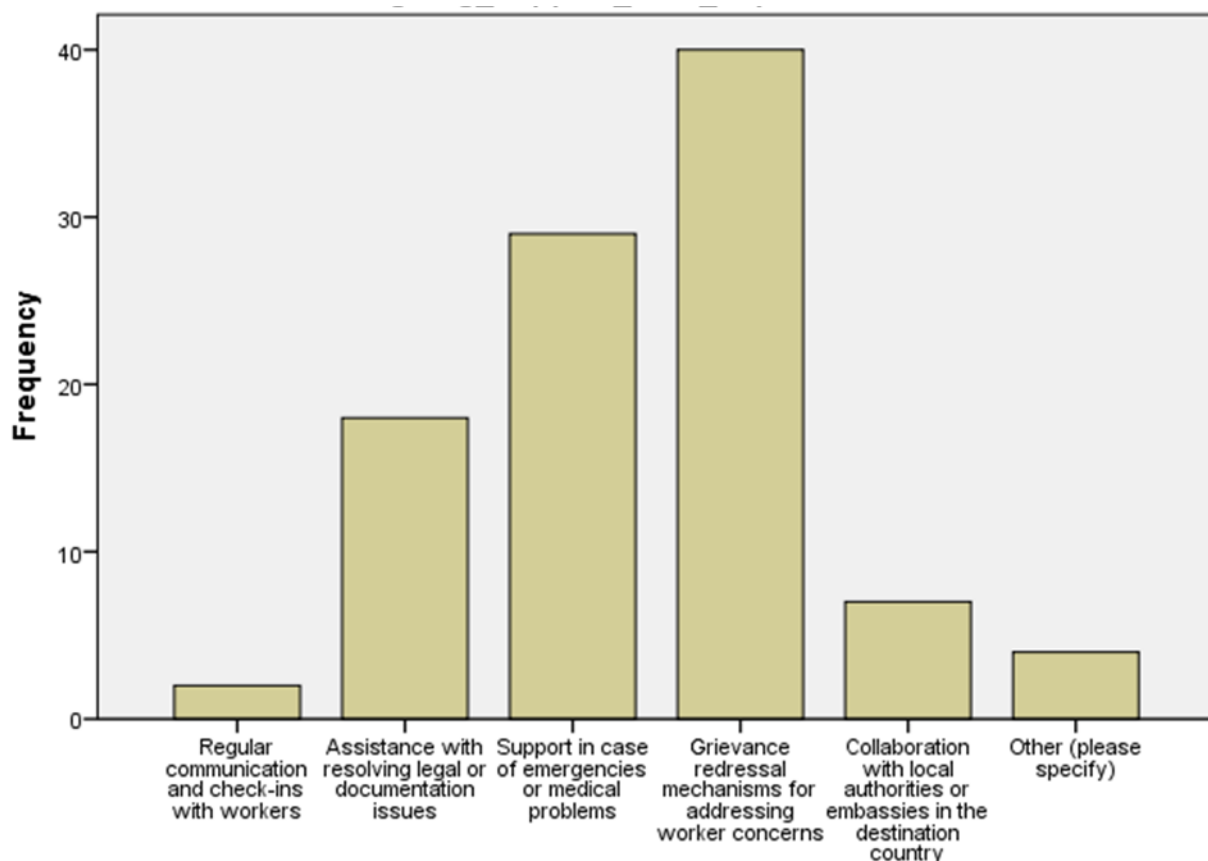
In summary, the overwhelming reliance on government competency certification as the primary method to ensure understanding suggests a centralized and standardized approach to pre-departure knowledge validation. While this provides a formal assurance, the relatively lower adoption of agency-specific assessments means that the depth and practical applicability of understanding might not always be comprehensively evaluated at the agency level. This highlights a potential area for strengthening agency-led assessment mechanisms to complement government certifications, thereby ensuring a more thorough and practical understanding among migrant workers, especially considering the previously noted qualitative finding of "Inadequate Pre-Departure Training."

#### **5.2.10 Support and Assistance During Employment**

This section analyses the types of ongoing support and assistance migrant recruitment agencies claim to provide to migrant workers after their departure and during their employment in destination countries (refer to Part 4, Declarative Question in Appendix 1). Understanding these support mechanisms is critical for evaluating the agencies' commitment to migrant welfare beyond the initial recruitment phase.

The data indicates that agencies primarily focus on providing support related to addressing worker complaints and handling emergencies once migrant workers are employed abroad. See following Figure 5.7.

*Figure 5.7. Support and Assistance During Employment*



The most frequently reported type of ongoing support is "Grievance redressal mechanisms for addressing worker concerns," accounting for 40% of responses. This high percentage suggests that agencies are keenly aware of the need to provide formal channels for migrant workers to report issues and seek resolution for problems they encounter during their employment. This is a crucial aspect of worker protection, as it provides a pathway for intervention in cases of exploitation, unfair labour practices, or other grievances.

The second most common form of support is "Support in case of emergencies or medical problems," cited by 29% of agencies. This highlights a focus on providing immediate assistance for critical situations that may arise, such as accidents, sudden illnesses, or other unforeseen crises. This reflects a recognition of the vulnerabilities migrant workers face in a foreign environment and the necessity of a safety net for urgent needs.

"Assistance with resolving legal or documentation issues" is provided by 18% of agencies. This type of support is essential for migrant workers who may face

challenges with their visas, work permits, contracts, or other legal matters in the destination country. While important, its lower frequency compared to grievance redressal and emergency support might suggest that agencies perceive these issues as less common or less urgent than direct grievances or emergencies.

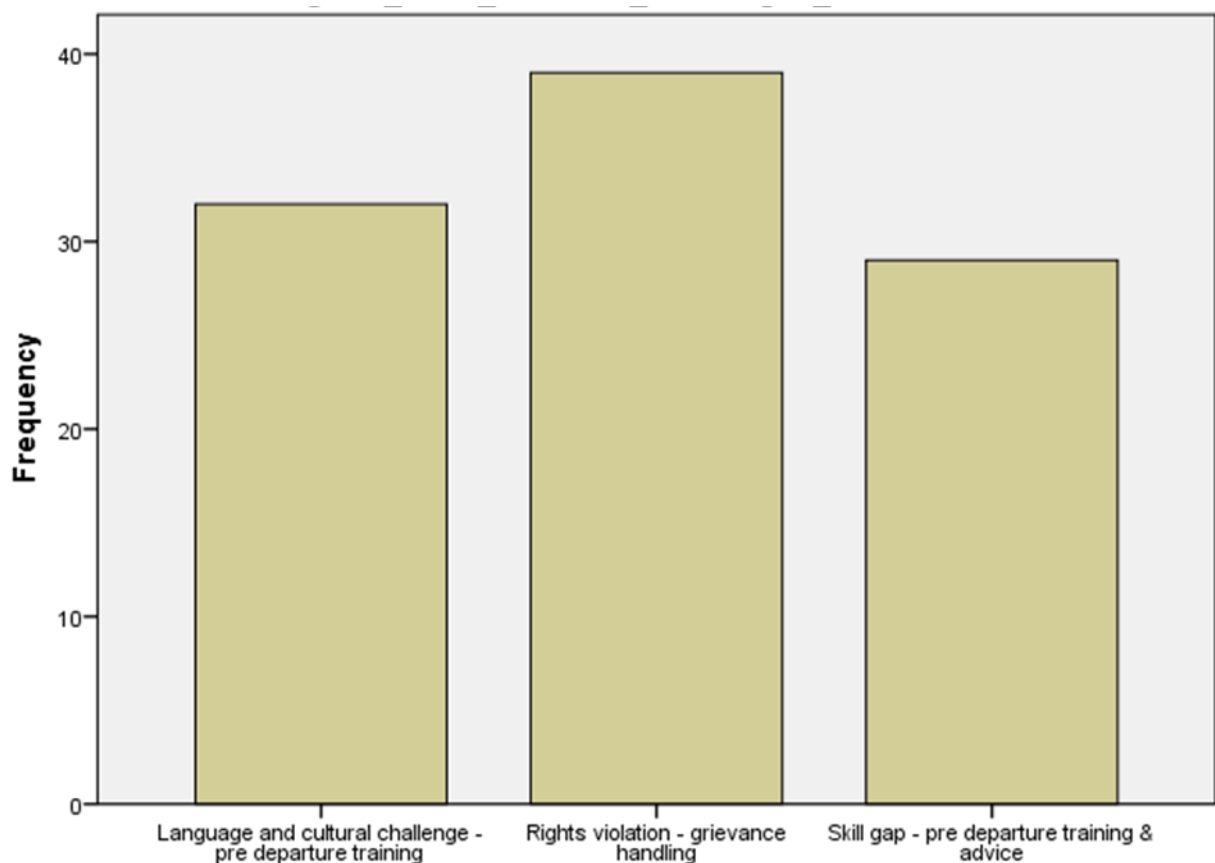
A concerning finding is the relatively low emphasis on proactive and collaborative support mechanisms. "Collaboration with local authorities or embassies in the destination country" is reported by only 7% of agencies. This suggests limited direct engagement with official channels that could offer robust diplomatic and legal protection for migrant workers abroad. Similarly, "Regular communication and check-ins with workers" is the least frequent form of support, at just 2%. This very low percentage indicates a significant gap in consistent, proactive outreach and welfare monitoring, which is vital for early detection of problems and building trust. The remaining 4% falls under "Other"

In summary, while agencies appear to prioritize responding to grievances and emergencies, their engagement in proactive communication and collaboration with official bodies in destination countries is notably low. This imbalance could mean that support is largely reactive rather than preventative, potentially leaving migrant workers vulnerable to protracted issues that might have been mitigated or prevented through consistent check-ins and stronger diplomatic ties. This quantitative finding aligns with reinforcing the need for more comprehensive, proactive, and collaborative support mechanisms for Ethiopian migrant workers abroad.

#### **5.2.11 Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers Abroad and Agency Assistance**

This sub-section addresses Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, and explores the specific gaps and challenges faced by both the agencies and the workers they deploy. The sub-section explores the most common challenges encountered by migrant workers during their employment abroad, as perceived by the recruitment agencies, and details the primary methods by which agencies offer assistance to overcome these challenges (refer to Part 4, Open-ended Question in Appendix 1). See Figure 5.8 below.

*Figure 5.8. Most Common Challenges Faced by Migrant Workers*



The data clearly identifies "Rights violation" as the most common challenge faced by migrant workers during their employment abroad, reported by 39% of agencies. This highlights a critical issue in the labour migration process, indicating that a substantial number of migrant workers encounter situations where their fundamental rights are not upheld. The agencies stated that the primary method for assisting with this challenge is "grievance handling," suggesting a reactive approach where support is provided once a violation has occurred. This finding underscores the ongoing vulnerability of migrant workers to various forms of exploitation, including issues with contracts, wages, working conditions, or abuse.

The second most common challenge, cited by 32% of agencies, is "Language and cultural challenge." This points to difficulties migrant workers face in adapting to new social environments and communicating effectively in their destination countries. Agencies address this primarily through "pre-departure training," aiming to equip workers with basic linguistic and cultural understanding before they leave. This proactive measure is essential for smoother integration and reducing misunderstandings.

Closely following, "Skill gap" is identified as a challenge by 29% of agencies. This refers to instances where migrant workers may lack the specific skills or competencies required for their overseas jobs, leading to performance issues or dissatisfaction. Agencies assist in overcoming this by providing "pre-departure training & advice." This suggests an effort to align worker skills with job requirements, although the prevalence of this challenge indicates that existing training may not always be fully effective or that skill demands are evolving.

In summary, the agencies perceive rights violations as the most pressing issue for migrant workers abroad, primarily addressed through grievance mechanisms. Language and cultural barriers and skill gaps are also significant challenges, which agencies attempt to mitigate through pre-departure training. While agencies offer some forms of assistance, the high frequency of these challenges, especially rights violations, suggests that current support systems might be more reactive than preventative, or that the scale and complexity of these issues require more robust and sustained interventions beyond current agency practices. This aligns with previous findings that highlight limited support in destination countries and inadequate pre-departure training.

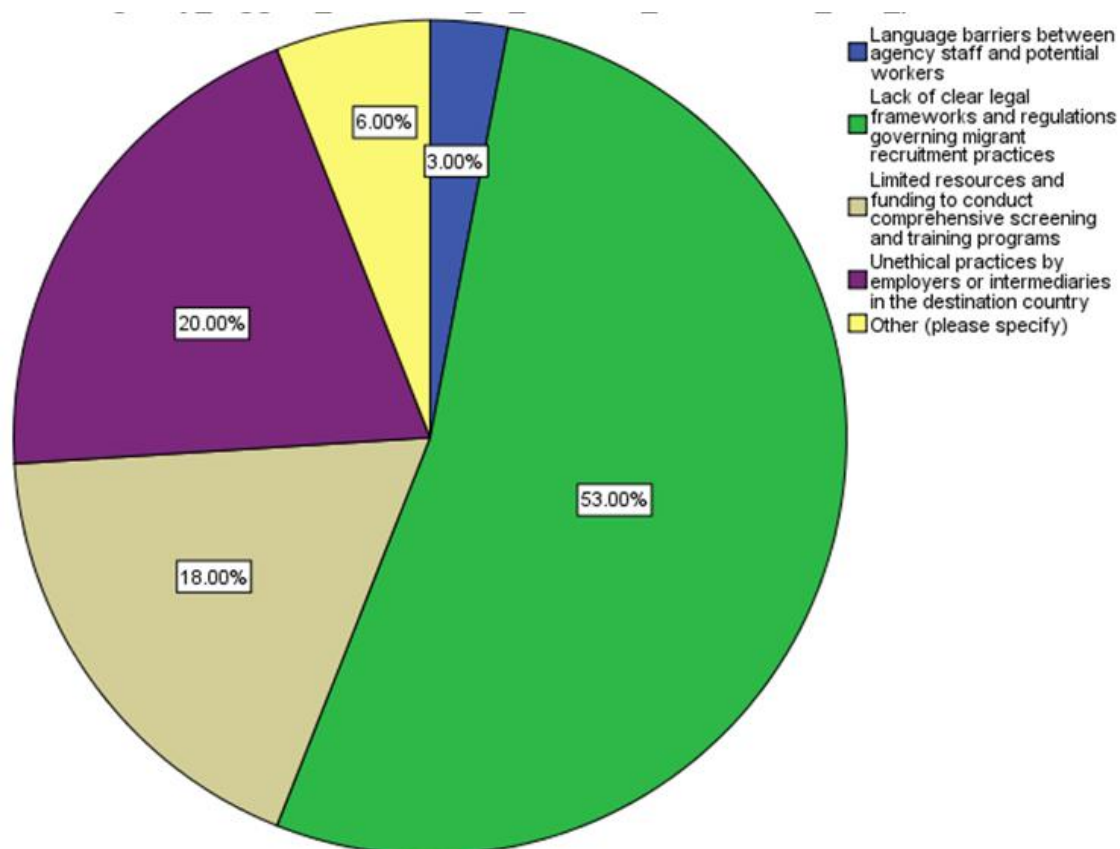
#### **5.2.12 Obstacles Faced by the Agency's Ability to Effectively Recruit and Protect Migrant Workers**

This section also addresses Research Objective 2 and Question 2 and explores the specific gaps and challenges faced by both the agencies and the workers they deploy. It presents the perspectives of migrant recruitment agencies on the most significant obstacles they face in effectively recruiting and protecting migrant workers. Understanding these challenges is crucial for identifying systemic issues that hinder ethical and safe labour migration practices (refer to Part 5, Declarative Question in Appendix 1).

The data clearly indicates that the "Lack of clear legal frameworks and regulations governing migrant recruitment practices" is perceived as the most significant obstacle by agencies, accounting for a majority 53% of responses. This finding strongly suggests that agencies recognize the critical need for robust and unambiguous legal guidelines to operate effectively and ensure worker protection. Ambiguous or

insufficient regulations can lead to inconsistencies in practices, difficulties in enforcement, and create loopholes that can be exploited, ultimately hindering both fair recruitment and worker safety. This aligns with the qualitative findings (See Chapter 6) that also point to bureaucratic hurdles and regulatory gaps. See Figure 5.9 below.

*Figure 5.9. Obstacles to Effectively Reform*



The second most significant obstacle, reported by 20% of agencies, is "Unethical practices by employers or intermediaries in the destination country." This highlights that challenges to worker protection do not solely originate from within Ethiopia; agencies face considerable difficulties stemming from illicit or exploitative behaviours by actors in the receiving countries. This external factor is largely beyond the direct control of Ethiopian agencies and poses a substantial threat to migrant worker rights and well-being.

"Limited resources and funding to conduct comprehensive screening and training programs" is identified by 18% of agencies as a significant hurdle. This financial and capacity constraint impacts agencies' ability to properly vet candidates, provide adequate pre-departure training (as discussed in previous sections), and generally

invest in the necessary infrastructure for effective and ethical recruitment. This obstacle directly affects the quality and comprehensiveness of services agencies can provide.

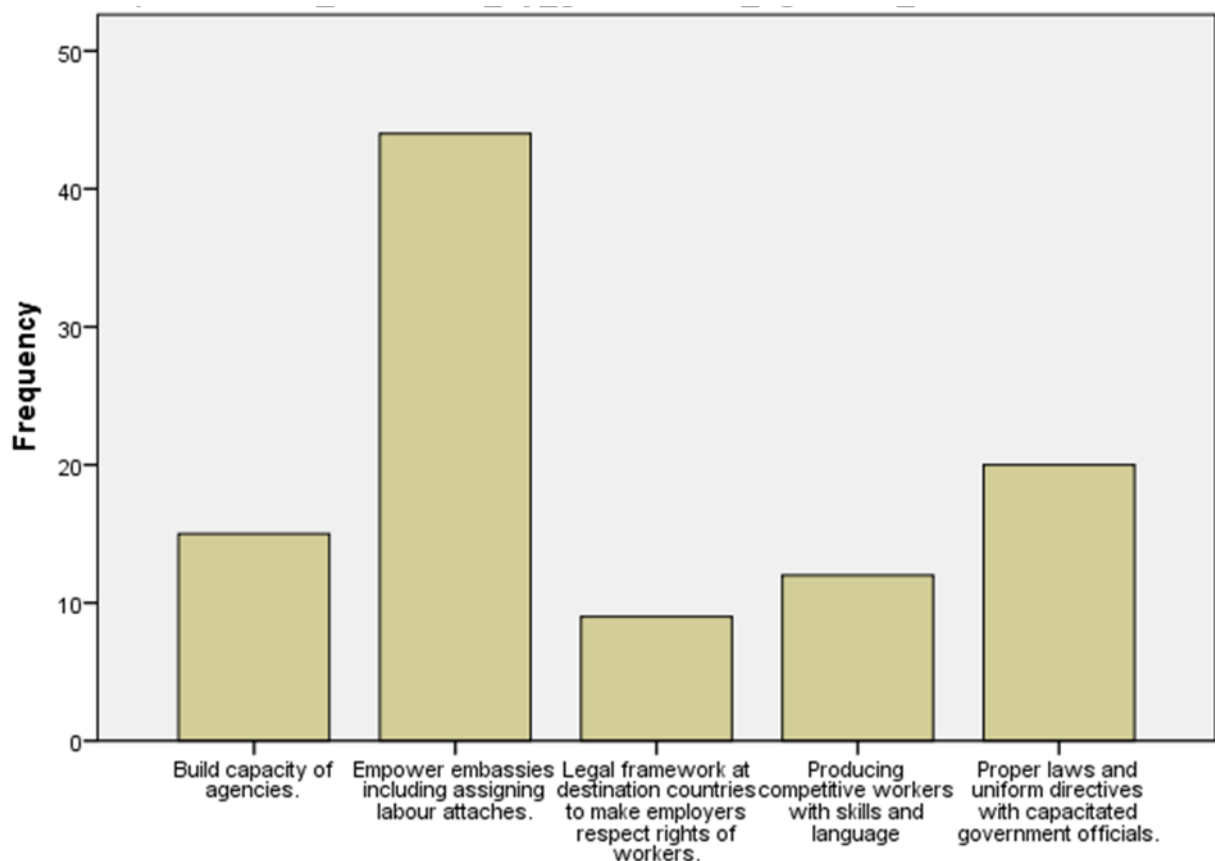
A small percentage (6%) falls under "Other (please specify)," indicating that some agencies encounter unique or less common challenges not covered by the main categories. The least reported obstacle, at 3%, is "Language barriers between agency staff and potential workers." While language proficiency was highly valued in the selection of migrant workers, agencies surprisingly consider it a minor internal obstacle to their own operations. This might suggest that agencies have already developed effective ways to bridge this gap, or that its impact on their overall ability to recruit and protect is less pronounced than systemic or external factors.

In summary, the agencies overwhelmingly identify regulatory gaps and unethical practices in destination countries as their biggest impediments. This underscores the need for governmental intervention, both domestically in strengthening legal frameworks and internationally in fostering bilateral agreements and oversight with destination countries. The perceived lack of resources also points to the need for capacity-building initiatives within the agencies themselves. Addressing these systemic obstacles is paramount to enhancing the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies in fulfilling their role in protecting Ethiopian migrant workers.

#### **5.2.13 Improvements or Measures to Enhance the Capacity and Effectiveness of Migrant Worker Protection Systems**

This section addresses Research Objective 4 and Research Question 4 by assessing potential improvements and measures that reflect the perceived effectiveness of current regulatory frameworks. The sub-section analyses the proposed improvements and measures that, according to the surveyed agencies, could enhance the capacity and effectiveness of migrant worker protection systems (refer to Part 5, Open-ended Question in Appendix 1). This provides critical insights into stakeholders' perspectives on potential solutions to systemic challenges (see Figure 5.10).

*Figure 5.10. Improvements or Measures to Enhance Capacity and System*



The data clearly indicates that "Empowering embassies including assigning labour attachés" is perceived as the most crucial improvement, with a significant 44% of responses. This strong emphasis highlights a critical need for enhanced diplomatic and consular support for migrant workers in destination countries. Labour attachés play a vital role in addressing grievances, providing protection, and facilitating communication with host country authorities. This finding directly correlates with the challenge of "Limited Support in Destination Countries," emphasizing the need for more robust government presence and assistance abroad.

The second most frequently cited improvement is "Proper laws and uniform directives with capacitated government officials," accounting for 20% of responses. This indicates a demand for clearer, more consistent, and effectively enforced domestic legal and policy frameworks governing migrant recruitment. It also points to the importance of adequately trained and equipped government officials to oversee and regulate the sector. This aligns with the "Lack of clear legal frameworks and regulations" identified as a major obstacle to effective recruitment and protection.

"Build capacity of agencies" is proposed by 15% of respondents. This suggests that agencies recognize their own need for improved skills, resources, and operational capabilities to more effectively recruit and protect migrant workers. This includes enhancing their ability to conduct thorough screenings, provide comprehensive training, and offer post-departure support. This proposed measure directly addresses the "Limited resources and funding" challenge previously identified.

"Producing competitive workers with skills and language" is suggested by 12% of responses. This emphasizes the importance of human capital development before migration. By ensuring workers possess the necessary job-specific skills and language proficiency, their vulnerability abroad can be reduced, and their chances of successful and sustained employment improved. This aligns with the previously identified challenges of "Skill gap" and the importance of "Language proficiency" in worker selection.

Finally, "Legal framework at destination countries to make employers respect rights of workers" is cited by 9% of agencies. While this is the least frequently mentioned improvement, it is a crucial external factor that directly impacts worker protection. This highlights the need for international cooperation and advocacy to ensure that host countries have and enforce robust legal protections for migrant labourers, addressing the challenge of "Unethical practices by employers or intermediaries in the destination country."

In conclusion, the findings reveal a multi-faceted approach to enhancing migrant worker protection. The top priority is strengthening diplomatic support in destination countries, followed by improving domestic legal frameworks and governmental oversight. Agencies also recognize the need for their own capacity building and for better preparation of workers with relevant skills and language. While legal frameworks in destination countries are seen as important, they are less frequently emphasized, possibly due to the limited direct control Ethiopian stakeholders have over them. Overall, the data underscores a desire for collaborative efforts among government, agencies, and international partners to create a more secure and ethical environment for Ethiopian migrant workers.

### 5.3 SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The quantitative analysis of data collected from migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia provides a comprehensive overview of their operational landscape, recruitment practices, and perceived challenges and solutions in protecting migrant workers. The findings reveal a dynamic and expanding sector, characterized by a recent surge in agency establishments, particularly from 2017 onwards, indicating a growing demand for overseas employment services. Despite this growth, the majority of agencies operate with a small workforce (73% employing 3 or fewer staff), which may impact their capacity to manage the complexities of international labour migration and provide extensive support services.

In terms of their stated missions and core values, agencies predominantly articulate a commitment to protecting migrant workers' rights and establishing themselves as reputable manpower providers. However, a comparatively lower emphasis on explicit compliance with national and international labour standards suggests a potential gap between espoused values and comprehensive adherence to formal legal frameworks.

Recruitment strategies are heavily reliant on community outreach programs and referrals from previous workers, underscoring the importance of personal networks and grassroots engagement. These methods are also perceived as the most effective for candidate acquisition, highlighting the power of trust and word-of-mouth in attracting new migrants. While online job portals are utilized, they are not the primary channel, possibly due to varying digital literacy and access. Regarding recruitment processes, pre-employment medical examinations and initial application screening are the most common steps. However, a significant portion of agencies (19%) reported having no standardized recruitment process, raising concerns about consistency and thoroughness. Furthermore, there is a relatively low emphasis on robust background checks like reference verification.

When selecting migrant workers, agencies prioritize practical attributes: language proficiency and work experience are deemed most critical, while formal educational qualifications are given minimal importance. This pragmatic approach focuses on immediate job suitability and adaptation in a foreign environment. Agencies largely ensure fairness and transparency through providing clear information and open communication, followed by conducting regular internal audits. While legal adherence

and staff training are recognized, their lower frequency suggests that practical information dissemination and oversight are the primary focus.

All agencies confirm offering mandatory pre-departure orientation and training programs, indicating high compliance with regulations. However, the content of these programs is heavily skewed towards job-specific skills and cultural adaptation, with minimal coverage of crucial protective aspects such as legal rights, workplace safety, financial literacy, and grievance mechanisms. This suggests a significant gap in equipping migrants with comprehensive knowledge for their safety and well-being. The primary method for ensuring understanding of this training is through government competency certification, with less reliance on agency-specific assessments.

Finally, agencies identify systemic obstacles to their effectiveness, with the "lack of clear legal frameworks and regulations" and "unethical practices by employers or intermediaries in destination countries" being the most significant. They also cite "limited resources and funding" for comprehensive screening and training. To address these challenges, agencies overwhelmingly call for "empowering embassies by assigning labour attachés" and "proper laws and uniform directives with capacitated government officials." They also recognize the need for their own "capacity building" and for "producing competitive workers with skills and language."

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented and analysed the results derived from the survey questionnaires administered to migrant recruitment agencies across Ethiopia and provides a quantitative data-driven foundation for the study's conclusions and recommendations, ensuring they are grounded in empirical evidence from the field. The quantitative findings paint a picture of a burgeoning yet resource-constrained migrant recruitment sector in Ethiopia. While agencies demonstrate a commitment to worker protection and transparency in their stated values and some practices, significant vulnerabilities persist due to limited human resource capacity, inconsistent standardized processes, and a notable underemphasis on critical protective topics in pre-departure training. The agencies themselves highlight systemic issues, particularly regulatory gaps and challenges in destination countries, underscoring the need for multi-stakeholder interventions, especially stronger governmental oversight,

enhanced diplomatic support, and targeted capacity building for agencies, to ensure safer and more ethical labour migration pathways for Ethiopian citizens.

The next chapter offers a detailed qualitative complement to the statistical findings, drawing on insights from six Focus Group Discussions and 40 Key Informant Interviews with key actors in Ethiopia's migrant recruitment sector—including government officials, agency representatives, migrant workers, trade unions, employers, and civil society organisations. Through this rich dataset, the chapter explores the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges surrounding Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), while also capturing stakeholder-driven recommendations for improving migrant protection and ethical recruitment practices.

## **CHAPTER 6: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 6 presents a comprehensive overview and in-depth analysis of the results obtained from qualitative data collection efforts. Complementing the quantitative data discussed in Chapter 5, this chapter provides the rich findings from the qualitative data, which was collected through 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 40 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with critical stakeholders in the migrant recruitment sector in Ethiopia such as representatives of the Ethiopian government, Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF), migrant workers, trade unions, employers, and civil society organizations.

The qualitative analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the perspectives, lived experiences, persistent challenges, and suggested potential improvements related to the multifaceted role of migrant recruitment agencies in protecting migrant workers' rights and ensuring safer, more dignified migration pathways. This qualitative exploration adds depth and context to the statistical findings, offering a comprehensive view of the subject matter.

The findings reveal that weak regulatory enforcement and high transaction costs borne by migrants reflect the dynamics of New Institutional Economics (NIE), where institutional failure systematically externalizes risks onto workers. At the same time, the role of brokers, kinship ties, and community networks illustrates the mechanisms described by Social Network Theory, showing how interpersonal connections both facilitate migration opportunities and perpetuate vulnerabilities.

The discussion that follows is aligned with the topics and questions as set out in the Focus Group Interview Guide (see Appendix 2) and the sections and questions as set out in the Key Informant Interview guide (see Appendix 3). The data analysis took place in terms of the questions posed and offers critical insights into various foundational aspects of participants perspectives, challenges and issues faced by agencies, improving capacity and practice and role of stakeholders collectively contributing to a foundational understanding of the current landscape, structural attributes, and operational capacity of these agencies within the Ethiopian labour

migration sector. The findings from each data collection method (FGDs and KIIs) are presented separately before a comprehensive comparative analysis is provided.

## **6.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) FINDINGS**

This section presents a synthesis of the findings from the six FGDs, which included migrant workers, employers, trade union representatives, government officials, the Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation, and civil society organisation representatives. The discussion is structured according to the topics and questions from the FGD guide. The responses from each FGD are detailed to provide a clearer picture of their specific experiences and perspectives. The following pseudonyms are used to reflect the different views of the representatives in the 6 focus groups and numbers were assigned to distinguish between the different respondents:

- Civil Society Organizations: CS
- Employers: EM
- EOAAF (Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation): EO
- Government Official: GO
- Migrant worker: MW
- Trade Unions: TU

### **6.2.1 Topic 1: Understanding Participants' Perspectives (Appendix 2 - Question 2)**

This sub-section presents qualitative data obtained during the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and addresses Research Objective 1 and Research Question 1, focusing on investigating the current state, roles, and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, as well as the institutional frameworks from the perspective of various stakeholders. It presents the perspectives of each FGD group regarding the role, effectiveness and perceived fairness of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The analysis follows the structure of the FGD guide, focusing on:

- Experiences with agencies
- Attitudes toward agency protection
- Gender and socioeconomic differences

#### **FGD1: MIGRANT WORKERS**

##### **Experiences with Agencies:**

Migrant workers described a mix of positive and negative experiences. Some participants appreciated the logistical support provided by agencies, especially in arranging travel and initial employment. However, the majority expressed disappointment, citing unmet expectations and a lack of post-departure support.

*“The agencies are a double-edged sword. They get us jobs, but we’re often left to fend for ourselves once we arrive.” (MW5)*

### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

Most migrant workers were sceptical about the agencies’ commitment to protecting their rights. They felt agencies prioritised profit over welfare, rarely followed up after deployment, and failed to intervene in cases of abuse.

*“They care more about the commission than our safety. Once you’re gone, you’re no longer their problem.” (MW3)*

### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

Female participants highlighted greater vulnerability, citing inadequate pre-departure training and a lack of gender-sensitive support. Socioeconomic status also played a role, with lower-income participants feeling pressured to accept any job, regardless of conditions.

*“I had no choice but to go with the first offer I received.” (MW4)*

## **FGD2: EMPLOYERS**

### **Experiences with Agencies:**

Employers acknowledged the importance of agencies in addressing labour shortages but expressed frustration with inefficiencies in the recruitment process.

*“We want to hire Ethiopian workers, but the process is slow and complicated compared to other countries.” (EM2)*

### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

Employers generally believed that agencies should ensure worker safety and fair treatment but noted gaps in agency capacity and communication.

*“We’ve had cases where the agency didn’t prepare the worker well, and it caused problems for everyone.” (EM3)*

### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

Employers observed that female workers, especially in domestic roles, faced higher risks of exploitation. They also noted that workers from rural or poorer backgrounds often lacked basic skills and information.

### **FGD3: TRADE UNIONS**

#### **Experiences with Agencies:**

Trade union representatives were critical of agencies, emphasising frequent reports of rights violations and lack of accountability. Allegations of bribery within official bodies to expedite processes added another layer of concern, highlighting the need for greater transparency and accountability.

*“You can’t get anything done unless you pay someone under the table. It’s an open secret.” (TU2)*

#### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

The majority of the Trade Union representatives argued that agencies should be held responsible for monitoring employment conditions and intervening when issues arise but doubted their willingness to do so. A recurring concern from trade union representatives was the widespread reliance on informal recruiters, especially in rural areas where licensed agencies are concentrated in urban centres like Addis Ababa. This reliance was seen to undermine transparency and increase vulnerability to exploitation. Informal channels were frequently associated with misinformation, inflated fees, and deceptive job offers. Participants noted that while some communities place trust in these informal actors, their involvement often leads to rights violations and trafficking risks. Trade union representatives emphasised that the use of informal recruiters persists largely due to gaps in formal outreach and the absence of accessible licensed agencies in remote regions.

#### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

Trade union representatives were emphatic about the heightened risks faced by specific groups of migrants, particularly focusing on female domestic workers and low-income migrants. Trade unions highlighted the vulnerability of female workers and the additional barriers faced by migrants from low-income backgrounds. They pointed out the exposure of female domestic workers to exploitation and abuse. The representatives also stressed the additional barriers faced by migrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, noting that their limited economic options often pressure

them to accept any job, irrespective of the working conditions. This vulnerability is further amplified by structural issues, such as the reliance on informal recruiters in rural areas where licensed agencies are absent, leading to increased risk of rights violations and trafficking. The overall system, in the view of the unions, often prioritizes profit over welfare, confirming their perspective:

*"Many of us believe that profit-driven motives often outweigh the welfare of workers. Our personal experiences and the constant reports of rights violations confirm this" (TU2)*

#### **FGD4: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

##### **Experiences with Agencies:**

Government officials recognised the logistical role of agencies but acknowledged significant gaps in oversight and worker protection.

*"We know there are good agencies, but many just focus on business, not on the welfare of the workers." (GO1)*

##### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

Government officials admitted that regulatory capacity is limited and that agencies often operate with minimal monitoring. They readily acknowledged that while they recognized the essential logistical role of PrEAs, there are significant failures in their Attitudes Toward Agency Protection. Officials confessed that the government's regulatory capacity is limited and that agencies are often allowed to operate with minimal monitoring. This structural weakness leads to a critical gap where many agencies "just focus on business, not on the welfare of the workers".

They substantiated this claim by highlighting practical breakdowns in oversight, noting that the government's capacity to both monitor and enforce standards is limited. This lack of enforcement means that agencies can often re-register under new names to avoid penalties, allowing bad actors to continue operating. Moreover, the officials recognized that the consequence of this limited oversight is a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable groups, confirming that women and the poor are disproportionately affected by weak agency practices and a lack of support. Female domestic workers were specifically identified as highly vulnerable, often receiving inadequate pre-departure training and lacking post-departure support tailored to their specific risks. The officials summarized their constrained position by stating,

*"We need to do more, but we are stretched thin" (GO3)*

### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

Officials stated that women and the poor are disproportionately affected by weak agency practices and a lack of support. Female domestic workers were identified as particularly vulnerable, often receiving inadequate pre-departure training and lacking post-departure support tailored to their specific risks. Participants noted that women employed in private households abroad face heightened exposure to exploitation, isolation, and abuse.

### **FGD5: EOFAF (ETHIOPIA OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES FEDERATION)**

#### **Experiences with Agencies:**

EOFAF representatives defended the role of agencies, emphasising efforts to comply with government guidelines and improve practices.

*"We want to follow the guidelines from the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS), but the data is often unreliable, so we have to rely on brokers and recommendations." (EO1)*

#### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

EOFAF representatives acknowledged the systemic challenges within the sector yet stressed that many agencies are striving to improve their protective practices despite these obstacles. They argued that the fundamental problem is not a lack of willingness but the competitive nature of the recruitment industry. This intense competition, they noted, often forces agencies into a race to the bottom, incentivizing cost-cutting measures that ultimately compromise worker welfare. Specifically, the Federation highlighted that narrow profit margins limit the funds available for crucial long-term support, which is necessary to ensure the safety and follow-up of migrants once they are deployed. This economic reality directly hinders the agencies' capacity to offer sustained worker protection, confirming the trade-off they face:

*"We're forced to lower our fees to stay in business, but that means we can't afford to follow up with every worker". (EO3)*

### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

EOEAF recognized the need and necessity for more gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches but cited resource constraints as the primary barrier to implementing them effectively. A major structural impediment they identified is the geographic concentration of licensed agencies in urban centres like Addis Ababa. This creates a severe trust deficit with rural communities and forces agencies to rely on informal recruiters to access most of the migrant pool, leading to higher risks of exploitation. This lack of regional presence particularly harms the poorest migrants and was summarized by the EOEAF's observation that

*"People in the regions don't trust agencies from Addis. They'd rather deal with someone they know, even if it's risky". (EO2)*

Furthermore, the EOEAF pointed out a gendered pattern in migration channels: while women tend to migrate through formal, legal channels for domestic work, male migrants often resort to irregular routes for employment in other sectors due to a lack of formal options, increasing their exposure to exploitation. This difference was noted as a critical vulnerability:

*"Most of our female recruits go through legal channels, but the men often disappear into informal networks with a lack of options in the regular avenue". (EO4)*

## **FGD6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Experiences with Agencies:**

CSO participants were highly critical, highlighting the risks posed by informal recruiters and the lack of effective government intervention.

*"Agencies can't reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap." (CS1)*

### **Attitudes Toward Agency Protection:**

CSO participants were extremely critical of the current system, arguing forcefully that migrant recruitment agencies are not sufficiently accountable and that a more robust oversight mechanism is desperately needed. This lack of accountability was seen as directly fuelling the risks of exploitation, particularly because government intervention was described as inadequate. A major point of contention was the structural barrier of agency concentration in urban centers, which forces rural migrants to rely on dangerous, informal recruiters. This geographical gap means agencies are ineffective

in large parts of the country, a failure that CSOs argue undermines the entire regulatory framework:

*“Agencies can’t reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap” (CS1).*

Furthermore, CSOs criticized government monitoring, believing it to be inconsistent and reactive rather than proactive. They argued that true accountability is absent when oversight focuses on superficial compliance:

*“The Ministry checks paperwork, but they don’t know what’s really happening. There’s no real accountability” (CS2).*

### **Gender and Socioeconomic Differences:**

CSOs placed a strong emphasis on the intersectional risks that disproportionately affect certain groups, particularly women and the poor, and called for targeted interventions. They highlighted the heightened risks for women and the poor, noting that these migrants often face the greatest danger due to inadequate agency practices, lack of information, and limited access to support services. This focus led CSOs to advocate for a fundamentally inclusive, gender-sensitive, and rights-based approach to migration governance. Their emphasis on targeted interventions reflected the understanding that generic policies are insufficient to protect low-income female domestic workers, who are exposed to severe vulnerability in isolated private households. To address this, CSOs recommended a formalised role for civil society in training, legal aid, and reintegration support.

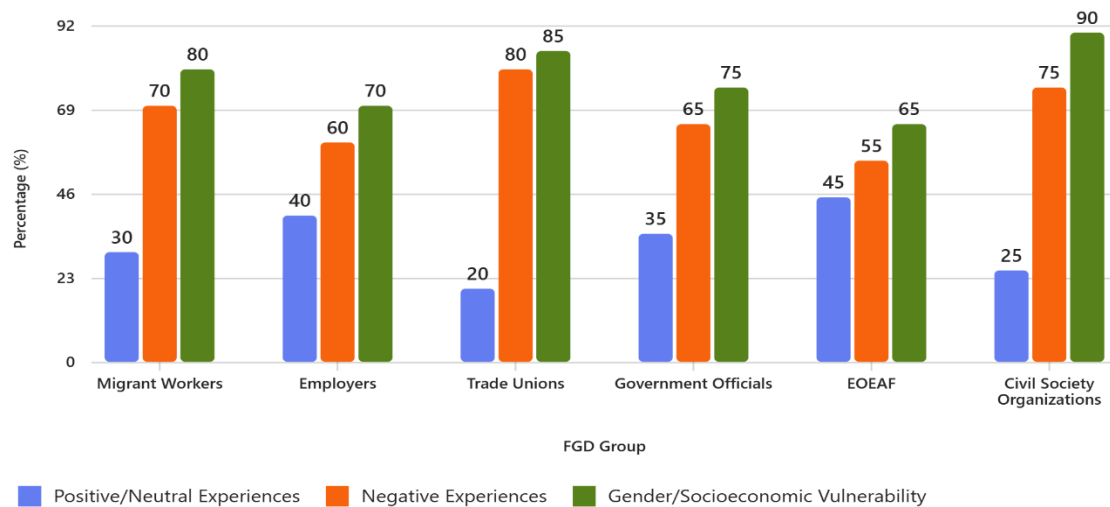
### **COMPARISON ACROSS FGD GROUPS**

- **Consensus:** All groups recognised the logistical importance of agencies but agreed that significant challenges remain regarding worker protection, especially for women and low-income migrants.
- **Divergence:**
  - Migrant workers, trade unions, and CSOs were the most critical, citing exploitation and lack of support.
  - Employers and EOFAF acknowledged problems but emphasised systemic and resource constraints.
  - Government officials admitted regulatory weaknesses and the need for stronger oversight.

- **Gender and Socioeconomic Focus:** All groups identified women and the poor as particularly vulnerable, though the level of emphasis varied.

Figure 6.1 below visually compares the perspectives of each FGD group on migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, highlighting three key dimensions: positive or neutral experiences, negative experiences, and emphasis on gender or socioeconomic vulnerability.

*Figure 6.1 FGD Participant's Perspective*



The graph clearly shows that negative experiences and concerns about vulnerability are dominant across most groups, especially among migrant workers, trade unions, and civil society organisations. Employers and EOEAF display a more balanced view, acknowledging both challenges and some positive aspects, while government officials recognise the logistical role of agencies but also admit significant gaps in oversight and protection. This visualisation underscores the broad consensus on the need for improved worker protection, with particular attention to the heightened risks faced by women and low-income migrants.

### 6.2.2 Topic 2: Challenges and Issues Faced by Agencies (Appendix 2 - Question 3)

The findings discussed here relate directly to Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, which explore the gaps, problems, and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies within the Ethiopian context. This sub-section summarises the

challenges and systemic issues identified by each FGD group regarding the performance and accountability of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia's migration sector. The analysis follows the FGD guide, focusing on:

- Main responsibilities and functions of agencies
- Capacity to protect workers
- Specific challenges and rights violations
- Contributing factors (internal and external)

## **FGD1: MIGRANT WORKERS**

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

Migrant workers reported frequent contract deception, with actual working conditions and wages differing from what was promised.

*“I was told I’d be working in a hotel, but I ended up cleaning private homes with no days off.” (MW4)*

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

Workers felt agencies were poorly equipped to protect their rights, especially after departure.

*“Once I left the country, the agency stopped answering my calls. I had no one to turn to.” (MW2)*

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Lack of transparency in financial dealings
- Inadequate pre-departure orientation
- Bureaucratic hurdles and delays
- Reliance on informal recruiters, especially in rural areas

## **FGD2: EMPLOYERS**

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

Employers cited inefficiencies in the recruitment process, including delays and poor communication.

*“We try to help our workers, but without embassy support, our hands are tied.”*  
(EM2)

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

Employers noted that agencies often failed to prepare workers adequately, leading to misunderstandings and workplace issues.

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Lack of IT expertise and legal knowledge among agency staff
- Disconnect between recruitment and actual employment conditions
- Limited government support in destination countries

## **FGD3: TRADE UNIONS**

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

Trade unions highlighted widespread rights violations, including wage theft, contract substitution, and a lack of grievance mechanisms.

*“The system is so slow and expensive that people would rather take the risk and go informally.”* (TU1)

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

They argued that agencies rarely follow up with workers and are not held accountable for abuses.

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Excessive administrative processes
- Weak regulatory oversight
- Profit-driven motives overshadowing worker welfare

## **FGD4: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

### **Main responsibilities and functions of agencies**

The primary functions and responsibilities of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in the Ethiopian labour migration context are mandated by Proclamation No. 923/2016 and subsequent amendments, as well as international fair recruitment guidelines.

These responsibilities are critical across the entire migration cycle. Specifically, PrEAs are tasked with ensuring ethical recruitment, which includes providing prospective migrant workers with accurate and complete information about the job, working conditions, and legal rights. They are legally responsible for facilitating safe and legal travel, obtaining verified employment contracts, and delivering comprehensive Pre-Departure Orientation. Crucially, their protective function extends beyond deployment, requiring them to proactively monitor the welfare of the worker in the destination country, manage grievances effectively, and facilitate safe and timely repatriation, when necessary, all while adhering to the principle of "Employer Pays."

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

Officials acknowledged the existence of many licensed agencies but noted that new agencies often lack awareness and capacity.

*"We know there are good agencies, but many just focus on business, not on the welfare of the workers." (GO1)*

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

Government capacity to monitor and enforce standards is limited, and agencies often re-register under new names to avoid penalties.

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Evolving but still weak regulatory environment
- Limited resources for monitoring and enforcement
- Disconnect between recruitment and employment concerns

## **FGD5: EOEAF**

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

The concentration of PrEAs in Addis Ababa was seen as a major barrier to equitable recruitment. To reach potential migrants in rural areas, agencies frequently rely on informal recruiters, whose exploitative practices undermine the integrity of the system. The trust deficit between rural communities and urban-based agencies further complicates outreach efforts. EOEAF representatives noted,

*"People in the regions don't trust agencies from Addis. They'd rather deal with someone they know, even if it's risky."*

EOEAF representatives pointed to unreliable data and the need to rely on brokers, which undermines transparency.

*“PrEAs want to follow the guidelines from MoLS, but the data is often unreliable, so they have to rely on brokers and recommendations.” (EO1)*

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

They acknowledged that not all agencies prioritise worker welfare and that profit pressures can lead to unethical practices. The competitive nature of the recruitment industry was noted as a double-edged sword. While competition can drive innovation, it also incentivises cost-cutting measures that compromise worker protection. Agencies reported that reduced commissions and narrow profit margins limit their ability to invest in long-term support services.

*“We’re forced to lower our fees to stay in business, but that means we can’t afford to follow up with every worker.” (EO3)*

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Narrow profit margins and competition
- Lack of trust between agencies and rural communities
- Limited staff and resources

## **FGD6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Main Challenges Experienced:**

CSOs emphasised the risks posed by informal recruiters and the lack of regional agency offices.

*“Agencies can’t reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap.” (CS1)*

### **Capacity to Protect Workers:**

They argued that agencies are not sufficiently accountable and that government intervention is inadequate.

### **Contributing Factors:**

- Poorly implemented digitisation and training programs
- Corruption and hidden costs

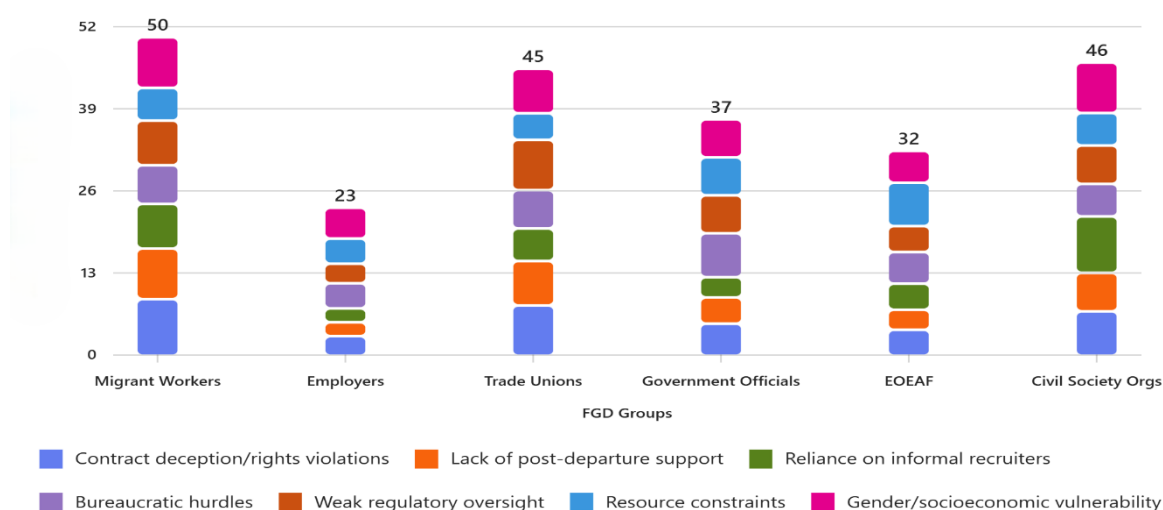
- Lack of practical skills and language training for migrants

#### *COMPARISON ACROSS FGD GROUPS*

- **Consensus:** All groups identified significant challenges in the recruitment ecosystem, including contract deception, lack of post-departure support, and reliance on informal recruiters.
- **Divergence:**
  - Migrant workers and trade unions focused on rights violations and a lack of agency accountability.
  - Employers and EOAAF emphasised systemic and resource constraints, including government inefficiencies.
  - CSOs highlighted the gap in regional coverage and the dangers of informal recruitment.
  - Government officials admitted regulatory and monitoring limitations.
- **Contributing Factors:**
  - Bureaucratic hurdles, profit pressures, weak oversight, and lack of trust were recurring themes.
  - Gender and socioeconomic vulnerabilities were noted by all, with women and the poor facing the greatest risks.

The bar chart below (Figure 6.2) visually compares the main challenges and contributing factors identified by each Focus Group Discussion (FGD) group regarding Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia. Each FGD group - Migrant Workers, Employers, Trade Unions, Government Officials, EOAAF, and Civil Society Organizations - is represented by a bar divided into coloured segments, with each colour corresponding to a specific issue such as contract deception, lack of post-departure support, reliance on informal recruiters, bureaucratic hurdles, weak regulatory oversight, resource constraints, and gender/socioeconomic vulnerability. The height of each segment reflects the relative emphasis placed on that issue by the group.

*Figure 6.2 Challenges and Issues Faced by Agencies*



This visualisation highlights both the common and unique concerns of each stakeholder group, showing, for example, that Migrant Workers and Civil Society Organisations place strong emphasis on gender and socioeconomic vulnerability, while Employers and Government Officials are more concerned with bureaucratic and regulatory challenges. The chart effectively summarises the complex landscape of challenges facing PrEAs from multiple perspectives.

### 6.2.3 Topic 3: Improving Capacity and Practice (Appendix 2 - Question 4)

This section explores the suggestions and reflections of each FGD group on how to strengthen the capacity and practices of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia to address Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3 and examines into the practices and suggested improvements for protecting the safety and rights of migrants and their families, as identified through stakeholder narratives.

The analysis follows the FGD guide, focusing on:

- Organisational and managerial improvements
- Policy and regulatory needs
- Learning from international best practices

#### FGD1: MIGRANT WORKERS

##### Organisational and Managerial Improvements:

Migrant workers emphasised the need for agencies to provide comprehensive and practical pre-departure training, ideally led by returnees who understand the realities

abroad. The lack of adequate pre-departure information was seen as a critical gap. Migrants often departed without a clear understanding of their rights, cultural expectations, or contractual obligations, leaving them vulnerable to abuse. Returnees advocated for improved training programs that focus on practical skills and language, ideally delivered by individuals with lived experience.

*“Let returnees lead the sessions. They know what it’s really like.” (MW6)*

This approach was seen as more authentic and effective than generic orientation programs facilitated by MoLS, which often fail to prepare migrants for the realities of life abroad.

### **Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

Streamlining legal migration processes was seen as a practical way to reduce reliance on informal channels by migrant workers. Participants described the current system as slow, expensive, and opaque.

*“If legal migration were easier, fewer people would risk going through brokers.”*  
(MW3)

Workers called for greater transparency in recruitment costs and contracts, and for agencies to maintain regular communication after deployment.

*“They said it was free, but I paid for everything—medical, training, even the certificate of competency.” (MW2)*

### **Learning from Others:**

Participants suggested learning from countries like the Philippines, which offer strong pre-departure training and support systems.

## **FGD2: EMPLOYERS**

### **Organisational and Managerial Improvements:**

Employers stressed the importance of better vetting and preparation of workers, including language and job-specific skills.

*“We need to teach rights, culture, and language—not just how to behave.”*  
(EM5)

**Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

They advocated for standardised, bilingual contracts and more stringent licensing requirements for agencies.

**Learning from Others:**

Employers recommended adopting digital recruitment platforms and learning from countries with efficient migration systems.

**FGD3: TRADE UNIONS****Organisational and Managerial Improvements:**

Trade unions called for mandatory legal and ethical training for agency staff and regular inspections to ensure compliance.

*“Agencies should be checked every six months. Not just when there’s a scandal.” (TU3)*

**Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

They urged for clearer laws outlining agency responsibilities and stronger penalties for misconduct.

**Learning from Others:**

Trade unions highlighted the need to adapt best practices from countries with robust migrant protection frameworks.

**FGD4: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS****Organisational and Managerial Improvements:**

Officials recognised the need for capacity-building programs for agencies, focusing on case management and legal compliance.

*“Our staff need legal training and case management skills. Right now, they just process documents.” (GO6)*

**Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia enacted the new Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025 to significantly reform and enhance the governance of labour migration. This legislative step was necessitated by persistent systemic challenges that have compromised the safety, rights, and dignity of Ethiopian migrant

workers, as documented in various national assessments. The latest reform, Proclamation No. 1389/2025, represents a comprehensive overhaul of Ethiopia's overseas employment governance. It repeals Proclamation No. 923/2016 and its Amendment No. 1246/2021, consolidating fragmented provisions and introducing new systems, standards, and institutional mechanisms. Government officials called for additional policy reforms and proper implementation of the proclamation to clarify agency roles and enhance monitoring mechanisms.

### **Learning from Others:**

Officials suggested benchmarking Ethiopia's system against successful labour-sending countries and leveraging digital tools for oversight.

### **FGD5: EOAAF**

#### **Organisational and Managerial Improvements:**

EOAAF representatives advocated for investment in staff training and expansion of agency offices to rural areas.

*"If agencies had offices in the regions, people wouldn't rely on brokers."* (EO2)

#### **Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

They supported the introduction of standardised contracts and regular audits.

### **Learning from Others:**

EOAAF emphasised the value of learning from international models, especially regarding digital tracking and complaint systems.

### **FGD6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Organisational and Managerial Improvements:**

CSOs called for agencies to collaborate with civil society for training and support, and to establish clear feedback mechanisms for migrants.

*"We need a dashboard where workers can log complaints, and we can respond transparently. It would help everyone."* (CS2)

#### **Policy and Regulatory Needs:**

They advocated for more inclusive and gender-sensitive policies, and for the government to enforce accountability.

## Learning from Others:

CSOs recommended adapting the comprehensive support systems used in countries like India and the Philippines. The participants encouraged learning from successful labour-sending countries such as the Philippines and India. These nations were praised for their strong bilateral agreements, institutional support, and comprehensive training programs.

*“The Philippines has a whole department for migrant workers. We need that.”*  
(CS5)

*“India trains its workers well. We should learn from them.”* (CS8)

Adapting best practices related to pre-departure training, welfare support, and diplomatic engagement was seen as a promising path forward.

## COMPARISON ACROSS FGD GROUPS

- **Consensus:** All groups agreed on the need for improved training, greater transparency, and stronger regulatory oversight.
- **Divergence:**
  - Migrant workers and CSOs emphasised practical, lived-experience-based training and ongoing support.
  - Employers and EOFAF focused on skill development and digitalisation.
  - Trade unions and government officials stressed legal compliance and regular inspections.
- **Learning from Others:** There was broad support for adapting international best practices, especially from countries with established migrant protection systems.

*Table 6.1 Summary of recommendations on improving capacity and practice.*

| Layer | Focus | Key Recommendations |
|-------|-------|---------------------|
|-------|-------|---------------------|

|                     |                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Top Layer</b>    | Policy & Long-Term Goals              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced Regulatory Oversight</li> <li>• Policy Reform</li> <li>• Learning from Global Best Practices</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| <b>Middle Layer</b> | Operational & Structural Improvements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger Communication &amp; Support Systems</li> <li>• Improved Vetting of Foreign Employers</li> <li>• Expanding Geographic Presence</li> <li>• Standardised Contracts</li> </ul> |
| <b>Foundation</b>   | Immediate & Foundational Needs        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive Pre-Departure Training</li> <li>• Transparency in Financial Dealings</li> <li>• Staff Training &amp; Capacity Building</li> </ul>                                     |

#### 6.2.4 Topic 4: Role of Stakeholders (Appendix 2 - Question 5)

This sub-section addresses Research Objective 4 and Research Question 4 by examining the roles of different actors in determining the effectiveness of the legal and regulatory policies and frameworks that govern migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The sub-section examines how each FGD group perceives the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including government, civil society, employers, and international organisations in protecting migrant workers and improving the recruitment ecosystem.

#### FGD1: MIGRANT WORKERS

##### Government's Role:

Migrant workers emphasised the need for stronger government oversight and more accessible support services, especially in destination countries.

*“Other countries have people at the embassy to help. We feel alone when there's a problem.” (MW6)*

##### Civil Society and International Bodies:

Participants valued the support of NGOs and international organisations but noted that their reach is limited, especially in rural areas.

**Employer Responsibility:**

Workers stressed that employers abroad must be held accountable for contract terms and fair treatment.

*“My contract said eight hours, but I worked twelve. No one cared.” (MW5)*

**FGD2: EMPLOYERS****Government’s Role:**

Employers called for more efficient and transparent government processes, especially regarding documentation and communication with destination countries.

*“If the Ministry worked faster, we could hire more people legally.” (EM2)*

**Civil Society and International Bodies:**

Employers saw value in collaboration with CSOs for training and awareness but felt that agencies and government should lead.

**Employer Responsibility:**

They acknowledged their duty to provide safe and fair working conditions but highlighted challenges in monitoring workers’ well-being after deployment.

**FGD3: TRADE UNIONS****Government’s Role:**

Trade unions advocated for regular inspections, stricter enforcement of labour laws, and the appointment of labour attachés in embassies.

*“Other countries have labour attachés. We have silence.” (TU4)*

**Civil Society and International Bodies:**

They emphasised the importance of CSOs in legal aid and advocacy, calling for formal partnerships with agencies and government.

**Employer Responsibility:**

Trade unions insisted that employers must respect contracts and provide grievance mechanisms for workers.

**FGD4: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

**Government's Role:**

Officials recognised their central role in regulation, monitoring, and policy reform. They admitted current limitations in capacity and resources.

*"We need to do more, but we are stretched thin." (GO3)*

**Civil Society and International Bodies:**

Officials acknowledged the contributions of CSOs and international partners, especially in training and advocacy.

**Employer Responsibility:**

They stressed the need for bilateral agreements to ensure employer accountability in destination countries.

**FGD5: EOFAF****Government's Role:**

EOFAF representatives called for more strategic collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Skills and better support for the Federation's capacity-building efforts.

*"The Federation should be Private Employment Agencies' advocate, but right now it's understaffed and underfunded." (EO3)*

**Civil Society and International Bodies:**

They saw potential in working with CSOs but noted that trust and coordination are lacking.

**Employer Responsibility:**

EOFAF emphasised the importance of vetting employers and maintaining communication channels for reporting abuse.

**FGD6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS****Government's Role:**

CSOs urged the government to enforce regulations, conduct public awareness campaigns, and invest in labour attachés abroad.

*"People in rural areas don't know the difference between legal and irregular migration. We need to inform them before they leave." (EO5)*

### **Civil Society and International Bodies:**

They advocated for a more formalised role for CSOs in training, legal aid, and reintegration support.

### **Employer Responsibility:**

CSOs called for clear grievance mechanisms and strict enforcement of labour standards for employers.

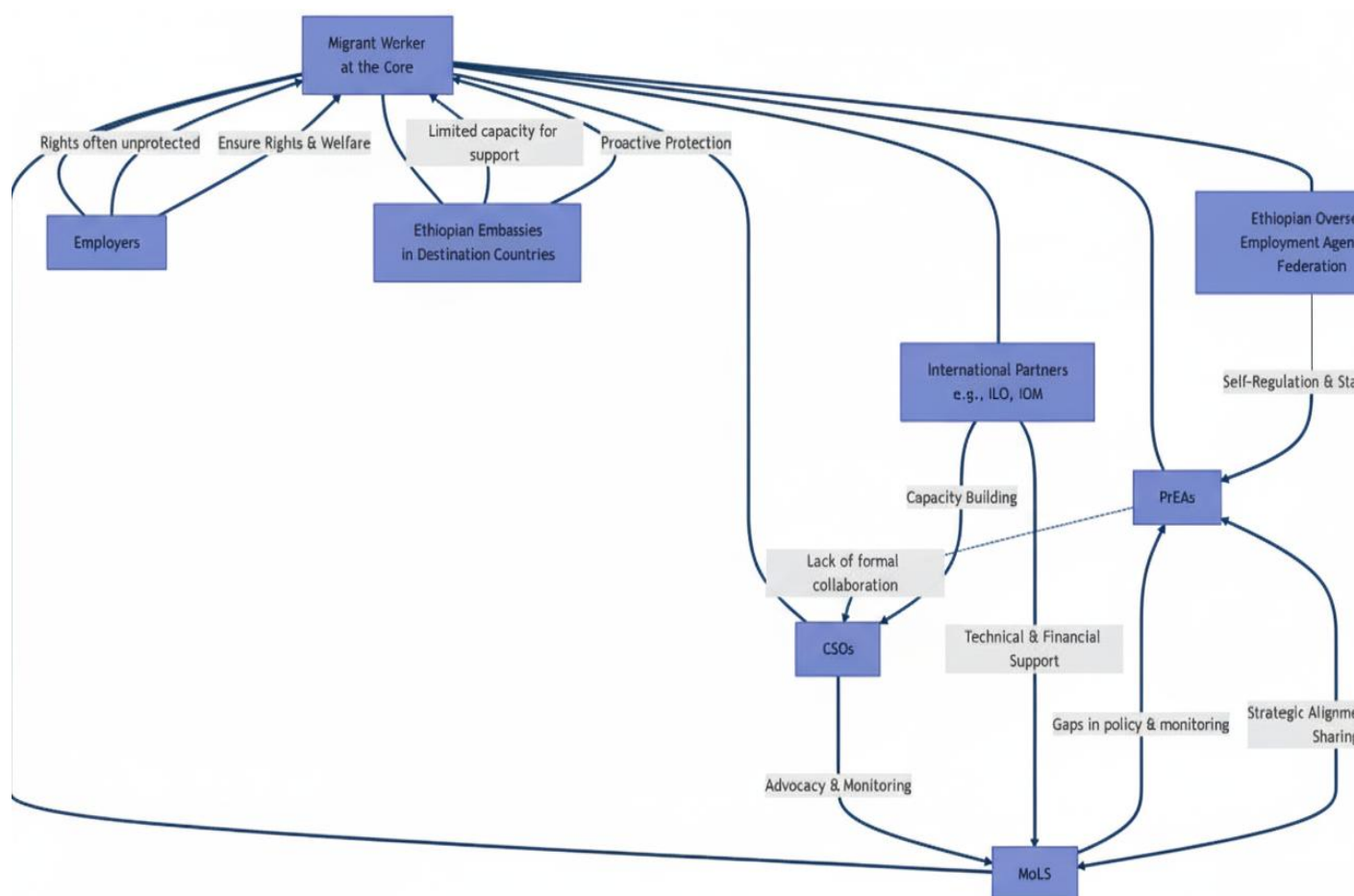
### *COMPARISON ACROSS FGD GROUPS*

- **Consensus:** All groups agreed that protecting migrant workers requires coordinated action among government, agencies, employers, CSOs, and international partners.
- **Divergence:**
  - Migrant workers and CSOs emphasised the need for government presence and support in destination countries.
  - Employers and EOFAF focused on process efficiency and better collaboration with the government.
  - Trade unions and CSOs stressed the importance of legal aid, advocacy, and employer accountability.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** There was broad support for stronger partnerships, digital feedback mechanisms, and public awareness campaigns.

Figure 6.3 below visually encapsulates the central argument that the protection of migrant workers is a shared responsibility requiring a cohesive, multi-stakeholder approach. Placing the migrant worker at the core, the map illustrates both the existing fragilities and the necessary collaborations within the system. The dashed line represents critical gaps and current failures, such as the lack of formal collaboration between private employment agencies (PrEAs) and civil society or the limited capacity of embassies, which leave workers vulnerable. Conversely, the solid and circular arrows chart the path toward a reformed system, outlining essential relationships defined by strategic alignment, data sharing, proactive protection, and accountability. Ultimately, the diagram serves as a blueprint, moving from a siloed model to an

integrated network where all actors have a clear and coordinated role in ensuring migrant worker safety and rights.

*Figure 6.3. Stakeholders' Ecosystem and role for migrants' protection*



## 6.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIs): RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the perspectives of key informants from six stakeholder groups, following the structure of the interview guide. Each topic is analysed by group, with a comparative summary at the end.

### 6.3.1 Topic 1: Understanding Participants' Perspectives (Appendix 3 – Session 1)

#### KII1: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

**Role and Perceptions:**

Officials recognized the logistical importance of PrEAs but expressed concern about inconsistent standards and weak monitoring.

*“We know there are good agencies, but many just focus on business, not on the welfare of the workers.” (GO1)*

**Regulatory Context:**

They acknowledged the need for stronger oversight and more effective implementation of existing regulations.

**KII2: MIGRANT WORKERS****Experiences and Attitudes:**

Migrant workers echoed FGD findings, describing agencies as necessary but unreliable in protecting their rights. Feelings of abandonment were widespread among returnee migrant workers, who described how agencies often ceased communication and support once the worker had departed Ethiopia. In cases of abuse, contract disputes, or emergencies, migrants found themselves without recourse or assistance.

*“Once I left the country, the agency stopped answering my calls. I had no one to turn to.” (MW2)*

**Vulnerability:**

They highlighted the lack of support, especially for women and low-income migrants.

**KII3: EOFAF****Federation’s View:**

EOFAF representatives defended the sector’s efforts to comply with regulations but admitted that some agencies prioritize profit over protection.

*“We want to follow the guidelines from MoLS, but the data is often unreliable, so we have to rely on brokers and recommendations. We also came across some agencies which prioritise profit but they are not representative of most agencies which work tirelessly to ensure protection of migrants” (EO1)*

**Challenges:**

They cited resource constraints and the need for better data and coordination.

**KII4: TRADE UNIONS****Critical Perspective:**

Trade union informants were highly critical, emphasizing frequent reports of exploitation and lack of accountability. While agencies are not legally permitted to charge recruitment fees to workers, hidden costs associated with mandatory certifications and informal recruiter fees were acknowledged.

*“Many of us believe that profit-driven motives often outweigh the welfare of workers. Our personal experiences and the constant reports of rights violations confirm this.” (TU2)*

**Advocacy:**

They called for agencies to be held responsible for ongoing worker protection.

**KII5: EMPLOYERS****Employer Perspective:**

Employers valued the role of agencies in recruitment but noted inefficiencies and skill gaps among workers.

*“We’ve had cases where the agency didn’t prepare the worker well, and it caused problems for everyone.” (EM3)*

**Responsibility:**

The Employers offered a nuanced perspective on their own Responsibility within the protection framework. They explicitly acknowledged their role in ensuring fair treatment—including timely wages and safe working environments—recognizing a basic duty of care under their contracts.

However, this acknowledgment was immediately qualified by the significant challenges they face in monitoring workers abroad, particularly once they are deployed into private households. Employers pointed out that the isolated nature of domestic work creates a "black box" where the ability of any external party, including the employer or the recruitment agency, to ensure continuous protection is extremely limited. They further argued that their difficulties were compounded by the recruitment agencies' frequent failure to provide adequate post-placement support, forcing

employers to manage issues that should be mediated by the agency. Ultimately, employers implied that their ability to fulfill their protective role hinges on a better-functioning system, summarizing the difficulty in ensuring sustained protection:

*"We hire them, and we pay them, but it is very difficult for us or the agency to truly check on them once they are inside a private house." (EM3)*

## **KII6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

### **CSO Perspective:**

CSOs were critical of both agencies and the government, citing the risks posed by informal recruiters and lack of effective intervention.

*"Agencies can't reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap." (CS1)*

### **Focus:**

They emphasised the need for more inclusive, gender-sensitive, and rights-based approaches.

### **Comparison Across KII Groups:**

- All groups recognised the logistical role of agencies but agreed that significant challenges remain regarding worker protection, especially for women and low-income migrants.
- Migrant workers, trade unions, and CSOs were the most critical; EOFAF and employers acknowledged problems but emphasised systemic constraints; government officials admitted regulatory weaknesses.

## **6.3.2 Topic 2: Challenges and Issues (Appendix 3 – Session 2)**

### **KII1: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

#### **Regulatory Gaps and Policy Implementation Limitations:**

Government Officials were candid in their assessment of the state's capacity to effectively manage and regulate the migrant recruitment sector, focusing on systemic challenges posed by Regulatory Gaps and difficulties in Policy Implementation.

Officials cited significant limited capacity for monitoring and enforcement, confessing that the government is simply "stretched thin" and lacks the necessary resources to

oversee the large number of agencies and the complex migration corridors. This shortage of personnel and funding means that many agencies operate with minimal day-to-day oversight, allowing poor practices to proliferate. Compounding the problem is the extensive proliferation of informal recruiters (illegal brokers) operating outside the legal framework, which the government struggles to track and prosecute effectively. An official's admission underscored this central challenge:

*"We are stretched thin. We need to do more monitoring, but we lack the resources and personnel to check every agency regularly." (GO2)*

Furthermore, while the government has taken legislative steps, such as enacting the new Overseas Employment Proclamation, officials admitted that implementation remains weak. They acknowledged a critical disconnect between having strong regulations on paper and having the institutional capacity to enforce them. This weakness in implementation allows issues like agency re-registration (to avoid penalties) and inadequate pre-departure training to persist, ultimately failing to provide the intended protection to vulnerable workers.

## **KII2: MIGRANT WORKERS**

### **Contract Deception and Abandonment:**

The testimony from Migrant Workers revealed a deeply concerning pattern of Contract Deception and Abandonment by the recruitment agencies. Workers described how the terms and conditions they agreed to in Ethiopia were systematically violated once they arrived in the destination country. The most common complaint was salary deception, leading to immediate financial hardship, where the promised compensation was significantly lower than the actual wages received:

*"I was promised a certain salary, but once I arrived, it was much lower." (MW1)*

This fraud was compounded by reports of hidden fees and job substitution, where workers were forced into different, often more exploitative, sectors like domestic work instead of the factory jobs they were promised.

Crucially, this deception was followed by a complete lack of post-departure support, leading to outright abandonment. Once the agency collected its fee, its responsibility ceased, leaving workers to face dangerous situations alone. Workers reported that agencies rarely followed up on their well-being and consistently failed to intervene

when disputes arose, such as cases of wage theft or physical abuse. This systemic failure meant that workers felt entirely isolated and defenceless when they needed help most:

*“When my employer started to abuse me, I called the agency, but they stopped answering my calls after the first time. I was alone.” (MW4)*

### **KII3: EOFAF**

**Male migrants and Operational Challenges:** EOFAF pointed out that the gendered nature of migration was emphasised, with women more likely to migrate through formal channels for domestic work, while men often resort to irregular routes for employment in construction and other sectors. The EOFAF representative commented,

*“Most of our female recruits go through legal channels, but the men often disappear into informal networks with a lack of options in the regular avenue.” (EO3)*

EOFAF stated bureaucratic inefficiencies within the Ministry of Labour and Skills were a source of widespread frustration. The online system was deemed ineffective due to infrastructural limitations, and staff shortages at the ministry contributed to significant delays.

*“If the government let us issue competency certificates ourselves, we could speed things up and reduce costs.” (EO6)*

These delays not only strained relationships with foreign partners but also imposed financial burdens on workers, further incentivising irregular migration. EOFAF also highlighted unreliable data, dependence on brokers, and lack of government support in destination countries. Agencies also face significant challenges in destination countries, where Ethiopian embassies often lack the capacity to support migrant workers. The absence of labour attachés was particularly problematic, leaving agencies to navigate complex legal and welfare issues without government backing.

*“We try to help our workers, but without embassy support, our hands are tied.” (EO2)*

Some agencies reportedly go to great lengths to support workers, including pursuing legal action in the absence of embassy assistance.

## **KII4: TRADE UNIONS**

### **Rights Violations and Bureaucracy:**

Trade unions reported frequent exploitation, especially of female domestic workers, and lack of effective grievance mechanisms.

Trade unions also highlighted excessive administrative hurdles, delays in processing, and a lack of responsiveness from relevant bodies discouraged formal engagement and pushed some migrants toward informal migration channels.

*“Excessive administrative processes and bureaucratic burdens frustrate both agencies and workers, sometimes pushing people toward informal migration channels.” (TU2)*

## **KII5: EMPLOYERS**

### **Informal recruiters, Skill Gaps and Bureaucracy:**

Employers highlighted, the geographic concentration of agencies in Addis Ababa as a structural barrier to equitable access. Participants noted that rural communities often rely on informal recruiters due to the absence of formal agencies in their regions.

*“If agencies had offices in the regions, people wouldn’t rely on brokers.” (EM2)*

Employers also cited inadequate worker preparation and delays in government processes as major obstacles.

## **KII6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Informal Recruitment and Corruption:**

CSO representatives echoed concerns, emphasising the risks posed by informal recruiters and the need for government intervention.

*“Agencies can’t reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap.” (CS1)*

CSOs also emphasized the dangers of informal recruiters, hidden costs, and lack of trust in agencies and government.

## **COMPARISON ACROSS KII GROUPS**

- All groups identified contract deception, lack of support, and regulatory gaps as key challenges.
- Migrant workers and CSOs focused on exploitation and vulnerability; EOEAF and employers highlighted operational and bureaucratic barriers; government and trade unions stressed the need for stronger enforcement.

### **6.3.3 Topic 3: Improving Capacity and Practice (Appendix 3 – Session 3)**

#### **KII1: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

##### **Capacity Building:**

Officials called for more training for agency staff and better monitoring systems.

**Policy Reform:** They advocated for clearer laws and regular audits. The government officials pointed out the enactment of Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025 marks the latest and most comprehensive step in Ethiopia's ongoing effort to regulate and professionalize labour migration, replacing and building upon its predecessors, notably Proclamation No. 923/2016 and its amendment, Proclamation No. 1246/2021. This legislative evolution is a direct response to persistent challenges, including trafficking, exploitation, and the operational limitations of Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) identified in national assessments. The new Proclamation aims to ensure the rights, safety, and dignity of Ethiopian citizens seeking employment abroad.

#### **KII2: MIGRANT WORKERS**

##### **Training and Support:**

The inadequacy of pre-departure orientation was highlighted, with participants noting that training sessions frequently failed to equip workers with essential knowledge about their rights, cultural norms in destination countries, and available support mechanisms.

*"We were told how to behave, but not what to do if something went wrong."*  
(MW6)

Workers recommended practical, returnee-led pre-departure training and ongoing communication.

#### **KII3: EOAAF**

##### **Staff Development:**

EOAAF supported investment in staff training and digitalization of recruitment processes. EOAAF strongly supported the need for enhancing the professional capacity of the sector, focusing its recommendations on staff training and digitalization. They advocated for significant investment in staff training to directly improve the quality of service and protection offered to migrant workers.

The professionalism of the agency personnel was considered critical, as it directly impacts the welfare and safety of the migrants they handle. In addition to internal capacity building, the EOFAF emphasized digitalization of the recruitment process. This was seen as a key strategy for overcoming systemic hurdles and improving transparency within the migration ecosystem.

The Federation specifically recommended leveraging digital tools for tracking and complaint systems, learning from international models to enable agencies to better monitor workers post-deployment and provide accessible channels for reporting issues. By focusing on both human resources through training and operational efficiency through digitalization, the EOFAF aimed to create a more ethical and accountable recruitment environment.

#### **KII4: TRADE UNIONS**

##### **Legal Compliance:**

Trade unions urged for mandatory legal training for agencies and regular inspections. The trade union representatives were resolute in their call for tightening Legal Compliance within the migrant recruitment sector. They argued that current practices allow too much room for negligence and exploitation, urging for two critical, proactive interventions: mandatory legal training for all agency staff and regular, unannounced inspections by the government.

The unions believed that the lack of knowledge regarding both national and international labour migration laws actively contributes to rights violations, and therefore, mandatory legal training covering the Overseas Employment Proclamation and destination country laws is essential to professionalize the sector and eliminate the excuse of "ignorance of the law." Furthermore, the unions stressed that oversight is currently too sporadic, which is why regular, unannounced inspections are necessary to create genuine accountability that extends beyond checking paperwork to verifying the quality of pre-departure training and post-deployment follow-up.

Ultimately, the trade unions insisted that these inspections must be backed by swift and severe penalties, like license revocation, to ensure the law is not only understood but effectively enforced to protect the welfare of migrant workers. This sentiment was encapsulated by their view that:

*"The law is only good if it is understood and enforced. Without serious consequences for non-compliance, agencies will always choose profit over protection." (TU4)*

## **KII5: EMPLOYERS**

### **Skill Development:**

Employers pointed out the fundamental deficit in Skill Development among migrant workers. They strongly emphasized the need for better, more rigorous language and job-specific training before deployment. Employers highlighted that inadequate language proficiency in the destination country's language was a major source of conflict and inefficiency, severely hampering workers' ability to understand basic instructions, perform tasks correctly, and, crucially, seek help or report abuse. In the employers' view, a worker who cannot communicate is highly vulnerable and ineffective.

Beyond language, they criticized the pre-departure training as often being too generic. They demanded hands-on, job-specific training—whether it was the operation of modern household appliances for domestic workers or measurable, practical skills for other sectors. This focus on verifiable training was, in effect, a call for greater agency accountability, as employers believed a skilled worker is inherently a less vulnerable worker. As one employer's practical frustration highlighted:

*"They arrive here and can't use the washing machine, or they can't understand basic instructions. It creates problems immediately." (EM4)*

## **KII6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Collaboration, Feedback and Monitoring:**

CSOs called for formal partnerships with agencies and digital feedback mechanisms for migrants. Participants felt that government monitoring of PrEAs was inconsistent and reactive rather than proactive. The perceived weakness of regulatory oversight further compounded these challenges

*"The Ministry checks paperwork, but they don't know what's really happening. There's no real accountability." (CS2)*

## **COMPARISON ACROSS KII GROUPS**

- All groups agreed on the need for improved training, transparency, and regulatory oversight.
- Migrant workers and CSOs emphasised practical training and support; employers and EOAAF focused on skills and digitalisation; trade unions and government stressed legal compliance and monitoring.

Figure 6.4 below visually compares the priorities of six key informant groups regarding capacity building in migration governance. Each row represents a stakeholder group, and each column corresponds to a thematic area: Training, Legal Compliance, Digitalisation, and Collaboration. Darker shades indicate stronger emphasis on a theme.

*Figure 6.4 Stakeholder Perspectives on Improving Capacity and Practice*

| Stakeholder Groups |                         | Training | Legal Compliance | Digitalization | Collaboration |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
|                    | Civil Society Organi... | 1        | 0                | 1              | 1             |
|                    | Employers               | 1        | 0                | 0              | 0             |
|                    | Trade Unions            | 1        | 1                | 0              | 0             |
|                    | EOEAF                   | 1        | 0                | 1              | 0             |
|                    | Migrant Workers         | 1        | 0                | 0              | 1             |
|                    | Government Officials    | 1        | 1                | 0              | 0             |
|                    |                         | Themes   |                  |                |               |

The graph reveals that Training is a universally shared priority, with all groups advocating for improved staff and migrant preparation. Legal Compliance is emphasised by government officials and trade unions, reflecting their regulatory roles. Digitalization is a focus for EOEAF and civil society organizations, suggesting a push for modernized systems. Collaboration is highlighted by migrant workers and CSOs, pointing to the need for inclusive, feedback-driven approaches. This visual summary helps identify both common ground and unique contributions across stakeholder perspectives.

### **6.3.4 Topic 4: Role of Stakeholders (Appendix 3 – Session 4)**

#### **KII1: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

##### **Central Role:**

Government Officials openly recognized the Central Role of the state in governing the migrant recruitment sector, which includes their responsibility for regulation and policy. They pointed to their legislative efforts, such as the new Overseas Employment Proclamation, as evidence of their commitment to establishing a comprehensive framework for protection.

However, officials were also candid about the significant challenge of capacity constraints. They admitted that the government is "stretched thin," which limits its ability to effectively monitor and enforce these regulations across all agencies. This lack of robust, on-the-ground oversight, they confessed, allows many agencies to operate with minimal scrutiny, leading to a system where, despite the policy intent, some businesses "just focus on business, not on the welfare of the workers." The core difficulty, according to the officials, lies in translating well-intentioned policy into consistent, actionable enforcement.

##### **Collaboration:**

Recognizing their internal capacity limitations, the officials strongly emphasized the critical value of Collaboration with external partners. They saw partnerships as an indispensable means of bridging resource gaps and enhancing the overall governance framework. They explicitly valued working with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for monitoring and on-the-ground support, and International Organizations like the ILO and IOM for providing crucial technical and financial support and capacity building. Officials acknowledged that these external resources were essential for improving specific areas, such as the quality of pre-departure training, improving data collection, and developing more effective complaint mechanisms. Their reliance on external support was clearly stated, underscoring the indispensable nature of these partnerships for achieving effective sector governance:

*"We need to do more, but we are stretched thin. That is why we rely on partners for technical and financial support." (GO2)*

#### **KII2: MIGRANT WORKERS**

### **Government and Employer Accountability:**

Workers called for stronger government presence in destination countries and employer accountability. Participants called for clear grievance mechanisms and respect for fundamental labour rights, as outlined in international conventions.

*“Employers must be held accountable. Without that, everything else falls apart.”*

(MW3)

### **KII3: EOFAF**

#### **Federation and Ministry Collaboration:**

EOFAF emphasized that successful sector reform requires a deeply collaborative approach, viewing the Federation and its members as being interdependent with other key actors. Specifically, the EOFAF advocated for both more support from the Ministry and better coordination with CSOs. The Federation strongly felt that the Ministry of Labour and Skills (MoLS) needed to be a more active and supportive partner, particularly in helping the formal sector withstand the threat of illegal and informal recruiters. They urged the Ministry to provide technical assistance for implementing new regulations and to facilitate financial support that would allow licensed agencies to invest in better worker training and crucial follow-up services. Critically, the EOFAF requested that the Ministry’s enforcement efforts be directed equally against illegal brokers and non-compliant licensed agencies, arguing that focusing only on registered members unfairly disadvantaged the compliant ones.

Simultaneously, the EOFAF called for formalized coordination with CSOs, recognizing their unique value in the migration ecosystem. They saw CSOs as essential partners for providing post-deployment support, counselling, and reintegration services—functions that agencies often lack the resources to deliver effectively. This collaborative appeal was an effort to build a multi-stakeholder system where each party plays an officially recognized, supportive role, ultimately strengthening the formal migration channels against informal risks, summarized by the need:

*“We need the Ministry’s help to survive the competition from illegal brokers, and we need to work with CSOs to truly protect the workers on the ground.”* (EO5)

### **KII4: TRADE UNIONS**

#### **Legal Aid and Advocacy:**

The trade unions emphasized that simply having laws and regulations is insufficient; effective worker protection requires proactive support and advocacy for migrants who face rights violations abroad. They stressed the critical need for strengthening Legal Aid and Advocacy by implementing two specific structural improvements: enhancing the role of labour attachés and establishing formal partnerships with CSOs.

The unions were highly critical of the limited capacity of existing labour attachés in destination countries, arguing that these officials are often overwhelmed, under-resourced, and lack the expertise to effectively handle the high volume and complexity of migrant worker disputes and abuse cases. Consequently, the unions urged for a significant increase in the number of qualified labour attachés with a clear mandate to offer direct, comprehensive legal and emotional support to distressed workers, ensuring they become the primary point of contact for legal representation, shelter services, and repatriation.

Recognizing that government capacity alone is insufficient, the unions simultaneously demanded formal partnerships with CSOs to leverage their reach, expertise, and trust within migrant communities. CSOs were seen as vital to providing on-the-ground legal assistance, counselling, and shelter services—functions that embassies and recruitment agencies often fail to deliver effectively. They called for these partnerships to be formalized and funded to provide sustained, high-quality legal aid. The unions' overall position was that migrants are often left defenceless when a contract goes wrong, and a comprehensive network of state-backed legal aid (via attachés) and external advocacy (via CSOs) is the only way to ensure their rights are effectively defended:

*"We need feet on the ground—more attachés who actually help and formal CSOs who can deliver the legal support the government and agencies fail to provide."* (TU3)

## **KII5: EMPLOYERS**

### **Process Efficiency:**

The Employers strongly advocated for significant improvements in Process Efficiency within the migration system. Their core demand was two-fold: for streamlined government processes and for much better communication with recruitment agencies. Employers viewed bureaucratic bottlenecks at the governmental level as a major

impediment to ethical and timely recruitment. They argued that lengthy, complex, or inconsistent administrative procedures create delays that cost time and money and, critically, increase the temptation for agencies and workers to resort to informal, illegal channels—a situation that directly compromises worker protection.

Furthermore, employers stressed that communication with recruitment agencies was often opaque, with a lack of timely updates on a worker's training progress, medical clearance, or document processing. This information deficit makes it difficult for them to plan and prepare for the worker's arrival. The employers' overall position was that efficiency is not just about speed but about reducing friction in the formal system to ensure migrants are deployed quickly, legally, and safely. The frustration with the current system was concisely stated:

*"The whole process is slow, and nobody tells us anything. We need a system that works, not one that encourages everyone to go around the rules." (EM2)*

## **KII6: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

### **Awareness and Reintegration:**

The CSOs strongly emphasized the need to focus on the full cycle of migration, urging for robust public awareness campaigns, the provision of legal aid, and comprehensive reintegration support for returnees. CSOs argued that many migrants are ill-informed or misinformed about the risks, their rights, and the true nature of overseas employment, often relying on rumour or misleading informal brokers. They urged the government to fund and launch sustained public awareness campaigns using local languages and media, particularly in rural areas where informal recruitment is rampant, to empower migrants to make informed decisions. The content, they stressed, must clearly differentiate between legal and illegal channels, detail the actual costs, and highlight common forms of exploitation and abuse.

Furthermore, recognizing that abuse still occurs despite precautions, CSOs stressed the need for structural support upon return. They advocated for a formalized, state-backed system to provide free legal aid to distressed workers both in destination countries and upon their return to seek redress. For returnees, CSOs highlighted the profound difficulties, including economic and psychological trauma, and called for comprehensive reintegration support. This support, they insisted, must include counselling to cope with trauma and livelihood assistance, such as vocational training

and access to small loans, to ensure sustainable re-entry into the Ethiopian economy. This holistic view was captured by one CSO's call for sustained support:

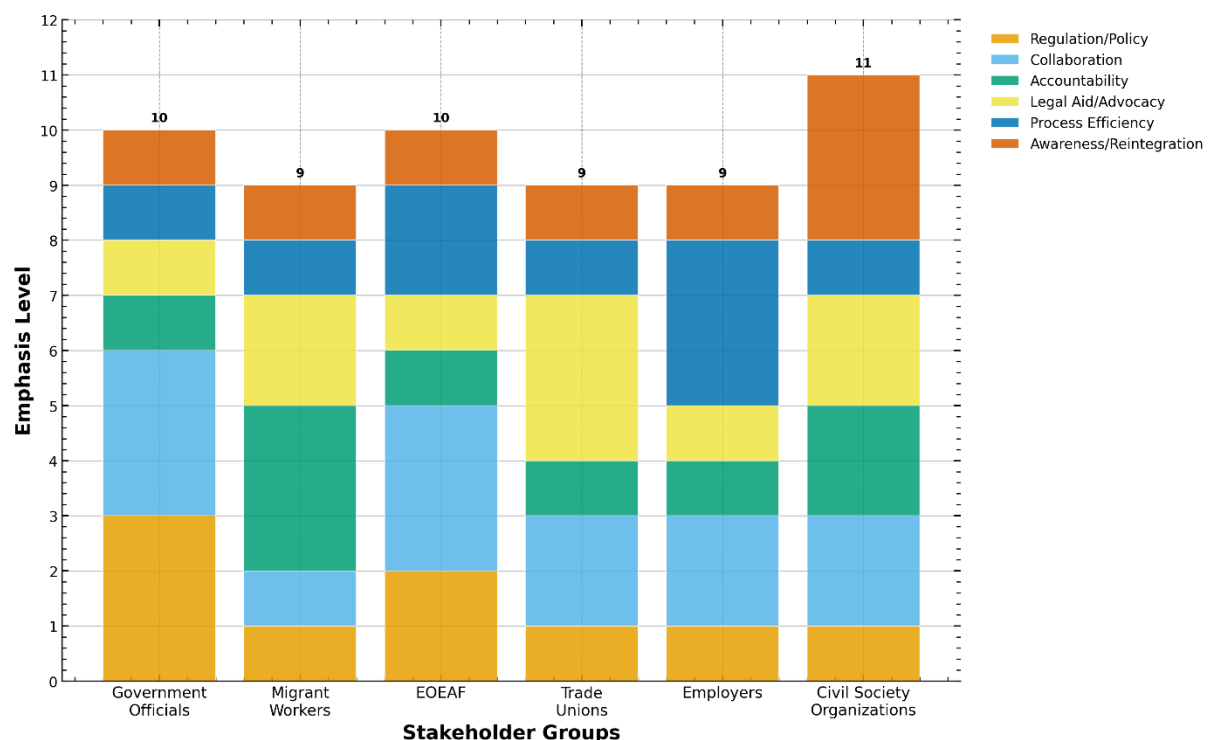
*"It's not enough to bring them home; we need to treat the whole person. Reintegration needs counselling, not just cash. We need to help them heal and help them start a new life."* (CS2)

#### COMPARISON ACROSS KII GROUPS

- All groups agreed that protecting migrant workers requires coordinated action among government, agencies, employers, CSOs, and international partners.
- Migrant workers and CSOs emphasised government presence and support; employers and EOFAF focused on process efficiency and collaboration; trade unions stressed legal aid and advocacy.

See Figure 6.5 for Stakeholder Priorities in Migrant Workers Protection

Figure 6.5 Stakeholder Priorities in Migrant Workers Protection



#### 6.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: FGDs vs. KIIs

This section compares the findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), highlighting convergences and divergences in perspectives across participant groups and topics.

### **6.4.1 Areas of Convergence**

#### **1. Recognition of Private Employment Agencies' Logistical Role:**

Both FGDs and KIIs consistently acknowledged the essential logistical function of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in facilitating overseas employment for Ethiopian workers. All groups agreed that agencies are central to the migration process, particularly in arranging travel, documentation, and initial job placements.

#### **2. Concerns Over Worker Protection:**

There was broad agreement that PrEAs often fall short in protecting migrant workers' rights and welfare. Both FGDs and KIIs highlighted issues such as lack of post-departure support, inadequate pre-departure training, and insufficient follow-up in cases of abuse or contract violations.

#### **3. Vulnerability of Women and Low-Income Migrants:**

All groups, across both methods, identified female domestic workers and migrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as particularly vulnerable to exploitation and inadequate support.

#### **4. Need for Regulatory Reform and Capacity Building:**

Participants in both FGDs and KIIs called for stronger regulatory frameworks, enhanced government oversight, and targeted capacity-building programs for agencies. There was consensus on the need for clearer laws, regular inspections, and more effective enforcement.

#### **5. Importance of Stakeholder Collaboration:**

Both sets of data emphasised that protecting migrant workers requires coordinated action among government, agencies, employers, civil society organisations (CSOs), and international partners.

### **6.4.2 Areas of Divergence**

#### **1. Degree of Criticism:**

- **FGDs:** Migrant workers, trade unions, and CSOs in FGDs were often more vocal and critical, sharing personal stories of exploitation and abandonment.

- **KIIs:** While KIIs echoed these concerns, representatives from EOAAF and employers tended to emphasise systemic constraints and resource limitations, sometimes offering a more defensive or pragmatic perspective.

## **2. Focus of Recommendations:**

- **FGDs:** Recommendations from FGDs leaned toward practical, lived-experience-based solutions, such as returnee-led training, ongoing communication, and grassroots awareness campaigns.
- **KIIs:** KIIs, especially from government and agency representatives, focused more on policy reform, digitalisation, and institutional capacity building.

## **3. Perceptions of Accountability:**

- **FGDs:** Participants expressed distrust in both agencies and the government, citing corruption, lack of transparency, and weak grievance mechanisms.
- **KIIs:** Key informants, particularly from government and EOAAF, acknowledged these issues but also highlighted ongoing reforms and the challenges of implementation.

### **6.4.3 Unique Insights from Each Method**

#### **FGDs:**

- Provided rich, detailed narratives illustrating the human impact of agency shortcomings.
- Highlighted the emotional toll of migration, especially for women and returnees.
- Emphasised the importance of community trust and the dangers of informal recruitment.

#### **KIIs:**

- Offered a broader, institutional perspective on regulatory and operational challenges.
- Provided insight into the complexities of policy implementation and inter-agency coordination.
- Highlighted the need for data-driven decision-making and international benchmarking.

#### **6.4.4 Synthesis**

The comparative analysis reveals that while both FGDs and KIIs identify similar core challenges such as inadequate protection, regulatory gaps, and the vulnerability of certain groups, their perspectives on causes and solutions are shaped by their roles and experiences. FGDs bring forward the lived realities and urgent needs of migrants, while KIIs provide context on systemic barriers and policy-level interventions. Together, these insights underscore the need for reforms that are both people-centred and institutionally robust.

### **6.5 SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

The qualitative analysis, drawing on both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), provides a nuanced and multi-layered understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia. The findings reveal a sector that is on the one hand essential for facilitating overseas employment and on the other hand fraught with significant challenges that undermine the protection and welfare of migrant workers.

#### **Key Themes Identified**

##### **1. Central Role of PrEAs, but Persistent Gaps in Protection**

PrEAs are widely recognised as indispensable intermediaries in the migration process, handling logistics, documentation, and placement. However, both FGDs and KIIs highlighted that agencies often fail to provide adequate pre-departure training, post-departure support, and effective grievance mechanisms. This gap is especially pronounced for female and low-income migrants.

##### **2. Widespread Reliance on Informal Recruiters**

A recurring concern is the continued dependence on informal brokers, particularly in rural areas where licensed agencies have limited reach. This reliance exposes migrants to misinformation, inflated fees, and increased risk of exploitation and trafficking. The continued reliance on informal recruiters, often operating outside regulatory frameworks create vulnerabilities for migrant workers and makes it difficult to ensure ethical recruitment practices and accountability.

##### **3. Regulatory and Institutional Weaknesses**

Participants across all groups pointed to weak regulatory oversight, inconsistent enforcement of existing laws, and limited government capacity as major obstacles to effective protection. While new policies and proclamations have been introduced, implementation remains a challenge. Both CSO, EOFAF and MoLS representatives acknowledged the necessity of strengthening regulatory frameworks and enhancing government oversight. This includes stricter licensing, monitoring, and enforcement to ensure compliance with national and international labor standards.

#### **4. Bureaucratic Hurdles**

Agencies, employers and government officials highlighted bureaucratic inefficiencies as obstacles to effective migration governance. These issues can impede the timely and transparent processing of migrant workers and limit oversight.

#### **5. Inadequate Pre-Departure Training**

Feedback from migrant workers, employers and other stakeholders indicated that pre-departure training provided by some agencies is often insufficient. This inadequacy leaves migrants unprepared for the realities of working and living in destination countries, increasing their susceptibility to exploitation.

#### **6. Limited Support in Destination Countries**

A critical concern was the perceived lack of adequate support mechanisms for migrant workers once they arrive in destination countries. This includes limited access to consular services, grievance mechanisms, and emergency assistance, leaving vulnerable workers without sufficient protection.

#### **7. Profit Pressures and Unethical Practices**

The competitive nature of the industry, coupled with profit-driven motives, was cited as a factor contributing to unethical practices among some agencies. This can manifest in excessive fees, deceptive recruitment, and a disregard for worker welfare.

#### **8. Gender and Socioeconomic Vulnerability**

Women, especially those employed as domestic workers, and migrants from poorer backgrounds are disproportionately affected by inadequate agency practices, lack of information, and limited access to support services.

## **9. Need for Capacity Building and Professionalisation**

There is a strong consensus on the need for comprehensive training for both agency staff and migrant workers. These programs should focus on improving organizational and managerial skills, promoting ethical recruitment, enhancing their ability to protect migrant workers' rights., legal and ethical training for agencies, practical and rights-based pre-departure orientation for migrants, and ongoing support throughout the migration cycle.

## **10. Importance of Stakeholder Collaboration**

Effective protection of migrant workers requires coordinated action among government bodies, PrEAs, employers, civil society organisations, and international partners. Participants called for stronger partnerships, digital feedback mechanisms, and public awareness campaigns. A coordinated approach is essential for creating a more protective and efficient migration ecosystem.

## **11. Learning from International Best Practices**

Many participants recommended adapting successful models from countries like the Philippines and India, particularly in areas such as pre-departure training, digital tracking, and bilateral labour agreements. Ethiopia could benefit from studying and adapting best practices from more established labour-sending countries, such as leveraging advanced systems like the Saudi Musaned system for improved recruitment and protection mechanisms.

## **8. Trust, Accountability and Transparency**

A fundamental challenge identified is the erosion of trust between migrant workers, agencies, and government entities. Rebuilding this trust through transparent communication, clear accountability mechanisms, and genuine commitment to worker welfare is seen as crucial for sector reform. Migrant workers expressed a strong need for greater transparency in recruitment processes, particularly regarding contracts, fees, and working conditions. The existing system was often perceived as lacking robust accountability mechanisms for agencies engaging in misconduct.

In summary, the qualitative findings underscore the urgent need for regulatory reform, capacity building, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure that Ethiopia's migrant

recruitment sector is not only efficient but also ethical and protective of migrant workers' rights and dignity.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 6 presented an in-depth analysis of the results obtained from qualitative data collection efforts. The qualitative analysis provided a nuanced understanding of the perspectives, lived experiences, persistent challenges, and suggested potential improvements related to the multifaceted role of migrant recruitment agencies in protecting migrant workers' rights and ensuring safer, more dignified migration pathways. The chapter gave a comparative analysis, highlighted areas of convergence and divergence, and identified key themes emerging from the qualitative data analysis. In conclusion, this chapter paints a comprehensive picture of the Ethiopian migrant recruitment sector, highlighting its vital role in facilitating overseas employment while exposing significant challenges related to agency capacity and practices in protecting migrant workers. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach involving regulatory reform, capacity building, enhanced oversight, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to ensure safe, fair, and orderly migration for Ethiopian citizens.

The next chapter discusses the comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative analysis by examining the quantitative data from 100 surveyed agencies alongside qualitative insights from 40 key informant interviews and six focus group discussions.

## **CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 7 concludes this study, which aimed to analyse the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia to fulfil their duties for a safe and orderly emigration of Ethiopian citizens and to formulate concrete recommendations to enhance their capacity for the protection of Ethiopian migrant workers in destination countries. This research was grounded in a mixed-methods approach, which sought to provide a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

Building upon the presentation of quantitative findings in Chapter 5 and the in-depth qualitative analysis in Chapter 6, this chapter serves to consolidate the study's empirical evidence. It synthesises the results from both data sets to draw substantive, evidence-based conclusions and fulfil the final research objective: to develop guidelines to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.

The recommendations are grounded in the study's theoretical framework. Strengthening regulatory enforcement and reducing hidden recruitment costs directly address the institutional weaknesses highlighted by NIE, while community-based awareness programs and support structures leverage the positive aspects of Social Network Theory to counter exploitative practices. Together, these theory-informed recommendations provide a coherent pathway for improving migrant safety and rights.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 7.2 revisits the study's research problem and primary objectives to provide the necessary context for the discussion. Section 7.3 presents a detailed comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings, demonstrating the methodological triangulation that underpins the study's validity. Subsequently, Section 7.4 discusses the significance of the findings, highlighting the study's contribution to theory, policy, and practice. Based on these insights, Section 7.5 offers a set of policy and programmatic recommendations. Section 7.6 identifies areas for future research and Section 7.8 reflects the original contributions of this study. Finally, Section 7.9 provides the overarching conclusion to the entire research study.

## 7.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The impetus for this research arose from the persistent vulnerabilities and rights violations faced by Ethiopian migrant workers, despite the regulatory framework governing Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs). The core research problem addressed by this study was the fundamental mismatch between the legal and ethical obligations of PrEAs and their actual capacity and operational practice on the ground to effectively safeguard migrant workers' safety and rights throughout the migration cycle.

To provide a comprehensive and evidence-based solution to this problem, the study was guided by the following overarching purpose and specific objectives:

### Overarching Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, specifically focusing on their mechanisms to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers, and subsequently develop pragmatic guidelines and recommendations to enhance this capacity.

### Specific Research Objectives

1. To investigate the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia including the processes involved in recruiting migrants, the methods used and the institutional framework.
2. To explore the gaps, problems and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.
3. To examine the practices of migrant recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrants and their families.
4. To determine the effectiveness of legal and regulatory policies and framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.
5. To develop guidelines to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.

| Specific Objective | Corresponding Research Question |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
|                    |                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Investigate the current state, role and responsibilities of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia including the processes involved in recruiting migrants, the methods used and the institutional framework. | RQ1: How does Ethiopia's legal and institutional framework for PrEAs align with international labour standards and ethical recruitment principles?                               |
| 2. Explore the gaps, problems and challenges faced by migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia.                                                                                                                    | RQ2: What is the current operational capacity of PrEAs in Ethiopia, and how does this affect the quality of services provided to migrant workers?                                |
| 3. Examine the practices of migrant recruitment agencies to protect the safety and rights of migrants and their families.                                                                                          | RQ3: What challenges and practices characterize PrEAs in Ethiopia, and how do stakeholders perceive gaps in migrant worker protection?                                           |
| 4. Determine the effectiveness of legal and regulatory policies and framework governing migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.                                      | RQ4: How do the quantitative and qualitative findings converge or diverge, and what does this reveal about the overall performance of PrEAs?                                     |
| 5. Develop guidelines to strengthen the capacity and improve the practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to promote safe, fair and ethical migration.                                                 | RQ5: What evidence-based recommendations and policy changes can strengthen the regulatory framework and operational capacity of PrEAs to better protect migrant workers' rights? |

This alignment of objectives and research questions provides a coherent framework that flows directly into the comparative analysis in Section 7.3 and the stakeholder-specific recommendations in Section 7.6, ensuring logical continuity from problem definition to evidence-based policy change.

## 7.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

### 7.3.1 Overview

The study, "An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers," investigates a complex and dynamic sector through a comparative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative

data. By integrating statistical trends from surveys of 100 agencies with the lived experiences and in-depth perspectives gathered from 40 key informant interviews and six focus group discussions (FGDs), this chapter seeks to develop a nuanced and holistic understanding of the current migration system.

The objective of this comparative analysis is to highlight the strengths and vulnerabilities of the current system, particularly where the two data sets converge or diverge. The quantitative findings—covering areas like agency establishment trends, staffing capacity, training content, and recruitment methods—provide the measurable breadth of the sector. The qualitative narratives from representatives of the Ethiopian government, Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF), migrant workers, trade unions, employers, and civil society organizations offer the contextual depth and explanatory power behind these numbers.

This chapter demonstrates critical areas of alignment, such as the rapid, yet fragmented, growth of the recruitment market and the operational constraints imposed by minimal staffing. It also reveals a crucial gap in the mandatory pre-departure training, which prioritizes job skills over essential protective knowledge like rights and grievance mechanisms. Furthermore, the analysis exposes the paradox where the most effective recruitment channels (community outreach and referrals) are also the conduits for informal, unregulated, and exploitative practices. Ultimately, this comparative approach aims to establish a robust and evidence-based platform for advocating for the systemic reforms that are consistently called for by all stakeholders.

### **7.3.2 Comparative Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

The study reveals a complex and evolving landscape, shaped by both statistical trends and the lived experiences of stakeholders.

A key finding from the quantitative analysis is the diverse range of establishment years among migrant recruitment agencies. The histogram shows a marked increase in agency formation from 2017 onwards, with peaks in 2018 and 2023. This surge suggests a growing demand for overseas employment services, potentially driven by economic pressures, policy shifts, and increased awareness among job seekers. Qualitative interviews with government officials reinforce this trend, revealing that some agencies facing closure penalties, simply re-established themselves under new

licenses. This regulatory workaround contributes to the dynamic nature of the sector, where older, more experienced agencies coexist with newer entrants, creating a competitive yet fragmented market.

Another critical area of convergence between the two data sets is the staffing capacity of agencies. Quantitative findings show that 73% of agencies employ three or fewer staff members, with only a handful operating with larger teams. This limited workforce raises concerns about operational efficiency and the ability to provide comprehensive support services. Qualitative data adds depth to this issue, explaining that narrow profit margins and unpredictable placement volumes force agencies to operate lean. Agency representatives candidly acknowledged that minimal staffing restricts their ability to follow up with workers abroad or offer robust pre-departure and post-arrival support.

Pre-departure orientation programs present another area where the quantitative and qualitative findings align. While all surveyed agencies report offering mandatory training, the content is heavily skewed toward job-specific skills and cultural adaptation. Topics such as legal rights, workplace safety, financial literacy, and grievance mechanisms are significantly underrepresented, each covered by only 3% of agencies. This gap is echoed in the qualitative narratives, where migrant workers and stakeholders consistently describe the training as inadequate. Many workers feel unprepared for the realities of life abroad, lacking the knowledge and tools to protect themselves from exploitation or abuse. The reliance on government-issued competency certification as the primary method of ensuring understanding further suggests that agencies may be outsourcing quality assurance rather than taking proactive responsibility.

The recruitment methods employed by agencies also reflect a reliance on informal networks. Quantitative data show that community outreach programs and referrals from previous workers are the most commonly used and perceived as most effective. However, qualitative findings reveal that this reliance often leads to the involvement of brokers and informal recruiters, especially in rural areas. These actors, while trusted locally, operate outside formal oversight and are frequently associated with misinformation and exploitative practices. Stakeholders expressed concern that the absence of licensed agencies in remote regions perpetuates this reliance, undermining transparency and increasing vulnerability.

Challenges faced by migrant workers abroad, such as rights violations, language barriers, and skill gaps, are consistently reported in both data sets. Agencies acknowledge these issues and claim to address them through grievance mechanisms and pre-departure training. Yet qualitative accounts suggest that support is often reactive and inconsistent. Workers describe feeling abandoned once deployed, with limited access to help in emergencies or when facing abuse. The lack of regular communication and collaboration with embassies in destination countries further exacerbates this issue, leaving migrants without a safety net.

Finally, both chapters converge on the need for systemic reform. Agencies identify the lack of clear legal frameworks and unethical practices in destination countries as major obstacles. They call for empowered embassies, better laws, and capacity building. Qualitative stakeholders echo these sentiments, emphasising the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, stronger regulatory oversight, and learning from international best practices. The shared vision is one of a more ethical, transparent, and protective migration system, one that places the dignity and rights of migrant workers at its core.

The following Tables (Table 7.1 to 7.6) present a detailed comparative analysis that juxtaposes the quantitative findings from the agency survey against the explanatory and contextual insights derived from qualitative data (interviews and focus group discussions). These tables are organized by key thematic areas, ranging from market trends and operational capacity to training gaps, recruitment risks, and the nature of support, to systematically demonstrating the points of convergence and alignment between the two data sets. Each table highlights how statistical realities are either reinforced, explained, or given crucial depth by the lived experiences and stakeholder perspectives, ultimately revealing the structural strengths and critical vulnerabilities within Ethiopia's migrant worker protection system.

*Table 7.1 Agency Establishment Trends and Market Fragmentation*

| <b>Data Point</b>          | <b>Quantitative Finding</b> | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b>                                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Establishment Years</b> | The finding shows a marked  | Government officials in FGDs reinforced this trend, revealing that |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   | increase in agency formation from 2017 onwards, with notable peaks in 2018 and 2023. This indicates a growing market demand and rapid evolution of the sector. | the government's regulatory capacity is limited. This weakness allows bad actors to continue operating by re-establishing themselves under new licenses to avoid penalties, contributing to the sector's dynamic but fragmented nature. |
| <b>Conclusion</b> | The quantitative surge in new agencies is, in part, a manifestation of regulatory loopholes and limited oversight identified by qualitative stakeholders.      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

The study confirms a rapid expansion and dynamic market within the recruitment sector.

*Table 7.2 Limited Staffing and Operational Constraints*

| <b>Data Point</b> | <b>Quantitative Finding</b> | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Staffing Capacity</b> | A significant portion of agencies operate with a small workforce. Cumulatively, 73% of the surveyed agencies employ three or fewer staff members. This highlights a prevalent characteristic of limited human resource capacity across the sector. | The Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (EOEAF) explained that narrow profit margins and intense competition force agencies to operate lean. An EOEAF representative admitted, “We’re forced to lower our fees to stay in business, but that means we can’t afford to follow up with every worker”. |
| <b>Support Impact</b>    | The low staffing raises questions about the ability to provide comprehensive support services, including pre-departure training and post-arrival assistance.                                                                                       | This minimal staffing restricts their ability to provide crucial long-term support and follow-up with workers once they are deployed.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Conclusion</b>        | Limited staffing is a direct consequence of the economic pressure and competitive environment, linking resource constraints to compromised worker support.                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Both data sets converge on the issue of constrained human resource capacity, which impacts the quality of support services.

*Table 7.3 Inadequate Pre-Departure Orientation and Training Gaps*

| <b>Data Point</b>         | <b>Quantitative Finding</b>                                                                                                     | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b>                                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mandatory Training</b> | 100% of surveyed agencies confirm they offer pre-departure orientation and training programs, noting it is a mandatory process. | Migrant workers consistently described the training as inadequate. |

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Content Focus</b>    | The content is heavily skewed toward "Job-specific skills" and "Cultural and social norms". Crucial protective topics like "Rights and responsibilities," "Workplace safety," "Financial literacy," and "Grievance mechanisms" each receive a very low emphasis, covered by only 3% of agencies. | Migrant workers felt unprepared for the realities of life abroad, lacking the knowledge and tools to protect themselves from exploitation or abuse. Employers corroborated this, criticizing the training as often being too generic and demanding hands-on, job-specific training. |
| <b>Assurance Method</b> | The most frequent method agencies use to ensure workers comprehend the information is the use of government-issued competency certification.                                                                                                                                                     | This suggests agencies are primarily fulfilling a compliance requirement and outsourcing quality assurance rather than taking proactive responsibility for the worker's comprehensive preparedness.                                                                                 |
| <b>Conclusion</b>       | Agencies prioritise compliance (offering the training) and job-readiness (skills/culture) over providing critical protective knowledge (rights/safety), a gap experienced directly by migrant workers.                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

A critical alignment is found in the content and quality of the mandated pre-departure training.

*Table 7.4 Recruitment Methods and Reliance on Informal Networks*

| <b>Data Point</b>        | <b>Quantitative Finding</b>                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Preferred Methods</b> | "Community outreach programs" are overwhelmingly the most utilized method (42%), followed by "Referrals from previous workers" (23%).                                                            | Qualitative findings reveal that this reliance often leads to the involvement of informal brokers and recruiters, especially in rural areas. Trade unions noted that these actors are frequently associated with misinformation, inflated fees, and rights violations.                                                               |
| <b>Geographic Divide</b> | The reliance on grassroots engagement is noted as potentially presenting challenges in standardizing information and preventing the proliferation of unregulated recruiters.                     | The EOAAF and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) identified the geographic concentration of licensed agencies in urban centres like Addis Ababa as a major structural impediment. CSOs argued, "Agencies can't reach the whole country. Without regional offices and trust-building, informal recruiters will keep filling the gap". |
| <b>Conclusion</b>        | The quantitative data's most effective recruitment channels are the same informal networks that qualitative data identifies as the source of major exploitation risks, undermining transparency. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

The preferred recruitment methods, while effective for outreach, introduce a high risk of exploitation due to reliance on unvetted actors.

*Table 7.5 Challenges Abroad and Inconsistent Support*

| <b>Data Point</b>                     | <b>Quantitative Finding</b>                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b>                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Primary Challenge</b>              | Agencies identify "Rights violation" as the most common challenge faced by migrant workers abroad, reported by 39% of respondents.                                                                  | Migrant workers and trade unions reported frequent exploitation, contract deception, and lack of effective grievance mechanisms. Workers stated, "Once you're gone, you're no longer their problem".    |
| <b>Grievance Support</b>              | The primary method agencies report for assisting with this challenge is "grievance handling," suggesting a reactive approach.                                                                       | Workers felt support was often reactive and inconsistent, describing feeling abandoned once deployed and having limited access to help in emergencies or when facing abuse.                             |
| <b>Embassy/Official Collaboration</b> | Only 7% of agencies report "Collaboration with local authorities or embassies in the destination country" as a support mechanism.                                                                   | Workers emphasised the need for stronger government oversight and more accessible support services, noting, "Other countries have people at the embassy to help. We feel alone when there's a problem". |
| <b>Conclusion</b>                     | The consistent reporting of rights violations is met with a largely reactive grievance mechanism and a severe lack of official collaboration with diplomatic channels, leaving migrants vulnerable. |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Both data sets confirm that rights violations are the dominant challenge for workers abroad, while agency support remains reactive.

*Table 7.6 Shared Vision for Systemic Reform*

| <b>Data Point</b>       | <b>Quantitative Finding</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Qualitative Convergence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Biggest Obstacle</b> | Agencies overwhelmingly identify the "Lack of clear legal frameworks and regulations" as the most significant obstacle (53% of responses).                                                                                                           | Government officials admitted regulatory weaknesses. All stakeholders agreed that protection is a shared responsibility requiring a cohesive, multi-stakeholder approach.                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Top Improvement</b>  | The top improvement requested by agencies is the "Establishment of empowered embassies/labour attachés". Other key requests include "Proper laws and uniform directives" (20%) and to "Build capacity of agencies" (15%).                            | Trade unions urged for a significant increase in the number of qualified labour attachés with a clear mandate to offer direct, comprehensive legal and emotional support. CSOs and trade unions encouraged learning from successful labour-sending countries such as the Philippines and India. |
| <b>Conclusion</b>       | There is a shared consensus across all actors on the need for stronger diplomatic presence, clearer legal frameworks, and comprehensive capacity building at both the agency and governmental levels to create a more ethical and protective system. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Both agencies and stakeholders are aligned on the need for top-down, multi-stakeholder reform.

### **7.3.3 Conclusion**

The comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia underscores a migration system characterized by both rapid growth and critical vulnerabilities. A consistent and sobering finding across both data sets is the persistent challenge of rights violations faced by migrant workers abroad, which agencies acknowledge but often address only with reactive and inconsistent support.

Key areas of convergence paint a picture of a sector that is structurally challenged:

- **Market Fragmentation and Regulatory Loopholes:** The quantitative surge in new agencies, with peaks in 2018 and 2023, is reinforced by qualitative findings that point to regulatory weaknesses allowing bad actors to re-establish themselves under new licenses.
- **Operational Constraints:** A significant majority (73%) of agencies operate with three or fewer staff members due to narrow profit margins and intense competition, which severely restricts their ability to provide comprehensive, long-term support and follow-up for deployed workers.
- **Inadequate Protection Training:** While all agencies comply by offering mandatory training, the content is heavily skewed toward job skills, with crucial protective topics like rights, workplace safety, and grievance mechanisms covered by a mere 3% of agencies. This prioritizes compliance and job-readiness over worker protection.
- **Reliance on Informal Networks:** The most utilized recruitment methods—community outreach and referrals—are the same informal channels that qualitative data identifies as the source of major exploitation risks, misinformation, and rights violations.

Ultimately, both agencies and stakeholders share a consensus on the need for systemic reform. The primary obstacles identified include the lack of clear legal frameworks and unethical practices in destination countries. The shared vision centres on the need for empowered embassies/labour attachés, stronger laws, and comprehensive capacity building at all levels. To create a more ethical, transparent, and protective system, future efforts must focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration and learning from international best practices, placing the dignity and rights of migrant workers at the core of the system.

## **7.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This discussion synthesises the findings from the preceding quantitative and qualitative analysis with the international legal, policy, and theoretical frameworks established in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) and Chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework). The core function of this section is to critically assess the degree to which Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia operate in alignment with global ethical recruitment standards and contribute to the realization of planned, safe, and responsible migration outcomes.

The findings reveal that Ethiopia's recruitment system suffers from institutional failure, as explained by NIE, where weak enforcement and high transaction costs externalize risks onto migrants. This is compounded by the influence of informal social networks, which, while providing access to opportunities, also perpetuate exploitation when intersecting with poorly regulated agencies. These insights align with global debates on ethical recruitment and the "Employer Pays" principle, highlighting Ethiopia's divergence from international norms. Situating the findings within the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Target 10.7) and the Migration Governance Framework underscores the urgency of reform and places Ethiopia's challenges within the wider discourse on safe and responsible migration governance.

### **7.4.1 Alignment of PrEA Capacity and Practice with International Standards (Referencing Chapter 2)**

The empirical findings from the FGDs reveal a persistent gap between the stated mandatory functions of PrEAs in Ethiopia and the core tenets of international labour

and human rights standards, particularly the **International Labour Organization (ILO) General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment** and the principles embedded in the **Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181 – Section 2.4 and 2.5)**.

- **Violation of the "No Fees to Workers" Principle**

A foundational principle of ethical recruitment, as codified by the ILO, is that **no recruitment fees or related costs should be charged to, or otherwise borne by, workers**. The findings, however, consistently point to a profit-driven environment where narrow margins and competition lead to cost-cutting and a reliance on informal recruiters who engage in corruption and hidden costs (FGD6: CSOs; FGD5: EOAAF). This practice shifts the financial burden onto the migrant worker, creating debt bondage and vulnerability, which is in direct opposition to the international standard and constitutes a fundamental failure in the fair recruitment ecosystem.

- **Failure to Uphold Contractual Transparency and Integrity**

International standards require that employment contracts be clear, transparent, in a language the worker understands, and provided sufficiently in advance to prevent substitution. The findings from Migrant Workers (FGD1) directly expose the systemic failure of PrEAs in this regard, with workers reporting "frequent contract deception" and conditions differing from promises. This confirms the literature's concerns [(Chapter 2 - Section 2.4.2 (ILO Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies) and Section 2.6.1 (The Role of Recruitment Intermediaries in Creating Vulnerability)] that the pre-departure phase in sending countries remains a critical point of vulnerability where PrEAs fail their due diligence obligations to eliminate deceptive practices.

- **Inadequate Post-Departure Protection and Access to Justice**

A central role of a responsible PrEA is to ensure continuous support and protection for the worker throughout the migration cycle, including effective access to grievance mechanisms. The data indicates a stark abandonment of this duty: workers felt agencies were "poorly equipped" and "stopped answering my calls" after departure (FGD1: Migrant Workers). This lack of follow-up and the argument by Trade Unions (FGD3) regarding the sluggish and expensive nature of the grievance system demonstrates a profound misalignment with the international right to effective remedy and access to justice. The abandonment of post-departure duties highlights a failure

to fulfill the core Functions and Responsibilities of recruitment agencies as established in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1, which identifies continuous support and grievance management as mandatory operational standards for responsible PrEAs.

- **Capacity Deficits and Regulatory Evasion**

The FGDs with Government Officials (FGD4) and EOEF (FGD5) highlight key structural weaknesses: limited government capacity for monitoring and enforcement, and the frequent re-registration of agencies under new names to "avoid penalties." This reality stands in stark contrast to the ILO's call for States to effectively enforce relevant laws, strengthen enforcement bodies, and implement standardized licensing or certification systems to prevent abusive and fraudulent methods. The findings suggest that while the regulatory framework (Proclamation 923/2016) exists; as detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7 (The Ethiopian Legal and Regulatory Framework) and Section 2.7.2 (Institutional Framework for Monitoring and Oversight); the capacity for regulatory oversight and accountability remains critically weak, allowing poor practice to persist.

#### **7.4.2 Evaluating Ethiopia's Recruitment Governance against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and MiGOF (Referencing Chapter 3)**

The study's findings on PrEA practice provide empirical evidence of the challenges Ethiopia faces in achieving its international commitments, particularly those articulated within the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **IOM Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)** (Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1).

##### **Impediments to SDG Target 10.7 (Orderly, Safe, and Responsible Migration)**

SDG Target 10.7 is the central policy framework for migration governance, calling for planned and well-managed migration policies. The study reveals that the current system is characterized by:

1. **Unsafe and Irregular Channels:** The reliance on informal recruiters in rural areas (FGD5: EOEF; FGD6: CSOs) indicates that a significant portion of migration flows remains irregular and unprotected. This directly undermines the "safe, orderly, and regular" objective of SDG 10.7.
2. **High Costs and Lack of Planning:** The high fees and hidden costs paid by workers (FGD6) directly contravene SDG Indicator 10.7.1, which tracks the reduction of recruitment costs. The findings suggest that profit motives (FGD3:

Trade Unions) are driving chaotic and costly recruitment, replacing planned, managed processes with market exploitation.

### **Violation of SDG Target 8.8 (Protecting Migrant Workers' Rights)**

SDG Target 8.8 specifically mandates the protection of labour rights for all workers, including migrants. The widespread contract substitution (FGD1), wage theft (FGD3), and lack of follow-up protection (FGD1) are direct rights violations that demonstrate a systemic failure to meet this goal. The inability of the existing governance structure (both government monitoring and PrEA capacity) to prevent these abuses constitutes a major obstacle to the realization of decent work for Ethiopian labour migrants.

### **Misalignment with the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)**

The MiGOF, which serves as the conceptual basis for assessing "well-managed migration," operates on three main principles and three objectives (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4). The findings demonstrate a clear failure against all three MiGOF principles:

1. **Principle 1: Upholding the Human Dignity and Well-being of Migrants:** The documentation of deceptive contracts and post-departure abandonment (FGD1) suggests PrEAs are failing to prioritize migrant well-being, violating this core principle.
2. **Principle 2: Ensuring Effective Migration Governance:** The findings suggest that while the regulatory framework (Proclamation 923/2016) exists; as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4 and Section 2.5; the actual capacity for regulatory oversight and accountability is critically weak. As highlighted by government officials in Section 6.2.4 (FGD4), limited enforcement resources and agency evasion tactics fundamentally compromise the effectiveness of governance, confirming the 'Requires further progress' status often associated with Ethiopian migration assessments by the IOM.
3. **Principle 3: Adherence to International Law and Standards:** As detailed in Section 6.5.1, the observed practices of charging fees, allowing contract substitution, and lacking post-departure support, directly contradict international labour conventions, rendering the system non-compliant with this third principle.

In conclusion, the empirical data strongly indicates that the capacity and practices of PrEAs, compounded by fragmented regulatory enforcement, place Ethiopia in the "Requires further progress" category against the objectives of international migration governance, particularly concerning the safety and protection of its migrant workers.

## **7.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS**

The findings presented in this thesis hold significant value across theoretical, policy, and practical domains, moving beyond a mere description of recruitment challenges to offer a prescriptive basis for change.

### **Theoretical Significance**

This study makes an original contribution to the literature on international labour migration by integrating the analysis of institutional capacity with the social, legal, and ethical dimensions that impact the lives of migrant workers. By focusing on the structural and agency-level deficiencies within PrEAs, the research provides empirical validation for the theoretical intersection between Social Network Theory and New Institutional Economics Theory.

The application of NIE demonstrates how institutional failure and transaction costs are embedded in Ethiopia's recruitment ecosystem. The findings show that weak regulatory enforcement, loopholes in licensing, and poor monitoring systematically externalize risks onto migrant workers. Practices such as illegal recruitment fees, debt bondage, and contract substitution are not isolated irregularities but structural outcomes of institutional deficiencies. This empirical evidence extends NIE beyond abstract economic modelling, grounding it in the lived realities of migrant workers and demonstrating how institutional weaknesses compromise rights and safety.

At the same time, the study enriches Social Network Theory by highlighting the dual role of networks in migration. Qualitative findings reveal that kinship ties, brokers, and community connections facilitate access to migration opportunities, but also perpetuate vulnerabilities when embedded in weak institutional environments. This underscores the relational dimension of migration, showing how social capital interacts with institutional structures to shape migration outcomes. By situating these dynamics within Ethiopia's recruitment ecosystem, the study demonstrates how networks act as both protective and exploitative mechanisms.

Furthermore, the study validates that a holistic approach (see section 3.2.2) to labour migration encompasses a comprehensive framework that integrates various elements and addressing the multifaceted nature of migration, which includes economic, social, legal, and ethical considerations. It involves the implementation of policies and practices that prioritize the protection of migrant workers' rights, including fair and ethical recruitment, decent working conditions, access to social protection, and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace. The findings of this study substantiate that collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders (such as governments, employers, trade unions, civil society organizations, migrants) is essential to ensure the effective implementation of labour migration policies (ILO 2019). Additionally, this study confirms that a holistic approach to labour migration emphasizes that policy and decision-making must be evidence-based and data-driven to address the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant workers (ILO 2019). By implementing a mixed-methods approach, this study gives a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. Thus, this study provides evidence-based conclusions and recommendations of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

The findings demonstrate that formal regulations (institutions) are often undermined by weak organizational capacity (agency) and economic pressures, leading to a path-dependent cycle of precarious migration. The use of a mixed-methods triangulation approach further contributes a validated model for analyzing complex, multi-layered migration governance challenges in a developing context.

Together, these findings advance theoretical debates by bridging NIE's focus on institutional failure with Social Network Theory's emphasis on interpersonal ties, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of migration governance and contributing to the refinement of theory in international labour migration studies.

### **Policy Significance**

The research offers immediate and actionable insights for policymakers in Ethiopia and the IGAD region. The quantitative assessment provides the first comprehensive baseline data on the operational capacity indicators of PrEAs, identifying precise

regulatory gaps in training, monitoring, and accountability. The qualitative findings provide the crucial human context, revealing the disconnect between legislative intent and implementation practice. This evidence directly supports the development of targeted policy reforms concerning the licensing, performance monitoring, and sanctioning of agencies, ensuring that future regulations are data-driven, practical, and focused on migrant welfare.

### **Practical Significance**

At the operational level, this study is essential for the leadership of PrEAs, training institutions, and migrant support organizations. It serves as an empirical diagnostic tool, helping agencies identify their specific weaknesses in pre-departure orientation, post-arrival support, and complaint mechanisms. The findings offer a clear framework for:

- Developing needs-based capacity building and training programs for agency staff.
- Improving due diligence procedures and ethical recruitment standards.
- Strengthening collaboration between PrEAs, the government, and civil society, thereby enhancing the collective responsibility for migrant worker protection.

## **7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY CHANGES**

Based on the evidence and comprehensive analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and the comparative synthesis in Section 7.3, this section sets out clear, actionable recommendations to strengthen the governance of migrant recruitment in Ethiopia. The recommendations are deliberately structured to avoid repetition of findings, while maintaining logical flow by briefly linking each policy proposal to the empirical and theoretical insights already established. This ensures that the recommendations are firmly grounded in both quantitative data (e.g., staffing levels, training gaps, reliance on informal networks) and qualitative evidence (e.g., stakeholder perspectives, migrant experiences).

The recommendations are grouped into three priority areas: (i) Regulatory and Oversight Reform, addressing institutional weaknesses and enforcement gaps highlighted by New Institutional Economics (NIE); (ii) Capacity Building and

Professionalism, focusing on strengthening agency competence and ethical practice; and (iii) Migrant Protection Mechanisms, leveraging Social Network Theory to reinforce support structures and reduce vulnerabilities. Each recommendation is presented in table format, specifying the proposed action or policy change and identifying the key stakeholder responsible for implementation.

*Table 7.7 Regulatory & Oversight Reform*

| <b>Recommendation</b>                                 | <b>Action/Policy Change</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Target Stakeholder</b>                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Establish a Performance-Based Licensing System</b> | Shift from simply issuing licenses to one based on audited capacity (staff competence, financial stability, and infrastructure) and a proven track record of ethical recruitment.                                         | Ministry of Labour and Skills                                                                                                 |
| <b>Mandate Independent Monitoring and Audits</b>      | Introduce regular, unannounced performance audits by a neutral, third-party body or civil society consortium to verify adherence to standards, particularly regarding pre-departure contracts and post-arrival follow-up. | Ministry of Labour and Skills, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice/ National Partnership Coalition for Migration |
| <b>Strengthen Complaint &amp; Redress Mechanisms</b>  | Create a centralised, accessible, and anonymous digital platform for migrant workers to lodge complaints directly. Ensure rapid, mandatory arbitration and                                                                | Ministry of Justice/ National Partnership Coalition for Migration                                                             |

| Recommendation | Action/Policy Change                                              | Target Stakeholder |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                | transparent, publicised sanctions against non-compliant agencies. |                    |

*Table 7.8 Capacity Building and Professionalism*

| <b>Recommendation</b>                                   | <b>Action/Policy Change</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Target Stakeholder</b>                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Standardise Professional Training for PrEA Staff</b> | Mandate accredited, specialised training and certification for all key personnel (managers, recruiters, and support staff) covering international labour law, ethics, worker safety, and cross-cultural communication. | Ministry of Labour and Skills, EOAAF/ PrEAs Associations, PrEAs |
| <b>Develop a National Code of Conduct</b>               | Establish a unified, sector-wide Code of Conduct for PrEAs, backed by a clear enforcement mechanism, that strictly prohibits fee charging to migrants and enforces the "Employer Pays Principle."                      | Ministry of Labour and Skills, EOAAF/ PrEAs Associations,       |
| <b>Enhance Pre-Departure Orientation</b>                | Transform Pre-Departure Orientation into a detailed, interactive training program that includes financial literacy, cultural sensitivity, and detailed information on rights, contract terms, and emergency contacts.  | Ministry of Labour and Skills, PrEAs, Training Institutions     |

Table 7.9 Migrant Protection Mechanisms

| Recommendation                                    | Action/Policy Change                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Target Stakeholder                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Establish In-Destination Liaison</b>           | Require PrEAs to demonstrate formal, verifiable partnerships or staff presence in key destination countries to provide mandatory post-arrival check-ins and immediate assistance in cases of crisis.                                       | PrEAs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassies/Consulates                    |
| <b>Mandate Insurance and Financial Guarantees</b> | Require PrEAs to contribute to a national worker protection and repatriation fund that provides immediate support and recourse in cases of abuse or sudden job loss, without the worker having to rely solely on the agency's surety bond. | National Partnership Coalition for Migration, PrEAs, Financial Institutions |

The following stakeholder-oriented approach ensures clarity of accountability and provides a practical roadmap for reform. To ensure accountability and effective implementation, here are the recommendations in a stakeholder-specific format:

- **Government:** Strengthen regulatory enforcement, licensing procedures, and embassy/labour attaché capacity to ensure consistent oversight and protection of migrant workers abroad.

- **Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs):** Adopt ethical recruitment practices, eliminate hidden fees, and improve pre-departure training to align with international labour standards and the “Employer Pays Principle.”
- **Migrant Workers:** Engage in awareness programs, rights education, and grievance mechanisms to build resilience and ensure informed participation in the migration process.
- **Civil Society/Trade Unions:** Provide monitoring, advocacy, and community-based support to complement state oversight and amplify migrant voices in policy reform.

The recommendations outlined above are not only practical but also firmly grounded in the study’s theoretical framework. The priority area of Regulatory and Oversight Reform directly responds to the institutional weaknesses identified through New Institutional Economics (NIE), where weak enforcement and high transaction costs externalize risks onto migrant workers. By strengthening licensing systems, mandating independent audits, and enhancing complaint mechanisms, the reforms address the structural failures that NIE highlights as central to exploitative recruitment practices.

The second priority area, Capacity Building and Professionalism, reflects the need to professionalize recruitment agencies and embed ethical standards. This aligns with NIE’s emphasis on institutional robustness while also drawing on Social Network Theory, which shows how agency practices intersect with community networks. By standardizing training, enforcing a national code of conduct, and transforming pre-departure orientation, these measures reduce the vulnerabilities perpetuated by informal networks and strengthen protective knowledge among migrants.

Finally, the third priority area, Migrant Protection Mechanisms, leverages insights from Social Network Theory by recognizing the relational dimension of migration. Establishing in-destination liaison offices, mandating insurance, and creating financial guarantees directly strengthen the support structures available to migrants, ensuring that networks act as protective rather than exploitative mechanisms. These measures also complement NIE by reducing transaction costs and institutional gaps that leave migrants exposed abroad.

Together, these stakeholder-specific recommendations—directed at government, PrEAs, migrant workers, and civil society—demonstrate how the study’s findings translate into theory-informed policy change. By bridging NIE’s focus on institutional structures with Social Network Theory’s emphasis on relational dynamics, the recommendations provide a coherent roadmap for reform that is both evidence-based and theoretically anchored.

In conclusion, the recommendations presented in this chapter provide a coherent, evidence-based, and theory-informed roadmap for reforming Ethiopia’s migrant recruitment system. By linking Regulatory and Oversight Reform to the institutional weaknesses highlighted by New Institutional Economics (NIE), and by grounding Capacity Building and Protection Mechanisms in both NIE and Social Network Theory, the study demonstrates how theoretical insights can be translated into practical policy change. The stakeholder-specific approach—assigning responsibilities to government, PrEAs, migrant workers, and civil society—ensures clarity of accountability and promotes collaborative action. Together, these measures strengthen institutional structures, professionalize recruitment practices, and leverage social networks to protect migrant workers. This integration of theory, evidence, and policy not only addresses Ethiopia’s immediate challenges but also contributes to the wider scholarly discourse on ethical recruitment and migration governance, reinforcing the thesis’s original contribution to knowledge and practice.

## **7.7 AREA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study provides a foundational analysis of the challenges facing migrant worker protection in Ethiopia, but it also opens new avenues for scholarly inquiry. Future research areas should focus on the following:

1. **Impact of Regulatory Reforms:** Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the actual impact of any newly implemented performance-based licensing systems (as recommended in 7.5.1) on the safety outcomes and rights adherence for migrant workers over a 3-to-5-year period.
2. **The Role of Digitalisation and Technology:** Research could explore the potential of technology, such as blockchain-based contract systems or digital

tracking platforms, to enhance transparency, reduce illegal recruitment networks, and improve the monitoring capacity of both government and PrEAs.

3. **Comparative Analysis of Destination Country Regulations:** A comparative study examining the governance and enforcement of PrEAs in key receiving countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar) is necessary to understand how transnational regulation can be synchronised with Ethiopian laws for improved protection.
4. **Economic and Social Costs of Migration Precarity:** Research should quantify the full economic and social costs, beyond wages, associated with migration precarity, including mental health impacts, family disruption, and the opportunity cost of regulatory failure.

## 7.8 THE ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This thesis makes several distinct contributions to the fields of migration studies, development studies, and governance in the Ethiopian and regional context:

1. **Methodological Triangulation in Governance Analysis:** It is one of the first studies to successfully implement a robust mixed-methods design, triangulating quantitative data from PrEAs with in-depth qualitative data from a multi-stakeholder perspective. This provided a fully validated, holistic diagnosis of the problem, offering a reliable model for future research on complex governance issues.
2. **Empirical Baseline of PrEA Capacity:** The study delivers the first empirical baseline assessment of the operational, financial, and ethical capacities of licensed PrEAs in Ethiopia. This moves the policy debate beyond anecdotal evidence, providing the necessary metrics for government and industry leaders to measure future progress.
3. **Integration of Institutional Theory and Worker Rights:** The research synthesised theoretical frameworks to specifically illustrate how institutional gaps in the regulatory environment directly led to a failure in the protection of migrant workers' rights (a tangible outcome). This bridges the gap between macro-level governance theory and micro-level human rights outcomes.

4. **Development of Targeted Policy Guidelines:** The findings were translated into specific, actionable policy and programmatic recommendations (Section 7.6) designed to operationalise ethical recruitment principles. This direct application of research to policy offers a blueprint for regulatory reform in Ethiopia's labour migration sector.

## **7.9 CONCLUSION**

This research set out to rigorously analyse the critical issue of migrant worker protection within the framework of Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in Ethiopia. Through the systematic collection and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, the thesis successfully achieved its overarching aim, revealing that while the legal framework is largely in place, its effectiveness is severely hampered by significant gaps in the capacity, resources, and ethical practices of many recruitment agencies. The findings underscore that the safety of migrant workers is fundamentally compromised by operational and regulatory deficits. This study not only diagnoses these failures but also provides a comprehensive, evidence-based roadmap for reform. The recommendations for policy changes, professionalization, and strengthened protection mechanisms are intended to guide a transition toward a more humane, transparent, and rights-respecting system of labour migration, ultimately enhancing the welfare of Ethiopian citizens engaged in overseas employment. The successful implementation of these measures will determine the future effectiveness of labour migration governance and the security of one of Ethiopia's most vulnerable working populations.

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## Appendix 1 – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers

### Survey Questionnaire

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this important research study. This survey aims to understand the practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and their role in protecting the safety and rights of migrant workers. Your honest responses will be crucial in achieving this goal.

#### **Part 1: Agency Background**

##### **Agency Information:**

1. Name of the Migrant Recruitment Agency: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Contact Information (Address, Phone, Email): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Year of establishment: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of employees: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you a registered and licensed agency by the Ethiopian government?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. In the process of registration

##### **Metacognitive Question:**

- Briefly describe your agency's mission and core values related to migrant worker protection.

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## Part 2: Recruitment Process

### 2.1: Identifying Potential Workers

- **Declarative Question:** How does your agency actively reach out to potential migrant workers? (Select all that apply)
  - Online job portals
  - Local advertisements
  - Referrals from previous workers
  - Community outreach programs
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- **Metacognitive Question:**
  - How effective are these methods in attracting qualified and diverse candidates for employment abroad?

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### 2.2: Selection Criteria

- **Declarative Question:** What are the most important factors your agency considers when selecting migrant workers for specific job opportunities? (Rank the top 3)
  - Educational qualifications
  - Work experience
  - Language proficiency
  - Skills and qualifications related to the job
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 2.3: Fair and Transparent Recruitment

- **Declarative Question:** Does your agency have a standardized recruitment process that includes the following steps? (Select all that apply)
  - Screening of applications and documents
  - Individual and/or group interviews
  - Verification of references and work experience
  - Pre-employment medical examinations
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - No standardised recruitment process
- **Open-Ended Question:**
  - How does your agency ensure that the recruitment process is fair and transparent for all potential migrant workers?

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### Part 3: Pre-Departure Preparation and Orientation

- **Declarative Question:** Does your agency offer pre-departure orientation and training programs for migrant workers?
  - Yes
  - No
- **If Yes:**
  - **Declarative Question:** What are the key topics covered in these programs? (Select all that apply)
    - Rights and responsibilities of migrant workers under Ethiopian law and the destination country's labour laws.
    - Cultural and social norms of the destination country.
    - Job-specific skills and requirements necessary for success.
    - Health and safety precautions in the workplace.
    - Basic language training relevant to the destination country (if applicable).

- Financial literacy and budgeting skills.
- Grievance redressal mechanisms available to migrant workers.
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- **Open-Ended Question:**
  - How do you ensure that migrant workers fully understand the information provided during the pre-departure orientation?

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#### **Part 4: Support and Assistance During Employment**

- **Declarative Question:** What ongoing support services does your agency offer to migrant workers after they depart for employment abroad? (Select all that apply)
  - Regular communication and check-ins with workers
  - Assistance with resolving legal or documentation issues
  - Support in case of emergencies or medical problems
  - Grievance redressal mechanisms for addressing worker concerns
  - Collaboration with local authorities or embassies in the destination country
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- **Open-Ended Question:**
  - In your experience, what are the most common challenges faced by migrant workers during their employment abroad? How does your agency assist them in overcoming these challenges?

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## Part 5: Challenges and Improvements

- **Declarative Question:** What are the biggest obstacles that hinder your agency's ability to effectively recruit and protect migrant workers? (Rank the top 3)
  - Language barriers between agency staff and potential workers.
  - Lack of clear legal frameworks and regulations governing migrant recruitment practices.
  - Limited resources and funding to conduct comprehensive screening and training programs.
  - Unethical practices by employers or intermediaries in the destination country.
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- **Open-Ended Question:**
  - In your opinion, what specific improvements or measures could be taken by the Ethiopian government, recruitment agencies, or other stakeholders to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of migrant worker protection systems?

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Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your responses will contribute to valuable insights for the research study.

## **Appendix 2 – FGD TOPIC GUIDE**

An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers

(Please note that not all questions in each category need to be asked, some may be optional depending on the audience)

### Focus Group Interview Guide

#### **Introduction** (7 minutes)

Introduction and the purpose of the focus group interview.

A brief overview of the thesis.

How information will be used.

#### **Icebreaker** (3 minutes)

"Can you share a story about someone you know who has migrated for work?"

#### **Understanding Participants' Perspectives** (20 minutes)

Shared Experiences: "Today's discussion focuses on migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia and their role in protecting migrant workers. Can you all share your experiences or interactions with these agencies?"

**Attitudes and Perceptions:** "In your opinion, how important is the role of migrant recruitment agencies in protecting migrant workers? Why or why not?"

**Gender and Stratification:** "Have you observed any differences in how recruitment agencies interact with or treat male vs. female migrant workers? Have socioeconomic factors influenced your experiences with recruitment agencies?"

#### **Challenges and Issues Faced by Agencies** (25 minutes)

Understanding Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) Roles: "Let's delve deeper into migrant recruitment agencies. In your view, what are the main responsibilities and functions of these agencies?"

Capacity to Protect Workers: "Considering the challenges migrant workers face, how well do you think recruitment agencies are equipped to protect their safety and rights?"

Challenges and Experiences: "Have you encountered any specific situations where a recruitment agency did not fulfill its duties? Can you share some examples of rights violations, exploitation, or other problems related to these agencies?"

Contributing Factors: "What factors do you think contribute to the challenges faced by recruitment agencies in protecting migrant workers? Are there any external or internal factors that hinder their effectiveness?"

### **Improving Capacity and Practice (20 minutes)**

Enhancing PrEA Practices: "We've discussed the challenges. Now, let's explore some ideas for improvement. How can migrant recruitment agencies strengthen their organizational and managerial skills to better serve migrant workers?"

Policy and Regulation: "What kind of regulatory frameworks or policies do you think are needed to address the challenges faced by recruitment agencies? Are there existing policies that need to be strengthened?"

Learning from Others: "Are there any successful examples from other countries regarding migrant worker protection by recruitment agencies that could be adapted in Ethiopia?"

### **Role of Stakeholders (15 minutes)**

Government's Role: "The government plays a crucial role. In your opinion, how can the government more effectively oversee and regulate migrant recruitment agencies?"

Stakeholder Collaboration: "Migrant worker protection requires collaboration. How can civil society organizations and international bodies contribute to this effort?"

Employer Responsibility: "What responsibilities do employers have in ensuring the fair treatment of migrant workers they hire through recruitment agencies?"

### **Conclusion (10 minutes)**

Summary: Briefly summarize the key points discussed during the FGD.

Final Thoughts: "I would appreciate any additional comments or suggestions you may have related to the topic of migrant worker protection and the role of recruitment agencies."

**Thank You:** Thank the participants for their valuable time and insights.

## **Appendix 3 – INTERVIEW GUIDE**

An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to  
protect the safety and rights of migrant workers

### Interview Guide

#### **Introduction:**

- Begin the interview by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of the interview.
- Assure the interviewee that their responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only.
- Obtain informed consent from the interviewee to participate in the interview.

#### **Section 1: Background Information**

1. Can you please provide a brief overview of your role and responsibilities within the migrant recruitment agency?
2. How long have you been working in the field of migrant recruitment?
3. Can you describe the structure and organization of the agency? How many staff members are employed, and what are their roles?
4. Are there any specific regulations or guidelines that the agency follows in the recruitment process? If yes, please explain.

#### **Section 2: Capacity Assessment**

5. In your opinion, what are the key strengths of the migrant recruitment agency in terms of its capacity to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers?
6. What are the main challenges or limitations that the agency faces in fulfilling its duties towards migrant workers?
7. How does the agency ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks and ethical standards in the recruitment process?
8. Can you provide examples of any capacity-building programs or initiatives that the agency has implemented to enhance its effectiveness? How successful have these been?

### **Section 3: Practice and Procedures**

9. What are the steps involved in the recruitment process for migrant workers? Can you describe each step-in detail?
10. How does the agency ensure transparency and fairness in the selection and placement of migrant workers?
11. What measures does the agency have in place to protect migrant workers from rights violations, exploitation, human trafficking, and forced labour?
12. How does the agency facilitate safe and orderly emigration for Ethiopian citizens? Are there any specific services or support provided to migrants before, during, or after their migration?

### **Section 4: Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement**

13. Does the agency collaborate with other stakeholders such as government bodies such as the Ministry of Labour and Skills, Ethiopia Overseas Employment Agencies Federation, civil society organizations, or international agencies? If yes, please describe the nature of these collaborations and their impact on the agency's work.
14. How does the agency engage with migrant workers and their families? Are there any mechanisms in place to receive feedback or address grievances from migrants?
15. In your opinion, what improvements or changes do you think are needed in the collaboration and engagement efforts of the agency with stakeholders?

### **Conclusion:**

- Thank the interviewee for their participation and valuable insights.
- Offer them an opportunity to ask any questions or provide additional comments.
- Reiterate the confidentiality of their responses and assure them that their input will contribute to the research findings.
- End the interview by expressing gratitude for their time and cooperation.

## **Appendix 4.1– CONSENT FORM: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES**

**Researcher:** Solomon Abebe Addis

#### **Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Solomon Abebe Addis, a researcher at the Development Studies, UNISA. The purpose of this study is to analyze the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia in order to enhance their ability to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this consent form provides you with information about the study, its procedures, and your rights as a participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether or not to participate.

#### **Procedure:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide information through survey questionnaires. The information collected will be used to identify patterns and themes related to the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies. Your participation may involve approximately 2 to 3 hours of your time, depending on the specific methods used.

#### **Risks and Benefits:**

Participating in this study may involve some risks, such as potential discomfort or emotional stress when discussing topics related to migration and recruitment agencies. However, every effort will be made to create a safe and supportive environment during data collection. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, but the findings from this study may contribute to improving the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, which could benefit future migrant workers.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Your identity and any personal information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and authorized personnel involved in the study. Any information published or presented will be in aggregate form and will not contain any identifying information.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Your decision to participate or not will in no way affect your relationship with the researcher or any other individuals or organizations associated with this study.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Solomon Abebe Addis at [20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za) or +251911898807.

Additionally, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Prof Derica Kotze - the supervisor, UNISA, at [kotzed@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kotzed@unisa.ac.za) and Prof Khatija Khan, Chair of College of Human Sciences\_CRECE at [khankb@unisa.ac.za](mailto:khankb@unisa.ac.za)

**Consent:**

I have read and understood the information provided above regarding the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: Solomon Abebe Addis

Researcher's Signature: 

Date: 01 July 2024

## **Appendix 4.2 – CONSENT FORM: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

### **An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

**Researcher:** Solomon Abebe Addis

#### **Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Solomon Abebe Addis, a researcher at the Development Studies, UNISA. The purpose of this study is to analyze the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia in order to enhance their ability to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this consent form provides you with information about the study, its procedures, and your rights as a participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether or not to participate.

#### **Procedure:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide information through in-depth interviews. The information collected will be used to identify patterns and themes related to the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies. Your participation may involve approximately 2 to 3 hours of your time, depending on the specific methods used.

#### **Risks and Benefits:**

Participating in this study may involve some risks, such as potential discomfort or emotional stress when discussing topics related to migration and recruitment agencies. However, every effort will be made to create a safe and supportive environment during data collection. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, but the findings from this study may contribute to improving the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, which could benefit future migrant workers.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Your identity and any personal information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and authorized personnel involved in the study. Any information published or presented will be in aggregate form and will not contain any identifying information.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Your decision to participate or not will in no way affect your relationship with the researcher or any other individuals or organizations associated with this study.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Solomon Abebe Addis at [20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za) or +251911898807.

Additionally, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Prof Derica Kotze - the supervisor, UNISA, at [kotzed@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kotzed@unisa.ac.za) and Prof Khatija Khan, Chair of College of Human Sciences\_CREC at [khankb@unisa.ac.za](mailto:khankb@unisa.ac.za)

**Consent:**

I have read and understood the information provided above regarding the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: Solomon Abebe Addis

Researcher's Signature: 

Date: 01 July 2024

## **Appendix 4.3 – CONSENT FORM: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

### **An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

**Researcher:** Solomon Abebe Addis

#### **Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Solomon Abebe Addis, a researcher at the Development Studies, UNISA. The purpose of this study is to analyze the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia in order to enhance their ability to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this consent form provides you with information about the study, its procedures, and your rights as a participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether or not to participate.

#### **Procedure:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide information through focus group discussion. The information collected will be used to identify patterns and themes related to the capacity and practice of migrant recruitment agencies. Your participation may involve approximately 2 to 3 hours of your time, depending on the specific methods used.

#### **Risks and Benefits:**

Participating in this study may involve some risks, such as potential discomfort or emotional stress when discussing topics related to migration and recruitment agencies. However, every effort will be made to create a safe and supportive environment during data collection. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, but the findings from this study may contribute to improving the effectiveness of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia, which could benefit future migrant workers.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Your identity and any personal information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and authorized personnel involved in the study. Any information published or presented will be in aggregate form and will not contain any identifying information.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Your decision to participate or not will in no way affect your relationship with the researcher or any other individuals or organizations associated with this study.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Solomon Abebe Addis at [20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za) or +251911898807.

Additionally, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Prof Derica Kotze - the supervisor, UNISA, at [kotzed@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kotzed@unisa.ac.za) and Prof Khatija Khan, Chair of College of Human Sciences\_CRECE at [khankb@unisa.ac.za](mailto:khankb@unisa.ac.za)

**Consent:**

I have read and understood the information provided above regarding the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: Solomon Abebe Addis

Researcher's Signature: 

Date: 01 July 2024

## Appendix 5 – ETHICAL CERTIFICATES



College of Human Sciences\_CREC

Date: 20/06/2025

Dear: Mr Solomon Abebe Addis

NHREC Registration # : (Rec-240816-052)  
Ref #: 3230  
Name: Mr Solomon Abebe Addis  
Student #: 20996039

**Decision: Ethics Approval from 20 June 2025 to 19 June 2026**

**Researcher:** Mr Solomon Abebe Addis

Ethiopia

Addis Ababa

20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za +251911898807

**Supervisor:** Professor Derica Kotze kotzed@unisa.ac.za

**An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers**

**Qualification:** PhD in Development Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics approval by the College of Human Sciences\_CREC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for **one year**.

The **low-risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Human Sciences\_CREC on **20 June 2025** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising during the undertaking of the research study that may affect the ethical integrity of the study, including those involving research participants, third parties, or juristic persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Human Sciences\_CREC without delay.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that may affect study-related risks to research participants, juristic or third persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Human Sciences\_CREC, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research study complies with all applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Where applicable, adherence to the following South African legislation is essential: the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the National Health Act (No. 61 of 2003)
6. Future use of this research data is permitted only in de-identified form and only for secondary research with objectives similar to those of the original study. Any secondary use involving identifiable human data will require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue beyond the stated expiry date (**19 June 2026**). A completed Research Ethics Progress Report must be submitted as an application for renewal and is subject to approval by the Research Ethics Committee. A Close-Out Report must be submitted upon completion of the research study.
8. The College of Human Sciences\_CREK may require the submission of regular progress reports on a [annual] basis, in alignment with Section 7.2 of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics (2024).

**Additional Conditions**

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from the research participants and Unisa.
2. Research data must be stored in compliance with the university's research data management policy for a period of up to 15 years.
3. When publishing the results, the researcher must take appropriate precautions to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants, juristic persons, third parties, and the university, in accordance with institutional policies and ethical standards.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication Practices, specifically Principle 7 on Social Awareness, must be ensured. This principle states: 'Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups, or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible.' The University of South Africa (Unisa) accepts no liability for any failure to comply with this principle.

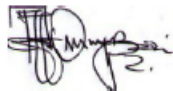
**Note**

The reference number 3230 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof K J Malesa  
Chair of College of Human Sciences\_CREK  
E-mail: maleskj@unisa.ac.za



Professor Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha  
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Human Sciences\_CREK  
E-mail: onyanob@unisa.ac.za



SEEK WISDOM, ELEVATE YOUR INTELLECT AND SERVE HUMANITY !

Addis Ababa University  
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Approved

## COLLEGE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (CDS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB) No: Spe/cer/09211/2024

Ph.D. Proposal Ethical Clearance Certificate

1. **Researcher's name:** Solomon Abebe Addis **Sex:** Male **Birth Date:** January 06/1983 **Student No:** 20996039 **Contact address /E-mail:** 20996039@mylife.unisa.ac.za

2. **PhD Dissertation Supervisor:** Professor Derica Kotze **Contact address/E-mail:** kotzed@unisa.ac.za

3. **Title of the Proposal:** AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAPACITY AND PRACTICE OF RECRUITMENT AGENCIES IN ETHIOPIA TO PROTECT THE SAFETY AND RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS.

4. **A Clear Statement of the Decision:** The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the College of Development Studies at Addis Ababa University (AAU) has received an application from Mr. Solomon Abebe Addis, a PhD student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Human Sciences. On September 14, 2024, he was conditionally granted ethical clearance, pending the approval from the relevant ethics committee in Ethiopia. It is important to note that the comments provided by reviewers should be addressed in the final version of his proposal.

Following a thorough review of the application and the ethical clearance approval letter (NHREC Registration # : Rec-240816-052 Ref #: 3230), the IRB of the College of Development Studies confirms that Mr. Solomon Abebe Addis has received ethics approval from UNISA. In recognition of this and in support of academic and scientific pursuits, the IRB of CDS at AAU recommends the initiation of data collection. This ethical approval acts as a preliminary letter, permitting Mr. Solomon Abebe Addis to commence data collection upon the recognition of the College of Human Sciences CREC.

5. **Decision:** The researcher is permitted to proceed with data collection activities upon final approval have been granted by the College of Human Sciences CREC.

6. This Certificate is issued upon the consent of the Dean of the CDS/AAU.

**IRB-CoDS**



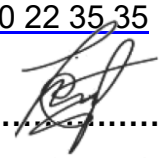
**Name:** Teshome Tafesse (Ph.D.)

**Designation:** Chairperson of IRB-  
CDS

**E-mail:**

[cods.irb@aau.edu.et](mailto:cods.irb@aau.edu.et)

**Tel:** +251 960 22 35 35

**Signature**.....

**Date:** November 01, 2024

**This certificate is valid only sealed and signed**

## Appendix 5 - CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR SURVEY ENUMERATORS

**Thesis Title:** An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of Recruitment Agencies in Ethiopia to Protect the Safety and Rights of Migrant Workers

**Principal Researcher:** Solomon Abebe Addis

**Institution:** University of South Africa (UNISA)

**1. Purpose of the Agreement** As an enumerator for this doctoral research project, I understand that I will have access to sensitive information provided by various stakeholders, including migrant workers, Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs), and government officials. The purpose of this agreement is to ensure the absolute protection of participant privacy and the integrity of the research data.

#### 2. Scope of Confidentiality

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Full Name), hereby agree to:

- **Maintain Anonymity:** Keep the identities of all research participants strictly confidential. I will not reveal the names or identifying characteristics of any individual or agency interviewed to anyone other than the principal researcher.
- **Data Security:** Ensure that all collected data—whether on tablets (CAPI) or paper forms (PAPI)—is stored securely at all times and never left unattended in public spaces.
- **Non-Disclosure:** Not discuss the specific responses, personal experiences, or sensitive information shared by participants (such as reports of exploitation, debt bondage, or regulatory failures) with any third party.
- **Ethical Conduct:** Adhere to the ethical protocols established by the UNISA College of Human Science Research Ethics Committee and the AAU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

#### 3. Enumerator Responsibilities

- I will conduct every interview in a professional manner, following the standardized protocols and ethical guidelines provided during my training.

- I will ensure that informed consent is obtained from every participant before data collection begins.
- Upon completion of the data collection phase, I will return all research materials, including original survey forms and digital files, to the principal researcher.

**4. Breach of Agreement** I understand that any unauthorized disclosure of confidential information or failure to protect participant anonymity constitutes a serious ethical breach. Such actions may lead to immediate termination of my involvement in the study and may be reported to the relevant university ethics committees.

## 5. Declaration

I have read this agreement, understand my obligations to protect the rights of the research participants, and voluntarily agree to these terms.

**Enumerator Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal Researcher Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6 – PERMISSION LETTER



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Ministry of Labor and Skills

#ref: 23/68/164/2024  
#in: 26-4-2024  
Date:

**To Whom It May Concern**

**Subject: Support for PhD Thesis Research - An Analysis of Migrant Worker Recruitment Practices in Ethiopia**

This letter is written to express the Ministry of Labour and Skills' support for Mr. Solomon Abebe Addis's, of UNISA, PhD thesis research on "An Analysis of the Capacity and Practice of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia to protect the safety and rights of migrant workers."

We acknowledge the significance of Mr. Solomon's research topic. Migrant worker safety and well-being are high priorities for the Ministry, and a thorough analysis of recruitment agency practices is crucial for ensuring Ethiopian migrant workers are adequately protected.

We believe Mr. Solomon's research will contribute valuable insights to improve the regulatory framework and practices of migrant recruitment agencies in Ethiopia. The findings can inform policy development and interventions to better safeguard the rights and safety of Ethiopian migrant workers.

The Ministry of Labour and Skills is committed to supporting research that strengthens migrant worker protections. We are confident that Mr. Solomon's research will be conducted ethically and rigorously.

We are willing to offer Mr. Solomon the following support:

- Facilitate contact with relevant stakeholders within the Ministry.
- Provide access to publicly available data relevant to migrant worker recruitment practices (upon request).
- Link with the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation, an umbrella organization for migrant recruitment Agencies in Ethiopia.

We encourage all relevant institutions and individuals to cooperate with Mr. Solomon in his research endeavors.

For Any inquires, feel free to contact Mr. Amsalu Bashe, Director of Overseas Employment Directorate with +251911055623.



**Amsalu Bashe**  
**Director**