Women trafficking in Ethiopia and its mitigation; The case of Arsi Zone, Oromiya

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Chapter 7

Mixed Experiences: Arsi Women Domestic Workers Trafficked to the Middle East

This chapter presents personal experiences of Arsi women domestic workers trafficked to the Middle East. It commences with defining briefly what is meant by domestic work and proceeds to present their experiences through their own voices. It is intended to complement previous chapters and shed more light on the human consequences of trafficking on the trafficked women's lives. The aim is to argue that, while survey data and statistical analysis (as presented in Chapter 6) is most useful in explaining the larger synthesis picture of trafficked women aggregated experiences, it does not substitute for exploring in-depth individual experiences which offer in-depth details of individual predicaments. In a sense, the chapter attempts to shift the focus from the traffickers and the legal, policy and institutional instruments and mechanisms to trafficking victims and survivors. It applies a victim-centered approach where the trafficked women and their stories and experiences take the center-stage. depicting and explaining their ordeals as well as showing what occupational patterns they engaged in when they returned to Ethiopia (Arsi). While a majority of women are vulnerable and trafficked, some can keep a measure of control over their destiny, and not all of these female migrants have negative experiences, not even the trafficked ones. Yes, they encountered deception, abuse and exploitation at the places of destination, but that does not mean categorically that all are 'victims' of trafficking and abused. The story of Nebiat (below) confirms this.

7.1 Domestic Work and the *Kafala* System

Domestic work constitutes a significant proportion of employment in many countries and contributes significantly to the global economy. Currently there are at least 67 million domestic workers worldwide, not including child domestic workers and this number is increasing steadily in both developed and developing countries. Even though a substantial number of men work in the sector – often as gardeners, drivers or butlers – it remains a highly

feminized sector: 80 per cent of all domestic workers are women.[154] It is also estimated by the ILO (2019) that: one in 25 women workers in the world are domestic workers, and in the Middle East, the region of concern to this study, one in three female wage workers ae domestic workers.[155]

In 2018 the ILO offered a new definition of what constitutes domestic work and how to classify it for statistical purposes. Itis more elaborate than the definition provided in the 2011 Convention on Domestic Work:[156]

> "Domestic work is defined for statistical purposes as "all work performed in or for a household or households to provide services mainly for consumption by household members". (ILO 2018: 32).

The ILO 2018 definition of domestic work made a distinction between two broad categories of domestic work: paid and unpaid. First, unpaid domestic work includes:

> (all) people who perform some domestic work without pay, such as household cleaning and maintenance, preparation of meals for the consumption of household and family members, household budgeting, caring for family members and a variety of other tasks for the consumption of members of their family or household, including themselves. Domestic work may also be performed without pay informally by friends and neighbors as informal direct volunteering, or more formally as organization-based volunteering (ILO 2018: 4).

Unpaid domestic work – usually on a family basis, or by neighbours or volunteers (ILO 2018: 32) - is common in almost all countries in the world, and often relates to a basic division of labor between men and women. In some societies such a gender division of labor is questioned by feminist analysts, who view it as an element of inequality between men and

[154] ILO 2019, Who are the Domestic Workers? Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/who/lang--en/index.htm.
[155] *Ibid*., 2019.
[156] There was already a definition for domestic workers in the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which calls for national policies to promote fair treatment and decent working conditions for domestic workers. It defines domestic work and domestic worker for legal and policy purposes as follows: (a) the term domestic work means work performed in or for a household or households; (b) the term domestic worker means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; (c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker.

women.[157] However, the feminist debate on unpaid women work is not part of the questions raised in this thesis, and this section does not dwell further on it, as it deals only with trafficked women, working as domestic workers.

Second, *paid domestic workers* are defined simply as: "(workers) who perform domestic work for pay." These are workers who work in the homes of others for pay, providing a range of domestic services: they sweep, clean, wash clothes and dishes, shop, cook, care for children or the elderly, sick and disabled, and/or provide such services as gardening, driving and security (ILO 2018: 4).

The materials are organized in two broad sub-themes to provide a coherent analysis consistent with the most reported consequences of human trafficking. The first section deals with violence against women domestic workers and bondage labor. The second section deals with sexual exploitation and physical abuse.

In the Middle East, domestic labor recruitment is handled through the *kafala* system., where kafala is an Arabic word which means 'guardianship'. It is meant to enable the employers to control the movement of foreign domestic workers. According to this system a document also called 'kafala' enables the domestic workers to obtain a visa to enter, live, and work legally. It states that the worker must have one single employer who also serves as the worker's visa 'sponsor', called *kafeel* in Arabic (or guardian). It stipulates that domestic workers are not allowed to work for another employer until their current kafeel has ended the sponsorship. Domestic workers who wish to leave an abusive kafeel before the end of their contract may not transfer to another kafeel without their current kafeel's permission. The following sections of this chapter shed light on the kafala system in practice and on how it institutionalizes the exploitation of women domestic workers.

7.2 Violence and Bondage Labor

This section refers to the problems encountered by women who belong to the category of paid workers performing the type of household work as described in the ILO definition. In this sub-theme, six women will narrate their experiences in two Middle Eastern countries. The first case, from Saudi Arabia, is that of interviewee Hafssa, who was trafficked in 2013. She returned from Saudi Arabia in 2018. The interviews with Hafssa took place in Shashemene, the capital of Arsi West, on 9 January 2020. The second case is interviewee Khamisa, who

[157] Refer for example to Jonson 2018, Sahraoui and Amrith 2018, Fernandez 2013, Shapiro 2013, Harroff-Tavel and Nasri 2013, and Boris and Nadaesen 2008.

was trafficked to Lebanon and returned to Ethiopia in 2017. She also lives and works in Shashemene. The third case is Nebiat, who was trafficked to Bahrain in 2010 and returned to Ethiopia in 2013, with much more pleasant experiences than interviewee 21 and Khamisa.

Hafssa, Khamisa and Nebiat[158] have different education backgrounds: Interviewee 21 holds Ethiopia National School-leaving Certificate and Khamisa completed Grade four, and both explained the discontinuation of their education to their parents in ability to cater for the education of their siblings. Both interviewees 21 and 22, felt the urge to improve their own living conditions and that of their parents before settling down and have their own families. Interviewee 21's case is different from Khamisa and Nebiat, as she completed her education and has a BA and an advanced diploma in marketing, and also because she was fortunate to be sponsored by a family that treated her well. Her kafeel allowed his house to be used by a couple of her trafficked women friends who were abused and fled the house of their kafeels.

Haffsa[159]

In 2013, Hafssa cousin who was at the time working as a driver in Saudi Arabia alerted a Saudi Arabian agent looking for six domestic workers to work for Saudi families. The agent contacted Hafssa whom she met in Addis Ababa. She paid the agent ETB 50,000 (out of ETB 250,000 she borrowed), to arrange her visa. She purchased her own plane ticket to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. The agent gave her a name of another Saudi agent whom was awaiting her arrival at Riyadh and took her to a detention-type camp where she waited until the Saudi woman arrived. Hafssa's name was announced, and she came forward to be collected by the Saudi woman, who took her the house where she would spend the following five years.

Hafssa had no formal contract through the Labor and Social Welfare Ministry in Addis Ababa (which is supposed to process legal labour migrants). All what she had was a kafala sent to her through the Saudi agent, where her status was legally bound to the Saudi individual employer or sponsor for the contract period. In this case, the Saudi woman became her kafeel. She could not leave or re-enter the country, or transfer to other employment for any reason without first obtaining explicit written permission from the Saudi woman kafeel. Hafssa's passport was confiscated and returned to her only when the period of the kafala had expired.

[158] All the names of informants presenting their story here are pseudonyms.
[159] Interview conducted in Shashemene on 25 April 2019.

Hafssa said:

> The Saudi family for whom I worked, considered themselves my owners and I was their 'slave'. As their 'slave', I should do whatever they asked of me in terms of household work 24 hours a day. They often woke me at mid-night to make them tea or bring water. I was often slapped, and my head banged to the wall or I was dragged by the head for no reason. When I decided to leave after the end of my contract, the Saudi woman, my kafeel, locked me in a room for three days and said she would not release me until she had an alternative domestic worker. It hurts me to remember that I received only a fraction of the salary I was promised (an equivalent of about ETB 3000, instead of ETB 14,000). When I was released, the kafeel handed me over to an agent who was instructed not to leave me alone until he was sure that I boarded the flight. She was afraid that I might come back and work with other people.

When Hafssa returned to Ethiopia in 2018, she started a small business selling tea and coffee in a location close to a government office. She earns ETB 150 to 200 a day (ETB 4,500 to 6,000 per month), which is more than her monthly payment in Saudi Arabia. She noted: "But it is like living from hand to mouth; I cover my siblings' education, and food, medicine, clothing etc. are expensive and the prices go up every day. She continued,

> I will return to work in Saudi Arabia, if I found a better kafeel', at least, there, I do not have to struggle or respond to so many immediate financial demands from so many family members and relatives.

The reason given by Hafssa as to why she would return to Saudi Arabia after what she had gone through is that no matter how little the money she earned was, it helped her to cover her siblings' education and pay for their basic needs. Clearly, she had a 'cost-benefit' understanding of living in poverty without an income in Ethiopia, and earning just enough to allow her and her family to hang on to survival.

Khamisa[160]

The second case is that of Khamisa, who was born in Ambo. She moved to Shashemene after returning from Lebanon in 2017 where she had worked for three years and six months. She does not wish to talk about how she earned the money which she paid to the agent and for the plane ticket to Beirut. Khamisa said the following:

> A friend asked me to join her to work in Lebanon because she was afraid of taking the journey alone. She also told me that we first go to work in Addis Ababa, saying "I have a male friend who will help us to find jobs because he had connections. When we arrived in Addis Ababa, he allowed us to stay in his small room while he stayed with another friend. He invited us to meet with a circle of young women and women who introduced to us to some friend. From one friend to new friends and other new friends, we began to circulate among these people. I feel ashamed to tell you what we did with them'. We spent two years before we made enough money for the journey out of Ethiopia.

Khamisa earned enough money to pay for an Ethiopian agent who promised to help her and her friend to travel and work in Lebanon. The first agent, whom they came to know via some friends to whom they were introduced, disappeared with the ETB 10,000 advance they gave him to start the process. The tried for the second time and found another agent to whom they decided to talk to only if there were at least two people as witnesses. 'The second agent seemed to know what he was doing', said Khamisa. The kafala system which Hafssa experienced in Saudi Arabia is also prevalent in Beirut. The Ethiopian agent found Khamisa and her friend two Lebanese families who were looking for domestic workers, sent the kafala documents for her and her friend. She said:

> The Ethiopian agent arranged our visa and every required official document at the cost of ETB 100,000 each. We paid our own tickets to Beirut through Cairo, Egypt. To be able to catch our transit flight, we had to bribe some Egyptian officials who offered to usher us through Customs. Not one kafeel received us at Beirut Airport, we collected our passports and we went our separate ways".

[160] Interview conducted in Shashemene on 25 April 2019.

> The day we landed at Beirut Airport I separated from my friend who worked with a different family in Beirut, and this was the last time I saw her, until today. I was kept inside the house of the kafeel and was never allowed to leave the house for three years and six months. I worked every day from 6:00 in the morning to 12:00 mid-night. This meant that I was left with no time to go out. The only time I left the house was when I went shopping with the head of the household. I was often beaten because I felt tired and sat to rest or when I had done all the housework. Although kafala is considered a legal document, it is not binding. I had no official residence which the kafeel should have organized. Without residence permit and passport with visa stamp, I could not go to complain to the police because I would be arrested for not having registered upon arrival from Ethiopia.

At least, Khamisa was paid half of what she was promised (an equivalent of ETB 4500 per month) and because she did not pay for rent or for food, she was able to save almost all the money. Upon arrival in Ethiopia, she opened a boutique shop selling imported fashion clothes and accessories. Khamisa said:

> I will never leave to a foreign country for work again but regretted that I did not renew my employment for one more year, because my business would have been much bigger". When asked about violence committed against her by almost all adult family members and being in captivity for that long, she said, "it is a price I had to pay to be where I'm today. But I will never go to work in another country again, no matter how much money they pay me.

Generally, most women return to Arsi. Among the interviewed women who told their stories, only two did not return to Arsi because of the stigma associated with returning empty-handed or the family knowledge of their engagement in activities (such as prostitution) which they do not approve of.

Nebiat[161]

The third case is that of Nebiat who after completing her university studies with a BA and an advanced diploma in marketing decided to travel abroad for employment as domestic worker,

[161] Interview conducted in Bekoji on 28 April 2019.

despite the negative advice she received from family and friends. Nebiat's family is neither rich nor poor but after looking for a job for two years she decided to leave Ethiopia for another country to make some money and start something new upon return. Nebiat's story of how she left Ethiopia to Bahrain was not different from that of Hafssa and Khamisa; the only difference is that one of her elder brothers who graduated from Addis Ababa University and a university friend of hers also lived in Bahrain. She said:

> An Ethiopian agent with knowledge of and connections with officials in the system, asked for ETB 100,00 to be paid in advance for completing all the procedures (visa and official documents). I purchased my ticket and left for Manama, capital of Bahrain. I left without any problem, was received at the airport by my friend and brother in Manama, and because both are university graduates and work with good companies, they had no problem finding a job. My kafeel was a Bahraini friend who was looking for a domestic worker with a command of English to help their children to improve their English language and homework. The Bahraini family treated me well, I got ETB 6000 salary, worked from 6:00 AM to 20:00 PM and I was free to visit my brother every few weeks, although my passport was held by the kafeel's wife.
>
> I saved almost all the money I earned. I lived in the family house, I got free food and drinks and can move in and out of the house. I was shocked to know that some people were treated badly and worked like slaves. I had good fortunes because I was lucky to have close relatives in Bahrain and a very kind kafeel to work for.

Nebiat's case reveals that even if an aspirant has all the connections needed in the country of destination, the trafficking agents (sometimes doubling as legal migration agents). They amass huge sums of money using their accumulated knowledge of the procedure and their contacts with corrupt officials to facilitate exit. The level of education and the host kafeel attitude and treatment of the trafficked person plays an important role in the quality of the trafficked women's life and experiences in the host country. In Nebiat's case, we can ask whether she was 'trafficked'. Although the procedure of exit and resorting to an agent that she followed was the same as in the preceding cases, she was more like a legal, voluntary labour migrant who made the decision to leave in full freedom and kept control of the process. Despite this, she was structurally in a vulnerable position and escaped abuse only because of a local

family/friend connection and a kind *kafeel*. This shows that there may only be a thin line between voluntary labour migration and being a victim of trafficking.

At least four general observations can be made. First, the kafala system in the Middle East represents an institutionalized system that offers fake legality and security: it is likely to deny those trafficked their rights and access to justice when physically abused or not fully paid the wages agreed upon. Second, ushering trafficked women to the houses of the kafeel, confiscating their passports and locking them up for years is common in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Such incidents of abuse are not only common, but also go unpunished. Third, the two cases narrated by Khamisa and Nebiat, clear victims of human trafficking, show that the consequences are almost identical, including abuse of human rights and experience of violence. However, upon return the abused have different attitudes towards their ordeal: Nebiat is willing to give it another try due to her poor social background and low educational level, while Nebiat with her better education and investment in fashion, was able to lead a better life. She tries her best to leave the past behind and vows never again to travel abroad for employment, legally or by being trafficked. The case of Nebiat reveals what may be tantamount to a class division between trafficked women. Those with a better education background, better-off family, and family members or social network in the country of destination, fare better than those with poor family background and no social network and contacts to settle and take or threated to take their cases to the authorities.

During the time of the research, Hafssa worked as marketing agent, importing goods from abroad and selling them for what she described as a good profit margin. She decided never to leave Bekoji and spend the rest of her life with her family and two children.

7.3 Sexual Exploitation and Physical Abuse

Finding women domestic workers readily available to narrate sexual exploitation and experiences is difficult. There is a sense of shame attached to talking about being sexually abused through physical abuse even in some societies that are relatively more open about sex than others. The stigma attached to being raped or sexually exploited during or after the trafficking process, makes the victim a pariah and reduces women chances of marriage.

Among ten women approached for an interview on these aspects, eight refused to respond to questions about sexual abuse, although they were eager to talk about violence, extortion and refusal to pay their wages. Only two women agreed to talk, under condition that

no mention should be made of their name or identify where they were born and where their families live(d).[162]

In order to gauge more experiences, these two cases of sexual exploitation and physical abuse are used to compensate for the difficulty of obtaining information through a primary source such as face-to-face interviews.

Meseret[163]

The first face-to-face interview was with Meseret. She was 28 year old when she left for Dubai as a domestic worker using the kafala system. Although it is mentioned in her kafala contract that she would be a domestic worker, upon arrival she was met at the airport by her kafeel, who took her to his house. To her surprise she found that there was no family. She told the rest of her story:

> The kafeel told me that his family was on holiday in the London and would return in a month. He demanded to have sex with me and when I refused, he raped me and after that promised to increase my salary if I did not resist having sex with him in the future and that I should not tell his wife and if I did tell his wife he would kill me because I would ruin his marriage and family life.
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> When the family returned from holiday, he told his wife that I arrived from Ethiopia the same day they had arrived. I thought that the sexual encounters with the kafeel might give me some sympathy and that I could have more freedom than other domestic workers in my situation. Unfortunately, there was no change: like other domestic workers, I was denied freedom of movement, locked inside, forbidden to leave the home without the wife who insisted that I should not leave her sight. Several times, I thought of escaping or tell the police. But I heard from other domestic workers that if I escaped the kafeel will report me to the police because escaping is considered illegal no matter what the reasons are. If I go to the police, the police will call the kafeel and there is no way that the police believe me against an UAE citizen. The reality of the matter was that I could not run away because my passport was confiscated by the kafeel upon arrival; therefore, I had no legal documents to prove that I was in the UAE legally.

[162] In fact, this approach was applied in all cases of the women interviewed, as part of the ethical considerations mentioned in Chapter 1.
[163] Names are again pseudonyms. Interview conducted in Shashemene on 28 April 2019.

When the husband and wife go out and lock me in the house, the other male adults also raped me and I sometimes ended up being raped by two men, including the Kafeel during the absence of his wife. After one year, I told the kafeel I want to return to Ethiopia. He informed me that he will deduct all the costs he paid to the brokers and agents, will not purchase my ticket and pay me only half of the salary that I accumulated during the year. I had to stay in servitude, sexually abused overworked and with no simple human rights such as freedom of movement, or work rights such as limited working hours and holiday. I thought of how I could pay the kafeel and the ETB 100,000, which I accumulated to be able to get the Kafala.

I stayed under these abusive work conditions and sexual exploitation for three years. The day I was leaving, the kafeel introduced me to the new domestic worker and said to me that there are many women who love to have my job. I left with tears on my eyes.

I worked long hours: clearing, washing, cooking, looking after the children and often carrying the small child on my back while working. Usually, I work for 16 hours and when there was a family occasion (birthdays and marriage anniversaries) which were attended by their extended family, I worked for about 20 hours every day.

When Meseret returned to Ambo, she could not face herself and live with her family and relatives pretending that everything was normal. She decided to move on to another town. Shashemene was her destination because she knew friends in the town. She opened a small bar and kitchen where she serves drinks and traditional food. Gradually, she attracted customers. She said, "I came from the UAE with money, but lost my soul and innocence, now, at least I do whatever I do for my own money, when I want and with whom I want".

Hassina[164]

Hassina, a 24-year old woman, followed the same procedure as in the other cases described in the stories of the domestic workers above. She secured a kafala through an Ethiopian agent who worked for a kafeel from Dubai. Hassina's kafala was for working as a waitress in a restaurant for a monthly salary equivalent to ETB 4000. Upon arrival, the kafeel took her to his house and told her that he asked the Ethiopia agent to send him a domestic worker and not

[164] Interview conducted in Addis Ababa on 28 April 2019.

a waitress because he had no restaurant. He also denied that the kafala in her possession was not the one he sent to the Ethiopian agent. Meseret relayed the rest of her story:

> I found that the kafeel had no family in the house he took me to. there were two other African women in his house: one from Nigeria and the other from Kenya. The other two women never greeted or welcomed me. Later they told me that they were in a worse situation than me. No family wanted to employ them 'because they are too black'.
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> He threatened to send me back to Ethiopia if I did not accept to work as a domestic worker. When I insisted in being employed according to the kafala I agreed to or I would report my case to the police, he slapped me, pulled my hair and locked me in a separate room for over 24 hours without food. At night he came to my room and promised to change my job if I had sex with him. The kafeel then slapped me again, insulted me, tied my hands and raped me. I sustained injuries and could not wake in the morning. After several days of regular kicking, beating, slapping and raping, I succumbed to my fate.
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> The kafeel used his connections with the authorities to sell my kafala to another family for a salary of an equivalent of ETB 3000 and the other ETB 1000 was paid to him every month. Fortunately, I had only one-year kafala, was able to collect my passport through Ethiopian brokers whom I paid almost 20% of my total earnings (ETB 7,200). When I returned to Ethiopia, I was not able to repay all the debt (ETB 50,000) which I paid to the agent who trafficked me to Dubai.

Hassina arrived back in Ethiopia broke, indebted and demoralized. She decided to disappear in Addis Ababa because she was ashamed to return to her family and whether or how to explain to them why she returned. She stayed with the friends whom she left behind and was fortunate to be given back the job which she had left more than a year ago and for the same salary. Her biggest problem was how to survive while using half of her salary to repay her debt. Hassina vowed never to allow herself to be trafficked, humiliated or go through such experience in her life. "It isn't worth it", she said.

These three stories of domestic workers, victims and survivors of human trafficking, bear the hallmark of sexual exploitation and physical abuse and the last two are similar to each other. The kafala represents an institutionalized system of human and labor rights abuse, where domestic workers' passports are surrendered to the kafeel, their mobility

restricted and confined and sometime locked in the kafeel's house. The women cannot change their employer regardless of how abusive the employer is and if they decide to do so they are forced to pay the kafeel excessive amounts of money.

As the case of other women who have gone through similar experiences as domestic workers in the Middle East[165], the women described above were not paid the full salaries mentioned in the kafala document, and as a result they incurred substantial debts to the trafficking agents. Although Middle Eastern governments have repeatedly expressed intentions to reform the system, to date it is still intact, even in more open Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon and Jordan.[166]

In five out of the six cases presented in this chapter, abusive kafeels effectively stripped the domestic workers of their human dignity and rights. Even some of those who were able to make some savings, returned home only as half survivors. The sense of being stigmatized in a society suspicious of their real jobs when they were in the Middle East which has an image of engrained abuse of foreign women; and Ethiopian women upon return are therefore forced to migrate to other parts of Ethiopia with a new identity, in order to avoid living in shame.

In essence, the few individual case studies presented in this chapters show in detail that the classification of women victims of human trafficking in the category of domestic workers protected by 'labour contracts' (such as kafala) is erroneous. More often than not they are victims of sexual exploitation, prostitution, labor bondage, slave labor, violence, and physical abuse. Kafala is an institutionalized system of domestic labor recruitment practiced in many countries of the Middle East, whereby women domestic workers are not protected from abuse.[167]

The abuse is not a single but multiple and belongs to several categories. For example, to argue that one category of women is sexually abused, another physically abused, and third experiencing bondage labor is incorrect and incomplete. The cases presented in this chapter show that women domestic workers who experienced sexual abuse, often also experienced physical abuse, bondage labor and violence. Sexual exploitation itself is a form of violence and physical abuse.

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[165] Refer for example to: Human Rights Watch 2014 and 2016, Habibi 2019 and Jureidini 2010.
[166] For Lebanon, refer to Jureidini 2002 and 2003 and Pande 2014. For Jordan, refer to Human Rights Watch 2011 and Harroff-Tavel and Nasri 2013.
[167] Refer to Briggs 2014, "Women migrant domestic workers in the Arab States" and Nisrane *et al.* 2020.

The importance of the individual voices expressed in this chapter is not about the number of those who relayed their experiences and whether these experiences are representative or not, but rather it is about revealing the complexity of abuse and how these different categories are related. For, example, it would have been possible to merge sections 7.2 and 7.3 because, the categories overlap; physical abuse and sexual exploitation are evident in the cases of Khamisa, Meseret and Hassina, who took the step to be trafficked for domestic work only to find that domestic work involved inhumane treatment and abuse.

The stories of women about how they were trafficked or the ill-treatment by their employers and their families may give the reader the impression that they have no agency or that all of them are losers. As individuals, trafficked women are not completely powerless in the face of the structures or institutions (family members, relatives, friends, brokers, governments officers, etc.) within which they act. Cases of women who left their families with or without permission to find a living in neighbouring towns, the capital or other regional states are numerous[168].

Before they embark on their journey to find a job, As Chapter five has shown, women are often attending training programmes organized by the Labor and Social Affairs Offices on their legal rights as migrants, as well as trainings to be able to perform domestic work. Trafficked women often also acquired knowledge about the country where they aspired to work, language skills, and travel documents (which is not an easy process).

Not all trafficked women depend on their families to raise money to pay traffickers or purchase tickets to travel abroad. Educated women saved and used their own financial means to travel. Similarly, not all returned women gave up on life and buried themselves in their misery. The case studies, show that they get themselves together and start a new life. This is shown in cases of those who open small businesses, e.g., for selling street food, tea and coffee, or become involved in petty trade, while others insist or reembarking on the journey and try their luck again.

7.4. Conclusion

Arsi women as domestic workers going to Muslim Middle Eastern countries are not helped by religion (Islam) and knowledge of Arabic, as alluded to in some studies (Chapter two and three). There are widespread practices of labor abuse facilitated by the kafala system and the faulty legal regimes in Middle Eastern countries. The lack of coordination between Ethiopian

[168] See Sari and Khairunnis 2014 and Grabska *et al*. 2019.

authorities (e.g. due to cumbersome diplomatic channels, non-observance of international treaties, or specifically anti-human rights trafficking authorities)[169] and the Middle Eastern countries receiving foreign workers exacerbate the plight of the women domestic workers. However, despite the myriad of difficulties that trafficked women go through, a few of those represented in this chapter were able to start a new life and engage in several income-generating activities. But the majority are not prepared to reembark on the journey, no matter what means the traffickers may use to lure them. But the socio-economic and environmental conditions in which Ethiopian women, including those in Arsi, live in are harsh and produce new generations that feel forced to leave and, with a belief in higher powers, 'try their luck', , despite the dangers involved in human trafficking. This idea of 'luck' that will come to them is characteristic of many potential migrants (male and female), regardless of the, often incomplete information that they have on conditions and risks (cf. Abbebe 2012; Fernandez 2019).

[169] As described in Chapters 4 and 7.