

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Determinants of rural outmigration of children and youth in a rapidly urbanizing nation: The case of Ethiopia**

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**Young people have continued to flock out of densely populated rural areas of Ethiopia. The overriding objective of this study was to assess the causes for the departure of children and youth out of rural areas and the protagonists involved in the migration decision. Primary data were gathered through a survey that covered 300 migrant-sending households; and from in-depth interviews. The findings revealed that the major causes of outmigration were limited access to land and livestock resources, dissatisfaction with village life and the search for employment, the need to pay off parental debts, lack of income diversification, expansion in rural education, practice of early arranged marriage, peer influence and the lure of urban centers, and positive attitudes towards the migration of a family member. The results from Poisson regression analysis revealed that family size, educational status, sex and age of the migrant-sending household heads at initial departure of the migrant and distance of the nearest urban center to the household's premises were found to be significant in explaining the variation in the number of children and youth migrating out of a rural household. From the results, it could be concluded that numerous economic and social motives are intermingled with demographic and environmental situations to generate outmigration.**

**Key words:** Children, youth, rural-outmigration, migrant-sending household, causes of migration, poisson regression, Ethiopia.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human migration has been an old and inevitable phenomenon undertaken for living and adjusting; though it has been proceeding in recent times at an accelerated rate because of improvements in transportation and communication technology (Oberai, 1993; Woldie et al., 2010; Eshetu and Beshir, 2017). The causes of rural outmigration of children and youth are numerous where there exists interplay between the economic,

sociocultural, demographic, political, environmental and technological factors. Rural outmigration of young people could be triggered by numerous factors such as intensifying population pressure and the associated scarcity, fragmentation and degradation of farmland (Caldwell, 1969; Oberai and Singh, 1983; Tesfaye, 2004; Beneberu and Mesfin, 2017); and limited non-agricultural employment opportunities (Lynch, 2005; Ayalew, 2010;

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Seid, 2016). Impoverished rural life and unfavorable working conditions and the resultant dissatisfaction of rural youth with rural life styles also generate rural outmigration (Bilsborrow, 1987; Oberai 1993; Aina 1995; Eshetu and Beshir, 2017). Natural calamities such as drought, flooding, and landslide (Markos and G/Egziabher, 1999; Assefa and Aynalem, 2011; Atsedo and Penker, 2016; Seid, 2016; SADC, 2017; Beneberu and Mesfin, 2017) are pronounced causes of rural out migration. Lack of socio economic and infrastructural facilities in the rural areas of origin (IOM, 2005; Erulkar et al., 2006; Asham, 2010; Ayalew, 2010); and the development of manufacturing industry and expansion in construction and services in urban areas (Oberai, 1993; Woldie et al., 2010; Eshetu and Beshir, 2017; SADC, 2017) generate migration.

Migration is considered as a coping mechanism to escape poverty and improve one's living and working condition and to learn new skills (IOM, 2005; Beneberu and Mesfin, 2017). It stimulates land and labour markets, helps in the transfer of new technologies and harmonization of human-environment relationships (Tesfaye, 2004; Beneberu and Mesfin, 2017). On the other hand, the continued drift of young, educated, skilled and energetic agricultural labour force into urban areas, if uncontrolled, is likely to weaken the rural economy (Seid, 2016), and increase work burden on family members left behind, and leads to family disintegration (Bilsborrow, 1987; Nehme, 2004).

This study is guided by the new economics of labor migration and social network theories of migration that look into migration decision as an individual as well as familial and communal venture (De Haas, 2010). This is crucial in understanding the socioeconomic fabrics of migration. The push-pull conditions in the areas of origin and destination, as well as perceptions and expectations of young migrants about destination areas are important theoretical underpinnings that are given due consideration in the study.

In Ethiopia where the level of urbanization is only around 20%, and where rural-urban and regional socioeconomic disparities are enormous, the perpetual exodus of people from rural areas is not only inevitable but it is also likely to intensify over time. It should also be recognized that failure to have a comprehensive understanding of human mobility will result in an insufficient understanding of why people migrate, what they do to make a living and how policy can help them to maximize the benefits of spatial livelihood strategies. Likewise, every geographic region is unique in terms of its socioeconomic and physical characteristics generating differential impacts on migration. Similarly, the role of government and societal attitudes to outmigration, and availability as well as use of information are all important ingredients in the study of rural outmigration. Therefore, from the foregoing discussions, it clearly appears that a study on migration determinants should be considerate of the spatiotemporal contexts which could not be

determined a priority. The principal objective of this study is, therefore, to assess the major migratory push factors of rural children and youth in the origin areas and attractions of destination areas from rural areas of Gojjam and Wolayta of Ethiopia.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in *Mecha* District of West *Gojjam* Zone in the Amhara National Regional State and *Sodo Zuria* District of *Wolayta* Zone in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR hereafter) of Ethiopia that have pronounced young people rural outmigration (Figure 1). *Mecha* district is a predominantly rural area with only 7.7 level of urbanization; having youthful population, where 54.6% of the population is in the age group of 10-29 years. The population density is about 1.8 times the density of the region and 2.8 times the density at the country level. *Mecha* District has basically a subsistence-based cereal-dominated mixed agricultural economy. The second study area, *Sodo Zuria* District is located in south central Ethiopia. It has population density of about 6 times greater than the density of the country and about three times than that of the region. The economy of the district is characterized by a subsistence mixed farming system where *enset* (*false banana*) farming is intermingled with the production of cereals, root crops and coffee in a regime of intensive cultivation. It is characterized by diminutive landholdings, whereby an overwhelming majority of the farming households /hhs/ (78.21%) have less than half hectare of cultivated land (CSA, 2013).

This study employed a hybrid of exploratory and concurrent triangulation mixed methods designs. In a two-phase mixed methods exploratory design, the results of the qualitative method were used in the development of a survey instrument; while in the validating quantitative data model of the triangulation variant mixed methods design, attempt was made to include open-ended qualitative questions with the quantitative survey instrument. Cross-sectional design was employed as it is best suited to studies aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon. Household heads provided information about the out-migrant family members and reasons they move out.

In order to identify the target sample households, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed. At the first stage, two '*districts*' were selected purposively, one from West *Gojjam* Zone and the other one from *Wolayta* Zone being considerate of the intensity of youth outmigration affirmed from literature and through observation in the zonal, regional and national capitals; and the socioeconomic condition of the districts. Second, out of the selected '*districts*' four *kebeles* (the smallest administrative unit in the administrative hierarchy in rural Ethiopia) were selected in every direction off the *district* capital purposively again in accordance to migration intensity and proximity to the *district* capitals (two *kebeles* within 10 km distance from the *district* capital and two farthest *kebeles* that are more than 10 km distance away from the *district* capitals) for better representation.

Once the smallest geographic study units were selected, however, the selection of the migrant-sending households was made on the basis of probability sampling techniques for ensuring representativeness. Since the number of migration affected households in the study *kebeles* was unknown, a sampling frame was created through house-to-house survey to identify households with and without migrant members. The migrant-sending household population identified through house- to- house survey was 1942. As the number of households identified for the study from the eight *kebeles* (the sampling frame) was too many, the desired sample size for the study was obtained using the Agrawal (2006) statistical formula:

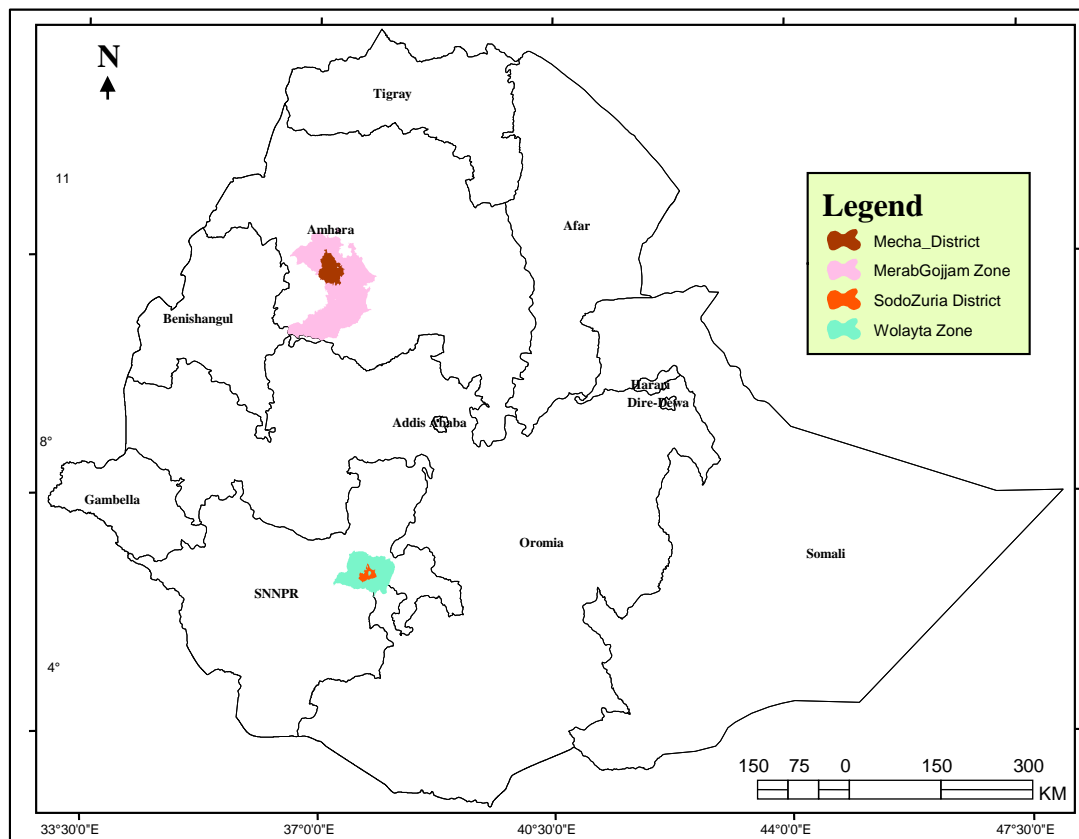


Figure 1. Map of the study districts in the national setting, Ethiopia.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where; n= is sample size

N= is the population from which the sample is drawn  
e =is the error which is supposed to be 0.05

Application of the aforementioned formula yielded a representative sample of about 331. However, for ease of treatment and as it does not put representation into question, data from 300 migrant-sending households was collected. For simplicity of comparison between the two migrant-sending districts, 150 migrant-sending households were taken from each *district*, keeping proportional allocation from the selected *kebeles*.

There are no specialized migration surveys in Ethiopia and because migration data at a '*district*' level that could be used for analysis were lacking, the researcher depended on generating primary data from the migrant sending households in the selected '*districts*' for analyzing the determinants of migration. Both primary and secondary sources of data have been utilized. The primary data were obtained through a questionnaire survey distributed to sampled migrant sending household heads whose family member aged 10-29 at the time of first departure, at least one, had moved out within the last ten years from selected rural villages. In addition, in-depth interviews were made with selected migrant-sending households, community leaders, local administrators, as well as potential and actual migrants. The secondary data were gathered from various sources including official documents, published and unpublished reports from various organizations.

Analytical operations on the determinants of migration of children and youth becomes complex if analysis is made for all the permanent movers. Therefore, the analysis of data was based on information collected as regards to the first migrant who left the household within the ten years reference time period. In a situation where two migrants departed from the household at the same time (four cases were encountered), within the reference period, information of the elder migrant was collected and analyzed for the sake of convenience. The proportion of households with a sole migrant member was very high, making analysis on one member alone justifiable. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, variance and ratios, and poisson regression model were used to make analysis of the determinants of the outmigration of rural children and youth from the migrant sending households in the selected districts. The qualitative data was used in discussions to embellish survey findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reasons for the departure of children and youth out of their rural domiciles could be related with economic, administrative, sociocultural, demographic and environmental situations of both sending and receiving regions. Rural children and youth decide to depart, either because of the dissatisfaction with the existing conditions in the areas of origin or as a result of the curiosity to find congenial conditions elsewhere. As presented hereunder, the reasons for the outmigration of children and youth

**Table 1.** Characteristics of rural out migrant children and youth at the time of initial departure.

Migrant's situation	Migrant sending households' location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No of hhs	% of hhs
	No of hhs	% of hhs	No of hhs	% of hhs	No of hhs	% of hhs
<b>Age</b>						
14-Oct	22	14.7	13	8.7	35	11.7
15-19	74	49.3	73	48.7	147	49
20-24	52	34.7	48	32	100	33.3
25-29	2	1.3	16	10.7	18	6
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	107	71.3	116	77.3	223	74.3
Female	43	28.7	34	22.7	77	25.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Birth order</b>						
1	44	29.3	71	47.3	115	38.3
2	52	34.7	36	24	88	29.3
3	30	20	29	19.3	59	19.7
4	10	6.7	7	4.7	17	5.7
5	6	4	6	4	12	4
6 and above	8	5.3	1	0.7	9	3
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Education</b>						
Unable to read and write	31	20.7	1	0.7	32	10.7
Primary (grades 1-8)	84	56	89	59.3	173	57.6
Secondary (grades9-12)	28	18.6	50	33.3	78	26
Tertiary	7	4.7	10	6.7	17	5.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Relationship to hhh</b>						
Child	141	94	146	97.3	287	95.7
Step- child	9	6	4	2.7	13	4.3
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

from rural areas are treated pursuant to the individual migrant characteristics, the status of the family, changing communal attitudes, and the driving factors in the area of origin and pull factors related to the destination.

#### **Attributes of migrants and migrant-sending households and rural outmigration**

A glance at the socioeconomic and demographic attributes of migrant-sending households and the actual migrants is vital to develop a clear picture of the differentials and determinants of migration from rural areas. Various personal demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as one's age, sex, marital status,

health status, level of education and ethnicity exert profound influence on the individual's decision to migrate.

The findings of this study corroborate previous studies which pointed out that young adults predominate at initial migration. The average age of children and youth at the time of initial migration was 18.71 years. This study divulged that a large proportion of rural out-migrant children and youth (74.3%) were males (Table 1); contrary to the long established view and scenario that indicates dominance of females in the rural – urban migration streams in Ethiopia. Though previous studies affirm that there is a tendency for the eldest son or daughter to be less migratory, this study brought to light that most children and youth rural out-migrants (67.6%) were in the first and second order births among the siblings (Table 1).

The study further disclosed that most migrants have attained a primary level of education (57.7%). Most migrants are single (79%) adults who have more freedom to move and have limited social ties to the family or community; and who more often move for job and marriage. In addition, although there is the view that neglect and stressing treatment of step-children and youth by stepparents is a huge migratory push leading to a sheer flight from home, it appears that most children migrating from rural areas (95.7%) originated from their biological parents and intact families where the husband and the wife live together.

As regards the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the parents' of migrant children and youth, the study unveiled that most migrants departed from household heads who were in their middle ages; the average age being 46.8 years (Table 2). Though there is literature which indicates that children from female-headed households are more prone to migrate, most migrants in this particular study migrated from male-headed households. The average number of children that the migrant sending households have at the departure of the initial migrant from the household was 4.98. Most migrant sending households (55.3%) have one family member departing from the household. The majority of the migrant sending households (93.7%) had large families having three to eight siblings (Table 2), where the competition for limited household resources, especially land, is intense. More than half of the parents of the migrant children and youth (58%) cannot read and write. Slightly more than three-fourth of the migrant sending household heads (76%) were married at departure of the primary migrant.

Whether a rural household is considered better-off or poor has to do mainly with possession of land and livestock and to some extent on income obtained from non-agricultural activities. Migrant sending households in *Mecha* and *Sodo Zuria* Districts possessed an average of 2.14 and 0.52 hectares of farmland when their first migrant member departed from home respectively. The status of landholding size over the past ten years for most migrant sending households has either remained constant or declined; and agricultural production has stagnated due to land fragmentation, impoverished soil conditions and inability to use either chemical and/or organic fertilizers, lack of draught animals, inability to use modern farming tools, inability to use pesticides and insecticides as well as lack of extension services. Inability to access land in an agrarian society leaves the landless with few alternatives to migration. Per capita livestock possession of the migrant sending households was not only small but it has declined over the last ten years as a result of the sale of livestock, shortage of grazing land, lack of proper livestock management, and death of livestock. Therefore, scarcity of farmland and dwindling livestock resources, declining agricultural production, and

lack of non-farm income generating activities could be regarded as some of the leading factors driving rural youth out of their domiciles.

As presented in Table 3, increasing household size, diminution of landholdings and lack of farmland was reported by 33 % of the migrant sending households as a cause for the departure of young people out of rural areas. The average size of the migrant sending households at the time of departure of the first migrant was found to be 7.3 members. Within the last ten years the landholding size of the migrant sending households was reported to have declined. The average farmland size was 1.32 hectares some ten years ago while it has dwindled to 1.16 hectares in the survey period. The tendency of declining of farm holdings of the older households could be attributed to land inherited by children or fractioned among the grownups. The amount of land available to parents was also found to go down as farmland used to be rendered useless due to degradation. Some migrant sending households reported a decline in farmland because a part of it was used for the production of eucalyptus tree. The migrant sending households and the potential migrants alike disclosed that the youth are virtually becoming landless unless they inherit some land from their parents, rent land to farm, engage in non-farm activities or migrate to secure their livelihoods. Interview with officials indicate that the government has also abandoned the idea of undertaking rural land redistributions claiming that it will exacerbate land fragmentation and resource degradation which leads to diminishing agricultural productivity. Farming households reported that many farmers are underemployed since they do not have sufficient farmland and they resort to both seasonal and temporary migration to supplement the family income.

A rural household necessitates cash income and may be in debt for the payment of taxes, to cover medical bills and educational expenses, to satisfy food needs, to buy clothes, for purchase of highly valued household goods and ornaments, house construction or improvement, death of pertinent livestock such as oxen and horses and the need to replace it, to buy agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and insecticides, landlessness and rent of land, for funeral and memorial feasts, marriage expenses and payment of bride prices, holiday celebrations and festivities and so forth. When a household especially with small amounts of land and livestock resources incurs a large debt, it is likely that the household sends some of its family members to work elsewhere to earn money to pay off the loans. Similarly, constant and often wasteful land utilization fueled by population pressure inevitably led to soil erosion and degradation. The need for intensification makes fertilizer application indispensable, though its price is soaring. This is likely to increase rural households' indebtedness and initiate migratory moves for repaying back debts. Farmers are allowed to access

**Table 2.** Attributes of migrant-sending household heads at departure of first migrant.

Attribute of hhhs	Location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No of hhs	% of hhs
	No of hhs	% of hhs	No of hhs	% of hhs		
<b>Age</b>						
30-39	36	24	38	25.3	74	24.7
40-49	60	40	59	39.3	119	39.7
50-59	39	26	42	28	81	27
60-69	13	8.7	9	6	22	7.3
70 and above	2	1.3	2	1.3	4	1.3
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	112	74.7	111	74	223	74.3
Female	38	25.3	39	26	77	25.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Number of migrant members</b>						
1	103	68.7	63	42	166	55.3
2	37	24.7	40	26.7	77	25.7
3	9	6	22	14.7	31	10.3
4 and above	1	0.7	25	16.6	26	8.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Number of siblings</b>						
2-Jan	8	5.3	11	7.3	19	6.3
4-Mar	50	33.3	54	36	104	34.6
6-May	55	36.7	61	40.7	116	38.7
8-Jul	32	21.4	24	16	56	18.7
9 and above	5	3.3	-	-	5	1.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Education</b>						
Literate	64	42.7	62	41.3	126	42
Illiterate	86	57.3	88	58.7	174	58
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Size of farmland (hectares) at departure of initial migrant</b>						
0- 1.0						
1.1- 2.0	16	10.7	142	94.7	158	52.7
2.1- 3.0	75	50	8	5.3	83	27.7
Above three	51	34	-	-	51	17
Total	8	5.3	-	-	8	2.6
	150	100	150	100	300	100
<b>Number of heads of livestock*</b>						
0	2	1.3	11	7.7	13	4.3
5-Jan	43	28.7	119	79.3	162	54
10-Jun	39	26	17	11.3	56	18.7
15-Nov	40	26.7	3	2	43	14.3
16 and above	26	17.3	-	-	26	8.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

\*livestock include cattle, pack animals, sheep, and goats, other than poultry.

**Table 3.** Family conditions and child upbringing related causes of migration (part of multiple responses).

Causes of migration	Migrant sending households' location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No of hhs	% of hhs
	No of hhs	% of hhs	No of hhs	% of hhs		
Increased household size and lack of farmland	43	28.7	56	37.3	99	33.0
Declining soil fertility and loss of productivity	33	22.0	21	14.0	54	18.0
Parental indebtedness and inability to pay off debts	31	20.7.7	14	9.3	45	15.0

**Table 4.** The rural push and the quest for better conditions elsewhere as a determinant of rural outmigration (part of multiple responses).

Causes of migration	Migrant sending households' location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No of hhs	% of hhs
	No of hhs	% of hhs	No of hhs	% of hhs		
Searching for job and supplementing family income	119	79.3	148	98.7	267	89.0
Poor rural living and working conditions, low social status to be a farmer	89	59.3	93	62.0	182	60.7
Presence of better amenities and entertainment in town	43	28.7	48	32.0	91	30.3
Lack of non/off-farm employment opportunities	55	36.7	33	22.0	88	29.3
Lack of rural credit to start business	23	15.3	15	10.0	38	12.7
Drought and rainfall unreliability	28	18.7	9	6.0	37	12.3
Low market price and uncertainty of agricultural products	11	7.3	5	3.3	16	5.3

fertilizer on credit basis from governmental fertilizer distributors; to reimburse debts with interest during next year's harvest time when prices of agricultural produce are lower. Farmers also borrow money from private money lenders with higher interest rates that sometimes reaches 10% per month. They also borrow money from micro-finance institutions such as the Amhara Credit and Saving Institution (ACSI) in the Amhara Region and Omo Micro Finance in the SNNPRS for starting income generating small-scale investment projects such as cattle fattening, and sheep breeding and other non-farm activities. Though it appears pleading as regards to enhancement of the wellbeing and livelihoods of the farmers, the advice and follow-up given to the borrowers is so minimal that the money borrowed is used to satisfy the households' food and other immediate needs with almost nothing used in productive investment. The household, therefore, has to pay back the debt often by selling from the meager food crops available to the household, selling existing capital resources and livestock; or some members should depart to fetch cash income for the sake of debt repayment. Therefore, farmers and their children alike migrate either temporarily or permanently to obtain cash to pay back their debts. Parental indebtedness and inability to pay back debts is reported by 15% of the migrant sending households as a cause for the departure of children and youth out of rural areas.

#### **Agricultural inefficiency, lack of income diversification, and rural outmigration**

Ethiopia finds itself in a complex, broad and deep poverty. The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report for 2019 ranked Ethiopia 173th out of 189 countries with Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.470. Therefore, it could be assumed that the widespread rural poverty as a result of internal and external influences is a major push factor for children and youth out migration.

The proportion of migrant sending households indicating lack of non-farm/off-farm income generating source as an important factor for the outmigration of children and youth was 29.3% (Table 4). In addition, lack of rural credit to farming households and rural youth to start business, rainfall unreliability, fluctuating agricultural prices and household resource scarcity as a result of increasing family size and land shortage as well as limited agricultural productivity could be recognized as important determinants of rural out migration of children and youth.

This study divulged that the basic reason for the migration of children and youth to urban areas is rural household's resource scarcity. Actual migrant respondents indicated that their parents are poor and are unable to provide them with their basic necessities. Household resource-scarcity coupled with large family

size makes it difficult to satisfy basic needs of children let alone providing them with the platform for their future development. Dissatisfaction with village life is an important motivation for rural out migration of children and youth. Urban areas of Ethiopia are relatively better endowed and privileged than rural areas in terms of infrastructural and socioeconomic facilities. There appears to be a socioeconomic complaint amongst rural children and youth with their increasing awareness about opportunities in urban areas. The grievances that children and youth develop on rural areas include landlessness and diminishing land size, deteriorating soil fertility, crop failure, livestock death, lack of employment specially for school leavers, less rewarding and laborious nature of rural work; lack of amenities such as health, education, potable water, electricity, telephone; lack of entertainment facilities; and other social restrictions.

Another factor for the migration of children and youth is the availability of wage employment opportunities in urban areas and commercial farms elsewhere. The labour intensive booming construction sector of expanding housing and urban infrastructure, the ever increasing demand for daily labour and housekeeping, as well as the diverse informal urban activities such as shoe shining, lottery vending, road side petty trading, carrying goods and luggage, cart pulling, messenger services, scrap collection, bus assistantship, prostitution, becoming waitress/waiter, being guard, babysitting are major attractions of rural children and youth to the urban areas. The expansion of commercial farms has also been an important attraction of rural youth out of the subsistence farming villages. As one can decipher from Table 4, the search for employment, which is a manifestation of rural poverty and underemployment, is identified as a crucial cause for the out-migration of children and youth from rural areas by an overwhelming majority (89.0%) of the migrant sending households in both study Districts. The living and working conditions in rural areas are without exaggeration full of hardships. Young people in rural areas have to endure monotony and overwork both on the farm and at home. The lists of activities that are demanded from rural children and youth adding to their misery are so inexhaustible. The time taking and backbreaking domestic works and field activities that could be performed day after day in the scorching sun, the chilly weather and drenching rains include: plowing, digging and ditching, weeding, harvesting, threshing, looking after livestock, collecting firewood, fetching water either carrying or using animal power, milking, performing messenger services, conducting household chores such as cooking, and taking care of younger siblings among others. As data presented in Table 4 show, poor rural living and working conditions and the concomitant low social status attached to be a farmer was indicated by areas.

The glamour and excitement of towns is a major

motivation in rural-urban children and youth migration. Migrants consider the town as the center of civilization in that its modern amenities like electric lighting, water supply, medical and health facilities, educational facilities, better shopping and marketing facilities, cinemas, bars and restaurants, roads and better transport facilities, buildings, and statues as well as non-material aspects of the town's cultural landscape such as the music, urban slang/dialect and communication, degree of anonymity, the ways in which people are dressed and other personal habits all have stronger appeal for the rural youth outmigration.

### **Improvements in rural education and infrastructure, family disintegration and rural outmigration**

Expansion of schools and promotion of schooling in rural areas stimulates outmigration of rural children and youth for further improvement of their education or skills. Urban oriented education prepares rural children and youth to take up urban activities, thereby initiating them to depart. In an attempt to ensure equitable and universal access to primary education, schools are established almost in every rural areas of Ethiopia. However, the dreams of pursuing further education appears to be thwarted because of the great distance that they have to traverse to find junior and senior secondary schools. For a poor child from the poverty stricken rural households, detaching oneself completely from farm activities and attending school is a daunting mission. After completing their primary education in a school located within their own *kebele* (combining work and schooling and assisting their parents) children are often required to travel longer distances away from home to attend secondary schools mainly in rented houses in towns. Therefore, youth are caught in a dilemma between dropping out of school to engage in farming and going to school or leaving the rural area altogether. There are also cases where children and youth migrate to further their education.

Asaminew is a 17-year old boy who came to Addis Ababa two years ago together with his friend. He recounted his motivation to migrate and his encounters in Addis Ababa as follows:

*I came here from Mecha District of West Gojjam Administrative Zone because my father was unable to sponsor my study for a junior secondary school which is about 15 km from home. I repeatedly asked him to buy me school uniform and stationeries so that I could pursue my schooling, but he turned down my request. He wanted me to assist him in the farm. Most of my colleagues pursued their education. You know, my cousin became a teacher after he completed his education but my father wanted me to be a farmer, oh! That was unpalatable. I just ran away. Father didn't know my whereabouts:*



**Table 5.** Rural social services inadequacy and societal malfunctioning related causes of outmigration (part of multiple responses).

Causes of migration	Migrant sending households' location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No. of hhs	% of hhs
	No. of hhs	% of hhs	No. of hhs	% of hhs		
Search for further education	24	16.0	43	28.7	67	22.3
Marriage	8	5.3	20	13.3	28	9.3
Conflict with family, domestic violence/ill-treatment	14	9.3	5	3.3	19	6.3
Seeking health facilities	21	14.0	2	1.3	23	7.7
Family separation and presence of step-parent	13	8.7	2	1.3	15	5.0
Early marriage and marital breakdown	7	4.7	5	3.3	12	4.0
Death of mother or father and presence of a step-parent	10	6.7	1	0.7	11	3.7
Conflict with neighbours and community members	9	6.0	1	0.7	10	3.3

*perhaps he might be mad at me... maybe he cursed me ...maybe he regretted for thwarting my ambition for further education... I just don't know. When I came to Addis Ababa things were not as I expected. I neither got a job readily nor pursued my education. I almost finished the money that I brought from home and became a derelict. Then, I did everything that I found for survival. Now, I am getting used to life here, I live with three countrymen who are slightly older than me at a place called Kara Kore in Addis Ababa sharing accommodation expense. I work as a daily labourer in a construction and get fairly sufficient income for my subsistence. Next year, I am planning to continue my education in the evening program at a government school near my residence to fulfill my dreams of becoming a skilled house builder.*

Another mechanism by which youth with some form of formal education are hugely tempted to leave the rural areas is when they are unable to be promoted from one grade level to another and repeat grades. Such children and youth are ridiculed by the community for their inability to pass from one grade level to another and therefore flee out of the village to an unknown destination, usually to urban areas.

Expansion of education in rural areas stimulates out-migration by providing children, with education and awareness of the socioeconomic opportunities available elsewhere. Rural children and youth who have attended formal education entail changing tastes for rural life styles and dream of urban ways of doing things as they become dissatisfied with the prospects of rural life. Children and youth who have acquired skills are more likely than those not so equipped to try their fortune in the towns. As shown in Table 5, nearly 20% of the migrant sending households indicated that the search for further education, its urban orientation and changing taste of lifestyle was indicated as a factor for the migration of children and youth from rural areas. A migrant sending household head denotes the perpetual exodus of young people out of rural areas in recent times associated with

the impact of the widespread education in rural areas as follows:

Ato (Mr.) Andargachew is a 58 years old man. He was born and has been living in *Enashenifalen kebele* all his life. He told that in earlier days, migration out of this *kebele* used to be a little known. Villagers had plenty of land and lots of livestock, and people ate to their full and there were no problems. Children were engaged in different forms of farm activity and the demand for their labour was immense. We pursued our parents' ways of life and we wanted our children to follow the rural traditions and usual ways of doing things, he added. Schools were not found nearby; and we were not even aware of the advantages for our young people to spend their time in schooling. Sometimes we were forced by the *kebele* administrators to send children to school. We created all sorts of lame excuses for not sending children and youth to school. We considered the time children and youth spend in schools as a waste of time; as they could have been engaged in productive agricultural activities. There were very few students who were resilient to pursue their schooling despite all the communal disincentives and disapproval for their education. These pioneers after completing their education became better clothed and were able to secure urban jobs and others were assigned to nearby elementary schools and started to influence people on the good virtues of education. This, I think, is a turning point in the perpetual outmigration of our young people from the village. Now, rural schools are found at shorter distances and more and more students are going to school. People's attitudes for education are changed favorably. Students, who complete schooling in the rural areas, neither do get jobs in the village nor do they want to stay on the farm. Children and youth are on the brink of flocking out of the villages.

Improvements in transportation and communication have tremendous impact on human mobility. Transportation and communication improvements not

only reduce the cost of migration but also lessen the psychological and cultural gap between the origin and destination areas, thus making migration easier. People also become more migratory and more informed about distant places as a result of improvements in transportation and communication technology. The average distance of the nearest urban center to the villages, where distance of the individual homesteads were reported by the migrant sending households, in the study districts was 16.4 km (standard deviation was 12.9). Migrant sending households stated the ease of access to transportation and information compared to situations sometime in the past. Therefore, the relative accessibility of the rural households either to an urban center or the existence of a vehicular road that traverses the study area could be recognized as a favourable ground that facilitates and hastens the exodus of children and youth out of the villages.

In a country such as Ethiopia, where family norms and values are of high importance and priority, marital breakdown is not only socially unacceptable but also scoured. Remarriages yield the presence of step-parents who often have negative connotation attached with them. There is an Amharic adage that notifies the age-old dissatisfaction and hatred step –parents have to their step-children which runs as “*yesew lij kemasadeg ye wusha lij masadeg yishala'* (It is better to keep a dog than to raise somebody else's child), and *Yalweledkut lij ababa bileggn afen daba daba alegn'* (I don't feel comfortable when a child I have not fathered calls me daddy). Similarly, young people do not find it comfortable to live with step- parents regardless of the humility that they display. '*Yenjera enat yasarirish ende jimat'* (Oh, stepmother, may you be charred like a wick) is an Amharic saying that usually comes out of children who are brought up by a step-mother to express one's grievance. Marital instability is found to be an important cause of out migration. Frequent exposure of children to heavy workload at home and feeling of helplessness motivate children and youth to migrate.

Step parents often cruelly treat their step-children. Yidnekachew is a 22 years old young migrant in Addis Ababa who came from *Amarit Wenz Kebele* of *Mecha* District six years ago and currently engaged in daily labour. He has stories to tell in connection with the mistreatment he received from his step-father during his formative childhood years. He narrates parental mistreatment as the causes of migration as follows:

My step-father was so cruel that he made my childhood years a living-hell. Hardly a day passed when he had never brutally beaten me for all sorts of lame reasons. He was even unhappy while he saw me taking a meal for survival. Once up on a time, perhaps at about the age of 10, I urinated where I slept. That was a terrible time. He tied a cord around my genital organ to stop my bed wetting and made me suffer a serious pain. My mother

begged him to untie me. It took him perhaps more than an hour to do so. The pain lasted for weeks. There were times when I was also burnt. Now I am away from him, I do not want to look back. Glory to the Almighty God, he can't inflict harm on me anymore.

The practice of parental arranged early marriage, where the bride and groom are not known to each other or have never met before has been common in rural areas of Ethiopia. This often times leads to marriage instability and is also a contributory factor to the outmigration of children and youth from rural areas. Parental arranged early marriages have been the norm particularly in rural *Gojjam* of North West Ethiopia. Children who get married at a very young age are less prepared psychologically and immature physically to shoulder family responsibilities. Marriage of unequal partners where the husband is often older (*Yalacha gabicha*) exposes particularly very young females to a miserable life at times leading to severe health risks such as obstetric fistula. This in turn pushes young females to move out of their original domiciles as runaways. Girls who are supposed to be given to husbands without their consent tend to flee from the rural areas. On the other hand, there is an age old tradition that urban residents particularly of rural origin get married to women who are supposed to be cultured from rural areas; which therefore, is a cause for the out migration of grownup girls.

### **The presence of pioneering migrants, peer influence, changing community attitudes and rural out-migration**

Outmigration is a function of social networks such as kinship ties and established friendships. The presence of family members already in a potential destination area promotes rural out migratory moves in many ways. In the first place, out migrants need to be supplied with positive information about destination areas as people tend to migrate less to an area for which they have little or no information; as the Amharic saying goes '*yemayawukut ager aynafikim*- means there is no craving for the unknown place'. Secondly, if there is a receptive population at the destination, adaptation of the migrant to the new destination will become easier. Pioneering migrants simplify situations for new entrants, thereby smoothening and facilitating their adaptation process. Whether finding jobs, assisting schooling or provision of temporary accommodation and food, or the psychic benefits of having some patron is considered; relatives in a destination play a pivotal role for the migration of individuals to the destination per se. Therefore, the kinship and friendship relations established by the potential migrants in the origin areas and pioneering migrants in the potential destinations are major determinants of outmigration. Presence of relatives/

**Table 6.** Social networks and external influences inducing rural out migration of children and youth (part of multiple responses).

Causes of migration	Migrant sending households' location				Total hhs	
	Mecha District		Sodo Zuria District		No. of hhs	% of hhs
	No. of hhs	% of hhs	No. of hhs	% of hhs		
Lure of pioneering migrants	82	54.7	97	64.7	179	59.7
Presence of relatives/friends in town	16	10.7	24	16.0	40	13.3
Lure of labour recruiting agents	6	4.0	29	19.3	35	11.7

Source: Field survey, February - May 2011.

friends already in town and other destination areas was indicated by 13.3% (Table 6) of the migrant sending households as a factor for the migration of their departed young members from home.

Peer influence is also a significant determinant of the migration of children and youth from the study areas. Children depart from their rural homes because of the enticement presented to them by their own peers of conditions in the destination. There is a tendency for children already in town doing informal jobs to exaggerate the freedom that they enjoy in an attempt to decoy new comers. Visiting migrants tell the honey and milk story of the urban areas to the potential migrants in their home village. The way they speak, the stories they tell about urban life, the way they are dressed, the ornaments they are decorated with, the gifts they present to their parents and relatives are all alluring to the potential rural children and youth migrants who are beset by a wide array of misfortunes. The information that potential migrants in the rural areas usually obtain from pioneering migrants makes them ambitious and eager to migrate. As one can decipher from Table 6, peer influence is a significant determinant as indicated by 59.7% of the migrant sending households for the migration of children and youth from the study areas. The limited impact of the lure of labour recruiting agents in the migration of children and youth out of rural areas could be explained by the closed nature of the community and the inability to penetrate the social niche.

Elderly interviewed respondents reported that long ago, the departure of a family member in a rural household used to be mourned. There were very few households that had a departed member. Today there are too many households who have migrant children in the *kebeles*. The attitude people have on the migration of a family member has greatly changed to the positive. There are also instances where families pressurize their grownups to move out and support them economically. Interviewees also reported that young people who work as daily labourers within the village on somebody's house are accorded low social status and ridiculed which in turn motivates them to migrate than staying in the village. Parents also visit their children who live in urban areas and when they return they often come to the village with new clothes, household utensils, and money both for themselves and for other closer relatives at the village.

This in turn initiates parents in the neighbourhood to compel their children to move out to benefit economically from migration. Parents, triggered by diminishing farm plots and dwindling livestock resources, wish their children to out-migrate and work in towns and commercial farms when they observe that the migrant children of their fellow villagers remit cash and bring gifts to their parents that improve their living conditions. Slightly more than half of the migrant sending households (54.3%) positively value the out migration of young family members and encourage their children to leave while 27.7% do believe that their family would have been poor if none of its members worked in the town. A large percentage of the migrant sending households (69.3%) consider the urban-ward migration of boys/young men as a good thing which could be associated with the great demand for girls for household chores, the risks of migration of girls such as abduction, the limited educational attainment of girls and the lower probability of finding urban jobs, the disgrace the family is likely to face if out migrating girls end up becoming a prostitute among others.

Other causes for the departure of youth from rural areas indicated by the migrant sending households were military service and Diversity Visa Lottery. Parents indicated that there were cases where the out migration of rural youth out of the village was an answer to the call for a contribution in safeguarding the safety and security of the state by joining the military. Some of the migrant sending households replied that youth are recruited to join the army in the incumbent regime on a willingness basis; though they recall, the *Dergue* (Military Junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991) used to snatch their family members to take them to the warfront, many of whom died during the civil war that ended in 1992.

### Regression model of the determinants of rural outmigration

Poisson regression model was used to make analysis of the determinants of the outmigration of rural children and youth from the migrant sending households in the selected districts. The application of the model became indispensable because the dependent variable was a count data with limited number of distinct values (ranging

**Table 7.** Summary of the results of the Poisson regression analysis of the determinants of the number of children/youth migrating from the households.

Parameter	Parameter estimates					
	Estimate	Std. Error	Z	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper bound
Constant	-6.105	0.194	-31.468	0.000	-6.485	-5.725
[Sex of hhh = 1]	-0.342	0.137	-2.489	0.013	-0.611	-0.073
[Sex of hhh = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Possession of radio = 1]	-0.816	0.128	-6.360	0.000	-1.068	-0.565
[Possession of radio = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Relative at destination = 1]	-0.166	0.105	-1.583	0.113	-0.372	0.040
[Relative at. destination = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Food adequacy = 1]	-0.200	0.107	-1.869	0.062	-0.410	0.010
[Food adequacy = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Entertaining children = 1]	0.243	0.116	2.094	0.036	0.016	0.471
[Entertaining children = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Non-farm employment = 1]	0.137	0.098	1.397	0.162	-0.055	0.330
[Non-farm employment = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
[Marital status of hhh = 1]	0.065	0.137	0.479	0.632	-0.202	0.333
[Marital status of hhh = 0]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.	.	.
Literacy status of hhh	1.003	0.091	10.978	0.000	0.824	1.182
Age of hhh at departure	0.076	0.004	20.652	0.000	0.068	0.083
Siblings at departure	0.285	0.027	10.395	0.000	0.231	0.339
Farmland size at departure	-0.113	0.100	-1.123	0.261	-0.309	0.084
Amount of farm produce	-0.004	0.003	-1.332	0.183	-0.010	0.002
Number of livestock at departure	0.006	0.013	0.438	0.662	-0.020	0.031
Distance to nearest urban center	-0.15	0.005	3.267	0.001	0.006	0.024

Model: Poisson

Design: Constant + Sex of hhh + Possession of radio + Relative at destination + Food adequacy + Entertaining children + Non-farm employment + Marital status of hhh + Literacy status of hhh + Age of hhh at departure + Siblings at departure + Farmland size at departure+ Amount of farm produce + Number of livestock at departure+ Distance to nearest urban center.

from one to seven) and the data when checked for linear regression did not satisfy the assumptions of normality and linearity.

Unlike the ordinary least square- multiple linear regression, logistic and loglinear/poisson regressions have relaxed data assumptions where there is no assumption that the dependent and independent variables be related linearly, the dependent need not be normally distributed, independents need not be interval in level of measurement and there is no assumption of homoscedasticity. The loglinear model assumes a multinomial distribution of counts within each combination of categories of independent variables. Predictor variables in loglinear Poisson regression could be categorical or continuous predictors added as covariates in either count or rate Poisson regression models; and like other forms of loglinear analysis, Poisson regression is predicting the count or rate. The dependent variable is the number of children departing from the migrant sending rural households. The independent (explanatory) variables that are believed to determine the out migration

of young members from rural households identified through meticulous literature review and own observation of the study areas as well as through survey are listed as follows:

$x_1$ : Farm size (per capita land holdings in hectares) at departure of the migrant

$x_2$ : Number of heads of livestock possessed by the household at departure of the migrant

$x_3$ : Quintals of agricultural produce (cereals) obtained in a year by household

$x_4$ : Family size (number of siblings) at departure of the migrant

$x_5$ : Educational status of the migrant sending household head (grade level completed) at initial departure of the migrant

$x_6$ : Age of the migrant sending household head at initial departure of the migrant

$x_7$  : Sex of the migrant sending household head (1: Male, 0: Female)

$x_8$  : Marital status of the household head at departure of the first migrant (1: Married, 0: separated/Divorced/Widowed)

$x_9$  : Presence of relatives in a destination at the time of initial migration (1: Yes, 0: No)

$x_{10}$  : Possession of radio in the household at departure of initial migrant (1: Yes, 0: No)

$x_{11}$  : Engagement in non/off-farm employment by the household head (income other than agriculture) at departure of initial migrant (1: Yes, 0: No)

$x_{12}$  : Adequacy of food produced by the household to feed family all the year round at departure of initial migrant (1: Yes, 0: No)

$$\ln \mu = -6.105 + 0.285x_4 + 1.003x_5 + 0.076x_6 - 0.342x_7 - 0.816x_{10} + 0.243x_{13} - 0.15x_{14} + e \quad (3)$$

From the explanatory variables family size (number of siblings) at departure of the migrant ( $x_4$ ), educational status of the migrant sending household (grade level completed) at initial departure of the migrant ( $x_5$ ), age of the migrant sending household head at initial departure of the migrant ( $x_6$ ), sex of the migrant sending household head ( $x_7$ ), possession of radio in the household at departure of initial migrant ( $x_{10}$ ), households' attempt to fulfill/entertain the needs of young family members and giving them chance to express themselves ( $x_{13}$ ) and distance of the nearest urban center to the household's premises ( $x_{14}$ ) were found to be significant in explaining the variation in the number of children and youth migrating out of a rural household.

Family size (number of siblings) at departure of the migrant, educational status of the migrant sending household (grade level completed) at initial departure of the migrant, age of the migrant sending household head at initial departure of the migrant, and attempt to fulfill/entertain the needs of young family members and giving them chance to express themselves determined the response variable positively. On the other hand, sex of the migrant sending household head that is whether the household male headed or female headed, possession of radio by the household at departure of initial migrant, and distance of the nearest urban center to the household's premises determined the response variable negatively.

When the number of siblings increases by one unit, the number of children migrating from the household increases by 33% ( $e^{0.285}$  where  $e=2.718282\dots$ ) is 1.33. When the number of schooling years attended by the

$x_{13}$ : Attempt to fulfill/entertain the needs of young family members and giving them chance to express themselves (1: Yes, 0: No)

$x_{14}$  : Distance of the nearest urban center from the household's premises (km)

The Regression model

$$\ln \mu = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2\dots\dots\dots\beta_{14}x_{14} + e \quad (2)$$

Where  $\ln \mu$  = number of children of the  $i^{th}$  household  
 $x_1 - x_{14}$  = explanatory variables

The reduced model of the regression analysis is therefore,

migrant sending household expressed in terms of grade level completed increases by one level, the number of children migrating from the household will be multiplied by 2.72 ( $e^{1.003}$  where  $e=2.718282\dots$ ). When the age of the migrant sending household head increases by one unit, the percentage of children migrating from that household increases by 8% that is  $e^{0.0763}$  where  $e=2.718282\dots$ ) =1.08. Male headed migrant sending households in rural areas generate 29% less migrant children and youth than the female headed migrant sending households that is ( $e^{-0.342}$  where  $e=2.718282\dots$ ) is 0.71. It is natural to assume that male headed households for a plough based agricultural system could be economical at a better standing than the female headed households and therefore give rise to limited migration of children and youth. Migrant sending rural households who possessed radio during departure of initial migrant have 56% less migrant children and youth than households who did not have radio ( $e^{-0.816}$  where  $e=2.718282\dots$  is 0.44). Although migrant sending households were assumed to generate more migrants from rural areas as a result of access to information about destination areas, more migrants originated from households who did not possess radio. A possible explanation could be because households who possessed radio were better-off rural households, where children and youth could access family resources rather than opting to migrate.

Households who attempted to fulfill/entertain the needs of their young family members and provide to their level best possible the opportunity to express themselves generated 27 % more migrants against the expectation that neglect is a cause of migration (1.27 =

$e^{0.243}$  where  $e$  is 2.718282...). It could be assumed that if the needs of children are satisfied in the rural areas, there is a natural curiosity to try something different somewhere. Better off households do not also thwart the educational needs of their children and youth, which of course is a major determinant of migration. Another significant determinant of the number of migrants from a rural household is the distance of the household's premises to the nearest urban center. The greater the distance of the households premises from the nearest urban center, the fewer the number of migrants from the household. Migrant sending rural households who are located closer to an urban center have 86% more migrant children and youth compared to households who are found far from the urban center, which is ( $e^{-0.15}$  where  $e=2.718282...$ )0.86.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central intent of this study has been the investigation of the causes for the departure of children and youth out of rural areas. The discussions made underpinned that there are numerous causes of migration where economic and social motives are intermingled with demographic and environmental situations. Rural children and youth decide to depart either because they are unsatisfied with the existing conditions in their areas of origin or are curious to find congenial conditions elsewhere.

Increased household size and lack of farmland is a major cause for the departure of young people out of rural areas. Lack of income diversification and the desire to fetch cash income, rural underemployment, and household indebtedness and inability to payback debts result in considerable outmigration of children and youth out of rural areas. Agricultural inefficiency, rural household poverty, dissatisfaction with the perceived dull village life and the glamour and excitement of towns are major motivations in rural-urban children and youth migration.

Widespread rural education and improvements in rural infrastructure are closely intertwined with the outmigration of children and youth. The practice of early arranged marriage, the tendency of urban residents to get married to women of rural origin, the presence of stepparents and marital instability are contributory factors to the migration of children and youth from rural areas. Existence of pioneering migrants in the potential destination areas and peer influence are also important determinants of the migration of children and youth from the study areas. Rural residents are gradually developing positive attitudes towards the migration of a family member. Since rural poverty is the ultimate cause that drives children and youth out of their rural domicile, the primary role of the government has to be a sustained and multifaceted effort on rural poverty reduction. Education programs and

curriculum that are relevant in improving productivity of the rural economic sector; assisting rural households to diversify income through non-farm income generating means and integrated population and reproductive health services could be important poverty reduction endeavours that prevent excessive exodus.

Relieving children and youth from being engaged in an arduous, time taking and backbreaking activities; and helping children to give more time to their education provides them an opportunity to succeed in obtaining professional urban jobs if they migrate. Environment induced excessive migration could be averted through intensified water and soil conservation endeavors to improve productivity. There should be sensitization on domestic violence and ill-treatment, and the impact of marital dissolution and related factors on migration. The traditional parent-arranged and forced early marriage practices common in rural areas should be discouraged through strict enforcement mechanisms on parents who permit marriage of minors.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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