

## **FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES OF RURAL-URBAN WOMEN MIGRATION: EVIDENCE FROM INJIBARA TOWN, ETHIOPIA**

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### **Abstract**

The overall objective of this study was to identify factors that contribute for women's rural-urban migration and its negative consequences in Injibara Town. Qualitative research approach was employed to describe the situation. For this purpose, both primary and secondary data sources were used. Data were collected using questionnaire and in-depth key informant interview. A total of 20 in-depth with women migrant interviewees were conducted using snowball sampling. Moreover, 7 key informants' were taken from the concerned offices and finally the study was consolidated by intensive review of related literatures. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through descriptive analysis. Findings of this study showed that pushing factors such as gender based violence, poverty; low productivity, drought, and lack of land combined with urban pull factors such as better employment opportunity, better income and urban way of life, good working environment, and better health care have had dominant effect for women migration. This study identified housing problems, violation of rights, diseases, lack of food, lack of job and low wage as negative consequences that women migrants were faced during and after their arrival to Injibara town. Accordingly, diversifying rural agricultural and non-farming business practices and formulation of appropriate migration policies that address economic and social needs of the migrants is crucial.

**Keywords:** Consequences, Factors, Injibara, Rural-urban migration, Women

### **Introduction**

The study investigated the contributed factors and consequences of rural-urban women migration in the case of Injibara town, Ethiopia. The main objective of the study was to examine the push and pull factors and

negative consequences of rural women migrants in arrival and destination area faced. The significance of the study problem can be demonstrated that, while there have been studies on migration, much has not been done into rural-urban women migration in the country, and especially in the area where this research was conducted. On the methodology of the study; the qualitative method was employed, implementing a cross-sectional design with basic data collection and data analysis procedures. Findings of this study revealed that, pushing factors such as gender based violence, poverty; low productivity, drought, and lack of land combined with urban pull factors such as better employment opportunities, better income and urban way of life, good working environment, and better health care have had dominant effect for women migration. Moreover, women migrants have faced major negative consequences during and at arrival to Injibara town including housing and food related problems, violation of rights, inability to obtain job and low wage. The findings of the study would assist the Social Workers, Civil Society Organizations, governments, ministries, donor organizations, international communities, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) having gender based violence related interests in understanding the factors causing rural-urban women migration and the Ethiopia's government effort to combat it. Finally, the study starts with a background section, the methodology, findings, discussion, implications and conclusion.

### **Background**

In many developing countries, disparities in living standards between lagging and leading areas or between rural and urban areas are large (Bundervoet, 2018). Due to structural, cultural, social and economic barriers, rural women, who make up one fourth of the world's population, fare worse than rural men, urban men and urban women (Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Women, 2017). It is increasingly acknowledged and understood that migration is a highly gendered phenomenon. Women, in general, face different challenges and opportunities in many areas than similarly situated men do. In addition, because rural women still often lack access to infrastructure and productive resources, represent the majority of the world's illiterates, are often excluded from wage employment and struggle to access health care, their experience of migration can significantly differ from urban women's experience (Gwanshak et al., 2021). According to Bundervoet (2018), women also migrate to escape

from arranged marriages and traditional gender roles. The migration experience is described as tough and full of challenges, and risky for young women in particular. Moreover, women in rural areas face numerous difficulties in securing property titles in rural areas, some women may migrate to towns and cities where prospects to acquire property are assumed to be better (Chan & Ren, 2018). Rural-urban migration is also driven by many factors and has large returns and costs. Climatic shocks and conflicts have become significant drivers of women migration to towns (Selod & Shilpi, 2021 & Agwu *ital.*, 2021).

Migration is a hot topic in Ethiopia, as in many other countries in Africa. Especially, rural-urban women migration has increased in the past two decades (De Reget & Mihret, 2020). Fransen & Onga'yo (2009) noted that Ethiopia has experienced political instability, war, famine, gender based violence and economic hardship over the course of its history. As a result, the country has known many types of migration over the years. It has been both an origin and a destination country for either voluntary or involuntary migrants, and many migrants have also used it as a transit area (Achinko, 2021). Moreover, Ethiopia has known large internal migration flows especially from rural to urban. Current internal migration patterns in Ethiopia are driven by the same factors that led to historical migration flows. The exact number of internal migrants are not available; however, it is evident from existing studies that approximately 50 to 70 percent of the population migrates temporarily or permanently (Mberu *et al.*, 2017). Yorke *et al.* (2022) found that girls and young women leave their rural communities and move to urban areas to pursue better education and to escape inequalities in rural areas. Despite the many challenges, the bulk of women migrants rate their migration as positive, saying that it opened up opportunities that were unthinkable in rural areas. According to Bundervoet (2018), life in the towns and cities however is hard, with women migrants complaining of frequent harassment by local authorities and law enforcement (and for young women, sexual harassment by brokers and employers), the difficulty of obtaining ID cards, excessive labor exploitation and the difficulty of accessing different types of government support.

There are some empirical studies (for example, Gebeyehu, 2014; Eshetu & Beshir, 2020; Mitiku & Mulatu, 2021; Abeje, 2021; Yorke *etal.*, 2022) which assessed factors and consequences of rural-urban migration in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, these studies have given less emphasis to further

explore multiple factors and negative consequences of rural-urban women migration in Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular. Moreover, little effort was made to assess the factors and negative impacts of rural-urban structured from which clearly gives a meaningful indication to understand the issue under study.

The main intention of this research was to conduct in-depth assessment on the factors and negative consequences of rural-urban women migration in Injibara town which is found in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. Therefore, this study was done to address basic research questions: what are the main factors for rural-urban women migration? And what are the major negative consequences women migrants faces in the study area?

### **Methods**

In this study both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were collected from women migrants that work in households, bars and restaurants, daily laborers and beggars. While secondary data were collected from national and international published and unpublished documents like journal articles, Women and Children and Social Affairs, Health, and Court Offices' annual reports in the study area, books and other internet sources related to the subject under study. In order to assure the relevance and importance of the collected data, the researcher has made an extensive review of the existing related literatures in Africa mostly on the factors and negative consequences of rural-urban women migration in Ethiopia in particular and other parts of the continent in general. Regarding the research approach, the researcher employed qualitative research approach in which the data were collected from secondary sources and the research method is descriptive because the study has attempted to describe and explore the main contributing factors and negative consequences of rural-urban women migration.

The research design used for this research was cross-sectional case study. This design was selected because it helps to get detailed information regarding the subjects of the study. According to Kothari and Garg (2014), research design provides an accurate account of characteristics of a particular individual, event or group in real-life situations. It also presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship (Neuman, 2014). Concerning data collection tools, questionnaire and in-depth and key informant interviews were employed to collect the required data. Data were analyzed qualitatively.

Because of poor recording system and dynamic nature of migration, it was difficult to get the exact figure and trend of women migrants that joined Injibara town in former and subsequent years. But, one can envisage that the Injibara town is expected to have thousands of women migrants (Awi Nationality Administrative Zone Women, Children and Social Affairs' Office, 2021). The sampling technique used was non-provability sampling i.e. snowballing. Because this technique was found to be appropriate to identify the interviews through chain reference for this study. Therefore, in this study 20 respondents for in-depth interview and 7 key informants were selected for this study.

### **Ethical consideration**

After proposal approval by Research and Publication Directorate Office of Injibara University and instruments of data collection and highlights of the study has been presented and approved by the College of Social Science and Humanities, the researcher first informed participants about the nature of the study and requested their consent to participate. The researcher considered the research values of voluntary participation, anonymity and protection of respondents from any possible harm that could arise from participating in the study. Thus, the researcher introduced the purpose of the study as an academic purpose and not for any other hidden agenda and requested the respondents to participate in the study on a voluntary basis and refusal or abstaining from participating was permitted. The researcher was also committed to report the research findings in a complete and honest fashion, without misleading others about the nature of the findings. Therefore, on the basis of these ethical principles, efforts were made and kept throughout the process of this research work.

### **Findings**

In this section of the study the demography of the interviewees and three main questions have been addressed. What the main pushing factors were exacerbating rural-urban women migration? What are the main pulling causes that lead to women migrate from rural to urban areas? And what were the negative consequences faced by rural-urban migrant women?

### **Demographic data of the interviewees**

In order to obtain the required data for this study the total number of 20 interviewees and 7 key informants were taken. Among them, regarding

their age, the data indicated the majority of respondents about 13 (65 %) were in the age group of 21-30 and this is accompanied by the age group of 31-35 which comprises 5 (25 %) and the remaining age groups ranging above 36 which comprises 2 (5%) respectively. In this regard, the result of this study showed that women and young girls who are in the age of 21-30 and 31-35 the most vulnerable group or segments of population for rural-urban migration in the study settings.

As far as education level is concerned, the majority 10 (50%) of the interviewees attended primary school and this is accompanied by 8 (40%) who are attended secondary level, girls and women who are illiterate comprising of 2(10%). This showed that those girls and women are not continues their educational status due to the problems of because of different problems in the study area.

### **Major Factors That Cause Women Migration from Rural To Urban Areas**

#### **Push factors for women migration from rural to urban**

According to the in-depth interviews from rural-urban women migrants who are working as household, restaurants, bars, beggars and daily laborers gender based violence, land, low agricultural productivity, drought, divorce, disagreement with family members are identified as the major push factors for rural-urban women migration. In addition, women migrants' responded problems related to family death, health, unable to repay loan, unable to succeed in education were identified as additional push factors for some of the migrants. Data collected from key informant interview from sector officials revealed that problems related to lack of land, low standard of living, gender based violence; inequality and disagreement with their husbands/divorce push women migrants from their place of origin. Moreover, the key informants confirmed that rural-urban migration is more increasing and prevalent in the study area due to the above mentioned push factors and other related reasons.

#### **Pull factors for women migration from rural to urban**

The result of this study indicates that majority of the interviewees were attracted to Injibara town to get better employment opportunity, better income, better urban way of life, better working condition and to get better health care. The interviewees in their response they also added that peer influence, anticipation to carry on personal business and own way of life

contributed for their migration. Interview data collected from Awi Nationality Administrative Zone Labor and Social Affairs Office and other key informants indicated that women are motivated for migration, when they see previously migrated peers wear shining cloths, to withdraw from poverty in a short cut way, and by misleading practice of human traffickers. It shows that dissatisfactions by the economic and social aspects of women at their place of origin combined with the urban attractions contributed for women to migrate to Injibara town. Thus, it is indicated that rapid movement of people from rural to urban areas is the result of expectations of better wages and the desire to improve one's economic situation.

### **Negative consequences faced by women migrants during and arrival**

According to this study, major challenges for migrant respondents during arrival to Injibara town were housing, food and inability to obtain job. Moreover, sexual harassment, isolation, cultural difference, inability to obtain education and health services, and illness were also problems faced by the majority of the respondents.

Five young women interviewees of the study who are working as household servants explained the negative consequences of rural-urban women migration and associated problems they faced during and in their stay in the study area as follows:

“We migrated from rural areas during our migration we faced gender based violence like sexual harassments by different brokers and male peers and housing problem. In addition, the brokers were forcing us to stay with many males and sold for prostitution for the sake of their income. After these miseries of life, brokers sent us to household employers and take forcefully much money for their broking transaction. After stay as household servants we faced problems such as excessive labour exploitation with least payment, rape by male household members, insulation, lack of food, not to pay the labour cost with in the limited time limits, problem of personal hygiene and prohibition to break time to visit their rural family and relatives.”

Interview data collected from sector officials disclosed that women migrants are exposed to shortage of food, lack of shelter, unable to quickly adapt to the new environment, lack of awareness about the available job opportunities, involuntary sexual intercourse with brokers, exposure to

communicable disease and unwanted pregnancy, possibility of death in an attempt to abort unwanted pregnancy, and labor exploitation during arrival. Among other things, housing problem and shortage of food challenged significant proportion of respondents during arrival.

### **Discussion**

Gender based violence, land, low agricultural productivity, drought, divorce, disagreement with family members are identified as the major push factors for rural-urban women migration. In line with these findings, Kainth (2009) found rural-urban migration is persisted because of low productivity, unemployment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement and natural calamities may force women to leave their native place in search of better economic opportunities. Gebeyehu (2014) in his study on rural-urban migration and land, identified that major reasons for rural-urban migration were associated with economic factors related to problems on production, income generation, wage labor opportunities, land and food security. A similar study conducted by Mitiku and Mulatu (2021) revealed that family size, unemployment, land owning and inadequate income were significantly push factors that forced rural women to migrate urban areas. Yorke (2022) also described in his study about dynamics of female rural-urban migration young women who leave their rural communities and move to the cities to pursue their secondary education and consider the nature and extent of the inequalities that they face in rural areas which limit their opportunities and outcomes and underpin their expected entry into marriage. According to Selod (2021), rural-urban migration is driven by many factors and has large returns and costs. This is because climatic shocks/drought and conflicts have become significant drivers of migration to cities. The studies by Abeje (2021) and Jarawura (2021) reveal that food shortages resulting from landlessness and drought are the principal factors for rural-urban migration. Supporting the above findings, Agwu et al (2021), well-articulated the persisted rural-urban migration mainly due to the farmer-herder conflict situation, poverty, lack of job opportunities, insecurity and gross inadequacy of social infrastructures in the rural areas. According to Choi (2021), low agricultural productivity in rural areas is the common push factor that leads to rural-urban migration. In general, economic factors such as poverty, low productivity, drought, gender based violence and lack of land had

contributed high in pushing the majority of women migrants from their place of origin.

In line with this idea, Rhoda (1983) quoted in Gebeyehu (2014) concluded that the combination of rural economic “push” factors, such as unemployment and underemployment, shortage of farming land, and weakening livelihoods, and urban economic “pull” factors, particularly high wages in urban areas, ultimately leads to migration. In line with this findings, Mitiku and Mulatu (2021) described that marital status (being unmarried), expected income in urban, short distance, education level and relative’s dwellers at receiving area are considered as pull factors for women migrants. The study findings of Alarima (2018) further revealed that better employment opportunities, superior wages in the urban areas, improved living condition are pull factors that attract rural women and youths to the urban centers. The findings of this study are also well supported by the study conducted by Eshetu and Beshir (2020), better income, and saving of migrants in the form of remittance positively and significantly related rural-urban women migrants. Moreover, provision of better education in origin areas and better-paying jobs in receiving areas would lead to higher rural-urban women migration. From the above findings, it is possible to deduce that due to the pull factors rural-urban women migration is increasing and highly pervasive in the study areas.

The International Organization for Migration (IMO) states that:

“The rural-urban migration of women can increasingly appear as the best option for the entire family, as the global demand for labor rises in highly gendered niches such as domestic work, health, child and elderly care, and also in the garment and entertainment industries. This demand acts as a powerful pull factor for women in depressed rural areas. For these women, who often did not finish primary education, engaging in these low-skilled jobs is often the only alternative (IMO, 2009: 22).”

In this study, major problems of migrants as result migration during arrival to Injibara town were housing, food and inability to obtain job. Besides, sexual harassment, isolation, cultural difference, inability to obtain education and health services, and illness were also problems faced by the majority of women migrants.

In line with this Banks (2016) affirmed that rural women migrants are vulnerable to risks of exploitative and abusive practices and generally

pervasive human rights violations during the course of movement and recruitment, and at the workplace in urban areas. A similar study conducted by Abeje (2021) about rural-urban migration, though the income from migration enables rural households to supplement poor harvests, service debts and diversify their livelihood; however, migration contributes to the spread of disease, as well as socio-culturally undesirable habits producing dysfunctional families and other societal ills. Mitiku and Mulatu (2021) also indicated that, putting pressure on social service and housing, increasing urban unemployment, rising of living cost, expansion of informal sector and unplanned urban expansion were the main impact in the urban areas. According to Gebayaw *etal* (2021) homelessness and health related problems are the common challenges associated with rural-urban migration. Koly *etal*. (2021) furthermore found that health related quality of life among rural-urban migrants living in slums is the pervasive problem in most urban areas. Gwanshak (2021) confirmed that rural communities in recent times experience deterioration in economy activities that led to poverty and food insecurity while urban centers have incidents unemployment, decline in wages stemming from urban economic instability. The rural-urban wealth inequality is more concentrated in economic activities in the urban center. Total neglect of rural areas was a result of migration of people from rural to urban centers. On the contrary, Zaami (2020) indicates that migration trends from an economic lens, arguing that migration has become a household strategy to diversify incomes. However, little research has focused on social networks serving as migration channels for migrants in the informal sector.

Migration has been framed as a challenge for many migrant receiving areas as migrants are considered to bring social, economic and cultural problems to host societies that entail policies and measures to prevent the migrants from entering the area of destination. Restraining and limiting the movement of people is possible although it cannot be a long-lasting solution. Movement is people's right, freedom, and it is what liberty is for man.

### **Implications**

The vitality of social workers in securing the rural-urban women migrants is well acknowledged. Accordingly, social workers (especially African origin) are basically needed to address the migrants in the destination areas. It draws the social workers emphasize of tackle the problems faced by

women migrants working with different governmental and non-governmental organization. This is because women migrants are overexploited by the various brokers and the employers who are committing serious human rights violations. Thus, social workers in Ethiopia in particular and African countries in general will be more aware of the factors and negative consequences faced by the women migrants. Finally the finding of this study would be used as the springboard for conducting country-wide quantitative researches about the extent, the contributing factors and the negative consequences of rural-urban women migration. Since, knowing the factors and consequences of rural-urban women migration requires serious intervention of social workers and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The study came with the major finding regarding the contributing factors and the negative consequences faced by rural-urban women migrants in the study area. Based on the study findings, poverty, low productivity, drought, inequality, gender based violence, conflict/ disagreement and lack of land were identified as the major push factors that contributed for rural-urban women migration. Better employment opportunity, better income, urban way of life, good working environment, better health and success in improved education were identified as additional urban push factors for women migrants. In their stay in the study area, low wage, housing problem, expense of education have had medium or high effect, while labor exploitation, sexual harassment, expense for basic needs, exposed to transmitted and non-transmitted diseases, health care have had and pervasive human rights violation are problems that women migrants faced. Finally, the study implies that diversifying rural agricultural and non-farming business practices and how urban policy makers are supposed to have systematic recording of migrants and formulate appropriate migration policy that address the economic, social and housing needs of migrants especially in Africa.

### Declaration

This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form, whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose. Information taken from published and unpublished work of others is cited and list of references are presented in the study. I confirm that the intellectual contents of the work are the result of my own efforts and no other person.

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