The Predicaments of Amhara Migrant-settlers in East Wollega Zone, Ethiopia

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The study has, first, identified the characteristics of migrants, who left their ancestral homes in the Amhara Region for good and settled in East Wollega Zone at various times. Next, it has uncovered the causes of the conflict that led to the eventual displacement of thousands of migrants-cum-settlers. Finally, it pinpointed the ways and means by which the settler-displacees have been resettled in a place called Jawi and the predicaments that they themselves and the host population have encountered. In short, the predicaments of Amhara migrants-cum-settlers who went through the processes of migration, settlement, conflict, displacement, and resettlement are the themes this study tried to investigate.

Introduction

Long inhabited areas of northern Ethiopia, particularly the highlands, frequently face soil erosion, environmental degradation, land and water scarcity, soil fertility decline, and high population pressure. The region’s severe problems are further compounded by vulnerability to climatic oscillations, mainly erratic and unpredictable rainfall. These in turn expose the areas to recurrent drought and famine. Peasants’ responses and coping strategies to these natural and human-induced problems vary, including migration (voluntary or involuntary) to vacant and relatively fertile land. Depending on the severity of the problems, migration could be seasonal, i.e. short-cycle circulation ranging between one and six months, or permanent. Peasants undertake seasonal migration as a coping strategy to reduce temporarily their household size (the number of mouths to feed) as well as to earn and remit money from income they obtain from farm and off-farm activities in recipient areas. In fact, in this type of migration, which is the norm rather than the exception in rural Ethiopia, migrants return home during farming peak activities. Such type of migration takes place in most parts of Ethiopia simply because peasants incur a high opportunity cost if they abandon their farmlands. Conversely, peasants may embark on permanent migration as a last resort when all other coping strategies fail. As noted by Corbett (1988), peasants living in drought-prone areas, which put their main source of income at recurrent risk, develop self-
insurance strategies to minimize risks on their food security and livelihoods. Surke (1994:86) also asserted “For rural people, migration is one of several coping strategies to deal with poverty which in itself reflects a combination of social, economic and political conditions”. These may involve rural-rural and rural-urban migrations in search of employment and livelihood in distant farmlands and/or labor markets. It should be noted that the role of kin and peer pressure and the quest for a relatively better life are also important factors that tempt people to abandon their homes. The study focuses on these aspects, namely the migration of Amhara peasants to East Wollega Zone and its consequences, in this particular case conflict and displacement.

Coping strategies, including spontaneous migration, by specific social groups of the peasantry and pastoralists in Ethiopia can be understood if, in addition to the development history of the country in general and the specific local areas in particular, the interaction processes with external actors are considered. It is obvious that the capacity to manage or mitigate disaster situations (e.g. famine/hunger) in Ethiopia becomes difficult as the endogenous capacity to gain access to food supplies declines. Moreover, the problem becomes more complex due to the mismatch between local predicaments and needs at the grass-roots level and emergency intervention by external actors.

The study identifies the characteristics of migrants who departed from the various zones of the Amahra National Regional State (hereafter ANRS) and settled in numerous Peasant Administrations (hereafter PAs) in Gidda Kiremu Woreda of the Oromia National Regional State (hereafter ONRS) and the settlers’ predicaments in relation to conflict and displacement. By so doing, the study will explore the social, economic, political and ecological factors that compelled the migrants to leave their homes permanently, how they lived in the host region and the causes of conflict and displacement. In short, the study depicts the predicaments of Amhara migrant-settlers who went through the process of migration, settlement, conflict and displacement. Based on the findings, attempts will be made to raise policy implications in the context of Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (hereafter CPMR) mechanisms that could reduce the recurrence of violent conflict in the same region and elsewhere in Ethiopia.

The fact that little or no empirical research has been carried out in the area on such a crucial issue encompassing all the above process makes the topic pertinent and timely. Further, the nexus among the processes, which the study will try to establish by probing into vulnerability, entitlement and coping approaches is expected to depict a clearer picture of the problems in the study areas in particular and Ethiopia in general.

The paper has seven parts. Part one is the introduction that gives an overview of the study. Parts two and three state the objectives, data generation schemes, and the methodology employed for data analyses. Part four introduces the geographical areas covered in the study. Part five summarizes a review of the debate on issues related to migration, environment and conflict. Part six reveals the findings of the study by highlighting the causal factors that led to migration and conflict. Part seven wraps up the paper by making conclusive remarks and the policy implications that are derived from the study.
Objectives of the Study
Given the aforementioned problems, the study attempts to:

- Identify the factors that led the migrants to spontaneously leave their ancestral homes (push factors) and to settle in Gidda Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone (pull factors)
- Analyse the adaptation of the migrants after they settled in Gidda Kiremu Woreda – *how the obtained land, lived in the recipient region and the kind of social interactions they had with the local people*
- Uncover the underlying causes of the conflict that led to the displacement of the migrant-settlers
- Suggest plausible CPMR mechanisms to mitigate, and if possible curb the eruption of other similar conflicts in the study area and elsewhere in Ethiopia

Data Sources and Methodology
The study is based on primary data generated through case studies, focus group discussions, and interviews with key informants and stakeholders in both regions. In order to obtain balanced information and establish ‘the truth’ in and around the conflict situation, discussions were conducted with key informants from the local Oromo population and the Amharas still living in Gidda Kiremu Woreda as well as the internally displaced persons’ (IDPs), who are presently resettled in Jawi Resettlement Site. Interviews were also held with authorities in Gidda Kiremu Woreda and East Wollega Zone; various ANRS offices; and in the Awi Zone where the displacees have been resettled.

Secondary data on various problems related to the study areas, in both the settlement and resettlement sites, was obtained from Woreda/Zonal offices, ANRS’s Regional Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Bureau (DPPB), strategy papers, evaluations and studies from NGOs, bilateral organizations and the different levels of government.

Based on the case study, focus group and key informant results from both communities, qualitative methods were used to analyze the data and information.

The Study Area
The major geographical area central to this study is Gidda Kiremu Woreda, which is found in the southwestern part of Ethiopia in East Wollega Zone (see Figure 1). It is into this and other woredas in East Wollega Zone that migration and settlement by Amhara settlers have taken place for more than six decades. The other areas included in this study are the various migrant-producing zones and woredas of the ANRS (refer to Figure 2).

As Figure 1 depicts, Gidda Kiremu Woreda is surrounded by Amuru Jarte, Abe Dongoro, Ebantu and Limmu woredas to the east, southeast, west and southern parts, respectively. To the north, the study area is bounded by West Gojjam Zone of the ANRS found on the other side of the Blue Nile (Abbay) Gorge. In terms of areal size and population, the woreda covers 2505 km² and is inhabited by about 150,000 people in 2006. The topography is characterized by a combination of highlands and lowlands.

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3 The first waves of migrants who treked to Gidda Kiremu Woreda may be traced back to the imperial era in the late 1940s, while the most recent migration occurred as late as 1999. During the 1980s, another wave of migrants came to the area through the government’s resettlement program.

4 The last census in Ethiopia was carried out in 1994. Population projection for the study area is made based on the country’s average growth rate of 2.8%.
that are mostly covered with forest. The area is also said to have a combination of tropical, sub-tropical and temperate climates. Both livestock rearing and crop cultivation (mixed farming) are practiced. As in all the woredas in East Wollega Zone, Gidda Kiremu is predominantly inhabited by Oromo people except for a few localities, mainly the lowlands, where Amhara settlers and spontaneous migrants are found.
A Review of the Debate

The complexity of the causes of migration makes it difficult to isolate one cause, for instance environmental degradation or population growth. It would be unrealistic to consider population growth alone as a cause for migration. Fundamental changes now exist regarding the understanding of natural catastrophes (e.g. floods, droughts) as limited to the spatial exposition of an area and predicting the probability of their recurrences at some future date and/or modifying their impact through technical interventions. Such emphasis on the violent forces of nature (a concept prevalent in the 1960s) failed to consider the socio-economic dimensions, including the socio-cultural, political-economic, and entitlement contexts. Even the socially differentiated effects of disasters have been ignored, i.e. why some people starve while others do not. This dated approach had a technocratic overture. As stated by Hewitt (1983), in the late 1970s’ and 80s’, the ‘human ecology’ approach, which emphasized the relationship between population size and resources, was strongly criticized for not considering the socio-economic system, including the socio-cultural, political-economic and entitlement contexts or dimensions. It is now clearly recognized that there are in fact no ‘natural’ disasters or proven ‘naturalness’ of disaster events as such but rather ones that have a human dimension, which can be legitimately referred to as ‘social disasters’. It is hence possible to assert that disasters, which may resemble those usually blamed on nature, are inherently induced by human action (Cannon, 1994). It serves some political interests to maintain the notion that disasters are natural rather than caused by political and economic processes.

Vulnerability studies should incorporate the production and social systems as well as the traditional security systems and coping strategies of the vulnerable groups together. This is why many researchers agree on the notions and outcomes of social vulnerability research findings, which principally focus on socially differentiated vulnerability to crisis and the capacity to cope. Generally, such notions are changing the old geographical paradigm that puts emphasis on risk or hazard research than on conceptual/analytical frameworks that accentuate human dimensions. It should now be stated that this approach has also tilted towards another extreme by giving undue weight to social attributes and by sidelining physical factors. An amalgamation approach is employed in this study to explore both factors. The rationale behind this approach rests on the premise that when social, economic and political processes put certain groups of people in a vulnerable situation, natural hazards, such as drought, can easily trigger disaster.

Nobel Prize Winner, Amartya Sen, first developed the entitlement approach in the context of famine-crisis research in 1981. Prior to that, in the 1970s’, there was a theory based on the food supply side to explain famine crises. The analysis of exchange entitlements by Sen (e.g. selling labor to earn money with which to buy consumable goods) has restored the much-needed emphasis to the role of demand-failure and identified the relative significance of supply-side changes. Further developments on the idea of vulnerability received momentum through the works of Chambers (1989). He differentiated external and internal dimensions of vulnerability whereby the crisis depends upon the exposure to known or defined risk (exposures) as well as the socially differentiated capabilities to withstand the crisis, namely coping. It should be reiterated that vulnerability is not necessarily an outcome of natural environmental calamities but
rather is a product of the interrelationship between existing social framework and political conditions (Mesfin, 1984).

Following Chamber’s works, important conceptual developments on the subject of vulnerability have come to the foreground with the works of Bohle and Watts (1993), Bohle et al (1994), and Blaikie et al (1994). Of these, Bohle et al (1994) combined the traditional ‘human ecology’ approach with political economy (the manner in which surplus is generated and allocated, social power and control, debt etc.) and entitlement theories to explain vulnerability. This landmark achievement helped explain the external dimensions of vulnerability. Contrary to this approach, Blaikie et al (1994) developed the ‘Pressure and Release’ (PAR) model in which they designated disaster as the intersection of two opposing forces, namely those processes generating vulnerability on the one hand and physical exposure to hazards on the other.

From the above arguments, it can be deduced that a number of factors, including but not restricted to socio-cultural, ethnic, agro-ecological, political-economic, resource scarcity and conflict, peer and kin pressure, social network, population pressure, and processes of social differentiation act in unison to cause migration that often results in violent conflict and population displacement (Wenzel, 2002). This means that it takes multiple factors to necessitate any type of migration. It can therefore be deduced that “movement takes place in response to a combination of environmental, social and political (including armed conflicts) stimuli” (Lonergan, 1988: 5).

Hence, one has to view migration not as a 'disaster-go' or 'drought-go' phenomenon but rather as a process that takes a long time to materialize. The threshold value or ‘cut-off point’ for people to reach a decision to move permanently, that is migrate, differs from individual to individual due to variations in migration behaviors, coping capacities and social networks. Corbett’s (1988) view of migration as a last stage in a sequence of household’s responses to famine conditions and a clear indication that many other responses have failed should be noted for further empirical investigation. As the author’s observations in many parts of Ethiopia testify, peasants and pastoralists often use multiple coping strategies in times of stress, such as borrowing grain, reducing consumption, changing dietary habits and receiving emergency food supplies. And yet, they undertake seasonal migration to rural or urban areas at the same time or sequentially as part of the households coping strategy. They have, what Dessalegn (1991:16) called “Anticipatory and crisis survival strategies, the former being those adopted during periods of normalcy, and the latter in times of stress.”

Internal conflicts have different causes, take different shapes in different countries and often end up by displacing people. In most cases, as is also the case in some parts of Ethiopia, ethnic differences seem to be the major cause of conflicts. However, in reality, a multitude of factors, such as resource scarcity, poverty, ethnicity, religion and lack of good governance could act either individually or collectively as causes. Of these, lack of good governance could be singled out as a major cause of conflict in Africa where “unitary systems make the largest group, dominant with a high degree of power centralization where ones interest will be protected at the expense of the minorities” (Adedeje 1999: 42-45). In addition to power sharing, ethnic rivalry or animosity, and unequal access to resources should be given due emphasis in the analysis of internal political dynamics in Ethiopia in particular and the Horn Region in general.

Although much of the intra-state conflicts in the Horn of Africa have the tone of politicized ethnicity categorizing people into majorities or minorities that coexist in a single state can also trigger conflicts. It is generally accepted that not all nationalities
that inhabit a single state are numerically equal. Problems emerge when inequalities in the size of population are translated into inequalities related to power and resources. This could be tantamount to non-recognition of rights. In order to accept the fact that diversity exists in a multi-ethnic society there should be tolerance towards multiculturalism. As rightly stated by Maybury-Lewis (1997:153), “A state can only function as a multi-ethnic system if its citizens are educated in tolerance and its civil society is working reasonably well.”

In Ethiopia and other African countries, ethnicity has been politicized to the point of inciting violent ethnic conflicts. In fact, Markakis (1998:103) affirms this saying “There is no doubt that ethnicity and political mobilization on the basis of collective identity based on cultural affinity is frequently though not always, one variable involved in the chemistry of the conflict.” The increasing domination and the unwillingness of some African governments to accommodate the interests of other groups lead to conflicts, and to make things worse, there has always been more emphasis on differences among ethnic groups than their similarities. The solution to such a problem rests on enhancing democratic values and institutions that could facilitate tolerance and magnanimity. It would, however, be naive to consider that democratic orientation and ‘modern’ political parties could replace traditional tribal and/or ethnic loyalty in Africa. If one opts to build tolerance and co-existence, due recognition of tribal and/or ethnic issues in an African political discourse is essential.

**Major Findings**

**Causes of Migration**

As has been indicated earlier, in the past five decades or so, due to a host of factors such as land scarcity, environmental degradation, population pressure, entitlement decline, political economy/social differentiation, vulnerability, food insecurity, peer and kin pressure and other related factors, thousands of people have spontaneously migrated, at different times, from different zones of ANRS to Gidda Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone (for the location of the areas refer to Figures 1 and 2).

After their arrival in the Woreda, most of the migrants first served as share-croppers with the local population or early Amhara settlers, who in most cases were their own relatives, for a couple of years or so before obtaining their own plots of land for farming. The plots in most cases were obtained either through contractual arrangements and/or purchase from the local population. After the settlers obtained land in one of the two ways, they cleared the forested areas and converted them into farm plots. Gradually, they settled in nine Peasant Administrative areas (PAs) of the Woreda, namely Aaroo Addisalem, Aaroo Bagin, Boka, Chelia, Kofkofe, Kusaye, Mirga Jiregna/Sire Doroo, Sombo, Wasti, as well as in Kiremu town (for the location of the PAs refer to Figure 3).

According to the information obtained from the migrants, almost all of them fared better in their new homes compared to their birthplaces: they were able to minimize their vulnerability and enhance their food security status.

The migrants have identified a multitude of factors that persuaded them to leave their homes permanently (push factors) and to choose Gidda Kiremu Woreda as their destination (pull factors). According to the informants, the former include recurrent drought, land scarcity, overcrowding, land and soil degradation, food insecurity, rainfall

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5 The selling and buying of land in Ethiopia has been outlawed since the nationalization of rural lands by the military government, the Derg, in 1975. As a result, peasants in different parts of the country undertake land transactions in an ‘illegal’ way.
scarcity and declines in soil fertility, in terms of relative importance. In the context of one of the migrant-producing regions, namely Gojjam, the 1996 land redistribution scheme that has diminished peasants’ holdings has been considered as an additional push factor. The migrants’ also pinpointed peer and kin pressure, availability of uninhabited and vacant land, the quest for better life, the presence of virgin and fertile land, suitability of climatic conditions and the opening of the Bure-Nekent road, in terms of relative importance, as significant pull factors that tempted them to migrate to Wollega. Of the pull factors, the first two played an important role in the decision of the migrants to move to Gidda Kiremu Woreda. Almost all the sampled migrants had one or more members of their nuclear and/or extended family members in Wollega prior to their migration.

The migration path normally followed the following course: firstly, male household heads migrated to Gidda Kiremu Woreda with their cattle; worked for a year or two as share-croppers, obtained land for farming by buying it or through lease agreements with the local population, cleared forested areas and changed it into farmland. In due course, they would first bring their immediate family members to the area in question to be followed by other family members and close friends. Of the ten randomly selected migrants from Dega Damot, Goncha, Motta, Saint Ajbar, and Semada Awrajas who arrived in Gidda Kiremu Woreda between 1984 and 1997 6, all of them had relatives (brothers, father-in-law etc.) who had settled earlier in various PAs of the Woreda. This is ascertained by Assefa who stated that, “…most of my [Amhara] informants reiterated the fact that they were informed about the availability of land in Wollega by those who had already settled in Gidda Kiremu Woreda” (1999:26).

As noted above, the migrants and authorities alike have more or less environmental and socio-economic factors that persuaded the migrants to move. Although the peasants failed to indicate social differentiation as a cause of migration, they acknowledged its existence stating that there was differentiation in land size and quality as well as livestock possession in their ancestral homes. They have documented the status of some people in their communities who had been more resilient and less vulnerable to dire situations compared to them implying, among others, the existence of unequal exposure to risks. These groups of people included those that had a relatively larger land holding, better quality plots and a sizeable number of livestock. They also explained their decisions to migrate because of the drastic deterioration of their lives from year to year due to recurrent drought, declining soil fertility and diminishing holdings. If one adds to these the prevalence of weak traditional protection systems that hardly shielded them from the onslaught of drought that occurred there on a regular basis, the picture would become complete.

Thus, most of the migrants whom the author talked to attributed their decision to leave their previous homes directly or indirectly to their increasing vulnerability and entitlement failures. In times of food scarcity, when grains were sold in the markets they did not have the money to buy them. Asked whether they exhausted various coping strategies before they opted to move, the answers were variable. The great majority of the respondents who migrated to Gidda Kiremu Woreda because of the existence of relatives in the destination area went there without exhausting the various coping strategies while others tried it partially, going to the extent of only borrowing grains and conducting seasonal migration before they made the final decision to move.

6 They were interviewed in their current living place, namely Jawi Resettlement Site, where they have been resettled since May 2001.
Figure 3. Gida Kiremu Woreda PAs.
Causes of Conflict and Displacement

Ethnic and resource-based conflicts have played a role in shaping the political dynamics of almost all states in the Horn of Africa. In Ethiopia, the objectives of successive regimes to centralize the state and strengthen the power of the ruling class were facilitated by the marginalization and/or exclusion of minorities. Both the imperial regime and the military government opted for the process of modernization through the use of force. This aspect was succinctly put by Young (1996:533), who stated “There was little scope in this process for the integration of the various ethnic groups, beyond the selective incorporation of individuals who accepted assimilations into the Amhara culture and society.”

This historical legacy has left its imprint in present day Ethiopia. Different ethnic groups challenged the military dictatorship that ruled Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991 because it failed to reduce the power of the center and the regime was determined to crush those groups opposing its policies by force. After the collapse of the military government in 1991, the EPRDF-led government prepared a national conference to form a transitional government. Those that participated in the conference were dominantly ethnic-based political groups who took up arms and fought against the previous regimes for decades. In order to promote its own political agenda and those political groups that had been allied to it, the EPRDF-led government divided the country into various regions based on ethno-linguistic criteria. The regionalization has given a loophole for some ethnic parties and elites alike to use ethnic cards for vengeance and to fuel up ethnic grievances in one or other parts of the country. As will be discussed shortly, the case study from East Wollega Zone has shown that environmental, political, socio-cultural, legal, and economic factors have incited inter-ethnic clashes resulting in the ousting of thousands of migrants.

The lives of migrant-settlers were disrupted when inter-ethnic conflicts flared up in Gidda Kiremu Woreda first in March/April 2000 and later on in June 2000. As stated by Deribssa (2004), the Amhara migrants were accused of establishing land claim, breaching land contractual agreements entered into with the local population, ‘abuse and misuse’ of the forest resources, ‘christening’ place names by giving them Amharic names, carrying illegal firearms, cattle rustling and the forwarding of demands to create their own zone in the area. As will be discussed shortly, the migrants contested almost all the accusations. In the words of the migrant-settlers, political/ethnic factors, most particularly the agitations that were made against the migrant population by the local ethnic elites played a crucial role in triggering the conflict leading to their eventual displacement.

The first clash that took place in March/April 2000 was contained, albeit temporarily, after the elders from both sides intervened to settle the problem. After a lull of about four to five months, the conflict resurfaced again in November/December 2000 claiming the lives of many people from both sides. A military intervention that followed resulted in the displacement of more than 12,000 Amhara migrants-cum-settlers or over 4200 households. The violent clashes resulted in human casualties, cattle rustling, the looting of grain, the burning of field crops and houses, the imprisonment of about 80 settlers, the burning of churches and the loss of property. After the last conflict, the settlers fled in panic to Burie, a town located on the other side of the Abbay Valley in the southern flank of the Amhara Region with their meagre belongings, some of their livestock, and children.
The question now is what triggered the violent conflicts that led to the displacement of thousands of people from the recipient woreda? In what follows, the major causes of the conflicts as stated by some writers (e.g. Deribssa 2004), Woreda officials, the local population, the migrant-settlers, and the author’s observation will be highlighted under five categories, viz. environmental, political, socio-cultural, legal and economic.

(i) Environmental: the local people complained that the migrant-settlers had indiscriminately cut trees to clear land for farming. The local people had been resentful of such acts for, as they said, it affected their economic life and dietary diversifications. Not only were their beehives destroyed when trees were cut but they were also left with few trees on which they hang beehives to produce honey. The migrant-settlers, in turn, acknowledged the felling of trees to clear the land for cultivation but said they did so selectively, leaving bigger trees untouched. It should at this juncture be affirmed that a sizeable proportion of the original forest cover has been lost due to the continuous process of migration and settlement in the study area.

(ii) Political: three factors that have influenced or triggered the conflict include: (a) agitation by the local elites against the presence of settlers in the Woreda. This has been one of the major factors that fuelled tension, triggered violent clashes, eventually leading to the displacement of some of the settlers. The settlers consider all the actions taken against them as ‘ethnic cleansing’. The author can also testify to the role of Woreda officials and cadres in politicising ethnicity and escalating the conflict. The officials showed partisanship, favouring their own kin. The Woreda officials, however, deny such allegation stating that not all Amharas living and working in the Woreda were targeted but only the ‘outlaws’, (b) The widely-rumoured allegation about the migrants demand to be considered as a special Amhara Zone within ONRS in a similar fashion to the Oromia Special Zone centred around Kemissie in ANRS. As testified by the East Wollega authorities, there was a misinterpretation of facts regarding this issue. The Amhara clergy and churchgoers alike created an ecclesiastical association in East Wollega and named it as ‘The Association of Guten Woreda Churches’. The de facto affixation of the word ‘Woreda’ to Guten, which did not exist on a de jure basis, coupled with the preparation of seals and stamps bearing that name without the permission of relevant regional offices led not only to the above-stated allegation but to the imprisonment of a number of priests and settlers, (c) The Woreda administration’s decision to exclude all non-Oromos from PA leadership after 1991 acted as a point of dissatisfaction among the settlers. The exclusion was justified on the bases of language and ethnicity. Officially, Afan Oromo became the lingua franca and kube the script of the PAs in the Woreda.

(iii) Socio-cultural: some four factors that have a socio-cultural dimension could be included in this category: (a) the ‘christening’ or ‘renaming’ of places in the Woreda: There is a consensus amongst my Oromo informants, farmers as well as authorities, regarding the ‘deliberate’ change of place names from Afan Oromo into Amharic. Some examples of this include the change of ‘Aaro’ into ‘Haro Addis Alem’; ‘Ajana’ into ‘Azana Selassie’; ‘Dekkaa Jegi’ into ‘Shasho Ber’; and ‘Bagin’ into ‘Bagin Mariam’. One of the justifications given by the migrant-settlers for the change or modification of place names has something to do with their inability to properly pronouncing local place names; the other is the identification of place names with newly established churches, which is the norm in Amhara societies. (b) Expansion of Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. The settlers have established churches in almost all the villages they lived in. The local people resented the migrants’ decision to construct churches for it was made without
consulting them. (c) The livelihood improvements that the migrants had attained in a short time (better life, control of markets and commerce) and the resultant jealousy that it kindled amongst the local population, and (d) the chauvinistic attitude of the migrants towards the local population. To the dismay of the local population, the historical bias of Amharas against the Oromos was by and large reflected in the study area. The migrants considered themselves as superior to the local population in terms of language and culture. This created a rift between the two ethnic groups.

(iv) Legal: included in here are three factors (a) the breaching of contractual agreements over land by the settlers and the local population. There have been many cases to breach of contract registered in PA and Woreda courts. There have been cases where some members of Oromo families sold land to the settlers but other claimants, mainly wives and grown-up children, refused to recognize the deals and took the case to the courts in Gidda Kiremu Woreda. The settlers complained that the courts have shown partisanship, favouring the local population, telling them to either make repayments or return the land to the original holders. Refusal to hand over the land back to the local population by the settlers resulted in armed clashes with the local police and militia. (b) refusal by the settlers to register their arms and surrender it to the police upon request. The migrant-settlers complained that the action was selective, in the sense that the order was directed against them and not on the local population. The Amhara settlers’ rifle culture was further strengthened by the escalating cattle rustling as of mid-2000. (c) the defiance by the post-1995 migrants to register in the PAs and Woreda offices for fear that they would be expelled from the area as ‘outlaws’.

(v) Economic: The ‘illegal’ sale of land by the local people to the ever-increasing migrant population has diminished the land available to the local farmers to such a degree that Oromo families failed to provide land to grown-up children. The growing land scarcity raised the issue of retrieving land that had been passed onto the migrant-settlers years before. The settlers, in turn, refused to return the land, which they said, they have developed for years and on which they were completely dependent. Such a polarized position further widened the rift between the two communities.

**Conclusions and Policy Implications**

**Conclusions**
The study attempted to establish relationships between migration, inter-ethnic conflict and displacement. The push and pull factors that led the people to migrate to other areas, in this particular case to East Wollega Zone, and the problems the migrant-settlers encountered in the host environment have also been noted. The degree to which resource conflict and social differentiation affect migration and population displacement in the context of resource scarcity and ethnicity has been discussed.

Of the many possible factors that forced the migrants in the study area to leave their ancestral homes for good, about one-third of them are environmental by nature. Included in these are recurrent drought, land and soil degradation, and declining soil fertility. The remaining push factors have a socio-economic and political nature and include social differentiation, weak traditional systems, greater exposure to risks, increasing vulnerability and entitlement failures. Similarly, some of the factors that attracted the migrants to Gidda Kiremu Woreda are characteristically environmental by nature. The availability of vacant or uninhabited fertile lands in the low lying areas of the Woreda that were avoided by the local population, and the suitability of the climatic condition for humans and livestock acted as centripetal forces in attracting the migrants.
to Gidda Kiremu Woreda. The socio-economic factors that pulled people towards the recipient Woreda include peer and kin pressure and the opening up of the Burie-Nekemt road.

Environmental, political, socio-economic, legal and economic factors triggered inter-ethnic conflicts in the study area eventually leading to population displacement. The excessive felling of trees (deforestation) to clear the land for farming has been considered by the local population and officials as a more decisive factor than others in inciting inter-ethnic conflict in Gidda Kiremu Woreda. The socio-political factors that provoked the clashes include disagreements over land rent contractual agreements between the local population and the settlers, agitation and hate campaigns waged against the settlers by the local ethnic elites, refusal to register and/or surrender firearms, rebuffing the Woreda administration’s order to enlist new arrivals (migrants) in PA offices, deliberate exclusion of migrants from PA leadership, expansion of churches by the settlers, renaming or christening of place names in Amharic, envy and jealousy by the local population and local officials at the economic success of some of the migrant population, and the chauvinistic attitude of migrant-settlers towards the Oromo population.

Owing to firstly, the presence of thousands of Amhara settlers still working and living in Gidda Kiremu Woreda and secondly, the undiminished influx of migrants and returnees to the Woreda, the government and concerned authorities need to devise Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (CPMR) mechanisms that could possibly control the flaring up of yet another conflict. In what follows the policy implications of the study in the context of CPMR mechanisms will be pinpointed.

Policy Implications
Narrating the tragic and unfortunate situation and identifying the root causes of migration and conflict are not ends in themselves. One should learn from the past and devise mechanisms to deter the re-emergence of conflicts and the escalations thereof in any conflict-ridden area in Ethiopia. Given the facts that (a) there are still about 18,000 Amharas living and working in Gidda Kiremu Woreda, (b) migration towards Wollega still continues, albeit in smaller numbers and (c) some of the IDPs from Jawi Resettlement Site are returning to Wollega, there are possibilities for conflicts to erupt again. What lessons can be learnt from the past conflict? What can be done to avert similar situations in the future? The following will be raised to address these questions:

- In order to address genuinely the underlying causes of conflicts and to provide a framework by which all the disputing parties can and will voice their divergent concerns, we need to break the long-held taboo of covering up conflicts in Ethiopia. One Muslim cleric (Sheikh), who migrated from Saint Ajbar Woreda (Wollo) to Gidda Kiremu Woreda in 1972 and still lives in Kiremu rural town, stated that even the government itself and state-run media maintained a conspiracy of silence when thousands of people were displaced and hundreds died due to the conflict in the Woreda at the end of 2000. Ironically, stated the same informant, relatively minor incidents, such as car crashes claiming the lives of only a few people, are reported by the same media.

- Although it may be difficult to stop the migration of people, government policies should be designed to help in averting and controlling the adverse effects of inappropriate development strategies. More so, promoting socio-economic and political policies that expand the base for sustainable development through
improvements in entitlements of people. Lastly, making people less vulnerable to
natural hazards thus ensuring their access to natural resources and developing other
alternatives than farming.
- Mechanisms should be sought by which the government’s devolution of power to
nine regional states based on ethnic lines (ethnic-based decentralization) should no
longer be used to promote political agendas by politicising ethnicity. Ethnic elites in
different regional states should be advised not to employ ethnic identities to mobilize
support and to incite communal hatred for political ends by stereotyping and
defaming other groups.
- Successful conflict resolution mechanisms between the Afars and Issas in 1998 and
between Amharas, Argobas, Oromos and Afars in North Shewa Zone demonstrated
clearly the need to strengthen traditional conflict management systems (e.g. 
*Shimgilna in Amharic and Jarsumaa in Afaan Oromo*) by establishing Joint Peace
Committees (JPCs) comprised of all stakeholders, including the warring parties.
- Inter-regional cooperation (e.g. between ANRS and ONRS as with the case study in
question) is also required to promote reconciliation between the warring parties. By
way of cultivating traditional mechanisms, community peace-building groups should
be created that could develop into cross-border community peace building
institutions. Although unsuccessful, such an attempt was made in East Wollega Zone
in the summer of 2000, about three months prior to the eruption of the conflict, when
ANRS representatives from Gojjam, Wollo and Gondar were sent to the troubled
region to resolve the problems jointly with their counterparts in East Wollega.
Differences arose between the representatives on issues of exposing criminals on
both sides.
- As stated by Hauss (2001), the clash of interests may not be compromised unless one
of the parties gives up and/or steps back from specific demands that are antagonistic
to the other. The Government of Ethiopia should create a common ground by which
competing groups should come to terms by discussing their differences. Revealing
the truth, indicting the guilty, building social capital, (because internal strife can
obviously destroy social ties in the society), enhancing indigenous and traditional
ways of conflict resolution mechanisms can help in bringing peace and stability in
conflict-ridden areas.

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