

The Socio –Economic livelihood of Migrant Shoe Shiners: The Case of Migrant Shoe Shiners in Sabean Quarter of Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Shambel Tufa Telila

Assistant Professor in Social Anthropology Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

shambeltufa@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate “The Socio –Economic livelihood of Migrant Shoe Shiners: The Case of Migrant Shoe Shiners in Sabean Quarter of Dire Dawa”. The researcher used Qualitative research approaches and primary data collection methods that largely include observations, interviews are the principal methods to understand the etic lives of shoe shiners. This involved the daily practice of the shoe shining children to understand their social and economic context of lives and their interpersonal relations in their livelihood perspectives, experiences and actions. Moreover, researcher has attempted to assess their social networks and economic relationships which were constructed by the children themselves. In fact, the whole process of generating the research data was primarily made on the basis of the children’s own perspectives and understanding of their work and livelihood conditions. Poor rural conditions of their

parents made them to migrate to provide food and basic survival needs to their children. Therefore, this study make known that the livelihoods of the shoe shiners are dynamic and there is an intense solidarity among shoe-shinning children in Dire Dawa. Most of them maintain very close social ties and networks with peer groups, relatives, customers, and with other street actors. The most predominant social tie and network are peer group socialization which is mainly constructed on the basis of identical work and geographical origin. Those who came from the same geographical origin and rural village form a unified functional group and develop high sense of belongingness. They live and work together for getting the benefits of communal life style. Children conceived that living together is the sole livelihood strategy which enables to reduce urban living cost and perhaps makes life easier and enjoyable. They use their social networks and bonds to overcome some of the challenges they face such as reducing

their meals and sharing apartments with colleagues as well as relying on each other's help in times of scarcity. Moreover, they create a new sense of 'family-hood' with their social groups and exercise a sense of enthusiastic love and care to each other. At times they suffer, they usually share material and financial benefits from each other. For instance, if a child lacks income to get food, friends will invite and or lend some money. If somebody is sick or injured they would take him to the clinic or give treatment at home. Shoe-shinning children one among the urban poor in Addis city, have been exposed to various vulnerable living conditions. Most of them lack adequate livelihood income and basic necessities which in turn affected their spatial well being and health conditions as well.

Key Words:- Socio -Economic livelihood, Migrant, Shoe Shiners

1. Introduction

Anthropological studies cover a holistic wide range of human activities and practices on which human beings stuck on for survival. One of these societal activities that immensely contribute for their survival and progress is the economy. Economic activities comprised of formal

and informal sectors. The intent of this paper is to find out the socio-economic contributions of the informal economic sector to the shoe shiners in national economy and actors in it. Attempts are made to explore the seasonal migration patterns of lottery vendors in Addis Ababa, their socio- economic conditions and their relations with their families.

Migration of people in Ethiopia to the city of Dire Dawa was traced back to the period of Emperor Menelik II in the late 19th century. The foundation of Dire Dawa as a city in the 1900s as a politico-economic and commercial center of the newly building empire of Ethiopia attracted people to exploit its opportunities both from within and abroad. Victory of the Battle of Adwa in 1896 over the Italian colonizers and political stability that followed contributed to the consolidation of the country as a permanent center of African freedom. Ethiopia became the sole center for the national economy and commerce of the east African countries. Historical sources witnessed that in the following decades business firms were launched, industries were setup and foreign embassies were established. All these new developments put the capital as a centripetal force of attractions for people

in the rural areas that were looking for better life Dire Dawa (Bahru, 1998).

Shimelis (1997) in his historical and oral accounts on the *Kistane* migration into the capital, Dire Dawa and other parts of the country, described push and pull factors from their residence. Accordingly, he pointed out population pressure, poverty and shortage of agricultural land as push factors to migrate and the demand for better employment opportunities and business making grounds in the urban center of Ethiopia as principal forces of attractions or pull factors.

Moreover, Worku (1995) discussed the migratory experience of the *Gumer* to Dire Dawa which were provoked by the life of the early migrants and viewed migration as one of their business option and livelihood. He also mentioned that migration to the capital Dire Dawa and other cities was one of the ways they can adapt to civilized life, realize the values of education and improve their living standards.

Mberu (2006) asserted that migration in Ethiopia occurs not only on an individual or family response but also in response to diverse socioeconomic, physical and political environment, and even resulting from government policy. He went on to

say that in spite of the low level of economic development, population movement in Ethiopia is of a considerable importance. Rural-rural and rural-urban migration was a result of the accumulated impact of famines and Ethiopians' survival strategies in response to their problems.

Emphasizing on internal migration, it tends to play a principal role in balancing both population pressure and economic problems. Ethiopia is basically under-urbanized according to African standards; internal population movement in Ethiopia is closely linked to the expansion urbanization. Adding to this he comments that in Sub-Saharan Africa improvement in economic circumstances in the urban areas is the principal factor of inspiration for internal migration. Individual migration allows the household to maximize its opportunities for survival by diversifying its sources of income and spreading its risks among other members of the family (Ibid).

Meberu also suggests that most literatures on the pattern of African migration viewed migration as part of the livelihood and survival strategy for the rural family. Hence, population redistribution and the growth of cities and towns are expected to

serve as important channels for national development and raise the living standards of individual migrants and their households.

Gutkind (1974: 82) states that the African rural-urban migrant who takes his rural lifestyle to go to the city, is confronted with a very competitive system with radically different economic structures. The typical African migrant is young, unskilled and has very little or no formal education. This migrant is suddenly faced with a society that highly values these very attributes she/he lacks, does not properly understand and does not control. A small proportion of unskilled workers may find employment as petty traders, but the majority make their livelihoods as shoemakers, security guards, messengers, physical laborers, lottery vendors and other odd jobs.

Along the course of their movement and in the destination or land of their dream informal networks are important in the formulation of livelihood strategies in the Ethiopian context. These social networks of organizations are based on their neighborhood, kinship ties, territoriality and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, Miles (2001) says that Africans have a long history of organizing themselves through

informal or formal channels to overcome the problems they face.

In broad categorizations migration is classified into internal and external or cross-national migrations. Internal migration can be viewed as a movement of people either permanently, seasonally or traveling within the frontier of the given country. Internal migration has four major categories: rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural and urban-urban migration. Rural-urban migration is the commonly practiced form of migration and people prefer to migrate internally in response to conditions they face in their locality. It has also the capacity to mobilize large steady flow of people in the directions of their preferences without totally being detached from their place of origin (Todaro and Smith, 2003: 336).

In a developing country like Ethiopia, where the infrastructure facilities are poorly provided, Kebede (1994) emphasizes that rural-urban migration has a negative effect on the social welfare and standard of life of people in the urban areas. He states that the growth of urban populations as a result of in-migration aggravates the already insufficient infrastructures, social services and the employment markets of cities.

Adding to the negative impacts of rapidly mounting pressure of migration on the urban areas Tegene (2000), says that uncontrolled migration is becoming the major factor for urbanization in Ethiopia, adding that if such trends continue, the prospect of balanced urban growth in Ethiopia faces an uncertain future. To this effect, he calls for governmental policies that will mitigate the pressure to migrate, along with policies that will encourage acceptable patterns of rural–urban migration.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design

This study focuses on the Socio – Economic livelihood of Migrant Shoe Shiners Migrant who reside in Sabean Quarter of Dire Dawa city in general and specifically those who live in place commonly known as the Quarter of Sabean. The rationale for the selection of the area was there are more importantly plenty of shoe shiners who are working in Dire Dawa city as shoe shiners, and daily laborers due to their low level of education when compared to other society live in Dire Dawa city.

Therefore, the research was based on the Socio –Economic livelihood of Migrant Shoe Shiners who migrated from rural areas of South Nation and Nationalities Regional State. Shoe Shiners in Dire Dawa in Quarter of Sabean are the major focus groups this research. Secondary sources are used to supplement the information gathered it includes books, bulletins, and different articles written on divorced mothers and children

2.2 Research Design

This study had been employed only qualitative method of data analysis in order to be comprehensive enough to look into livelihood of children. The qualitative method of data analysis enables the researcher to show the magnitude and important link between migration and shoe shining children. Qualitative method of data analysis is exceptionally helpful in identifying contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals.

2.3 Data of Source

Primary and secondary source of data are used by the researcher, the primary sources are obtained from the field through instruments such as interview, field observation and focus group discussion. Secondary sources of data are data

obtained from published and unpublished sources. These secondary sources of data were used to relate and triangulate the research problem of the past with situations on real ground which was obtained from primary sources of data, that were obtained from the field.

2.4 Type of Data

Both primary and secondary types and data were used to realize this paper. The primary data's were data's collected from field through different techniques of data collection such as interview, field observation, and focus group discussion. The data is obtained from interview, focus group discussion and from field observation were triangulated in line with the importance as discussed in review literature earlier.

Interview question was generated by the researcher and interviewed some selected informants who were willing to respond, who are living in Dire Dawa City quarter of Sabean. Thus, primary data's were collected through interview method, focus group discussion and field observations were directly collected from the field while secondary data types were also used from different written sources.

2.5 Methods of Primary Data Collection

A. Interviews

Interviews were of crucial importance in gathering wide range of primary data for the study. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with key informants and study participants. The key informant interviews were made with few shoe shiners living in Dire Dawa. This was done in order to get information about the socio-economic lives of shoe shiners.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven Shoe Shining children who live in Dire Dawa. These interviews allowed me to gain an understanding of the living condition of the Shoe Shiners and economic and social livelihoods'. The interviews we conducted in their working environment which helped me to explore social network and interaction they had among each other.

Prior to the formal interview, related literature on the issues of migration, informal economic sector and history (background information) of Shoe Shining in Ethiopia were reviewed and interview guide was prepared. The interview guide was used to ensure that all key issues are covered during the interviews. The interview was conducted in *Amharic* and

tape recorded after gaining the informants' consent.

B. Field Observation

As a researcher, the researcher has viewed series of observation for more than three months. The observations were carried out in Sabaeon Quarter of Dire Dawa, which provides the researcher to look in to their socialization, living together, sharing what they have (which is equal Share). The researcher made partial participant observation, while they shine shoes and tried their chances, but they did not actively participate in an attempt to such activities.

C. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion (FGD) was held with more than twenty-five shoe shiners in five groups and five members in each group. The FGD was employed in an attempt to look into the push/pull factors of migration, their living condition and the problems they faced in Dire Dawa. It also helped to validate the data gathered through the interviews.

D. Secondary Data Collection

Documents on the subject of rural-urban migration in Ethiopia, informal economic

sector and the Ethiopian labor Union were reviewed by the researchers. Secondary documents obtained helped as guidelines for exploring vital information while gathering data via interview and the Focus Group Discussion.

2.6 Methods of Data Analysis

The interviews and the Focus Group Discussion were conducted in *Amharic* language. Following the interviews, the tape recorded interview and the Focus Group Discussion were then transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts were then organized and analyzed thematically. Therefore, the researcher employed the qualitative method of data analysis.

3 Ethical Considerations

A key question for Anthropologist to conduct research, they must ask the studied community (the host community), that whether the research have no danger to the host community. The livelihood of the children, their activity in their everyday lives, and enlightening one's identifying as a researcher who did the study for seeking solution for the problems that

has negative impact for the communities under study.

Therefore, this study do not affect any body negatively either communities in focus or others who are in methods for realization of this paper. The researcher gave much attention on the dignity, self-esteem, privacy or democratic freedoms for people under study and for informants and discussants in data collection. It also was not against interest of any others societal groups.

Before proceeding with the interview and the FGD the study participants were informed on the nature and purpose of the research, consent was asked and secured. Great care was made to provide a relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees, so that they may feel comfortable when talking about themselves. Guarantees were given to the participants that the study was to understand the living and working conditions of the Shoe Shiners only, and it was only for academic purposes. Guarantees that ensured confidentiality were also given. That is, no names would be used in documents without their consent.

4. Field experiences of the Researcher

The researcher faced a lot of challenges and obstacles during the field work. One among the most dangerous problem was lack of awareness of the community under study focus of Shoe Shiners research. The People were unaware of doing research with the working Shoe Shiners rather most of them believed that field work with those children is for the sake of earning donation. A lot of obstacles were occurred while conducting the interviews and the focus group discussions. Thus, during the field work the researcher was mainly constrained by the people's bad attitude and misperception towards research on the life of the shoe shining children.

The other important challenge of the field work faced by the researcher was difficulty to mobilize the working Shoe Shiners due to lack of time for the children because they are rushing to work areas. Shoe-shinning children give attention to their work and earning their daily livelihood. They do not give attention whether you approach them very well or not. They would immediately rush into work irrespective of what you favor them. To eliminate this problem, the researcher had invested a lot of time, energy and money. This in turn, highly affected the research time and progress as well.

One of the core mechanisms adopted in the process of mobilizing the study Shoe Shiners for the purpose of creating and developing rapport was designing to make them a friend. This mechanism was really the most significant of all which rapidly mobilize very large number of shoe-shinning children in the study locations. The researcher observed that children were very happy and eager to spend the whole weekend with me playing as their friends and relative.

5. Finding and Discussion

Background

5.1 Shoe Shining in Ethiopia

Shoe shining is the oldest economic activity in Ethiopia, which was believed to be started during the regime Emperor Menelik II with the beginning of the trend of Urbanization. Children have detail knowledge of the public space and usually derive benefits out of it

The shoe shining was began its operation with establishment of urban centers and urbanization process in Ethiopia. The exact date of the beginning of shoe shining was unknown but more attached with the Gurage communities to start such economic activity in the country.

Shoe shining is the most important economic activity for the community engaged in it, in addition to processing of economic activity shoe shiners works by placing different places for shining and generating livelihood which will then be funneled to the development of the societal economy in particular and country job seeking in general. The shoe shiners were organized to make their livelihood more possible.

Children's territoriality is better explained in terms of the series of chains and networks that have been established by a certain ethnic group for being in a defined place for long (ibid). In the same way, the territorial boundaries for Hadiya and Wolayita ethnic and shoe-shinning children have been established separately surrounding the Ashewa and Sabeian area and Kafira respectively.

This often requires high competition and they are also supposed to defend their territory from other street invaders and or new comers. Striving to make their territory clean and safe to work is another responsibility for the shoe shine children as customers are highly sensitive to maintain their safety in every occasion. They know that customers mostly prefer comfortable, safe, and relatively neat places along with getting the shoe-shine service. Otherwise, they do not prefer getting the service in the

unclean and sunny places. This indirectly creates competition among the shoe shining children. Moreover, these children regarded their territory as a day-home from where they wash, clean themselves, take a rest, sometimes eat, drink and play with their friends. They spend almost half in a day in their territory.

As children have no any legal permission for occupying their territories on the street, police and other city gardeners sometimes may prohibit and displace the children. Working children who usually occupy the same territory interact and support each other in their day-to-day life. Knowing the areas of activities and people (shop keepers, waiters, police, and other inhabitants) and developing a sense of belongingness is part of the children's efforts and survival strategies. Above all, shoe shining children occupying same territory and work together serve protecting against the urban gangsters and vagabonds on the street. This shows that accessing a given territory does not only mean accessing better livelihood opportunities but also maintaining children's livelihood security.

The economic and social construction of the shoe shiners include the construction societal bond between society and the most important economic activity for their

family and their livelihood and make a good example for victims of flood and drought. The shoe shining has provided and still provides job opportunities to thousands of lottery vendors (who in turn provide for their families) across the country.

5.2 Shoe Shining as the Informal Economic Sector in Ethiopia

The informal sector today accounts for a significant share of the economy and employment globally. It provides jobs and reduces unemployment and underemployment, but in many cases the jobs are low-paid and the job security is poor. It is often unregulated, unrecognized and unregistered and escapes formal government regulation fully or partially. Informal economic activities are outside the reach of government regulation and are usually carried out as a means of survival.

In urban areas in Ethiopia, the informal sector is growing with the increase in urbanization. Usually those engaged in this sector include, petty trade and service, construction and domestic services and accounts for a great number of urban employment.

The concept of informal sector covers a wide range of labor market activities that combine two groups of different nature. On the one hand, the informal sector is formed by the coping behavior of individuals and families in economic environment where earning opportunities are scarce this include casual jobs, temporary jobs, unpaid jobs, subsistence agriculture, multiple job holding. On the other hand, the informal sector is a product of rational behavior of entrepreneurs that desire to escape state regulations which is unofficial business activities (such as tax evasion, avoidance) and underground activities (World Bank, ND).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) was the first to introduce and refine the concept of the informal sector, where it categorized the workforce in the informal sector into the following three broad groups:

- “(a) owner-employers of micro enterprises, which employ a few paid workers, with or without apprentices;
- (b) own-account workers, who own and operate one-person business, who work alone or with the help of unpaid workers, generally family members and apprentices; and

- (c) dependent workers, paid or unpaid, including wage workers in micro enterprises, unpaid family workers, apprentices, contract labor, home workers and paid domestic workers”. (World Bank, ND),

There are also a variety of characteristics that distinguish the informal sector. The sector such as shoe shining usually relies on kinship relationship and the use of family and unpaid labor thus they usually employ fewer employees. The ease at which people enter and exit economic activities in response to market domain sets it apart from the formal sector, this can be one of the reasons for women to be engaged in the informal sector as it allows them to be near their home and attend to household chores while simultaneously engaging in gainful employment. The other characteristic feature of this economic sector is that the activities in the informal sector are diverse and usually labor intensive requiring little capital.

In developing countries where resources are scarce, the informal sector such as shoe shining creates employment opportunities, generates income, contributes to the GDP and to the livelihood of the poor (ibid, ND).

5.3 Reasons for Migration of Shoe Shiners

The reasons for migration of the Shoe Shiners from their home land to the urban areas are insufficient land, the depletion of the fertility of the cultivable lands, mounting prices to purchase artificial fertilizers and certified/selected seeds to maintain land productivity.

The reason behind the migration of Shoe shiners children from *South Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopian Regional State* is due to economic problems. Most of the stated that the plots of land for agricultural produce are scattered, have poor yields and are incapable to carry the rapidly growing population of the region. Thus many youth from this Regional States come to Dire Dawa as Shoe Shiners beginning from the age of childhood. The decision made for their departure to migrate to Dire Dawa is determined both by the members of their family and sometimes the youth escape independently without informing their parents.

The majority of the migrants are those who have economic problems and in a weak conditions to make their livings in their local environment. They were influenced and provoked by their predecessors who

for sometimes came to Dire Dawa formerly and then after their return manifested remarkable changes in their personal life and agricultural produce. In addition, there exist rumors of exaggeration and easy ways of making money in Dire Dawa circulated by the people in *South Nations and Nationalities*. Children's parents are living in rural areas and are largely small peasant farmers. For such reason that rural parents are not able to fulfill the increasing food and other material and financial demands of their shoe shining children at their original home, these children were obliged to quit school and migrate to the city in search of employment in the informal sector.

Generally, children's decision to migrate is mainly activated by the push factors such as family impoverishment, rural unemployment, and large family size, lack of access to education, family death and disharmony. Besides, pull factors are also fuels which highly accelerate the decision to migrate. It means that the availability of social ties, relatives, friends and older siblings at destination mainly triggered migration decision from villages to towns.

The other informant noted that, shoe shiners come to come to Dire Dawa as "recurrent migrants". The major reason of this recurrent migration is to help improve

agricultural production by raising funds to buy inputs such as fertilizer and better seeds. By “recurrent migration” we meant that these shoe shiners come to Dire Dawa in specific time for about a year or maximum of five years to return original homeland, by shining shoe and living a shared life to them and back to their family. The reason for staying for only a year to five years is because they need to return to their farms and help their families. In addition they believed prolonged stay in the city might expose them to undue influences that city life may bring about such as addiction which might corrupt them and also deplete their savings that would have been otherwise used for the intended purpose of supplementing the agricultural activities.

They also informed that there is observable difference on the farmlands of the families of those whose earnings were made by shoe shiners and those who are not. The former groups are able to buy fertilizers and certified seeds for plots of their families land which results in abundance of farm products and development of their households. The others emphasized that shoe shining is not a permanent job but is a temporary one to support the subsistence life of their families. They do not want to stay longer

in Dire Dawa and prefer to refresh themselves by visiting their locality and tackling their families’ problems. In describing the changes brought by the returnees, he mentioned that they helped their families to buy fertilizer, rented additional farm lands, launch permanent shop business etc.

According to, the Focus Group discussants they came from *South Nation and Nationalities* Regional State, from the specific locality. They come straight to Dire Dawa because they mentioned that they have little choice to make their livelihoods. They could have gone to cities but preferably to Dire Dawa because of vast opportunities and better market options for shoe shining and daily labor work in the city. Many shoe shiners migrate from the rural area of the *South Nation and Nationality Regional State* region during the slack agricultural season.

In Dire Dawa their residence is generally located around *Ashewa, Sabean and Kafira and Taiwan* Quarters of the city by claiming that these areas are convenient center for their business. Furthermore, cost of rent is cheaper around these areas. The participants unanimously pointed out that the principal pulling factors for their migration to the capital were shortage of cultivable lands,

inability to become self reliant, poverty and the sky rocketing prices of fertilizer. In the past begging was the only option to escape such adverse problems.

One of the FGD discussant, a senior among the participants and has been engaged in the business of shoe shining since 2004. Others were also attracted into the shoe shining business seasonally and visiting their locality on and off. In their discussion they mentioned that few years ago, the business was predominantly monopolized by the *Guraghe* communities and currently, the shiners came from *Gammo, Kembata and Wolaitta* areas from the Southern Nations and Nationalities are actively taking part in Shoe shining business.

The discussants also explained that there is also a decrease in size of agricultural plots of land in *South Nations* Regional State, area which made young boys leave their towns seeking work in the city followed by their fellow mates and thus return profitable most of the time. The agricultural lands has diminished in size and most of the land is inaccessible for agricultural plough as there is high flooding and the presence of mountainous terrain in the locality which contributes to land erosion and degradation. They also

added that there is an increment of price of fertilizers and certified seeds from time to time.

Thus, to cope up with such problem, they prefer to migrate to Dire Dawa and work for a while as a solution. They also joined Shoe Shining informal sector by dropping out of their education and majority of them dropped out at the primary educational level. As a lasting solution, some of the discussants called upon government policies for resettlement in other areas and construction of irrigation schemes.

Migration to urban areas is usually closely related to employment and earning opportunities in the formal and informal sectors in urban areas. Migration is a common response to economic and environmental pressures, and an integral part of livelihood strategies in many parts of Ethiopia. Migration clearly plays an important role in helping keep families and children out of poverty.

There are many reasons why children end up on the streets. Various push and pull factors lead to children coming to the streets. Most of them who come from rural areas share the conviction that urban life is easier. The pull of the glamour of living in a city and raising one's living standard is one of the illusions. In other cases, children dropped out of

school or were sent to the cities by their families to earn money and escape the intolerable conditions of poverty in their homes.

5.3 Living conditions of Shoe Shiners in Dire Dawa

After they decide to leave for Dire Dawa they take travel from *their original homeland* and then directly come to Dire Dawa. In Dire Dawa, they all have receivers and caretakers for a while until they adapt themselves to the new working environment. Children's from *South Nations and Nationalities* and other parts of the country engage in different jobs like physical labor construction industry and others. Nonetheless, the most profitable and seasonally suit business for them is shoe Shining in different corners of the Quarters of Dire Dawa. They live together in groups, where in the house they rented to cope with expensive living condition and share costs. Shoe shiners from South Nations and Nationalizes Regional State preferred to work in potential business areas of *Ashewa, Ganda Gerada, Sabiean* and *Taiwan*. They lived in the areas of *Ashewa* and *Ganda Gerada* where rental costs are relatively cheaper and suitable for their group living.

In Dire Dawa, they adjust to the new ways of life and are able to scrutinize fast business making areas. They moved on foot, they covered long distance per day and along their travel they learn new areas so that they can quickly track businesses suitable for other days. Their average shining a month is between Birr 500-700. The shining varies from place to place, on working days from Monday to Friday, holy days, and weekend. Moreover, demand varies from restaurant to restaurant and other public gathering areas. As many of the informants stated during the interviews, their original setting was in *Ashewa* but shifted to *Sabiyeen* due to the lack of punctuality of their exact time when they can earn money and as many of their customers come to place called *Ashewa*. This type of business is always active because people rely on the hope of winning of their daily livelihood and therefore, it has many customers. The best place where they have demand for shoe shiners according to them are the *khat* Chewing areas of *Ashewa* and *Kefira*. They carry all their money in their pockets and when it reaches up to 1,000 Birr return to their homeland, *South Nation*.

In describing their living situation in Dire Dawa one of the informants explained as follows:

I am a migrant in Dire Dawa, the living conditions is tough, everything is expensive, we share living expenses with our friends such as house rent, food and other expenses for daily and monthly consumptions. Unless we share what I mentioned above for communal life, we won't have enough money to save and send to our families.)

Another informant tries to explain living condition in Dire Dawa, he describes

I was grade six students when I came to Dire Dawa, I dropped out of school to support my family, initially I didn't have any place to stay and there is nothing affordable to live on. The money that I brought from my family had been finished immediately which made my survival challenging).

The FGD discussants also in explaining their living condition in Dire Dawa, they all agreed that the perception that they had before coming to Dire Dawa was different. They said that they assumed life would be easy in Dire Dawa but they found that life was harsh for them. Thus, as a solution to this difficult life of Dire Dawa they live in group from two to thirteen in one rent house. They Shine shoe from 300-400 Birr worth of Birr and on average earn 40-50 Birr (15% commission) per day.

The discussants also mentioned that they save some amount of money from that they earn daily after they spent some of it for daily consumption. Life is expensive in Dire Dawa; we share for our daily consumption. All the FGD discussants agreed that people in the rural areas have a false perception about Dire Dawa. They said that people in rural areas believed that the city life is filled with opportunity, comfort and easy income generation. But life is tough when they get to the city; they have to look for jobs and a place to stay which turns out to be a difficult task. Men that come from rural areas also involve in other sectors like daily laborer to cope up with the living conditions.

According to our key informants in the past, there used to be initiative one of the elder shoe shiner as mentioned that everything is expensive nowadays to wear beautiful cloths, to protect ourselves from the night codlings. Nowadays, these kinds of incentives have ceased, as the occupation is a license-free and not taxed which has increased the number of Shoe shining children's. Children prefer other livelihood activities mainly due to the subsistence nature of their work. It means they lack adequate benefits out of it due to limited scope of the work and tough

competition existing among the increasing number of shoe-shiners in the city.

Accordingly, if they have got the chance to be employed in any other activities of the informal economy, they will be able to directly shift regardless of lacking the necessary skill and capability to do the job. This implies that shoe-shinning activity serves as a means of temporal survival until better livelihood condition has come. They will remain with this work as long as no option exist, meaning it is a matter of necessity for immediate survival.

5.4 Effect of Migration on their Place of Origin

According to my informants who stated that the recurrent migration affect on the *South Nations Regional State* in general and his family in particular. He noted that the recurrent migration of the youth of the Region brought about major change in the areas. The livelihood of their parents is changing because of their children's earnings, which helped to buy agricultural inputs and increase yields. Thus, the living condition of their family has been changed when compared with those families who do not have children who are engaged in Shoe shining in Dire Dawa.

The second informant told the researcher that migrants are changing the livelihood of their parents as he stated that the children from *South Nation and Nationality Regional State* who came to Dire Dawa as shoe shiners are changing the subsistence way of life of their parents. They informed the researcher that their parents live a life from hand to mouth before they came to Dire Dawa. As he stated the life of their family dramatically changed after they began supporting them by providing money to fertilizers and selected seeds to increase agricultural production. As agricultural production increases, the subsistence life began to change and improve, when compared with those who do not use fertilizers and selected seeds.

The third informant also tries to explain the effect of migration on their place of origin, *South Nation and Nationality Regional State*. He pointed out that the life of their parents is now changing after being supported by him. Some of the migrants disclosed that they bought oxen and cows for their families or built houses with corrugated sheet of iron to cover roofs, which according to them is believed that such change brings about a high status according to our society. They support their family not only by contributing some

amount of money to buy fertilizers but also by taking part as an additional labor force during harvesting, seeding and other related agricultural activities. Another important effect that has been observed was that many young people from the district came to Dire Dawa by dropping out of school; this in turn therefore, may adversely affect educational the participation of the male youth in the district.

The discussants also discussed and participated positively and willingly to express their ideas of the migration on their place of origin. The recurrent migration brought about change in the study area on social and economic spheres. This is to mean that since they could afford to buy fertilizers, agricultural yields increase. Some of the lottery vendors after their return, they open shops at the town of *South Nation and Nationality Regional State* and at the same time support their families in rural areas. They also explained that Shoe Shining income remarkably improved the lives of their parents and that there was a marked difference in the lives of parents of migrant Shoe shiners and the non-migrant ones in the locality.

5.5 Saving Schemes of Migrant Shoe Shiners

The process of saving varies from individual to individual, for instance the majority of them keep their hard earned money on hands of peoples from which they rent home, and some others said they save by themselves.

The informants informed us during our FGD about the various money saving mechanisms. One of the ways of saving money is they hand over the money to the owners of their home. Others keep their money at the hands of the *elder Equb collectors from the group*. Many of them have developed a strategy of saving more by consuming less through minimizing their expenses. Lottery vendors who do not have families to support can save up to 10,000 Birr.

But those who have families to support could not save up this much money as they have responsibilities such as buying fertilizers, certified seeds and support their families' household.

5 Conclusion

This study point out that the migration of shoe shining children from the rural-urban areas of South Nation and Nationalities Regional state are facing vulnerable livelihood conditions in the city of Dire Dawa because majority of the children have come from large headed families having more children in the household. Large family size is one of the reasons for family impoverishment which, in turn, affected children migration in search of work in the city. The great majority shoe-shinning children in Dire Dawa city have come from Gamo, Wolayita and Hadiya ethnic groups of poor families living with subsistence agriculture.

Children's parents are living in rural areas and are largely small peasant farmers. For such reason that rural parents are not able to fulfill the increasing food and other material and financial demands of their shoe shining children at their original home, these children were obliged to quit school and migrate to the city in search of employment in the informal sector. Generally, children's decision to migrate is mainly activated by the push factors such as family impoverishment, rural unemployment, and large family size, lack of access to education, family death and

disharmony. Besides, pull factors are also fuels which highly accelerate the decision to migrate. It means that the availability of social ties, relatives, friends and older siblings at destination mainly triggered migration decision from villages to towns.

After migration, the first entry to work for most of the migrant shoe shiners children working in Dire Dawa is shoe-shine engagement that is due to the ease of entry and flexible nature of the work. Most of them belong to 6 to 16 years of age. One of the reasons for the ease of entry into this livelihood activity is since all one needs is their labor and little money to purchase polish, brushes and soap; and then business commences right away just like that. On the other hand, children perceived that this activity as temporal means of survival livelihood and way of adapting the urban setting. This shows that shoe shinning work is serving the children as a means of transition in to other form of livelihoods. One of the main reasons for this is the inadequate livelihood income of the work.

This paper examined the socio-economic activity of recurrent migrants of Shoe shiners, who were engaged in shining, brushing and washing Shoes. The anthropological study used was etic

perspective to look into the activities of the shoe shiners from their own perspective.

Originally, shortage of farmland and the desire to earn additional income are the major reasons for the seasonal migrants to come to Dire Dawa from their places of origin. The research found that mostly men particularly young children are predominantly involved in the migration. The ease at which one can be engaged in shoe shining, it has made it appealing to the migrants as no initial capital is required and that they use their own labor and efforts to make their sale. The earnings obtained have allowed the households of the migrants to sustain their agricultural activities in their place of origin and supplement their income from agriculture. The duration of their seasonal migration ranged from one year to five years.

References

[1] Bahru Zewde (1998) *A Short History of Ethiopia and the Horn*, Addis Ababa: Dire Dawa University Press.

[2] Gutkind, P. (1974) *Urban Anthropology: Perspectives on Third World Urbanization and Urbanism*, Assen: Van Gorcum and Comp. B.V.

[3] Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Central Statistical Authority (2003) *Report on Urban Informal Sector*

Sample Survey, Addis Ababa, January 2003.

[4] Kebede Mammo (1994) *Migration and Urban Development in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.

[5] Mberu, Blessing Uchenna (2006) Internal Migration and Household Living Conditions in Ethiopia, in *Demographic Research*, 28 June 2006, Volume 14, Article 21, pp. 509-540 Retrieved from <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol14/21/> , on May 15, 2011

[6] Miles, M. (2001) "Women's Groups and Urban Poverty: The Swaziland Experience". In: Tostesnsen, Tvedten and Vaa (eds.), *Associational Life in African Cities*. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.

[7] Shemelis Bonsa (1997) *Migration, Urbanization and Urban Labor Undertakings: The Case of the Kistane of Dire Dawa 1900-1944*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Addis Ababa: School of Graduate Studies, Dire Dawa University.

[8] Worku Nida (1995) *The Impacts of Urban Migration on Village Life*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Addis Ababa: School of Graduate Studies, Dire Dawa University.

[9] Tegegne Gebre Egziabher (2000) *Perspectives and Issues of Urban Development in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Regional and Local Development Studies, Dire Dawa University.

[10] Todaro, M. and Smith, S.C. (1989) *Economic Development*, 8th ed. New York: Addison Wesley.

[11] World Bank (ND) *The Informal Sector* (ND) retrieved from: <http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/0/2e4ede543787a0c085256a940073f4e4?OpenDocument> , on June 2, 2011