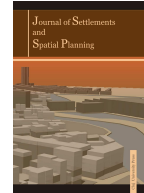




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Socio-Economic Status of Tigrean Ethnic Immigrants. The Case of North Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Cross-border migration has been a basic issue in Ethiopian urban masses particularly in Tigray region where the socio-economic sustainability of immigrants is considered pathetic. This work is an attempt to identify demographic features, to analyze socio-economic conditions, and problems faced by immigrants. By using purposive sampling 240 households of Tigray immigrants were sampled from four sub-cities. Analysis of the work reflects that Tigrean ethnicity was a common feature of immigrants regarding language, culture and history. Majority of immigrants arrived in study area by travelling more than 200 km. Orthodox Christianity and Islam were religious faiths of sampled population. Juvenile and senile dependents scored the share 44.5%. With widespread illiteracy and poor educational level, the working population was mainly engaged in hotel, restaurant, pity trade and as laborers. Their monthly earning less than 1000 birr was common phenomenon among 80% households. Half of the immigrants' population was residing in rented houses followed by slum dwellers and homeless people, whereas 37% spent nights on the iron beds, on the ground using skin/hide as well as grass as mattress. Drinking water was fetched from the springs and was in 20% households. Besides, 66.3% dwellings had not any toilet facility where as 75% immigrants were suffered from one or more diseases.

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration is considered as voluntary migration for economic or movement of large numbers of people from one country to another [1]. The involuntary journey for resettlement of immigrated people/refugees to country is also considered as cross-border migration [2]. The annual growth rate of immigration has been the steepest in the developing countries, and about half of all international migration takes within the developing countries [3]. Migratory flows to developed countries in the United States of America, the number of foreigners entering the country was 1,130,818 in 2009; in the United Kingdom, 470,000 in 2009; in Spain it was 469,342 in 2009; in Sweden, from 83,763 in 2009; and, in New Zealand, 57,618 in 2010. However, there were no staggering reversals in the patterns of movement; the total number of international migrants in the world was estimated at 214 million people and 740 million internal migrants.

According World Migration Report 2011, around a billion people (roughly one in seven of the world's population) are migrants [4].

Developing countries of Africa and Asia are under a serious impact on the economic stability due to return of large numbers of migrant workers. Many of these countries are already struggling with high unemployment, and now they face the prospect of trying to absorb large numbers of returnees into their labour market. These countries are also likely to be hit financially, as migrant workers returning home will no longer be able to send remittances. Neighbouring Chad and Niger, for instance, 70,000 and 80,000 nationals in 2009, respectively; return home from Egypt and Tunisia, on their own or with the support of International organization of Migration (IOM). Such massive return movements have raised concerns about food security in receiving communities and highlighted the need for reintegration options and community stabilization programs to absorb the high number of returnees

without destabilizing the sub region and to mitigate the risk of a humanitarian crisis related to livelihood failure [4].

The contemporary migration has been considered advanced by theoretical work based on neoclassical economics, new household economies, cumulative causation and more recent developments in transnationalism theory. There is also a growing body of empirical research relating to migration. Arguably, however, theory and research has not as much impact on policy formulation as political discourse, media reports and public opinion on the nature, purpose and socio-economic impact of migration [5]. According to the survey of International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2005, migrant workers were needed to cover labour force shortage in Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand [6]. About 80% of the respondents believed that migrants made a net contribution to the economy in the Republic of Korea and Singapore [7].

So far as the involuntary migration (refugees) in concerned, it was about 18 million in 1993 which has fallen to 14 million in 1996. However, the number of refugees is overshadowed by increase in the number of internally displaced persons those who have been forced to flee their homes by armed conflicts, persecution, or natural or anthropogenic disasters [8]. Because of the high number of civil wars and local conflicts, the number of internally displaced persons was estimated at 30 million worldwide, mostly concentrated in 35 countries in 1999. Africa was the worst affected region where up to 16 million people were internally displaced in 1998 [9].

The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia displaced thousands of Eritreans. Impelled by a band of external pressures, regional and spatial rivalries in 1977-78, over 400,000 Eritreans were living in refugee camps in Sudan. By 1991, EPLF¹ forces had expelled the Ethiopian forces. A referendum was held in 1993 under UN supervision, and Eritrea was declared independent country. But it did not end the clash and in 1998 fought once again over the disputed border region. In 2000, it was the war because of which nearly 390,000 people were displaced. The war ended with a negotiated settlement known as the Algiers Agreement in 2000. A final border demarcation was decided by UN-associated commission in 2003[10]. UNHCR² reports that there were 10,700 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia in 2005, mostly located not far from the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. As a vast majority of them are originally from the province of Tigray and they are among the poorest of Africa's poor [11]. Until the conflict erupted, most of

them worked as daily labourers, gardeners, hawkers, vendors, pity traders and restaurant workers and females as house maids. Since then, many have been laid off without food, shelter or diplomatic support. Roughly 25,000 Ethiopians have returned to Ethiopia, victims of joblessness and discrimination against Ethiopians in Eritrea [12].

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted in nearby Eritrean border regional city Mekelle, a capital of Tigray region having a concentration of immigrants of Tigrean ethnic immigrants, with the following objectives:

- to identify ethnic, religious and demographic status of Tigrean immigrants;
- to analyze socio-economic characteristics of cross-border migrants;
- to ascertain problems faced by immigrant people in the study area.

3. STUDY AREA

Mekelle city is situated about 780 km away from Addis Ababa near North border of Ethiopia at 39° 25' 30"-39° 38' 33" E and 13° 24' 30"-13° 36' 52" N coordinates.

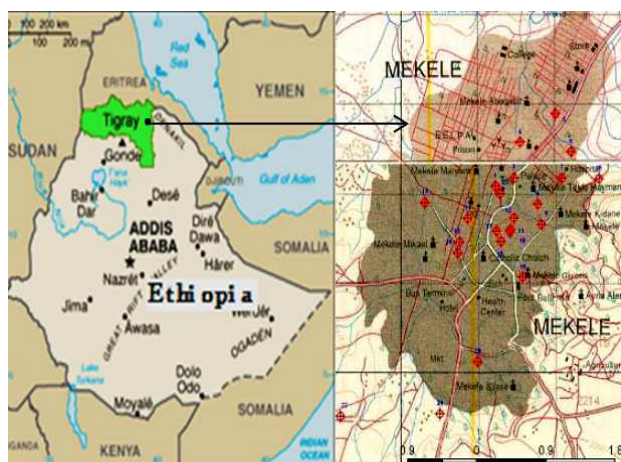


Fig. 1. Location map of study area (source: Tigray regional office, 2010).

According to census in 2007, the population of the city was of 215,456 consisting 104,758 males and 110,788 females residing in seven sub-cities, i.e. Hawelti, Ayder, Adi-haki, Semien, Hadnet, Kedamey and Quiha [13].

Population Growth is associated with migration-rural to urban and cross-border from Eritrea [14].

Agro-processing, small and household level industries handled by formal and informal sectors are sources for occupations and livelihood. Recently, the city has been popular for rapid political and economic development [15].

1 EPLF-(Eritrean People's Liberation Front) was an armed organization that fought for the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia.

2 UNHR-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees known as the UN Refugee Agency.

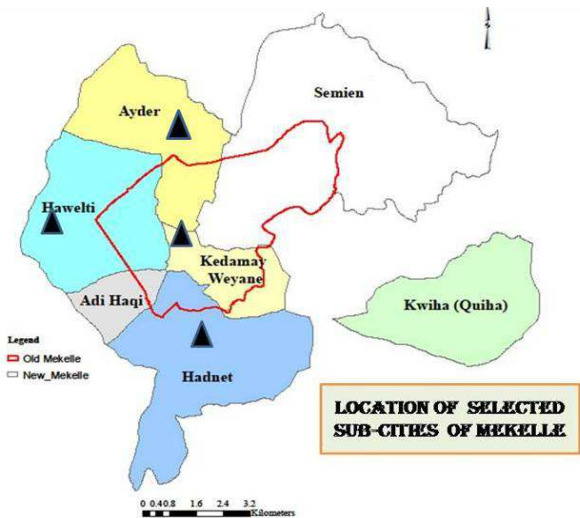


Fig. 2. Location of selected sub-cities of Mekelle (source: Moumié Maoulidi (MCI) and Tesfu Weldegerima (BOFED), 2009).

4. DATA AND METHODS

The study is based on primary sources of the data, due to paucity of published and official records. Primary data were gathered through field survey in Jan-March 2012 using schedule method for the detail information regarding gender, age, education level, work participation, income, housing conditions, and sanitation facilities. On basis of random sampling, out of seven, four sub-cities (57%) were selected consisting 6963 (50.07%) households of Tigrean immigrants. A list of identified households’ heads of each sub-city was arranged in alphabetical order. On the basis of purposive sampling 240 households randomly were selected which represent about 22% to the total households of the immigrants. The share of households in each sub-city was determined by Bhan’s model (1989), a sample size of target population [16] being enough to serve an adequate representative and small enough to be chosen cost-effectively in terms of both time and cost difficulty of analysis. After determining sample households of Tigrean immigrants, the sampling was conducted by calculating the proportion of sampled households existing in each sub-city on the basis of the following formula.

$$S = \frac{th}{TH}$$

where,

- S - samples to be taken;
- th - target households of Tigrean immigrants;
- TH - total households of Tigrean immigrants.

The gathered information was processed in tabular form, and to derive specific conclusion, simple mean and percentage methods were used. The data were represented through line, bar, pie and star diagrams. To make effective result and discussion part,

direct observations and focus group discussions on the different issues related to ethnicity, religion, family, employment, earnings, residences, and social adjustment affairs, reflections of previous studies were included to analysis qualitatively findings of the work.

Table 1. Procedure for Selection of Immigrants’ Households.

Target kebeles	Calculation	Sample proportion	Absolute samples
Hawelti	$240 \frac{2174}{6963}$	= 74.94	75
Kedamay	$240 \frac{1391}{6963}$	= 47.94	48
Ayder	$240 \frac{1437}{6963}$	= 50.22	50
Hadnet	$240 \frac{1941}{6963}$	= 66.90	67
Total	$2933 \frac{100}{13907}$	= 50.07	240

Source: Based on Field survey, 2012.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Immigrants by distance of birth place

Ethiopia has experienced political instability, war, famine, and economic hardship over the course of the history. As a result, the country has known by many types of migration over the years from origin to destination places in the form of voluntary or involuntary migrants [17].

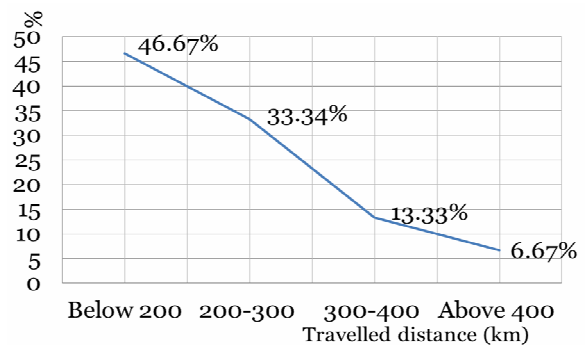


Fig. 3. Status of immigrants by distance from birth place (2012).

Figure 3 depicts the distance of birth place of the immigrants and shows that 46.67% of the Tigrean immigrants travelled less than 200 km distance, followed by 33.34% who covered 200-300 km, and 20% reached more than 300 km by crossing the border. The higher concentration of immigrants covered a distance up to 200 km. The majority of Tigrean ethnic people from the surrounding places came to the city to work for earning livelihood (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Arrival of immigrants by direction and distance from birth places (2012).

5.2. Immigrants by ethnicity and religion

Tigrean ethnic people are descendents of the Abyssinian Empire that was displayed to rule in the 12th century, have been known by language and culture [18]. Table 2 shows the characteristics of religious and ethnic group of immigrants. The majority of immigrants were followers of Orthodox Christianity, Muslim and other religions.

Table 2. Religion and ethnicity of immigrants (2012).

Religious status	Ethnicity (%)	
	Ethnicity	(%)
Orthodox	Tigrean	73.33
Muslim	Tigrean	20.0
Others	Tigrean	6.67

Source: Field survey, 2012

Top rank of the followers of Orthodox religion reflects that the Orthodox Christianity has been considered a way of life, a tradition, which, for centuries shaped the thought, the outlook, the culture and the socio-economic life and development of the Tigrean people.

Muslims forming second main religious group [19], they were mainly engaged as merchants from centuries...According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Mohammed was nursed by an Ethiopian woman. Later, the Muslim Hadith (collection of traditions about Mohammed's life) recounts that Mohammed sent some of his followers to Negash in AD 615, to avoid persecution in Arabia. When things calmed in Arabia, most refugees returned home. So, Negash continues to be a crucial pilgrimage point for Muslims..... [20, p. 147].

The Islam now has been in fabric of the society in Tigray and the neighbouring regions.

5.3. Immigrants by marital status

Marriage determines consistency of the family and stability of social life particularly in Ethiopian society. They are arranged traditionally to create further community ties and to increase or maintain the family's social status [21].

Figure 5 shows that there was a majority of married immigrants followed by single divorced/widowed (fig. 5).

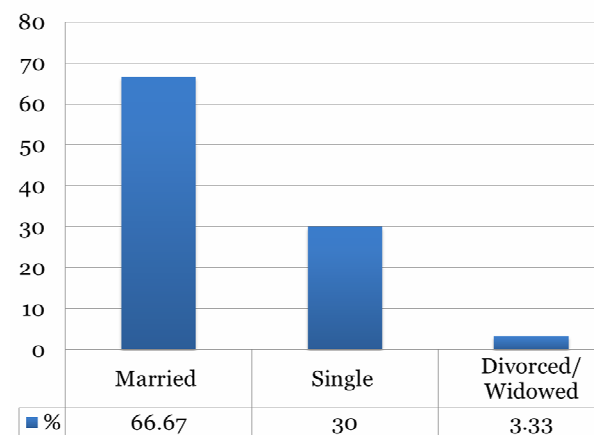


Fig. 5. Marital status of immigrants (2012) (source: Field survey, 2012).

Most of respondents belonged to married category that is considered as an index for socially accepted life, however, many of them were forced bachelors who left their family at the origin places, and arrived to survive their lives, however, they sent remittance to their family in forms of cash and kind. Moreover, spending days without marriage was a common feature among the Tigrean immigrants who worked as daily labourers, house/restaurant workers and pity traders. It was recorded during field survey that a chunk of such pity workers did not get life partner, due to their poor earning, uncertain and unreliable working conditions, deprived housing and living conditions.

5.4. Population of immigrant by age and sex

Table 3 reveals that share of working age 15-59 years among cross-border settler population was about 45% followed by juvenile (44.5%) and senile dependences (9%) respectively.

The young people mainly arrived at the town from the adjacent region to establish better lives. That is why working age-group population was recorded in high proportion, generally, dominated by males.

However, a chunk of working age immigrated females (46%) was below 14 years as children were considered as earning assets, they earn as child labourers, and by begging, particularly small girls who win sympathy easily from people to get alms in cash and kind.

Table 3. Age and sex composition of immigrants (2012).

Age group	Male (%)	Female (%)	All (%)
Below 7	22.29	25.09	23.69
7-14	22.71	20.97	21.84
15-59	47.33	43.46	45.39
Old	7.67	10.49	9.08

Source: Field survey, 2012, N=417

5.5. Immigrants by level of education

Regarding the education level of the immigrants, more than 75% was either illiterate, not being able to read and write, or they attended school for primary education till the 8th grade (table 4).

Table 4. Immigrants' educational status (2012).

Educational status	Female (%)	Male (%)	Average (%)
Illiterates	27.02	8.51	17.76
Literate	25.67	28.72	27.19
Primary	27.02	32.97	29.99
Secondary	12.16	19.14	15.65
Till grade 10+2	4.05	6.38	5.21
Graduate & Above	4.05	25	4.15
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2012, N=417

During field survey we noted that displacement and economic pressure was the major barrier against education. However, to promote immigrants' education, the Ethiopian government improved the reception and handling of the refugees in collaboration with UNHCR.

Facilities included scholarships enabling them to attend primary, secondary, technical and higher education. By joint endeavour of the National Intelligence and Security Service and the Ministry of Education, Mekelle and Axum Universities granted scholarships to cross-border immigrants: "The scholarships would strengthen the brotherhood between Ethiopians and Eritreans. It would also help Eritreans to improve their knowledge and skills and take over leadership of their country" [22].

5.6. Occupational status of immigrants

Figure 6 indicates the occupational structure of the sample of immigrants who were engaged in different economic activities. Generally, the main occupations performed by cross-border immigrants were as it follows: workers in hotel/restaurant, housemaids, servants and guards, and thus they were

accepted more easily in urban society. Moreover, they worked as middle men, shop-keepers, and pity traders. Having the same cultural background was an advantage for them to be employed in these professions.

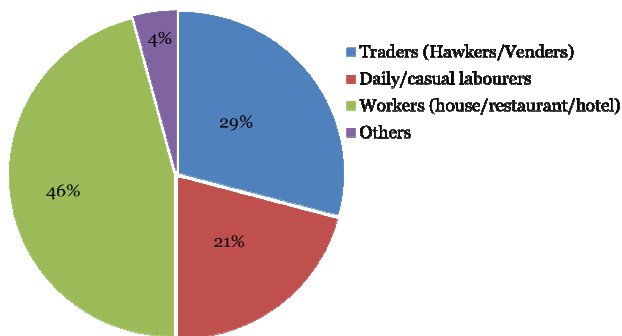


Fig. 6. Occupational Status of Immigrants (source: Field survey, 2012).

The daily/casual labour was a common profession among the immigrants' households. Also, they were involved in freight transportation, whereas they fetched water/goods by donkeys and horse carts. A group of Tigrean immigrants (3.33%) was engaged in services of private and government organizations such as: drivers, cleaners and office keepers, due to the policies for the immigrants promoted by the Ethiopian government. During field investigation it was recorded that females worked in houses, hotels, restaurants, bars/pubs. In some cases they performed combined serviced as barmaids and prostitution to earn money to support their own life and their family members [23].

5.7. Working days and income

Figure 7 shows that 36.67% immigrants earned monthly less than 600 birr³. It was due to lack regular work in informal sectors.

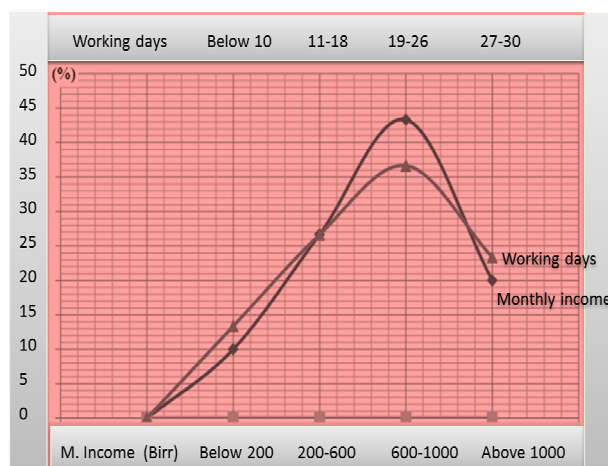


Fig. 7. Immigrants by monthly income and working days (2012).

³ 1USD=18.2 Birr on 17th May, 2012

5.8. Immigrants by dwelling conditions

House is one of basic needs for the civilians in order to live a protected life [24]. Table 5 shows that 50% immigrated population was residing in rented houses, whereas they spent 2/3 rd part of their total earning for the rent of the houses.

Table 5. Status of immigrants' dwelling (2012).

Dwelling condition	(%)
Rented house	50.00
Own house	33.67
Slum/hut	9.67
Homeless	6.67
Total	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2012.

However, 33.67% immigrants lived their own houses those were constructed with the help of local stone, local woods and grass. They lived in miserable conditions, while 9.67% spent their nights in huts/slums, which were congested, dirty and in absence of the least basic amenities. About 6.67% of the immigrants were homeless who spent their nights along the roads, streets, pedestrians, in pipes, under trees and the open sky.

5.9. Immigrants by belongings used in houses

Generally, in the houses of immigrant population there were no good quality beds. Iron beds were very frequent because they were comparatively cheaper, more durable, easily to transport as well as stress-free in return value whenever they were sold. Using wooden-rubber beds, animal hide, grass, and the ground was a sign of the immigrants' poor economic conditions (table 6).

Table 6. Status of belongings for sleeping (2012).

Belongings used for sleeping	(%)
Sleeping on ground	23.33
Iron beds with mattress	36.67
Wood +rubber without mattress	13.33
Wooden with mattress	10.00
Animal skin-hide/mattress of grass	16.67
Total	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2012.

5.10. Immigrants by distribution of possessions

Table 7 deals with ownership of possessions those points out the level of socio-economic conditions. The immigrants owned different materials which had

more than 10% share of possessions, i.e., mobile phone (15.38%), eclectic stove (heater) 14.17% and radio (12.15%) respectively. It was recorded during field survey that the proportion of costly possessions was poor among the houses of immigrants.

Table 7. Immigrants by type of possessions (2012).

Type of possessions	(%)
TV	4.45
Radio	12.15
Mobile (phone)	15.38
Fridge	4.86
Sofa	9.00
Gas stove	4.86
Electric stove	14.17
Traditional stove	9.69
Dining table set	2.02
Water tank	2.43
Motor cycle	0.40
Horse cart/donkey cart	3.24
Cow/goat/sheep/ donkey/horse	3.43
Other	6.48
Total	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2012.

5.11. Immigrants by source of drinking water

Table 8. Status of drinking water (2012).

Source of drinking water	(%)	Distance (km) source of water	(%)
Taps	66.67	Short distance (within or outside of promises)	53.33
		Middle distance (below 1 km)	26.67
Hand pump & others	13.33	Long distance (above 1 km)	20.00
Total	100.00	Total	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2012.

The water taps were in public places where people usually waited for water in a queue, but at outer of the town, due to undulating topography, the major sources of water were springs. However, the immigrants who had good income, education, and standard of living, consumed purified/mineral water through purchasing it from the market.

Contrary, members of 26.67% households fetched water from below 1 km and 20% covered distance

more than 1 km by a journey of 3-4 hours for fetching water in a jerry cane of 20 litres. There were women and children on duty to fetch water under difficult topographical circumstances. Fetching water consumed energy and time, and affected their health. There are some springs nearby settlements and others were at their peripheries. The springs were naturally located at the bottom of slopes, are walled and covered by the community. The problem of water shortage was common in October and April for a short period, when the households of immigrants, particularly at the periphery of the city, faced problems that were sometimes risky.

5.12. Immigrants by toilet facility

Table 9 deals with the status of toilet facilities among immigrants' households.

Table 9. Immigrants by toilet facilities (2012).

Having toilet facility	(%)	Type of toilet facility	(%)
Yes	36.67	Modern	27.27
No	63.33	Traditional	72.73
Total	100.00	Total	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012.

There were nearly 2/3 rd without toilet facilities. However, those households having toilet facilities highly consisted with traditional toilets (uncovered, without walls and roof). These toilets always present challenges for health and hygiene. Although some public toilets were constructed in different parts of the selected sub-cities, because of the lack of water supply, cleaning services and smell, people were forced to avoid them.

5.13. Immigrants by Distribution of Diseases

Figure 8 depicts that the people in 80% of households were suffering from either one or more types of diseases.

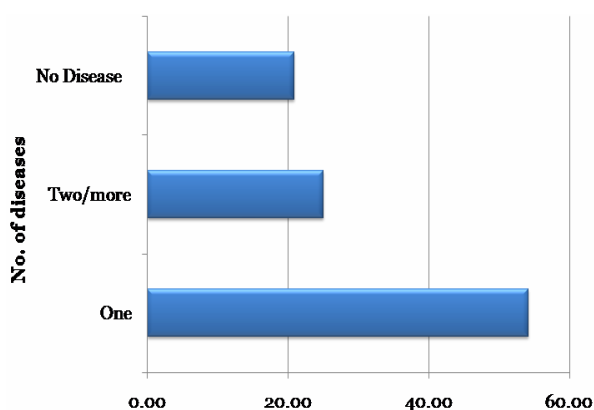


Fig. 8. Status of family members suffering from diseases (source: Field survey, 2012).

Their poor sanitation facilities led to open defecation. This affected children, especially those below five years old, causing diarrhoea, one of the most common transmitted diseases [25]. Anaemia, typhoid, TB malaria and sexually transmitted diseases were the other common diseases among adult, old as well as immigrants' children.

During field investigation we found out that health services for immigrants were not satisfactory because of any regularity and accessibility of skilful medical officers, nurses, and of other supporting staff and medical equipments.

5.13. Immigrants by facing common problems

Table 10 shows that immigrants reported the problems were as deficiency in good health services, water supply, house, and proper food (43%) was major which they faced.

Table 10. Common problems faced by immigrants (2012).

Problems faced by immigrants	(%)
Lack of basic needs house, supply of water, food	43.3
Poor health and finance	30
No proper employment, income, education	16.7
Expansion of crime/ multilevel inquires	10
Total	100

Source: Field survey, 2012

Other problems were the poor health and finance, unemployment and under employment, irregular earning, poor education, and expansion of crime.

6. CONCLUSION

Tigray people have been living from centuries, on the North Abyssinian plateau is known as national state. Presently, this plateau lies in the territories of Eritrea and Ethiopia where cross border migration has been an issue from Eritrean land to Ethiopian urban areas for improve living standard. But their socio-economic conditions reflect the reality of living in the Tigray capital city.

The present work showed that 53.33% Tigray immigrants travelled more than 200 km to come to the city. They were mainly followers of the Orthodox Christianity and of the Islam. Most immigrants were married and some were forced bachelors. The mainstream of population was under working age, followed juvenile and senile dependents. Illiteracy and poor level of education was common. Immigrants were mainly engaged in lower tertiary economic activities, i.e. workers in hotels, restaurants, houses, daily/casual

labourers and pity traders. The majority of them (nearly 67%) passed their nights in either low grade rented houses, huts, slums, or as homeless using beds of iron, of indigenous material and mattresses of animal skin and grasses, having few home possessions.

However, a segment of them who had more working hands in the family had their own houses with basic possessions for a comparatively improved life. But, they had to cope with poor and pathetic supply of water, the absence of toilets, prevailing diseases, and insignificant health facilities.

The absence of toilets over half of immigrants households are forced to practise open defecation, responsible causes for diarrhoea that is a common communicable diseases in the urban ghettos.

The Tigrean immigrants faced social, economic, infrastructural and institutional difficulties as unemployment and under employment, irregular earning as well as poor education, and deficiency in health services, water supply, in housing and in sanitation facilities. There is an urgent need to reduce these problems, to improve their socio-economic conditions.

The following suggestions are recommended to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Tigrean immigrants:

1). To identify backward immigrants with special approach for providing cheap and easy access to housing.

2). To develop employment opportunities by establishing intensive labour based manufacturing factories and commercial units in the periphery of the city.

3). To promote industrial skills among immigrated population to prepare self-help group for employment by establishing household level industries to prepare local bread, edible brackish material, biscuits and so on.

4). To introduce the easy process of the institutional loan, and make collaboration with different sectors of the city for income generation.

5). To open education institutions particularly for weaker, immigrants and homeless people of the society.

6). To develop health and sanitation facilities and to make availability of water and food assistance.

7). To create awareness in the community about cooperation in order to change behaviour and attitudes regarding immigrated people.

8). To initiate programmes for employment and livelihood by distribution land to produce vegetables and livestock for dairy purpose to fulfil the city demand.

9). To establish special agencies or institutions which address immigrants' problems and to control corruption in government bodies for improving the service ability of administrators.

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