

Routes, Motivations, and Duration: Explaining Eritrean Forced Migrants' Journeys to Johannesburg

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Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, Mr. Tekleab Araia and Mrs Zewdi Sbahtu; my sisters Azieb and Lucia; and to my brothers Michael, Zerit, Zemen, and Daniel.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in Forced Migration Studies, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

_____ This _____ day of _____ 2012
Tsfalem Tekleab ARAIA

Supervisor: _____ This _____ day of _____ 2012
Prof. Loren B. Landau

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Key terms

Asylum: Protection granted by a State to an alien on its own territory against the exercise of jurisdiction by the state of origin, based on the principle of non-refoulement, leading to the enjoyment of certain internationally recognized rights.

Asylum seeker: Person seeking to be admitted into a country as a refugee and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. It includes people who are already in a country but seeking asylum.

Diaspora: Refers to any people or ethnic populations that leave their traditional ethnic homelands or country of origin, being dispersed throughout other parts of the world.

Duration: Refers to the length of time the journeys of migrants too.

Emigration: The act of departing or exiting from one State with a view to settle in another.

Forced migration: General term used to describe a migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes.

Immigration: A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.

Migration: A process of moving, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants.

Motivation: the necessary and sufficient conditions that forced the migrants to make decisions whether to stay or migrate

Refugee: A person, who “owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (*Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol*).

Resettlement: The relocation and integration of refugees into a third country. It is one of the three “durable solutions” promoted by the UNHCR in deal with refugee situations.

Routes: Many migrants travelled through and across different borders and directions that constitute as routes.

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Abstract

This research report examines the migration experience of Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg. Since 1998, thousands of Eritreans have found their way into South Africa, with the existing trend indicating that this number is steadily increasing despite the fact that most of them use South Africa as a transit destination on their way to North America, Europe, and Australia. Even though they are spread out all over the country, there are many of them in Johannesburg. This research therefore focuses mainly on those refugees and asylum seekers living in Johannesburg. However, I expect the experiences of those who live in other parts of the host country to be the same as the ones who live in Johannesburg.

The report looks at the motivations, routes, and duration of the journeys of the migrants with the purpose to explain the role of migrant networks in shaping international migration. The source of information for this work is mainly the migrants themselves. Accordingly interviews were conducted through snowballing sampling. The number of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers participated both in the formal as well as the informal interviews is 60. This first hand evidence gives much support to the platform of this research.

According to the findings, most of these migrants have traveled long distances to reach to South Africa. Their testimonies demonstrate that these journeys were influenced by the diasporic networks established along the routes identified in this case study. Similarly, the motivations of forced migrants are prone to the influence of these networks in many different ways as discussed in the report. Forced migrants are not, in most instances, attracted by any particular immigration policy of a host country. Rather this type of migration is now perpetuated, institutionalized and is directed by these networks.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Human migration is as old as human history itself. People migrate for different reasons; the range of the journeys might vary according the reasons. In the course of modern world history many restrictions have been placed to deter the easy flow of people from one country to another or/and indeed from one place to another. However, it is impossible to stop migration for it is part of human civilization and development (Meissner *et al.*, 1993:1). As a result, it still continues to hold a significant place in shaping the socio-economic landscape of the world.

Migration is not a negative phenomenon per se; in fact the reverse is true in many instances. Countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand constitute a positive result of massive and continuous migration. Still these countries are at the forefront of attracting further migrants. However, with the economic challenges, especially the economic imbalances amongst countries, the migration course started to change. In addition to this, human-made as well as natural catastrophes compel millions of people to flee their original places. Moreover, increasing democratization accompanied with economic development continues to create multiple destination options for many categories of migrants depending on their motivations- challenging the migration systems propositions. All of these factors in turn increased the number of both potential and actual migrants. With these pressures countries became conscious and began to develop

immigration or refugee regimes both on national and international levels, mostly designed to curb the impact of the pressure (Meissner *et al*, 1993:74-75).

The main question this research report seeks to examine is whether there is an alternative explanation to the structuralist view of migration which has yielded often strict and narrowly defined national and international migration policies. Migration as a process has its own consequences and one of these is the emergence of migrant networks. Migrants develop their own networks that would enable them to interact with each other or with their kith and kin in their country of origin. Therefore migrant networks are created by migration and at the same time networks also illustrate the process itself.

The in-depth interviews with Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg reveal the impact of migrant networks, sometimes known as diasporic networks, on the motivations to migrate and select destinations, and how these networks shape and organize their journeys. The report provides a brief overview of the major migration theoretical propositions followed by a historical background of Eritrean migration patterns before discussing the empirical evidence gathered through the interviews.

Research question

The research report seeks to examine some key questions on the role of migrant networks on the migration processes *vis a vis* the various immigration restrictions and other forms of challenges. These, among others, are:

- How do networks evolve and regenerate?
- What is the extent of their influence?
- How do they shape and organize the motivations, routes, and duration of the forced migrants' journeys?

What types of challenges do forced migrants face on their journeys and what types of assistance do they receive from the migrant networks.

Theoretical framework

There are different migration theories and models that can serve as premises for themes related to migration and social networks. In most cases these theories can overlap and supplement each other. For the purpose of this study I will divide the theories into two main categories. The first group of theories emphasizes structural economic dimension as a key approach to explaining migration. On the other hand, the second group pays more attention to the perpetuation of migration even in the absence of the economic differentials through the already established migrant networks.

Neoclassical economics: on a macro level this theory views geographic differences in the supply and demand for labor in origin and destination countries as the major factors driving individual migration decisions. Among the assumptions of this model are that international migration will not occur in the absence of these differentials, that their elimination will bring an end to international movements, and that labor markets are the primary mechanisms inducing movements. Government policy interventions affect

migration by regulating or influencing labor markets in origin and destination countries (Massey *et al.*, 1994).

The micro extension of this theory also focuses on the level of individual rational actors who make decisions to migrate based upon a cost-benefit calculation that indicates a positive net return to movement. Differences in earnings and employment rates are key variables, and governments influence migration through policies that affect these variables. (Massey *et al.*, 1994).

The new economics of migration: this model views migration as a family (i.e., group) strategy to diversify sources of income, minimize risks to the household, and overcome barriers to credit and capital. In this model, international migration is a means to compensate for the absence or failure of certain types of markets in developing countries, for example crop insurance markets, futures markets, unemployment insurance, or capital markets. In contrast to the neoclassical models, wage differentials are not seen as a necessary condition for international migration, and economic development in areas of origin or equalization of wage differentials will not necessarily reduce pressures for migration. Governments influence migration through their policies toward insurance, capital, and futures markets, and through income distribution policies that affect the relative deprivation of certain groups and thereby their propensity to migrate (Massey *et al.*, 1994). Fundamentally that is what world system theory also stands for; it essentially explains how the world market disrupted traditional systems thereby causing migration (Massey *et al.*, 1994).

Dual labor market theory: proponents of this theory believe that demand for low-level workers in more developed economies is the critical factor shaping international migration. To avoid the structural inflation that would result from raising entry wages of native workers, and to maintain labor as a variable factor of production, employers seek low-wage migrant workers. In this model, international migration is demand-based and initiated by recruitment policies of employers or governments in destination areas. Wage differentials between origin and destination areas are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for migration. The options for government policy intervention to affect migration are limited--short of major changes in economic organization in destination areas (Massey *et al*, 1994).

The above theories explain migration through economic and labor forces. It is true that “push” and “pull” factors in the place of origin and destination, respectively play a role in causing migration. Massey *et al.* recognize the role of the above factors in the “initiation” stage of migration (Massey *et al.*, 1994:701). Nonetheless, these models fail to reveal how migration is organized and maintained in the course of history. They also fall short of considering the other wing of migration--forced migration. Forced migration presents a new challenge to the proponents of the above theories. Because, these models cannot fully interrogate the issues surrounding forced migrants’ journeys. It would be naïve to assume that asylum seekers can react to economic or labor related policies of host countries, especially while they are in a difficult situation to secure a safe haven.

Another limitation of these propositions is that they give more weight to government policies implementation as explanatory factors. The Population Reference Bureau makes similar claim that “...migration is the most difficult component to predict and is most affected by government policies and government policies. Because nations can control their borders, they may regulate the flow of legal immigrants” (PRB, 2005). The challenge is how governments react to the flow of forced migrants who are not in a position to travel through the normal legal process of immigration rules and regulations (Van Hear, 2003). The reality beforehand is that these migrants travel long journeys and enter into countries of their choice despite the conservative legislations of states. Accordingly, our theories should address the anomaly of such human movements in a way that can include and measure the various other variables such as migrant networks. As described above by Massey, these theories might have played a central role during the initiation period, but once the momentum kicks off the influence of these policies is reduced. Therefore we need to seek for other feasible models to explain the migration processes of forced migrants.

Network theory

Unlike the above theories the second group of theories focuses on networks as one of the major variables that explain migration. Migration networks are the networks that facilitate the migration of people from one place to another. These networks, however, vary both in terms of their function as well as different features. Kritz and Zlotnik (1992) argue that although ‘migration systems’ are defined by economic and political structures,

there are other processes that shape them. The processes can be institutional networks, individual networks and organization of migration (Kritz and Zlotnik, 1992).

Migrant networks are some of the dominant elements in the field of migration and they are defined in so many different ways. According to Lomnitz (1976) as quoted by Gurak and Caces (1992), “A social network is a structured set of social relationships between individuals” (Gurak and Caces, 1992:152). As these relationships grow the networks also evolve alongside. Spittel adds that the networks “are defined ... as recurrent set of interpersonal ties that bind migrants and non-migrant together within a web of reciprocal obligations that can be drawn up on to facilitate entry, adjustment, and employment at points of destination”(Spittel, 1998:1). These networks can have different forms, and it is difficult to have a uniform definition for them. Nonetheless, they evolve in the course of time as result of the unique interactions that exist among family or community members (Gurak and Caces, 1992).

Furthermore, Massey and colleagues define “migrant networks as set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non migrants in origin and destination areas though ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin” (Massey *et al.*, 1994:728). Massey’s group categorizes networks as the bases for the “perpetuation” of migration. The content of this argument is that government policies are flexible, they can change anytime and as a result the chain migration can be interrupted at any point time. However, it is the networks of migrants that maintain the perpetuation of such migrations not the host government policies.

According to many scholars (Massey *et al.*, 1993, 1994; Westwood, 2000; Ajaya, 2000) social networks are very significant tools in facilitating migration. The phenomenon occurs often after migration starts. The causes of migration can be wars, civil violence, human rights violations, and natural disasters. On the other hand migration can be voluntary; people can migrate in search of better opportunity or better jobs. The networks however, remain stable in both cases of migration.

Vertovec (2003), on his part, adds more vigor to this paradigm and the implication of social networks to migration. He discusses the type of intervention the networks make in forming continuous support structures for migrants:

It is often pointed out that for migrants, social networks are vital for finding jobs and accommodations, circulating goods and services, as well as for psychological support and unremitting social and economic information. Social networks often channel migrants into or through specific places and occupations ... Migration is a process that both depends on, and creates, social networks (Vertovec, 2003:650).

Thus, once the migration is established it creates networks that sustain it. The course of this process of migration creates these social networks amongst migrant communities continuously and depends of them for its continued existence (Karim, 1998). It is because of such dynamism that we see today migrants, especially forced migrants are able to travel across national boundaries regardless of the host governments' immigration or refugee policies.

Others also have come with a new model called *herd behavior*. This model is a supplementary to the network theory in the sense that it happens within the migrant networks. In explaining the theoretical grounds of migration some scholars such as Bauer, *et al.* (2002) point out that herd behavior can determine the nature of migration. The theory's main emphasis is that migrants make rational choices in their decision to emigrate and select their destinations. Both components of this theory, herd behavior and networks externalities supplement each other (Bauer, 2002:4).

There are certain aspects potential emigrants often take into consideration before they start their journeys. One of these aspects is the Bayesian rationality (Bauer, 2002:9), the tendency to "follow the crowd". Normally migrants have some signals or information about the destination places. However, the information is not always perfect to give a full picture of these places. At this juncture Epstein explains the possible alternatives:

In the face of uncertainty, a common decision rule is to randomize, but here you confront an indivisible location decision. You may not know all that much about life in that location. You observe, however, that other people who are like you have recently been favoring this location. You might have a personal feeling that the location people have been choosing is not the best from among the available alternatives. You might, however, decide to discount this feeling based on your private information, and to proceed on the assumption that others have been making decisions based on better information than you have. That is, you may take the position that so many other people cannot be wrong. If you behave in this way and discount private information or your feelings to follow the decisions of others, you are adopting a decision rule that gives rise to herd behavior (Epstein, 2002:1).

In this way individual migrants often take the risks of following their own *herd* of migrants into a particular destination. The significance of government policies in this context is hardly visible. The decisions and motivations of migrants depend on the movement of the bigger migrant communities. Selection of destination areas on the basis of the various socio-economic policies becomes irrelevant for migrants that can be treated under this model.

In general, the first group of theories try to explain migration in terms of economic or labor related forced and the implementation of government policies. They argue that countries can regulate the migration flows according to their economic conditions. However, despite all the restriction placed on migration, people are on the move constantly. Therefore, the explanation provided by these theories is not sufficient. At this junction, the network theory can serve as the most feasible framework to explain the nature of migrants' journeys. This study uses the network theory in explaining the journeys of Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg.

Hypothesis

Diasporic or migrant networks play a more vital role in shaping the movements of people than the draw of the final destination or host countries' immigration and refugee policies. I expect that migrants utilize these networks in organizing their migration and they are hardly attracted by a host country's policies. Their decisions and motivations to migrate are greatly influenced by the existence of migrant networks and their intervention to render their services.

Rationale

It is apparent that hundreds of thousands of Eritreans have been displaced during the war of independence. Many lived in refugee camps in the Sudan for more than three decades. Once again thousands of Eritreans are fleeing the country, however this time the forced migrants come from urban areas and arrive in capital cities of host countries. I am particularly interested to understand the complex nature of their journeys. The Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg are part of the new surge of migration from Eritrea. Considering the time as well as funds limitations I had, it was the most feasible choice to work on this group. Obviously, my previous limited knowledge of forced migration in relation to the Eritrean context also inspired me to work on this subject matter.

Methodology

The ultimate objective of this research is to determine which variable is the most influential one in explaining the migration processes under review. My independent variables are: migrant or diasporic networks, transport modes, intentions, and host countries immigration or refugee policies. On the other hand, the dependent variable is the journey of the forced migrants (routes and duration). The final inference of the study comes from the interactions between these independent and dependent variables.

In order to measure these variables, the study presents a descriptive pattern of the migration undertaken by Eritrean forced migrants. The data gathered are the basis for this

presentation; respondents were asked about the places through which they traveled until their final arrival in Johannesburg. They were also asked why they chose those particular routes. Moreover, interviewees provide more information about the duration of their journeys. If the migrants chose any particular routes due to the immigration or refugee policy of host countries, the result will shift from what I hypothesize in this study and give weight to those policies. On the contrary, if 75% of the respondents show that they chose a particular destination at any given time is due to the presence of diaspora community and their support, then we can confidently say that the significance of the networks is more significant *vis a vis* the policies of host countries. In addition to the above factors, the study will examine the role of other factors such as transport modes, intentions, and other factors in affecting the duration of the journeys.

I intend to show how this variance affects the average duration of the journeys. The investigation also covers the impact of host country policies. Respondents are asked questions in expectation whether they encountered delays in their planned journeys due to those policies. I measure the influence in terms of the changes migrants make in their decisions due to these policies and what alternative mechanisms they put in place.

In order to interrogate the outstanding issues of this study, there is a need to have the relevant data. This data should consist some basic aspects of the migration processes. The following are, amongst others, the major issues to which we need to have substantial information:

- the density of migrant/diasporic networks
- the routes they took in the course of their migration
- the duration of the journeys all the way to Johannesburg
- their first countries of asylum prior to their arrival in South Africa
- the reasons why they chose those particular routes
- the sources of information for their journeys
- their source of financial support to cover the expenses of the journeys
- the amount of aide provided by either host countries or other humanitarian parties

According to the qualitative nature of this research, a specific data collection method had to be adopted in order to gather the desired data. As a result, due to the complex life situation of the subject population it was important for the researcher to employ a specific component of random sampling, snowballing sampling. Respondents are approached to participate in the interview without any prior selection process. The interviewer visited areas where there are Eritrean migrants, restaurants, work places (shops or in the streets), and residences.

The research was done in some selected neighborhoods of Johannesburg. Normally there are some specific areas or key neighborhoods where these forced migrants live and visiting such areas is essential. In this case the most important areas where the interviews were conducted were: Johannesburg city center, Yeoville, Berea, Bertrams, Orange Grove, BezValley, and Newlands.

A set of questions was prepared beforehand to guarantee that the same questions were asked during the interviews. This was important in terms of maintaining a fair judgment based on the results of the interviews. Moreover, it was necessary to make sure that the sample is representative. The structured interviews were both closed and open-ended, this helped to generate the required data from the informants. Simultaneously, some informal interviews were also conducted in a similar fashion. Most of the interviews were recorded in a tape except in few cases where the respondents were reluctant. Totally 60 refugees and asylum seekers participated in these interviews. Twenty of them participated only in the informal interviews. This was so as to better understand, by strengthening the illustration, the whole trend of their motivations to migrate, the routes they have taken, and the duration of their journeys. This made both the quality and quantity of the data needed for the research stronger and more representative.

The next task to work on was transcribing and translating the data into English because all the interviews were done either in Tigrigna (the major language in Eritrea) or in Amharic (the Ethiopian official language). The translation was done as accurately as possible, especially with the direct quotes integrated in the discussion. The researcher conducted the whole process of interviewing as well as the transcription and translation work.

Limitations

As in all research work, this study has its limitations. The primary drawback is related to the sampling process itself. Since there is not a central list of the subject population from which respondents could be randomly selected, it was necessary for the researcher to use snowballing sampling. However this technique may fail to include potential informants that could have supplemented the research with divergent responses. The other limitation is that research subjects are predominantly people who live under difficult conditions. As a result of their insecurity, they might have responded very cautiously or sometimes they even avoided some questions which they thought were a little personal. However, these problems were not fundamental in changing the outcome of the research. In fact, more interviews were done in order to fill the loopholes.

To ease such pressure, the informants were assured that the information they provided was only for academic use by the researcher and would remain confidential. In addition, they were told right before the interviews that they had the freedom to either refuse to answer certain questions or interrupt the interview in the middle if they felt the need to do so. In so doing, the researcher was able to win the trust and confidence of the respondents who participated in the study. Accordingly, once the taped information was transcribed the tapes were destroyed, and the names used in this text have been changed to protect the identity of the migrants.

CHAPTER TWO

Eritrea: historical background and the dynamics of forced migration

This chapter gives an historical background of Eritrea and some aspects of migration that can serve as historical basis to explain the current state of Eritrean migrant or diasporic networks. It briefly presents an overview of the Eritrean history by focusing on the most significant periods that have left their marks. It also puts the whole processes of forced migration in the history of Eritrea into perspective by providing information about the evolution of Eritrean diasporic communities. By doing so we can link what is happening now with the historical discourse briefly discussed in this chapter.

Eritrea has a population of about 3.5 million people and is located in northeast Africa along a 1000kms Red Sea shore. Nine different ethnic groups constitute the population. The country was formed as political entity with the advent of colonialism in Africa. In January 1890 it was formally declared an Italian colony with clearly defined boundaries and the name Eritrea was given to it. Italian rule continued for the next 50 years until their demise during the World War II. At this point Italy was defeated in Eritrea by the British army that instantaneously formed a military administration in 1941 (Mayotte, 1992).

Britain ruled Eritrea as a protectorate for another ten years until its fate was decided by the United Nations in 1952. At this juncture, Ethiopia claimed the former colony and argued it should unite with “greater Ethiopia” for strategic reasons, particularly acquiring

a sea outlet. Ethiopian intervention in the question of the Eritrean future created divisions both inside Eritrea and amongst the international actors of the time such as the USA, UK, USSR, and France. This gave Ethiopia to strengthen its bargaining position. Finally, in 1952, these big powers decided that Eritrea become a federal state under the Ethiopian monarchy (Iyob, 1995).

Nevertheless, in 1962 the existing Ethiopian emperor abrogated the whole Federal Act and reduced the former colony into one of the Ethiopian provinces. This sparked a violent anger among Eritreans, and the tension escalated into a declared armed resistance, a conflict that continued from 1961 to 1991 (Mayotte, 1992). The thirty-year war ravaged both rural and urban life; according to Pateman, for instance, an exodus of 400, 000 Eritrean refugees fled into the Sudan in 1975 (Pateman, 1998). Even before the war, Mekuria Bulcha asserted that “The Eritrean Liberation movements have been fighting against the Ethiopian military forces for the last 24 years and the conflict has so far produced more than half a million refugees, the majority of whom live today in the Sudan” (Bulcha, 1987:25). These refugees have become the basis for the ever-increasing Eritrean diasporic networks.

The formation of diasporic communities and the density of their networks

Forced migration has become a vicious part of life in the horn of Africa. Successive conflicts and droughts have had long-standing repercussions in the region, disrupting the life of various communities in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan. People in all walks of life have felt the impact of this lingering violence. The Eritreans have been at

the forefront of these dynamics. Despite their struggle, the acute drought and the war of independence (and continued violence) have taken their toll, resulting in massive involuntary displacement. Until 1990 some researchers once “estimated that a million Eritreans were refugees” (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 1999:190). After independence in 1991, many hundreds of thousands of refugees, mainly those who stayed in refugee camps in the Sudan, returned home (UNHCR, 2003b). On the other hand, many more also continue to live in exile.

Eritreans in the Sudan

The Sudan has been very popular for its reception of refugees for many decades. Most notably it has been the hub of Eritrean refugees throughout the second half the 20th century and still continues to host a large number of them today. There could not be other immediate refuge for the Eritreans than this neighboring country. The only other alternative was Ethiopia, which the refugees were also fleeing to (Kibreab, 1987).

Sudan hosted around one million Eritrean refugees throughout the year and the majority of them have lived for decades in various camps in the rural areas of eastern Sudan. Also the major towns of the country such as Khartoum, Kasala, and Port Sudan have hosted quite a substantial number of Eritrean urban refugees who later became the pioneers of further migration into other parts of the world (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 1999; Mayotte, 1992).

As is reflected above, the first mass influx of Eritrean refugees into Sudan occurred 40 years ago and we can imagine how the density grew in time (Kibreab, 1996). In the course of the 25 years stay in exile (mostly in the Sudan), hundreds of thousands of Eritreans were resettled into third countries, mainly in Europe, USA, Canada or Australia through UNHCR resettlement programs and individual efforts. Many others who were not able to get such opportunities or who might not have liked to do so traveled to the Gulf States, mainly to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates. Quite a substantial number of them continue to live today in these regions. The exodus created a widespread and strong Eritrean diaspora throughout the period of the war of independence (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 1999; Kibreab, 2003).

The majority of those who could be resettled into the capital cities of the West or so were mainly urban refugees. In fact, the first refugees belonged to this category of refugees. This group of people has been establishing ever-growing networks that contributed in attracting others to follow their footsteps. Therefore the number has been growing over time as new arrivals are added. Eritrean urban refugees in the Sudan first lived in the major towns of, Khartoum, Kasala and Port Sudan (Mayotte, 1992). A study conducted by several NGOs in mid 1980s made the following statement about the characteristics of urban refugees and their movements:

The urban refugee is above all an individual, and his [or her] flight to a neighboring country is deliberate and organized. He is much more politically aware, more educated and more ambitious than refugees from the country [side]. He is not satisfied to stay in the first place where he feels safe, as they are: he tries to go to a country in Europe or North America or, at least, to reach the capital

of the country he has chosen for exile. This is in order to continue his studies or to find a job corresponding to his training or social ambitions (CIMADE *et al.*, 1986:91).

This was also pointed out by Peter Nobel who said, referring to the Eritreans, "... many of them have today found second countries of asylum other than Sudan" (Nobel, 1982:5). These phenomena resulted in the dispersion of people having the same origin and links abroad, thus creating migrant community.

It is these early migrants who interconnected the networks of Eritreans abroad. These highly entrenched networks have proven to be very effective in terms of facilitating and supporting new refugees to make their way into the place of their choosing. As time went by these networks became more transnational. Besides, due to the fast moving information and transportation systems from the late 20th century onward the tough journeys became much better than before, making links very easy for such communities.

As the process gathered momentum throughout the whole of the second half of the 20th century the diaspora communities in the West began to grow. The most prominent countries were Canada, USA, England, Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. Correspondingly, Australia was also added to the list, the density has in fact grown with the continuing flow of people to the country. Matsuoka and Sorenson add that, "Hundreds of thousands of Eritreans ... were forced to flee their homes; the majority went to neighboring countries such Sudan and Somalia, but thousands were scattered throughout the Middle East, Europe, and North America" (Matsuoka and Sorenson,

1999:219; Connel, 1997:201). According to the data gathered from the interviews, even now the forced migrants in Johannesburg would like to join the diasporas in these western countries, for them this is the inevitable end of their long journey.

Eritreans in Ethiopia

From the very beginning Ethiopian intervention in Eritrea caused a great political, social, and economic havoc starting from the federation period up till the independence of Eritrea. This historical dynamic is directly linked to the migration of the research subjects, their routes, and motivations. Ever since the federation period from 1952 to 1962, Ethiopian authorities were working to dismantle the economic base of Eritrea, which was fairly linked to the industrial establishment at that time. Earlier on the Italians had been doing everything possible to make their colony a springboard for further expansion into the region. Accordingly, they established various industries, for example they prepared commercial plantations to support the industries, and they then began to bring Italian settlers to own and run these entire economic sectors with Eritreans providing labor.

Federation therefore brought two distinct entities together, at least in principle. The one is democratic and industrial, and the other feudal monarchy. Right from 1952 the Ethiopian monarch wanted to move the center of the modern economy to the south, under his closer range. Since Ethiopia, at that time, knew what was going to happen with the status of Eritrea, they moved various industries to Ethiopia. As a result, the working class that has been long established in Eritrea had no choice but move further south with their

machines. Specially, after 1962 the year when the whole federal arrangement was unilaterally declared null and void, the government intensified the momentum of shifting the epicenter of the modern economy. “A policy of terror and intimidation ensued. Imperial forces brutally quelled protesting and striking students, workers, and teachers. Many were beaten, arrested, and held without legitimate charges. Labor unions and political parties were banned. Industries were closed; others were moved to Addis Ababa...” (Mayotte, 1992:227).

The first batch of people who migrated to Ethiopia seems to have been skilled laborers. Now that both the political and economic hub was moved, Eritreans, in their thousands, began to trek to Addis Ababa and other towns of Ethiopia in search of jobs. According to one report, “There are [or have been] more than 500,000 Eritreans in Ethiopia. Many of them were highly educated and either owned businesses or have been appointed to high-level posts in government and civil administration...” (Santoro, 1998). This clearly shows the evolution of the networks throughout the continuous migration to the country.

Similarly, after the collapse of the Ethiopian monarchy in 1974 the new military government followed similar policy as its predecessor. Massive Ethiopianization campaigns of Eritreans were attempted, with job assignments for Eritreans set mostly in central Ethiopia. At the same time people often would go to Ethiopia simply because Eritrea had become a war zone ever since the forceful occupation. Hence, thousands assimilated themselves in the heart of Ethiopia and lived there for almost half a century. As a result, they adopted Ethiopia as their own country both culturally and legally. This

status was not changed even when Eritrea became an independent country, Eritreans retained their Ethiopian citizenship, even though the majority of them also sought Eritrean citizenship by voting in the referendum in 1993, a great demonstration of their willingness to hold dual citizenship.

Another group of people also moved to Ethiopia after independence. The new government that succeeded the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia had recognized Eritrean independence and had established friendly relations with the Eritrean provisional government. Accordingly agreements were made for people and goods to move freely across the borders. Eritreans could live in Ethiopia having only their Eritrean identity documents and the same conditions applied for Ethiopians in Eritrea. These Eritrean migrants went to Ethiopia for different reasons, some went to do business and others were in transit to third countries. Due to the strict policy of the Eritrean government on emigration, many young Eritreans went to Addis Ababa to process their immigration to the western countries. Consequently, the number of the Eritrean community in Ethiopia was growing over time. Some projected the number to be above 500, 000, although the Eritrean government's estimate has been conservative (Santoro, 1998).

Eritrean migrants in Kenya and Uganda

Part of the Eritrean diasporas also live today in several other African countries such as Kenya, and Uganda. Even if there is no clear evidence about the exact period where Eritreans began to settle in Nairobi, the migrant community has been growing continuously (Church World Service, 2005). Similarly, there are Eritrean forced migrants

in Uganda. There is meager evidence that can suggest they were there for a longer period of time. Recently, however, Eritreans have sought refuge in Uganda, mainly Kampala (Michela, 2003).

Thus, the dispersion of Eritreans throughout the period of the struggle for independence created strong diaspora communities in many countries. These communities were at the heart of developing migrant networks that played a great role in facilitating further migration. The clustering of Eritrean migrant communities in North America, Europe, Australia, the Gulf countries, and some neighboring African countries demonstrates how those networks worked to attract new migrants into certain destinations. Usually, the diaspora communities have maintained their link with their country of origin. They always keep in touch with their kith and kin through the possible means of communication such letters, phone calls, verbal messages, and most of all migrants maintain their link by sending remittances to their loved ones. As a result, people at home know where most migrant communities live and if there is any reason for them to emigrate, the first destinations would be in these places. That is what is happening with the new surge of Eritrean migrants.

The new wave of migration

In reading this report it is natural for someone to ask the question why Eritreans are still being displaced. Therefore in order to give a full background about the subject population of this study the researcher will highlight some of the major reasons why these Eritrean urban forced migrants are fleeing their country today.

Even though some economic migrant continued to flee Eritrea right after independence, the migration witnessed in the past six is unprecedented. The first and major cause for the disruption of life was the border war with Ethiopia. A dispute over a small border town sparked a full-scale war between the two countries and thousands of lives were lost and millions were displaced (MSF, 2000). For instance, the Eritreans who lived in Ethiopia for decades now came under grave threat. Around 100,000 of them were forcefully deported to Eritrea a country they can only claim as their origin. This in itself created havoc amongst this long existing community (HRW, 2003a). Indeed, according to the findings of this research most of the Eritrean refugees in Johannesburg are part of this displaced community. Especially the early comers to South Africa were mainly those who came from Ethiopia right after the war broke out.

On the other hand, the number of Eritreans fleeing their country has increased after the war. These are the ones who are directly affected by the war and its repercussions. The interviews done showed that most of the refugees and asylum seekers are young and came predominantly from urban areas in Eritrea, particularly the capital Asmara. At the same time, almost all of them were forcefully recruited in the national army for very long time since the start of the war. One interviewee lamented, “they [the government] played with our age!” He was referring to the protracted stay in the military without any payment. Nawaal Dean has revealed in an article written in one of South Africa’s newspapers, the *Mail & Guardian* that, “In Eritrea men and women between 18 and 40-years-old are required to do military service, and can be called up at any time. The

service period is technically 18 months, but can be extended indefinitely, providing the state with cheap labour” (Dean, 2004). Moreover, Eritrea is being slammed by many human rights organizations for its repressive policies (HRW, 2003b).

Today, thousands of Eritrean forced migrants are staying in refugee camps or urban areas outside the country. Paradoxically, some few thousands of Eritreans are recognized as refugees in Ethiopia. The UNHCR oversees their livelihoods in the camp in northern Ethiopia. Officials from the organization confirmed that every month around 250 new arrivals join the camp. However, according to the information given by the respondents, a higher number is flowing to the Sudan. More alarming refugee situations, related to the Eritreans, also emerged both in Malta and Libya in the last three years (UNHCR, 2003a).

In 2003 several hundreds of Eritreans found themselves in Malta due to bad weather on their way to Europe by sea. The Maltese authorities put them into highly secured prison, they were treated as ordinary criminals. They applied for asylum, but were rejected. Between September 30 and October 3, 2003, 223 of the Eritreans were deported under duress and on their arrival in Eritrea, reports claim that all of them were taken to undisclosed detention centers (Afrol, 2002). Amnesty International (2003 and 2004) reports that some have escaped from the penitentiaries and arrived in the Sudan again. These victims have disclosed the odyssey of their deported compatriots in an interview with Amnesty International. According to the report established by the organization, all the deportees are exposed to inhuman and degrading treatment (Maltamedia, 2004).

Similarly, Libyan authorities also began to strike against Eritrean forced migrants in the country. One year after the above incident Libya began to deport Eritrean migrants after putting them in detention for several months. The August 2004 occurrence that captured the eye of the world when some of the deportees “hijacked” a Libyan plane can serve a clear indication of the dire condition of Eritrean forced migrants. The refugees landed the plane in Khartoum, Sudan where they got full asylum (Pretoria New Weekend, 2004).

Thus, we can see the long existence of the diasporic communities that became the basis for these networks to flourish. Some of these centers of diasporic communities are along the routes covered in this research and they might show how far the forced migrants are aware of them. At the same time, the new surge of forced migrants has strengthened the networks long established. With this in mind it would be very easy for us to measure the motivations of the refugees and asylum seekers to use particular routes and how the existence of these networks affects the duration of the journeys. The next chapter gives the whole picture of these journeys by outlining the major features involved.

CHAPTER THREE

The Migration Course: routes and the duration of the journeys

The Eritrean forced migrants who participated in this study explained that their journeys were irregular. This is mainly attributed to the nature of their flight which was often unceremonious. In many instances they had to slip out of their country and enter in the territories of other countries. This made their journeys extremely difficult to organize. As a result, the choice for routes was very important for these migrants. This chapter discusses the pattern of migration and the factors that affected the journeys. It explains the role of the migrant networks in relation to host government immigration policies.

Routes

The investigation of this research points out that only one out of the total number of forced migrants who, formally and informally, participated in the interviews came directly to Johannesburg. Even that individual did not come as directly as it were, he had been in Ethiopia for five years looking for his way out to the West. Thus we can assume that 100% of the informants passed through six or more countries. Nonetheless, most of them, 95% of those interviewed said they were never granted any formal asylum in those countries along the routes, except those who lived in Ethiopia as legal Ethiopian citizens. In order to have a better understanding, the routes may be divided into major, secondary, and minor ones, according to the number of migrants who passed through them.

Major routes

The first major route is the one that begins from Ethiopia where a large number of people of Eritrean origin have lived for a long period of time. The trend of this migration to Ethiopia was discussed earlier, for some of them it was their country of citizenship and for others it was the first point in their long journey. The facts gathered here indicate that the early comers into Johannesburg were Ethiopians, and Eritreans who lived in Ethiopia had this information. Nonetheless, this route was not known, at least, amongst Eritreans until 1998 (Hopa, 1999). The number of respondents who came via this route is 35, though the migrants would take different passages on the next stage of their journey from Kenya.

Many who were displaced from Ethiopia ended up mainly in Nairobi. This development began immediately after the border war broke out in 1998 (HRW, 2003c). Many families split up as a result of the massive deportations of members of households to Eritrea. In many of the cases while parents were deported their children would be left behind, because parents they were not allowed to take their children with them. In such circumstances it is very difficult for young people to stay without their parents; instead they had to find their way out of the country to a place from where they could establish their contacts. Subsequently, many Eritreans traveled to Kenya (IRIN, 1998; HRW, 2003).

Figure 1. The course of migration along the major routes.

AFRICA



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For those who came through this passage, crossing the Ethiopian border with Kenya was the most difficult part of the journey for. Most of them remember their traumatizing experience of the border crossing. They did not have valid documents to enter into Kenya; they were displaced abruptly due to the new calamity in Ethiopia. As a result, they had to travel on foot to avoid every checkpoint and for most of them the journeys were very difficult. Semere who arrived in Johannesburg in 1999 narrates part of his flight as follows:

Oh, I have a terrible memory of it. After we arrived in Moyale (Ethiopia) our ascoblay [Amharic term for a trafficker] informed us that we would be crossing over to Kenya under the cover of darkness. It was raining and it was disgusting but what could we do? There was no other possible alternative for us. At dawn we entered the Kenyan town of Moyale. That same day we wanted to clear ourselves from the border town and we began to search for other traffickers who would help us get to Nairobi. Finally we got some people, but they told us how difficult it would be to travel by bus. Instead, they organized us trucks loaded with animals. The long ride amongst the cattle was my worst nightmare ...anyways we arrived in Nairobi peacefully...

Yet, many people did not want to go back to their country of origin, which was at that time, at war with Ethiopia. Therefore, hundreds of the youth were stranded in Nairobi hoping to secure their lives and then of course to migrate into third countries, primarily western countries (HRW, 2003). Nevertheless, after a long stay (1 to 3 years) they tend to search for other possible alternatives. Haile, one of my informants said, “When I first went to Kenya my intention was to process my immigration to either the US or Canada but then it was boring waiting it for three years. I got information from my friends about South Africa and that is how I decided to come here.” According to his response, he has siblings in North America and part of his family was deported to Eritrea. This is the

typical example of the networks we have been discussing, connecting the various corners of the dispersed family.

The second major route for Eritrean forced migrants that have arrived in Johannesburg is via Sudan. Sudan has historically been the hub of Eritrean refugees and as the closest neighbor it remains the major junction point for people who have been fleeing Eritrea and heading to different destinations. Indeed, according to the informants the number of young (between 18 and 40 years old) Eritreans in the major towns of Sudan has grown substantially with the constant flow of new arrivals often former soldiers and the bulk of these migrants are still in the country waiting or preparing to migrate further. This claim can be verified further by looking at the nature of recent arrivals in South Africa, the data show that most of them are coming via Sudan where they stayed no longer than 2 to 3 years. This is in addition to the long stayed urban as well as camp based Eritrean refugees in the Sudan. As described earlier, the majority of these migrants chose to take the northern route (out of the scope of this study) on their way to Europe (Pugh, 2004:56; BBC, 2004). However, still a significant number has been flowing to South Africa, especially in recent years beginning from 1998.

From the Sudan people arrive in two capitals, Nairobi and Harare; 19 of the respondents used this route. Those people (9 respondents) who went to Kenya were the ones who decided to try their luck through asylum process to immigrate into the Western countries where they intend to settle finally and when that fails they continue their journey to Johannesburg. On the other hand, the Khartoum-Harare route is the most frequented way

among the people who chose to travel to South Africa, 11 of the 19 forced migrants came through this route. Finally, the two directions would converge in Harare with the one come from Kenya joining the other in Zimbabwe. From Zimbabwe it is straight to the final point, Johannesburg. However, there were other extensions of the major ones, and of course diverse narrow passages also joined these major routes at different points of the entire journeys. These tributary passages are treated in this study as secondary or minor routes.

Secondary routes

It appears that when the forced migrants were leaving their country of origin for exile they used so many exit points. There was no clear and major exit route as such; these varied both in time and from place to place. The factor for the irregularity of the exit routes was mainly the security aspect, to keep oneself away from the watch of the army along the borders. So it is very hard for these migrants to draw the course of migration right from the beginning.

Nonetheless, once the asylum seekers are out of their country the course starts to take shape. Then it is possible to distinguish the general trend of the migration and its characteristics. This enables us to determine the significance of even other secondary routes that were used by some of those who participated in the interviews. The route which comes from Ethiopia diverges further into other routes. One goes down to Tanzania, Mozambique, Swaziland, and finally to South Africa. This is the second largest route in terms of the number of people (15 respondents) who came through it and the

unavailability or invisibility of the diasporic networks in these countries. The information collected also indicates that those who came earlier from 1998 to 1999, mostly before three to four years often used this route. And it is also the longest, in terms of distance, route to South Africa.

From Dar es Salaam the journey continues down to Maputo where the final arrangements are made to cross the South African border. The voyage to Maputo is often made in two separate routes that require different modes of transportation. The first one is a sea voyage with ships or small boats; and the second is made on land using buses to ride all the way. According to those who traveled through this route part of the long voyage seems to be one of the toughest part, with various hazards along the way, crossing rivers, accidents, border security, and the distance itself. Swaziland is always mentioned in the course of their journeys but they usually do not enter the capital, rather they use it as a passage as they walk across into South Africa. This usually takes place during the night, to evade being spotted by the border guards.

Figure 2. The course of migration along the secondary and the minor routes.
AFRICA



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Minor routes

Amongst the tributary pathways is the one that goes to Djibouti and converges in Kenya with the other routes. Similarly there may be other secondary routes too; the story of one of my informants can reveal the determination of forced migrants who wish to arrive at their planned destinations and the factors that influence it in the course of their journeys. He is a man of 29 years age, a teacher by profession. He began his journey from the port city of Massawa in Eritrea, he knew a person involved in the port administration with access to docking ships. The person arranged for him to get into the ship and hide, what he thought was that the ship was on its way to Greece. The crew had no idea that there was a person on board. After seven days at sea the ship arrived in the port city of Dubai, here the informant believed he had arrived where he wanted to arrive, Greece, therefore he gave himself up to the crew.

He said, “They were surprised and so was I, they asked me who I was and where I was from. I told them everything, but finally they asked me whether I was a Muslim or a Christian and I told them I am a Christian, they could not believe me but thank God I had this little cross in my pocket, I showed them.” As a result the crew agreed among themselves that they would hand him over to a country where there are Christians and they took him to India with them. Unfortunately, Indian authorities denied him any asylum, the crew therefore had to bring him with them on their way to Africa, Mozambique where they gave him “enough money” to cover for his expenses until he gets into South Africa.

In the same way, the formal as well as informal interviews conducted indicate that there are some people who fly to Mbabane, the capital of Swaziland. Apparently this is known mainly to Ethiopians and Eritreans who came directly from Ethiopia. A few also mentioned that Lesotho on their transit until they left it for Johannesburg. Similarly, some of the respondents also acknowledged having followed another corridor that passes through Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and finally link itself with Dar es Salaam or else end up in Harare through Zambia.

This pattern of migration reveals that a lot of Eritreans are currently on the move. It appears that this trend will last at least until the major causes of their flight are resolved. Various sources and facts gathered from the interviews indicate that the capital cities through which the routes pass are today overcrowded with new Eritrean urban forced migrants. It is very difficult to imagine what the pattern of their movement would look like in the absence of the networks. Obviously without the presence of the migrant or diasporic networks the pattern would be different. Indeed, it is possible that the flow would have been very little and we would have noticed clustering of the migrants in just few cities or countries. However, the main dilemma is that it is inevitable for the networks to emerge once a migrant, especially, a forced migrant has set a particular route and destination.

Motivations of the migrants

As discussed earlier, the link between capitals is not coincidental. None of the route lines have missed the centers of dense Eritrean diasporic communities in Africa. Interestingly

the information gathered in this study explains how the density of the networks in some capitals attracts migrants on their pursuit for better and safe refuge. If we look carefully, only few people passed through Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. These places are not as known as Sudan and Kenya amongst these Eritreans, this is attributed to the little presence of Eritrean immigrant communities.

Besides, if we observe the whole migration trend, we understand that many of them stay longer in the capitals where there is a considerable presence of Eritrean diasporic communities. Many of the respondents said that they lived in Khartoum and Nairobi for longer period before they came to South Africa. Most of them stayed in these capitals for more than one year, whereas in those capitals where there is no any significant number of Eritreans they stayed not more than two weeks or so. Dawit who stayed in Kenya for three years said, “I stayed in Nairobi for three years. I was with some relatives, and there were many Eritreans like me, we were expecting go to the US or Europe. Suddenly, we heard many people, including our friends were leaving for South Africa”. This testifies that the presence of diasporic communities is very essential to the migrants. This is true because they draw their plans depending on this reality than being influenced by the draw of the migration policies of host countries.

The story of a young man who left Eritrea four years ago confirms the above claim. Immediately after finishing high school, he did not want to go to the mandatory military service and instead left the country. He told me, “I didn’t know what to do but for sure I was confident that my siblings would help me. My brother and one sister are in the US

and another sister in the Middle East [UAE]. When I arrived there [Nairobi] I phoned them and accordingly they talked among themselves to support me and accordingly they talked to people they had known in Nairobi”. Practically speaking he has relied on them financially for the last four years in exile, paying all his living costs and travel costs as he migrated from Eritrea to the Sudan and then to Kenya where he stayed for two years until he finally came to South Africa in early 2004. This tells us something with respect to the role of the diasporic networks in institutionalizing migration and shaping the motivations of migrants.

The interviews conducted for this study show that the ultimate motive for the majority of Eritrean forced migrants in South Africa or Johannesburg as a case is to migrate into other third countries, presumably to North America, Europe, and Australia. However, often they wait for a long time before they succeed to make it, mainly due to financial constraints. In South Africa the chances of making proper preparation to leave for third countries is relatively good, either they can get out soon or make good money (at least by their own standards) in the process. Selam says that when she came to this country she never “thought to stay that long because the purpose was to use South Africa as a springboard, but then you always face risks. For instance, I once tried to get into Europe and I was arrested in Germany and deported back to South Africa. Even now my final goal is to move out of this country in any way ...” She lamented how much money she spent for the previous attempt, and now she is struggling to make enough money for the next try.

According to Selam, the main reason why she wants to migrate again to Europe or North America is because it is there where she can be established, with her siblings and other relatives. She thinks “South Africa is not the place for Eritreans; look at it, there are no Eritreans who live permanently. They all go after staying for some time”. My encounters with the forced migrants as well as my observation seem to endorse this notion about Eritreans. For instance, Selam owns a good business in Johannesburg and earns very well, but the diasporic social forces determine the whole issue of staying here or moving to another destination.

In their study of other forced migrant communities in Johannesburg Landau and Jacobsen make some assertion on the intended destination of most of the migrants. Even though the claim that South Africa is a transit country for the migrants is not made, their statement makes clear that the intended destinations for scores of refugees and asylum seekers are North America and Europe. Their account states that:

There is also strong evidence to suggest that South Africa was not always the intended destination. On leaving their home countries, half of the migrants (50%) considered going elsewhere than South Africa. Of these, 62% considered going to North America or Europe, some 10% considered going elsewhere in Africa, while about 12% reported “having no plans (Landau and Jacobsen, 2004).

This contradicts with the normative assumption by different circles in the South African official discourse that refugees come to South Africa looking for permanent settlement and compete for the available resources and provides more evidence for better

understanding the nature of their migration, their motivations. Table 1 gives a glimpse of this in the case of the Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg.

Table 1. The planned final destinations of the migrants

	Men	Women	Total	%
North America	13	3	16	44
Europe	10	5	15	41
Australia	3	0	3	8
South Africa	1	0	1	2
Anywhere	1	0	1	2
Total	28	8	36	100

How do they make choices of destination? This is a very significant question in relation to the objectives of this study. According to the findings, of those asked why they chose a particular destination, 94 % indicated that they have kith and kin there. Beyond that their choices do not entail such a complex and rigorous understanding about the place they plan to go to.

The inference we can make from this is that the motivations of the migrants are highly influenced by the diasporic networks. For example, if someone has a relative in Europe, the whole preparation process is focused on how to reach there. The forced migrant maintains a constant link with whom they are related to. One of the respondents said that, “it is very difficult to make the journey possible if you do not have relatives who can help

you all the way, I mean financially and legally, especially on arrival. You know that most of us immigrate illegally, so on arrival you need to have a lawyer.” He also indicated that if any migrants who have relatives in Europe cannot make the journey and would like to change the course to North America, the relatives then negotiate with some friends (perhaps from same country of origin) across the Atlantic and mobilize some sort of support.

Therefore the strength of the networks can be measured by the level of their influence in organizing the motivations of forced migrants. The findings in this particular study confirm that forced migrants do not give much emphasis to the distinctiveness of final destinations, in terms of the immigration policies. The response of the interviewees was significantly similar in explaining the major driving force that would take them to any particular destination. For them the existence of diasporic communities in the capital cities is always important in redrawing the status of their journeys or in organizing their livelihoods, however temporarily. In addition to influencing the motivations, the networks also make important further interventions that affect the movement of forced migrants.

Duration of the journeys

The duration of the migrants’ journeys varies a great deal. We have seen how intricate these journeys are, the stakes are always high for someone who falls under forced migration. The whole movement of the migrants is hardly regular and is highly vulnerable to many distinct barriers. The forced migrants under review are not the

conventional ‘refugees’ recognized by the international refugee regime, in fact most of them still remain asylum seekers. Therefore it is very difficult to travel such a lengthy journey in just short period of time as would be done under normal circumstance where people can arrange their flights and reach their destinations in a matter of hours or so. The average time taken to complete the journeys from Eritrea to South Africa is two years. This is excluding the time most of them spent planning the journeys at home. Rarely do we find people who made these journeys in a matter of less than a week time.

According to the findings, the duration of the journeys depends on the availability of enough money and the routes taken. If we look at the figures provided by the migrants themselves we can easily understand how expensive these journeys can be. Undoubtedly this is the major source of their difficulties without which they cannot make a successful flight. Every step of their move involves finances and it is clear how difficult it can be for displaced people to find enough money. The greater amount of the money (depending on the type of the journey) goes to the traffickers who then arrange the particular journey as agreed on the deal. The amount of money required for the journey may vary immensely with the time and the terms of agreements. The general consensus amongst the respondents is that they paid between US\$300 and \$4000. This is just the amount of money needed for transport and payment of the dealers who organize the travel and excludes the amount of money required for day-to-day life in the big cities. Normally, the departure is either from Khartoum or Nairobi and sometimes also from Addis Ababa. The mode of transport is also a very important factor in the duration of the journeys. When respondents were asked about mode of transportation, almost all kinds were

mentioned. The interviews further indicate that most of the migrants traveled on foot, especially at the beginning and towards the end of their journeys. Another way of traveling is taking different kinds of vehicles: trucks, pick-ups, minibuses, taxis, buses, and military vehicles. This slowed down travel across the boundaries of many countries. For others, mostly recent arrivals, air transport cut the long distances short so much so that it saved them a month-long journey.

More than anything, however, the existence of the diasporic networks is very important in either making the journey shorter or longer. Many of the informants indicate that there are many people who are stuck along the way, just because they cannot afford the cost to make it to the destination point, Johannesburg. More than 90% of those who participated in the research were supported either by their relatives or their friends in the diaspora. And 100% of them said they received indispensable support from people, Eritreans, who they did not know before.

According to the migrants, the length of stay in one capital is highly related to the presence of a diasporic community. Most of the respondents stated that they stayed more than a year in one of the major capitals where there is a presence of Eritrean community. As we will see it in the following chapter, capitals like Khartoum, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi are major diasporic community hubs. Indeed, the evidence suggests that a significant number of the migrants engage in various odd jobs while in these cities. They worked as drivers, bar tenders, security guards, shopkeepers, taxi assistants, and cashiers. Others also took on different learning activities mainly computer and English language.

Most of them narrate how they lived in groups, often in neighborhoods inhabited by Eritreans or Ethiopians. Yonas recalled, “In Nairobi you feel at home, because there are many Eritreans. If there were no Eritreans I do not think that we could have gone to Kenya or stayed long there. For example, no one stays longer in countries such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe; you just stay in a hotel until you leave for your final destination [South Africa]”.

To sum up, the pattern of these routes reflects the density of the diasporic networks. The routes have always led to capital cities of the countries along the general routes described in this chapter. The length of stay in one capital city is highly linked with the density of diasporic networks. Most of the forced migrants stayed for longer period of time in Addis Ababa, Khartoum, and Nairobi before they arrived in Johannesburg. These cities have always accommodated thousands of Eritreans as part of the larger diaspora. On the contrary, the length of stay recorded in cities such as Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Maputo, Harare or Mbabane, is very short, often less than 3 months or in most instances just less than a week. The findings tell us that there is no significant number of Eritreans in the latter group cities and as a result this can serve as the main indicator to establish a causal link between the pattern of migration and the influence of the networks. In the next chapter we will see the close interaction of the forced migrants on one side and the diasporic networks on the other.

The role of host countries' policies

Policies of host countries always hold an important place in shaping the world's global human movements. Theoretically policies determine who can enter into any sovereign territories at any given time. Practically also, these immigration or refugee policies slow the flow of migrants. Throughout their history states have developed sets of categories for people who would like to enter into their respective territories. In their article "Immigration and Politics" Cornelius and Rosenblum wrote that, "...policy choices perfectly define the conditions of migration. Particularly, policy decisions classify migrants as legal permanent residents, temporary nonimmigrants, humanitarian migrants, or undocumented immigrants" (Cornelius and Rosenblum, 2004:112). There may be economic related explanations of attracting or refusing migrants into their domains. At the same time host countries have an international moral obligation to host forced migrants, at least conventional refugees as recognized by the international refugee regime (UNHCR, 1951:16).

Therefore undoubtedly host country's policies are very significant in terms of setting the platform on which migration can be organized in the modern world. We have already seen how governments responded to the resettlement of thousands of refugees in their territories. Immigration policies also open their border for legal migrants who would like to work outside their country of origin. Generally speaking, therefore, policies play mainly an initial role in the migration processes.

The cumulative result of these processes is the emergence of immigrant communities almost everywhere in the world. For instance, even those countries known for their welcoming immigration or refugee policies today depend on the existence of the migrant networks in order to facilitate resettlement of refugees from other countries. Canada and Australia have designed policies that allow immigrants to sponsor their family members or relatives. For example Canada has set a program of termed “family class immigration” for processing the immigration for those sponsored by their kith and kin (CIC, 2005; DIMA, 2004). What is very interesting here is that we witness the interplay of policies and the networks in explaining the movement of people into these countries.

The respondents in this study had limited knowledge about the immigration or refugee policies of the country. None of them actually mentioned the policies of any those countries through which they had to pass as a driving force to migrate. Tekeste, one of the interviewees said, “we never asked about that [immigration policies of Sudan], you just follow people who had migrated earlier.” This does not mean that policies do not have any role, however the individual decision of the migrants depends on the networks as facilitators. Another evidence found from this empirical study is that the migrants did not receive any assistance from governments. In fact, they were not allowed to apply for formal jobs in Sudan or Kenya. In spite of the restrictive policies of those countries, these forced migrants were able to survive and continue their journey to South Africa, all in the absence of assistance from host countries. On the contrary these migrants challenged the odds of host country policies and arrived in Johannesburg.

Moreover, their arrival in South Africa was not ceremonious, they crossed the borders without the blessing of the guards. All the migrants participated in this study admitted that they entered South Africa illegally. In this context one can notice the absence of immigration or refugee policies, countries even cannot fully control their own borders. Presumably, the theoretical placement of the policies help forced migrants to apply for asylum. After that these asylum seekers stay in limbo from the policy output point of view. At this juncture it is important for someone to think about the conditions of these migrants, their shelter, food, and security provision. It is here where we see the intervention of the diasporic networks to fill the gap. Therefore it very difficult to conclude that these policies draw the movement pattern of forced migrants. If this was so, then we would see a different picture of the process. For instance, we have seen the deportations of similar Eritrean forced migrants from Libya and Malta. If these migrants went to Libya or Malta because they had analyzed the countries' immigration or refugee policies, can we have more sensible explanations that would convince us that those policies changed overnight? Even the limited influence of these policies comes only either at the initial stage or once the migrants at their destinations or transit destinations. Thus, they do not thoroughly examine the whole journey of forced migrants.

Host countries' immigration policies are always in place to regulate and control the magnitude of immigration into their domains. And this is mostly done on the basis of the labor or economic interests of the countries. Some countries might want skilled or unskilled labor and then they might relax their immigration barriers in order to attract the needed labor. Certainly, the required number of migrants can come in as a result of the

changes in policies. However, it would be a fallacy to assume these policies would define the journeys of forced migrant. Even refugee policies, with all their flaws, are not in a position to explain these journeys. Host countries may even give asylum to those who seek protection in their territories depending on the admissibility of each case. Usually the policies are so strict, except may be in *de facto* situations. Yet, the respondents point out that there was no formal rejection of their asylum applications by authorities of some host countries, mainly Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya. If so why these forced migrants are on the move, is it to seek employment or better refuge? None of the respondents have ever taken any formal employment in South Africa despite their diverse skills. Therefore, we find out that these policies have little influence on the journeys of the migrants.

However, it is interesting to learn the implications of the other variables, mostly the migrant networks. The forced migrants interviewed indicate that every move in their journey was related with these networks. Their decision to move from country to country is influenced by the diasporic networks, either by providing the necessary information or just in the form of *herd* effect. It is also very interesting to learn that regardless of the immigration policies of host countries we see these journeys are continuously undertaken. If the reverse is true, there was little possibility that these forced migrants would end up in South Africa. The reality is, however, different; these migrants made their journeys outside the reach of the policies. These policies do not allow people to move across borders at their own will, but the forced migrants do not use the official and legal entry ports. Thus, at this juncture the networks play a significant role in drawing and

redirecting the pattern of the journeys. The next chapter discusses the nature of this role, and highlights on the level and type of the intervention by the networks.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Impact of the Diasporic Networks

This chapter discusses the outstanding questions how the networks play a role in shaping the journeys of forced migrants based on the data gathered from the sample of the study population. Here we will see the facts in relation to the main theme of this report, and we will discuss various factors that influence the general trend of their migration. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the magnitude and type of the network intervention.

Actual intervention of the networks

Networks constitute an important resource for migrants who use them to gain employment, housing, etc., in the migration setting. Without the existence of these social networks migration involves high costs and risks. Much of what is being described here is the phenomenon of chain migration or the passing of information from migrant to home, particularly information on life abroad which may persuade family members and friends to formulate ways of migrating and finding settlement techniques along the migration settings (Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000:127).

Almost all the respondents agree that once they arrive in the capitals of the countries they pass through, their main task is to get hold of either their relatives or people of the same origin before they get in touch with local authorities. This dominates widely the common thinking of Eritrean migrants in general and it has evolved throughout the second half of

the 20th century (Kibreab, 1983:88). Teklit is one of those came via Sudan and then moved to Nairobi. He narrated his first experiences in exile:

My friends and I were in the army and did not have enough time to prepare. We just slipped into Sudan, Kassala [a town close to the Eritrean border], after traveling three days on foot. We knew there were Eritreans living in the country, so the first thing you do is find some Eritreans. Especially in Kassala it easy to find Eritreans. In Khartoum is it is a little bit difficult but still you find Eritreans. They are very helpful, in our case we met some people who were like us but they had arrived before we did. We stayed for three months with them. Finally, they first left for Libaya and we went to Kenya before coming here in 2001.

There is no doubt that with time this can deteriorate and migrants can find it very tough at times to lose the support of the migrant networks. As another respondent recalled, “sometimes people do not like you to stay for months in their home and even if you do they give you hard time. But I think it is understandable, because people like me come to them one after another and how long can they continue to be so generous?” Nevertheless, the new arrivals also have their own supporting networks, they help each other in the process. The respondent adds, “... therefore sometimes it better to stay with people who like you, new refugees.” The intervention of these networks eases the whole process of settlement in exile. The intervention can be expressed in so many different ways, it can be information, financial, psychological, or in any other form of tangible support.

Diasporic networks as a source of information

According to Gaim Kibreab, accessibility to information about the routes and the situation in the destination place is very significant. He says that information “...

increases with proximity and decreases with increased distance” (Kibreab, 1987:40). Indeed, in many instances, long distance migration is practically very difficult unless those networks intervene materially. And in the case of urban refugees the major sources of information about the destination points and the process to get there are the diasporic communities. Nevertheless, this may not necessarily be the case for some individual refugees who do not have access to the assistance provided by the networks formed by people of same origin (Kibreab, 1983:88). As we have seen earlier, it is very easy for Eritrean migrants to get enough information about the neighbouring capitals like Khartoum, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi. This is ascribed to the proximity as well as the migration experiences evolved in the region.

Usually asylum seekers do not seem to have much knowledge in terms of identifying their destinations unless provided with adequate information. The findings of this research suggest that information is essential for them in the process of making the right decision. The case study of the Eritreans reveals that the major sources of information are the diasporas themselves. For example, only a quarter of those who came from or via Ethiopia originally planned to come to South Africa. Out of the total number of the interviewees only two college students gathered more information from newspapers, magazines or browsed from the internet. The rest had no intention of finding themselves in Johannesburg but to either North America or Europe. But when they heard about a new and fairly better destination they decided to migrate. Mohammed, one of those interviewed explained how their motivations are prone to the networks’ contribution;

Originally I never planned to come to South Africa, I just left Ethiopia to rescue myself, you know it was bad there after the war broke out. The only chance I thought going was Kenya and then I would succeed in securing asylum either in the US or England. However the process became so tedious and less promising, it is in the midst of this situation I was able to get information about South Africa for the first time ... Yes, I heard this information from some Eritrean friends. They told me that there were many habeshas [Eritreans or Ethiopians] who were coming and also I heard that it was possible from there to travel abroad. After that some of my friends and I decided to prepare for the journey to Johannesburg.

To better understand the situation one can see how the chain works amongst the migrants. Few get the information about their final destination while they are at home. Even so, they obtain the information from the diasporic networks in those destinations. The majority, however, plan their journeys along every transit stop where there are the diasporic networks. The above respondent explained how the migrants share information about certain destination. “The main job for us in Nairobi was trying to know a way out. We had to search for new information continuously until we get out. Being there, you cannot miss single information, people share that for their common interest. You cannot get them from others but your people [fellow country men and women]”.

Similarly, the ones that came directly from Eritrea via the Sudan do not seem to have any familiarity of what South Africa or Johannesburg looked like before they planned to get there. When asked how they were able to get information about the city, the majority answered that their friends or relatives who migrated earlier provided them with the

details they needed as migrants. Above 50% of those interviewed responded that they have either their own siblings or cousins with them, and have come to the country one after the other.

Amongst them were also three couples; the men who arrived earlier helped their spouses to follow them. In fact, these women are part of the sample population, I interviewed them randomly and it was surprising to learn that how the networks are strengthening from time to time. Perhaps we can better understanding the cumulative effect of the networks; we see slowly families reuniting in exile as a result of this type of chain migration. In another incident the same thing happened with two brothers whom I met in the course of my interviews separately, they came to Johannesburg one after the other. One of them said, “While I was in Kenya I had a process [asylum application] to wait, when it seemed impossible, my elder brother who was already here advised me to come to South Africa, he arranged the journey for me and here I am in this city now ...immigration or policy was not significant for me at that time, I did not even think about that, just how to get here was the only concern.” This reflects the view of the majority of the respondents on how they get the necessary information about a certain destination and how one can make a successful journey to it.

The others, 25% of the total, also indicated that they had someone who they knew, be it relatives, close friends, or someone they knew along the routes but came before them. The rest 25% seem to be the pioneers who came with little help from such networks but

defies all odds along the way. Evidently, even the latter had the opportunity to get similar aid from Ethiopians who first explored the closer but new world (Hopa, 1999).

In order to better clarify this, I decided to talk to some Ethiopians to get their views on this. Abebe, one of the three Ethiopians who participated in the interviews said, “Before 1998 you could hardly find *Tigriewoch* [Eritreans], it was after the war that we began to see them. On the contrary, many Ethiopians were already here way before this time, of course they were not as many as today. These days it is just a constant flow, as you see it [Mayfair] now it is full of *habeshas*.” As a result, they almost all knew how they would live as asylum seekers or refugees owing to the essential information they got about their destination.

The data gathered further indicates that most of the flights were not effectively premeditated. Above 65% of the informants divulge that they never thought they would go out had it not been for the border conflict which disrupted their ordinary life (USCR, 2000). In the midst of all this rush, however, when they decided to flee, even if within a short period of time, they knew where to go. For instance, they had to be very sure that there were many Eritreans who lived in the Sudan for a long period of time and they were confident enough that they could get emergency help from them. Michael came via the Sudan and explained;

it depends where you arrive first, sometimes people end up in the refugee camps [in Sudan] where you will be accommodated by the Eritreans there, but most people like me get in Kassala, for instance in our case we just sneaked into the town and we saw Eritreans who were speaking Tigriña just on the street. We decided to meet them and they were very hospitable, they immediately took us with

them. So, even if you depart without due preparation, you know people like these will always welcome you, it is just the culture. However, you should not forget that a lot of people, especially women, also make enough preparation like taking addresses of those who can help them.

This is partly attributed to the cognitive knowledge of the migrants who know from history that there have been thousands of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan. Beginning from the earlier flight of refugees the popularity of the Sudanese cities in the minds of many Eritreans. Obviously there are a lot of the migrants who get very concrete information before they get on their journeys. As some of the informants pointed out, they make adequate preparation, they know how they can organize the journey, which routes they can take, and where they will end up after every journey. This is possible because they are constantly supplied with the necessary information from the other destinations of their journeys.

Therefore, the role of the networks is very significant. First of all people can gain enough information about the situation of the first destination or else if they emigrate unceremoniously they can have confidence in the existing networks for help once they arrive in exile. Because the long established diasporic networks provide a constant flow of information thereby enriching the familiarity of those who are forced into exile, with information on their destinations. Moreover, these networks are not limited in providing information but also they are active in making material as well as financial contribution during the migration process.

Financial assistance

Metaphorically speaking migrants have their own nations (the diasporas) along the routes they take. One of the interviewees who spent one decade in migration (he first immigrated into Saudi Arabia in 1994, and deported to Ethiopia, then moved to the Sudan from which he finally came to South Africa) described the support of Eritreans on the routes as follows:

Their support is always great, the journeys are always risky, anything can happen. I remember when we were crossing the Sudanese border we hired a guide in order to show us the safest passage. We trusted him but finally he disappeared with all our money and belongings. However, after we arrived in a small refugee camp in the Sudan, we were supported by the people. In fact they were Eritrean refugees who lived for years there. They contributed some money for us to continue our journey to Khartoum. I do not also forget the help I got in Dare es Salaam from one Eritrean family when I arrived there on my way to South Africa.

The testimonies of the majority of the respondents are similar. They often elucidate that Eritreans whom they met en-route supported them in so many different ways. This goes with the density of the networks in those particular places where the migrant arrived. For instance, those who came via the Sudan seem to have acquired much support. This is simply attributed to the presence of Eritreans almost everywhere in the Eastern Sudan towns, villages or refugee camps. “The Eritreans in the Sudan are so nice, they help you in everything they can”, said Michael. During the first few days the migrants got free accommodation with these Eritreans, they gave them all the necessary information on how to get used to the new environment and told them what the next step would be.

Normally, as mentioned earlier, urban forced migrants do not stay in villages or refugee camps for any long period of time. Once they arrive in a host country, they immediately search for ways to get to the nearby towns, in the above case the migrants get financial support from the camp-based refugees for transport to get to the towns. The same trend continues even in the towns as we have seen Michael's experience in town of Kassala. More importantly, however, the migrant themselves help each other in the towns where mostly stay in groups. Awet, who first migrated to the Sudan in 2000, said that even though she had addresses of some people who lived in Khartoum for so long she preferred to stay with the refugees whom she met in town. For her, "it is better to stay with people like you who can better understand you. Otherwise, you cannot get the essential help or information about continuing your journey. For six months I stayed with such people and I got a lot of support both materially and spiritually." In this way therefore the migrants create the networks and make the most of them.

The migrants in the big city

The magnitude and significance of the networks seem to change with distance. For instance, when the host countries are far from the home country the diasporic communities tend to be smaller in size but their support for the migrants remains strong. As most of the informants indicated migrants mostly get the needed assistance from their close relatives or friends when they first reach the neighboring capitals like Khartoum, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi. This is partly attributed to the scale of the migrants and the availability of enough resources to accommodate a large and continuous flow of migrants.

However, the large-scale flow of refugees dwindles as the migration course continues to more distant destinations. This is due the intricate challenges migrants face to make the long -distance migration. Only those who get the financial assistance as well as those who make the most of the networks are able to make the journeys successfully. Therefore, those who were able to arrive to South Africa are few compared to the large number of migrants stranded in the capitals of the neighboring countries mentioned above.

In comparison to the networks en route the ones in Johannesburg are by far stronger and more important. The experience of them in Johannesburg shows this reality, unlike in the other capitals through which they passed this city is strange and scary for them. Given the small size of the Eritrean migrant community it is very difficult for new migrants to settle easily. Fortunately, however, the support and cooperation of the existing community is very strong. A new migrant doesn't need his close relative or friend in order to benefit from the established networks, in fact the networks cross ethnic boundaries as well as national boundaries at this junction. This is widely expressed by people who got support from Ethiopian migrants in South Africa, especially in Johannesburg. By the same token Eritreans also reach out to help the new Ethiopian arrival whenever they get them.

Johannesburg is one of the biggest cities in Africa, if not the world and it is here where the migrants often arrive after their long and complicated journeys. Sitting in one of the “*hebesha*” restaurants throughout the process of interviewing. The researcher witnessed

newcomers every single day over a period of one month. This illustrated to me the gravity of the current situation in the home country. The researcher also saw the networks in action, helping the newcomers to ‘integrate’ in the prevailing setting. Listening to the ones who had been in Johannesburg for several years talking about providing their fellow countrymen and women a temporary accommodation reveals the core value of the diasporic networks. In most of the cases, connections are done in advance but some may arrive without having to establish the necessarily connections.

Figure 3. Eritreans and Ethiopians selling “stuff” in the popular Jeppe Street in Johannesburg city center, a photo taken by the researcher in February 2004.



Under such circumstances people need guidance on arrival. What is astonishing here is that even those who come without knowing anybody in the country have one significant reference point in the city. This reference is the popular Jeppe Street where most of the Eritreans and Ethiopians work. Tekle is one of those who did not know anybody before his arrival. He came from Zambia where he stayed for two years in a religious college in

Lusaka. He said, “I only knew that the *habeshas* [referring to Eritreans and Ethiopians] are found in Jeppe Street and when my friend and I arrived in the city we asked some people about the street which is close to where we were. It was in the morning we met some of them there who immediately showed us where we could sell stuff.” That first night they stayed with those people but on the next day they were able to rent their own room in nearby Troy Street. This is how migrants develop their own network in order to survive and function as people in the midst of the odds they encounter.

Figure 4. Some “habeshas” relaxing after work late in the afternoon in Jeppe Street, a photo taken by the researcher in February 2004.



Another more important contribution of the diasporic networks is that they help migrants to adapt to their new environments. For example, it is often difficult to for these helpless migrants to cope with their lives in big capitals like Nairobi or Johannesburg. The irregularity of their migration does not equip them the necessary preparations a traveler

makes. Therefore, they value the support they get from Eritreans in these capitals; the migrant communities give them with temporary shelter, introduce them to the new areas, assist them with knowledge about how to live in a new social context, help them with communication, etc. This lifts a huge psychological burden off the migrants' mind, eases their lives and makes their journey a little bit smoother. Solomon gives an account of his first two weeks in Johannesburg, "When we arrived we were four people and we did not have close relatives in Johannesburg. Only one amongst us had a relative, unfortunately that relative was not in Johannesburg at that moment. So, we had to search for alternatives, luckily we heard that Eritreans have some rooms reserved for new guests and we stayed for two weeks there freely".

To sum up, the continuously flourishing Eritrean diasporic networks have affected the journeys of new forced migrants tremendously. This influence can be expressed both in material as well as psychological terms. In fact, the intervention of these networks is visible right from the outset of the migrants' journeys. They serve migrants as guidance by providing information of all kinds related to the migration process and the respective destinations. At the same time, the networks also offer a significant material assistance that would enable migrants to reach their final destinations successfully.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The situation of urban refugees and asylum seekers needs a thorough understanding from social science point of view. In many themes related to refugees we have seen the concentration mainly on those displaced en masse. This focus about hot spots and conventional refugee situations has meant little attention and resources are given to the case of urban forced migrants research. However, in recent years researchers seem to be paying attention to the complex existence of forced migration in urban settings.

The movement of these migrants entails enormous challenges. The distinctiveness of such type of migration lies in the irregularity of the journeys undertaken by the migrants. Obviously, the migrants under this category are not simply passengers who can organize their journeys with no major obstacles and travel formally. Often such people are forced to migrate, and there are various known reasons to flee their countries of origin. In the case of Eritrean forced migrants the major factors are the border war with Ethiopia, and human rights violation by the regime which has curtailed all forms of civic and political expressions since independence in 1991.

Historically we have seen how migration depends on, and creates social networks. The general pattern of the routes seems to have been redrawn according this reality. The people who first arrived in the capitals of their host countries began to attract further

migration. People then began to flow towards the neighboring countries from where they processed their asylum applications. Most of them seem to have been urban refugees who had their relatives already at the planned destinations. Here we see a triangular network created amongst various such exiled communities. For instance, one is in the US, the other one may be in the Sudan or Kenya, and the rest of the family may be at home. It is essential to appreciate their constant contacts with each other forms the triangular relationship and gradually we see the steady expansion of the networks as a result of this interaction.

The neighboring countries, mainly the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and a few others served as an exit for Eritrean migrants. What is worth mentioning here is that these people have in no way lost contact with their country of origin. Usually the contact through the various communication methods is constant and beyond that the migrants have generally a sense of duty to provide their kith and kin with financial support. Sometimes they visit their country of origin if it is safe for them to do so. In due course this practice has established enduring diasporic networks that facilitate both the material as well as emotional needs of those who are part of the migration process.

The other essential side of these relationships is the one that exists amongst the various migrant communities in different countries or continents. The argument in this paper is that either migrant networks or the support of host countries mostly determines the journeys of forced migrants. There are thousands of Eritrean refugees, for example, in the

major cities of the Sudan. This happens either because the migrants want to stay there or are unsuccessful in their attempts to migrate to other destinations. Moreover, close relatives or friends may end up in two or more different destinations that in turn would lead to the development of distinct networks-transnational ones. Thus, these migrant communities have maintained their own networks that have been playing a role in the snowballing effect of further migration of their fellow countrymen and women.

The data gathered for this purpose lend a great deal of support to this reality. Primarily the validity of such an argument is reflected in the characteristics of those who participated in the interviews. More than 90% indicated that they have close relatives who migrated earlier and became a source of motivation and substantial support for them. The long established networks there signify the routes these asylum seekers and refugees take throughout their journeys.

We have also seen how the motivation to use certain routes and get to a particular destination evolved amongst Eritrean migrants. Traditionally, there are some popular destinations for Eritrean forced migrants. And therefore one would expect the trend to continue the same way unless other variables intervene and affect that trend. Even if people do not have close relatives in those destinations to support them, the general perception is that the final point would be in those Western destinations.

Having this ambitious dream of going to the “land of milk and honey” they seek the most feasible way of making it a reality. Before they brace themselves for a long and may be perilous voyage, they work at gathering adequate information about all the possibilities. Normally, the information comes through those diasporic networks; such information is circulated very fast amongst a small population of a town where it is possible to know each other and it easily disseminated around. Definitely, most of the time the information provided seems to exaggerate the real life situation out there. If someone in a neighborhood set their feet on one of the Western countries, then the colleagues at home think it is that simple to get there. They do not often have a clear picture of what it takes to get there; they are only inspired by the pay-offs of the journeys.

The density of the diasporic networks therefore, greatly influences their journeys. The diasporas have been a great deal of financial support for their country of origin, by sending remittances to their kith and kin at home. Certainly, the majority of the informants are very grateful for the financial assistance they get from their immigrant relatives or friends to facilitate their journeys. We have seen how expensive it can be for the average Eritrean to make the whole journey and people understand the value of such networks as they think of emigrating from their country. As a result, you find out that most of the Eritrean forced migrants in Johannesburg are from well-to-do families in some way or another.

In fact, the migrant networks have served these migrants as guides that may sometimes determine which route one can take in order to arrive in their predestined final stops.

When someone arrives in the Sudan they do not usually wait there indefinitely, instead they explore the role of the networks that are constantly running. They can sometimes provide them with multiple choices of routes and then it is up to the migrants to decide whether to take the north route or south to Nairobi and Johannesburg.

The poor reception of the first countries of asylum does not seem to encourage these forced migrants to apply for asylum. Even if they apply they typically encounter unnecessary formalities and corruption. This is clearly confirmed by those who stayed in Kenya and tried their hard luck for asylum. Those few who are able to make it through the much more repulsing offices related to asylum seekers are often turned down. Hence, these isolated migrant communities out on the cold would naturally search a way out of their miserable situations. They may sometimes find themselves in eccentric, both legally and morally, activities; they may fall prey to traffickers thereby promoting human trafficking (Morrison, 1998).

All the various journeys they have are aimed at making their dream come true, the dream of finding oneself either in North America, or Europe and Australia. Most importantly, none of the people interviewed received any assistance from any local humanitarian organization on their way to Johannesburg. This study has found out that humanitarian aid in the urban areas is not available or inaccessible.

If they barely rely on any humanitarian assistance along the journey there must be other sources of support. Financially, they solely depend on either themselves or their immigrant relatives wherever they may be. At the same time, during their tentative stay at any transit point they obtained, to a large extent, their support from the diasporic networks around them. The Eritrean forced migrants who participated in this study depended fully on themselves and the networks. For instance, immediately after they arrived at Johannesburg they spent no time wandering around the city. The next morning it was straight to “work”, out on the streets as hawkers. Because people from the same country of origin have already established the ways of survival and when the new ones arrived they showed them how to make it.

What we need to realize is that this is not unique amongst Eritreans only, rather other migrant communities also have similar experiences. In explaining the Nigerian migrants in Johannesburg, Adelaja found similar functions of diasporic networks. He writes, “The relatives or friends not only show the new migrants around but they also resolve financial and other problems after resettlement. Through these networks, their transnational kinship and social ties are maintained and reinforced in a foreign country” (Adelaja, 2001:88).

Finally, in this study the characteristics of the routes described and the various destinations along the route from Eritrea to South Africa respond to the importance of the diasporic networks. The indicators of the close interaction between the forced migrants and the diasporic communities also give weight to the main argument of the study. The

actual intervention of the networks and the higher degree of awareness from the migrants' side in turning that to their advantage tell us to appreciate this developing phenomenon.

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Appendix

Interview Procedure

1. Would you mind telling me your age?
2. When did you flee from your country of origin/nationality?
3. Tell me how you went out of your country?
4. Which is your first country of asylum?
5. Where did you stay when you first arrived in the country?
6. Tell me if you ever received any help from authorities in that country of asylum or other humanitarian agencies.
7. If not, how were you able to survive during your stay in that country?
8. Did you consider going to other countries before deciding to come here? If you did where did you consider going and why?
9. How did you get the information about South Africa or Johannesburg and what attracted you most?
10. When did you depart from the first of country asylum?
11. Tell me the places you passed through sequentially while coming to South Africa after leaving the first country of asylum?

12. How long did you stay in those places respectively?
13. Did you get any kind of support in these countries? If you did, what kind of support was that and from whom?
14. Tell me the transport modes you used while travelling?
15. How were you able to pay all expenses for your journey?
16. What made you finally to decide coming to South Africa or Johannesburg?
17. When did you finally arrive in South Africa? Which was your entry point?
18. How and when did you arrive in Johannesburg?
19. What did you do immediately after arrival?
20. Where did you stay for the first two weeks after arrival?
21. What were you doing during this time?
22. What or who do you think played the major role in making your journey successful?
23. What do u think were the major obstacles that delayed/sped your journey?
24. Have you ever been granted asylum in any those countries you travelled through?