Vulnerabilities of Migrants at Destination: The Case of Temporary rural-rural Labour Migrants from Quarit District, West Gojjam Zone of Amhara Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Migration is associated with opportunities that it generates for migrants and their households, on the one hand, and with vulnerabilities of migrants at destination on the other. This article explored ways in which temporary rural-rural labour migrants from Quarit District werre exposed to multiple and interdependent shocks at destination. It employed qualitative research approach whereby data were generated from focus group discussions, key informant interviews and secondary sources. Participants in the focus group discussions included migrants from purposively selected four migrant sending *kebeles* in Quarit District. Key informants comprised experts drawn from relevant offices at various levels of administration. The analysis relied on thematic and descriptive approaches. The findings showed that rural-rural labour migrants, who werre in search of opportunities in cash-crop-growing areas in Ethiopia, were vulnerable to multiple and interacting shocks of crop failure, market, health, employment and crime. The levels of vulnerabilities might vary across migrants depending on a complex mix of contextual factors situated at various geographical scales, and attributes and risk management strategies of migrants. The results also pointed out the fact that vulnerability could not be fully captured in a localised and single-shock based vulnerability analysis alone. These imply the need to mainstreaming migration into development policies and strategies that are designed to address this kind of vulnerability.

Keywords: cash crop production, wage labour, rural-rural migration, vulnerabilities, shocks

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

Migration is an important livelihood strategy of rural households in developing countries (de Haan 1999; Woldie *et al*. 2010; Etzold 2017) although there is no conclusive agreement as to whether migration as a strategy needs to be promoted (Hagen-Zanker 2010). Studies on the effects of migration tend to focus on financial gains for migrant-sending households in the form of remittance without considering hurdles faced by migrants at destination (Sakdapolrak *et al*. 2016). This meant that sometimes migrants support themselves and their households at the expense of their vulnerabilities at destination (Winkels 2004; Sakdapolrak *et al*. 2016; Etzold 2017). Such vulnerabilities ignite questions related to factors inducing vulnerabilities which many studies are unable to address (Cutter 1996; Ribot 2014).

Factors exposing migrants to shocks tend to be associated with multifaceted institutional, socio-cultural, economic and environmental issues that prevail at various scales and converge in diverse ways at destination (Leichenko and O'Brien 2008; Leichenko *et al*. 2010). In terms of institutional factors, migrants are exposed to abuses, diseases, work-related injuries, discriminations, mental illnesses, anxiety and death because of discriminatory or non-existence of, or non-compliance with, policies, laws and regulations to protect migrants' rights (Abu-Habib 1998).

Environmental factors of vulnerability are related to migrants' tendency to live in vulnerable places such as coastal, flood-prone, degraded and drought-prone areas (Cutter 1996; Downing *et al*. 1996; Adger *et al*. 2009; Santha *et al*. 2016). Economic factors can also be the causes of vulnerability to certain places or people due to, among others, the existence of unfair trade relationships under economic globalisation (Winkels 2004; Leichenko and O'Brien 2008; Leichenko *et al*. 2010). This is so because the global economic structure makes developing countries and their population vulnerable to shocks. Under such contexts the (re)production of vulnerability is an integral part of the wider economic system (O'Brien and Leichenko 2000; Leichenko and O'Brien 2008; Leichenko *et al*. 2010).

Socio-cultural factors of vulnerability occur in the form of stereotyping, racism, and discrimination associated with values, customs and norms that give culturally constructed meaning to migrants based on migration status, gender, ethnicity and race (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003; Findlay 2005). These sources of vulnerability often constrain migrants' possibilities of securing employment opportunities, especially during economic crises and unemployment situations (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003). Attributes of migrants are also important factors for vulnerability and, as socio-cultural factors, they commonly associate with migrants' legal status, gender, ethnicity, religion, and level of education that may enhance, or lessen, vulnerability (Abu-Habib 1998; Pollock and Lin Aung 2010). Migrants' risk management strategies can also expose migrants to various severe forms of shocks. (Santha *et al*. 2016).

Generally, empirical literature shows that exposure of migrants to shocks stems mainly from the intertwined environmental, economic, and socio-cultural factors, as well as migrants' characteristics and risk management strategies. These different factors of vulnerability, having various sources, frequencies, and impacts, interact with each other in complex and multiple ways, eventually shaping the trajectories of migrants' vulnerability (Leichenko and O'Brien 2008).

In the context of Ethiopia, evidence shows that rural-rural migrants are vulnerable to various sources of shocks at destination (see Woldie *et al*. 2010; Schicker *et al*. 2015; Tsegaye 2016). Rural-rural migration constitutes the highest share of internal migration though showing declining trend over the years. It comprised 56% of internal migration in 1984 (Central Statistical Agency [(CSA 1991)], 49% in 1994 (CSA 1998) and 47% in 2007 (Dorosh *et al*. 2011), followed by rural-urban migration with a share of 29%, 25% and 27% during those corresponding census years, respectively. The current temporary rural-rural migration in the country is partly associated with the expanded production demand of cash crops such as sesame in lowland areas associated with increasing demand of Ethiopian sesame in the global market (Woldie *et al*. 2010).

The intent of this article, in light of the above-note, was to assess the nature of shocks to which temporary rural-rural labour migrants were exposed at destination and the factors and mechanisms through which migrants were exposed to these shocks. Guided by the vulnerability analysis concept drawn from Double Exposure Framework (Leichenko and O'Brien 2008), the article specifically considered the type of shocks, scale of shocks (idiosyncratic or covariate), distribution of shocks (which migration type faced what type of shock) and shock management strategies migrants employed (ex-ante and ex-post) based on evidence generated from temporary rural-rural migrants from Quarit District of Amhara Region, north-western Ethiopia.

1.2. Conceptual and Theoretical Bases

Vulnerability is a multi-dimensional and multifaceted concept used variously in changing contexts (Cutter 1996; Eakin and Luers 2006; Casale *et al*. 2010). However, as defined by Chambers (1989:33), vulnerability is:

> … exposure to contingencies and stress and means for coping with them. Vulnerability, thus, has two sides: an external side of risks, shocks and stress to which an individual or household is subject; and an internal side, which is defencelessness, meaning the lack of means to cope without the damaging loss.

This definition, which is extensively used by many authors, points to the fact that vulnerability not only results from exposure to risks and shocks, but also is the outcome of ways of managing risks and shocks (Winkels 2004; Casale *et al*. 2010). The definition is adopted in this article, where shock is noted as an adverse event (e.g. crop failure or market distortion) that causes the loss of individual or household income, diminishing of consumption, and productive assets, as well as inducing serious concerns about individual/household welfare (Dercon *et al*. 2008). Risk is understood as potential adverse event or, in short, a potential shock (Modena 2008). Shocks and risks can be divided into idiosyncratic and covariate. Idiosyncratic shocks are specific to individuals or households (health shock and employment shocks) while covariate shocks are those commonly shared by the wider community or even communities (e.g. crop failure and market

price shocks) (Siegel and Alwang 1999). However, most shocks seem to have features of both kinds of shocks (Siegel and Alwang 1999) and one can cause or result from the other (Modena 2008). The term exposure refers to the state of being prone to some effects (such as drought, high temperature, and external market, etc.) that are related to certain contextual factors (Downing *et al*. 1996; Leichenko and O'Brien 2008).

Most vulnerability analyses and interventions tend to focus on the question of 'vulnerability to which issue?' Commonly, this question gears towards pinpointing the outcome of a particular kind of shock although, practically, shocks do not work in isolation (O'Brien *et al*. 2009; Bunce *et al*. 2010). For instance, drought may not occur independently from disease outbreak or other shocks (Leichenko and O'Brien 2002) and, thus, multiple shocks can occur together and severely endanger the livelihood security of individuals and households (O'Brien *et al*. 2009; Santa *et al*. 2016).

However, although various approaches to vulnerability analysis (e.g. Cutter 1996; Turner *et al*. 2003) recognise the importance of multiple shocks, conceptualising how exactly multi-shocks interact with each other remains problematic (O'Brien *et al*. 2009). Currently, many studies use the Double Exposure Framework, developed by Leichenko and O'Brien (2008), to analyse vulnerability from multiple shocks perspective even though migrants' vulnerability is not their focus of attention (see Bunce *et al*. 2010; O'Brien *et al*. 2009). The framework is rooted in the fact that shocks and their causes do not work in isolation. The Double Exposure Framework is helpful in dealing with issues of where and how shocks and their causes interact and provides better opportunity in finding long-term solution as compared to analytical frameworks that oriented efforts to a single-shock and its cause/s (O'Brien *et al*. 2009; Bunce *et al*. 2010).

Exposure to global processes of change is a function of the nature of the change (its rates, magnitudes, geographical extents, etc.) and the *contextual environment*. The term contextual may be taken to mean interconnected range of conditions that determine the intensity of exposure and individuals' or households' responses to changes in global processes. In this regard, one can argue that the contexts within which migration takes place create

vulnerability, not migration itself (Deshingkar 2004). Contextual factors that build vulnerability may occur at varying scales but 'the state of vulnerability' depends on the attributes of exposure unit (Adger and Kelly 1999). Thus, variation of vulnerability among migrants can emerge depending on whether, and to what extent, each group of migrants is integrated to various contextual factors at various scales that drive exposure to shocks and affect responses (Eriksen *et al*. 2005).

Considering its relevancies as discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, the Double Exposure Framework was adopted as a conceptual and analytical framework for the present study. In this article, therefore, place of destination is taken as the exposure frame where different contextual factors converge, while migrants at destination are taken as exposure unit, along the conceptualisation by Leichenko and O'Brien (2008). One can logically assume that vulnerable places are by implication locations where vulnerable people live (Downing *et al*. 1996). The responses (risk management strategies) are other causes of vulnerability intrinsically connected to migrants' exposure to shocks and to attributes of migrants.

This article identified the factors that cause temporary rural-rural labour migrants' exposure to these and other kinds of shocks at destination based on ideas drawn from the Double Exposure Framework. The article conceptualises that migrants are exposed to crop failure, market, employment, health, and crime shocks at destination. Crop failure indicates a decline in quantity and quality of crop output due to bad weather and/or poor farming practices. Market shock denotes the decline of market price of sesame. Health shock refers to the sickness and death of migrants while employment shock designates lack of job or inability to work even if one seeks job or working at minimal wage. Crime shock refers to exposure to theft, breach of agreements by employers, and conflicts due to actions committed or omitted against migrants in violation of public laws, and oral and written agreements.

2. Methods

Being one of the 15 Districts of West Gojjam Zone of Amhara Region, Quarit District has 28 rural and two urban *kebeles*[1] (Figure 1) (Quarit District Administration Office 2015). Its population is estimated at 135,400 people (68,639 females and 66,761 males), with 127,103 rural and 8,297 urban residents (CSA 2013). The District is located within altitude range of 1861–3519 metres above sea level, and it is part of the resource-poor Northern Highlands of Ethiopia and food-insecure Districts of Amhara Region (Amhara Livelihood Zone Reports 2007; Teshome 2010) although not yet designated as food-insecure.

Both Quarit District and the specific study *kebeles* were selected based on information obtained from key informants drawn from the Zone and District Agricultural Offices. Accordingly, the District was selected as having the largest number of rural-rural migrants in West Gojjam Zone and the specific *kebeles* were selected for their high volume of temporary rural-rural labour migration. This method of identification of *kebeles* was employed due to lack of official data on temporary rural-rural labour migrants both at national and lower administrative levels. The study employed qualitative research approach in purposively selected four *kebel*es in the District (Figure 1). It focused on three types of migrants: full-time wage labour migrants, crop farming migrants and casual wage labour migrants, categorized based on the types of livelihood activities in which migrants participate at the destination.

The main sources of data were Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Secondary sources. At the place of origin, six FGDs were conducted, two from each type of migrants, between February and May 2015. Each FGD had 6–10 participants selected purposively considering factors such as long exposure to shocks, spatial patterns of migration (destinations within and outside Amhara Region) and years of migration experiences. The FGD participants were selected when they returned to their place of origin.

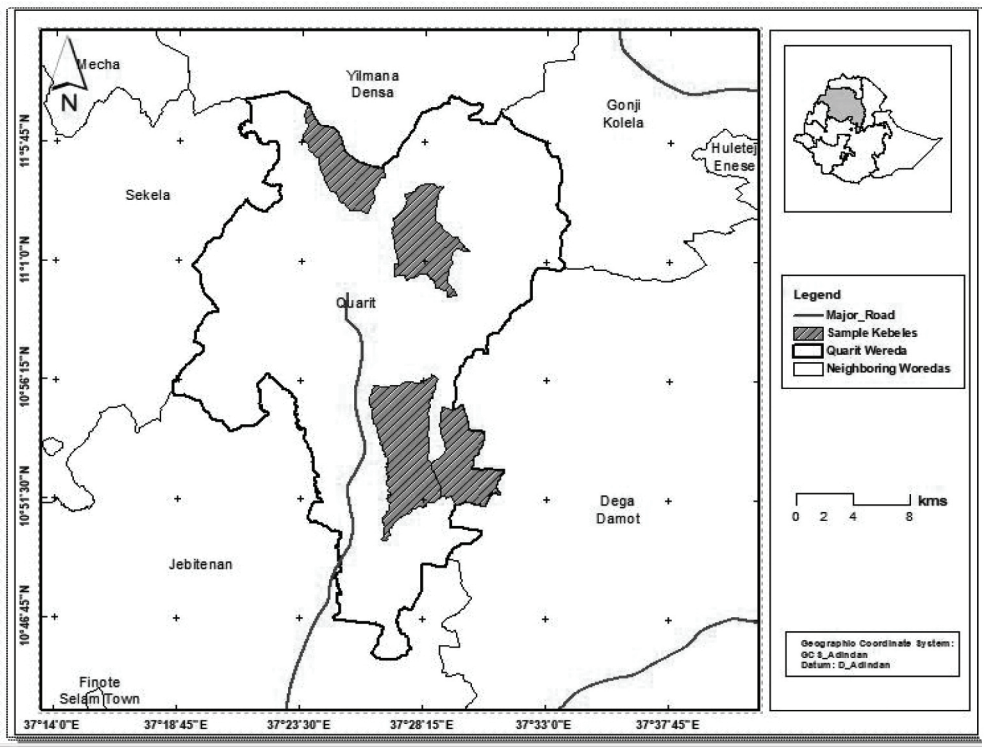

Figure 1. Map of the study District and *kebeles*
Source: CSA (2007)

To supplement the data collected at origin (Quarit District), 15 key informants were also selected from pertinent sectoral offices at District level (at destination of migrants) and other various levels of administration. These sectors include Labour and Social Affairs (one each from Amhara Region, North Gondar Zone and Mirab Armachiho District), Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) (one each from Sesame Business Network (SBN) office at Gondar branch, ECX offices at federal ECX and Gondar branch), police (one each from Mirab Armachiho District, Jawi District and North Gondar Zone), health (one each from Jawi District, Mirab Armachiho District and North Gondar Zone), and Agricultural Offices (one each from Mirab Armachiho District, Jawi District and North Gondar Zone). All the key informants were recruited based on their privileged access, by virtue of the positions they held, to the required information. The interviews were conducted between August and September 2015.

Most of the interviews were semi-structured and the sessions were recorded using digital audio recorder besides taking notes. Second round KIIs were also conducted both by phone and in person to understand the changing situation of migrants' exposure to shocks and to address issues that demand verification and clarification (Rigg *et al*. 2014). The initial semi-structured interview guide was employed with a major focus on exposure to shocks. Data analysis involved triangulation of various datasets for validation. It relied on thematic and descriptive methods followed by integration of evidence to generate empirical findings regarding the vulnerability of migrants in line with the types of migration.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Types of migration

The types of migration which actually refer to the occupations of migrants at destination include crop farming, casual wage labour and full-time wage labour migration. Similar categorisation was done by Arhin (1988) in Ghana.

3.1.1. Crop farming migration

Migrant farmers that participated in the focus groups reflected that crop farming migrants primarily engaged in sesame (*Sesamunindicum L.*) (Amharic equivalent = *selit*) production, with some engagements in pepper, sorghum, groundnuts and soya bean production, depending on the nature of the agro-ecology at destination. Sesame emerged as an important high-value global cash crop ranking second to coffee in the Ethiopian crop export (FAO 2015).

Those informants also revealed that migrants access land through renting and sharecropping. Renting involved paying agreed upon money in cash for a specified land size for a defined period of time, usually for one growing season. On the other hand, sharecropping, which migrants call *kibdet,* allowed migrant farmers to access land through an arrangement that required in-kind payment (crop products) to land owners that essentially had two variants: 1) fixed in-kind payment depending on size of land migrants rented in from land owners; 2) fixed proportional in-kind payment

depending on the amount of agricultural outputs migrants managed to obtain from a given plot of land. The amount of payment relies on the deal made in specific local context. In such cases, focus group participants noted that individuals who migrate for crop farming had two sources of labour: own labour together with accompanying family members and hired labour. The latter included full-time and/or casual-wage labour.

3.1.2. Full-time wage labour migration

Full-time wage labour migration refers to migrating to work as wage labourers where migrants were employed for certain months or one growing season to perform specified agricultural and/or non-agricultural activities with defined in-kind or in-cash payment. They were largely employed for one cropping season that commenced with land clearing and ended with threshing. As pointed out by FGD participants drawn from full-time wage labour migrants, potential employers were migrant farmers, locals, settlers and investors. They further noted that variations existed between male and female migrants in terms of work assignment and related payments. The male primarily undertook agricultural activities while the females were engaged in domestic work as housemaids. Both were employed on the basis of in-cash and in-kind payments though the male inclined more towards in-kind payment and the female towards in-cash payment. These types of migrants were entitled to accommodation as fringe benefits.

3.1.3. Casual wage labour migration

This type of migration was occasioned by the need to get temporary casual-wage-based employment mainly in the production of sesame and other crops as well. As evidenced by FGD participants among casual wage labour migrants and key informant experts from Labour and Social Affairs Offices (LaSAOs), weeding and harvesting activities of sesame were key employment opportunities. They also reported that major large-scale employers were investors besides locals, settlers and migrant farmers, and that the modes of employment were either contractual or on daily basis. Under the contractual mode, a labourer or group of labourers agreed to carry out a specified piece of work, such as weeding certain size of crop land, for fixed cash payment whilst casual wage labourers were hired on daily basis at existing wage rate, which, during weeding season, depended largely on

size of crop land. However, payments for a given size of crop land varied across place and time depending on availability of migrant labour. Harvesting time was crucial in sesame production with the mode of payment known as *hilla*[2].

3.2. Migrants' vulnerabilities at destination

3.2.1. Health shock

Participants in FGDs and health experts revealed that health shock was more of idiosyncratic across all forms of migrants. Though typical sources of health shocks were diarrhoea, typhoid, typhus and anaemia, malaria was the most important one. Lowland areas – key destinations – are usually known to have hot climate that harbours mosquito. In addition, migrants coming from highland Ethiopia tended to have limited or no immunity to malarial infections compared to those from lowland areas (Kassahun *et al*. 2014). Unfortunately, lowland areas were also characterised by poor health condition associated with poor diets and polluted water along with poor infrastructure (FAO 2010). Health experts indicated that the vulnerability of migrants to malaria, the main agent of illness and death, was attributed mainly to the fact that migrants commonly lived and worked in open spaces or partly open shelters with limited access to the required preventive facilities. As migrants worked in the night, especially during sesame harvest, there was a high risk of exposure to mosquito biting, which was also reflected by other studies in Ethiopia (Schicker *et al*. 2015; SBN 2015; Woldie *et al*. 2010) and India (Rogaly *et al*. 2002).

As noted by FGD participants, migrants usually ate food they were not familiar with at origin. The common foods they ate at destination were *genfo* (porridge) and *kita* (bread) made from sorghum while they were used to *teff ejera* at place of origin. Both FGDs and health experts reflected the feeling that these foods were less nutritious compared to energy required for intensive labour work that increased migrants' vulnerability to health shocks.

As attested by FGD participants and health experts, migrants used unsafe drinking water obtained from rivers and ponds, which increased their

vulnerability to health shocks. They further noted that getting access to health services at destination was not easy for migrants. As confirmed by FGDs, sometimes it took more than five hours walk to arrive at the nearest health services, further indicating that they occasionally bought medicine from pharmacies and ordinary shops with no prescription as an ex-ante health risk management strategy. Other strategies by some migrants included using bed nets to keep mosquito at bar and opting for group migration to assist each other in times of health shocks. However, key informants from the health offices and the FGD participants indicated a number of harmful health-risk management strategies of the migrants, including refraining from taking medicine with the expectation that their health condition will improve by itself; continuing working unless the illness became acute; and discontinuing medication upon seeing early symptoms of recovery; and not taking medicines until returning to place of origin. On this matter, FGDs revealed cases where migrants sometimes returned home sick but still not taking medications. This revelation concurs with observations made in Indian cities (Santha *et al*. 2016). As explained by health experts, some health-risk-management strategies of migrants exposed them to life-threatening health risks. What is more, studies showed that such untreated or asymptomatic infections of the migrants allowed the disease-causing parasites to be transported to the place of origin (Schicker *et al*. 2015).

Another factor of exposure to health shock, according to casual and full-time wage labour migrants who took part in the focus group discussions, was migrants' tendency to prioritise saving much of the money they earned from their employment over considering to improve their living and working conditions at destination. This revelation was consistent with the evidence established on factors that exposed casual wage labourers in north-western Ethiopia to health shocks (SBN 2015). Generally, ill-equipped living and working environment, characterised by lack of health and transportation facilities, poor diet, and migrants' weak coping strategies, are factors that expose migrants to health shocks at destination.

3.2.2. Employment shock

Information generated from FGDs and KIIs from LaSAOs at various levels of administration reflected that employment shock was an idiosyncratic shock which was common among casual wage labour migrants. It was noted that high competition over available jobs, untimely migration, and absence of prior arrangement and information on available jobs occasionally made casual wage labour migrants fail to secure jobs or take up low- paying jobs or even return home with no earning.

The key informants from LaSAOs noted that employment shocks among casual wage labour migrants largely resulted from their lack of access to adequate labour information. These findings are consistent with the cases of seasonal rural-rural wage labour migration in Amhara Region of Ethiopia, in general (Woldie *et al*. 2010), youth migration to urban centres in Ethiopia (Adamnesh *et al*. 2014) and temporary migration for agricultural work in India (Rogaly and Coppard 2003). The key informants further indicated that oversupply of wage labourers in the labour market ultimately led to unemployment. This was somehow connected to investors' exaggerated calls, through government electronic media, for such labourers at destination. The exaggerated calls were associated with investors' interest to mobilise excess labour supply which created a good opportunity for them to fix wage rate to the lowest possible level. That literally created openings for labour exploitation. Market institutions that had decisive roles in managing employment contracts, labour information and protection were so weak or missing in Ethiopia; and that increased job insecurity among individuals in the informal sector (World Bank 2007).

Casual wage labour migrants that participated in the FGDs and experts from LaSAOs also linked employment shock with crop failure experienced by employers. When investors faced crop failure, the demand for wage labourers temporarily fell, increasing the termination and violation of contracts as observed by Kostka and Scharrer (2011) in Benishangul Gumuz Region of Ethiopia. Key informants from LaSAOs also associated climate variability, especially the late onset of rainfall, with employment shock, especially when migrants had little access to information about the changing rainfall pattern. Sometimes, climate variability propeled a shift in crop

planting and weeding calendars, making migrants victim if they followed the previous calendars. They recalled that such a shock engulfed casual wage labourers during the 2015/16 cropping season as the late onset of rain postponed the weeding time of sesame. This finding conformed to experiences documented in West Bengal, India (Rogaly 1998; Rogaly and Coppard 2003), where the incidence of employment shocks among seasonal migrants for agricultural work was associated with, among others, climate variations between years.

As mentioned in the previous section, exposure to health shock could also lead to employment shock that reduced earnings. The forgoing findings implied that the causes of, and migrants' exposure to, shocks were multiple, interacting and interdependent. On the other hand, focus groups drawn from casual wage labour migrants held that well-informed (through friends and employers) migrants made proactive arrangements and hence evaded or reduced employment shock, which, to a large extent, demonstrated how social networks through information exchange reduced vulnerability. This meant that vulnerabilities were not uniform even among casual wage labourer migrants.

3.2.3. Crop failure as a shock

Crop-failure-related shock was evident among crop farming migrants and full-time migrants whose earning depended on in-kind payment. In this regard, three interrelated factors exposed migrants to crop failure shock, viz., excess rainfall, shortage of rainfall and poor agricultural practices.

Excess rainfall: Crop failure is largely the result of working in climate-vulnerable economic sub-sector: sesame farming. Sesame is intolerant to heavy rain, waterlogging and frost situations, though it is tolerant to drought. Those unfavourable weather events mostly expose sesame to diseases which ultimately cause substantial yield loss (Kostka and Scharrer 2011; Geremew *et al*. 2012). In this view, agricultural experts and FGD-participant migrant farmers pointed out that sesame pods easily shattered if exposed to heavy rain during ripening stage. Evidence shows that sesame varieties in Ethiopia contain capsules that naturally shatter upon ripening (Daniel 2017). Focus groups identified pod shattering as an important

source of exposure to crop failure, an issue recorded by other studies in Ethiopia (Kostka and Scharrer 2011; Global Agricultural Information Network [GAIN] 2016). FGD participants noted that, as risk management strategy, crop farming migrants attempted to diversify crop production (Kostka and Scharrer 2011) or switched to other forms of migration (casual wage labour and full-time wage labour migration) or even sometime avoided migration altogether.

Shortage of rain: Although sesame is a drought-resistant crop, it still needs adequate moisture at its early growth stage (Geremew *et al*. 2012). In case of rainfall shortage at this stage, the crop becomes susceptible to diseases that cause seeds to dry up (Kostka and Scharrer 2011) though such shock, according to the FGD participants, was less frequent in the destination area. For instance, agricultural experts linked the 2015/2016 drought year in Ethiopia to migrants' exposure to rainfall shortage induced crop failure in a similar way as GAIN (2016) did. Under such cases, it was noted that migrants opted to plant early-maturing new sesame varieties, which, nonetheless, had economic burden in terms of additional labour cost, draught power and purchasing new varieties. Further, as an ex-ante risk reduction strategy, migrants delayed planting until adequate rain came and then planted varieties that mature within shorter growing period.[3] Generally, natural factors that are beyond farmers' control make sesame farming a risky business since securing returns from sesame farming turns out to be a matter of chance.

Poor farming practices: In order to secure better output from sesame farming, one has to carry out timely farm activities, particularly weeding and harvesting. A little deviation from appropriate practices in sesame farming may cause significant loss in output (Kostka and Scharrer 2011). The FGD-participant migrant farmers and the key informant agricultural experts revealed that poor farming practices such as untimely and improper planting, weeding and harvesting; using inappropriate seeds, selecting unsuitable land, absence of crop rotation, and sowing the same sesame seed over several subsequent seasons, led to yield loss. Above all, key informant agricultural experts linked poor farming practices to lack of knowledge on

the part of the sesame farmers, and this implied the inadequacy of institutional support to migrants, regarding sesame farming.

Significant sesame yield loss occurs during harvesting time because harvesting lasts only for two to four days following actual observable ripening stage (Wijnands *et al*. 2009). According to migrant farmers, sesame farmers should harvest sesame on time based on a sign that appeared on leaves; otherwise, capsules would shatter and seeds disperse. Occasionally, inexperienced migrants do not know about the sign. Such a short ripening stage makes sesame harvesting activity arduous and labour-intensive, estimated to take 30–40 person-days/hectare (Wijnands *et al*. 2009). On the other hand, agricultural experts tell that a combination of poor farming practices and natural factors expose sesame crop to diseases, insects and pests often reinforced by the nature of sesame varieties grown in Ethiopia. These varieties, besides being shattering type, have capsules that do not ripe uniformly; capsules in lower part of sesame plant ripe earlier than in the upper part (Geremew *et al*. 2012). This difference, not only complicates harvesting time, but also causes the lower part of capsules to disperse when the upper part becomes ripe, a problem that could be overcome through responsive institutions (Kostka and Scharrer 2011).

As pointed out by migrant farmer FGDs, labour-scarce migrants opted for ex-ante risk reduction strategy such as calling in household members from place of origin and/or employing full-time wage labourers or casual wage labourers along with working day and night, and limiting the size of land to cultivate based on available financial and labour resources. Essentially, what seems important in the struggle to overcome risky farming practices is learning from social networks regarding what type of sesame variety is suitable to what type of soil and what agricultural activities are required at what time. This revelation is similar with what was witnessed in Vietnam where social networks shaped migrants' access to agro-ecological knowledge and helped overcome impeding risks (Winkels and Adger 2002). Needless to say, the risk of sesame production is not uniform even among same type of migrants as revealed by both agricultural experts and migrant farmers in the focus group discussions. First, the severity of bad weather varies from one place to another. Second, poor farming practices that induce

crop failure may significantly vary from migrant to migrant. Thus, it is discernible that crop failure can be idiosyncratic (e.g. poor-farming-practices-induced crop failure) or covariate (e.g. bad-weather-induced crop failure) or both. Generally, the causes of migrants' vulnerability to crop failure relate to a complex web of interactions between erratic rainfall (excess or shortage), the nature of Ethiopian sesame varieties and poor farming practices.

3.2.4. Sesame market price shocks

Market shock directly affects migrants whose return from migration depends on sesame farming, i.e., crop farming migrants and full-time wage labour migrants whose wage depends on in-kind payment. It has been noted that Ethiopian sesame is highly susceptible to market shock due to the volatile nature of international market environment (UNDP 2015). Presumably, the networked and global scale integrated market often marginalises primary producers in many developing countries. Experiences showed that many countries were deeply engaged in transforming their institutional systems to accomplish agendas stemming from global economic structure (Sassen 2000).

Congruent with such global-national interface, focus group participant migrant farmers and key informants from ECX offices at federal and Gondar branch linked the extreme decline in the market price of sesame from Birr 3200/quintal in 2013/2014 to Birr 1500/quintal during 2015/2016[4] to international sesame market irregularities. As a coping strategy, migrants delayed selling their sesame, expecting a rise in price but the price continued declining. This misfortune testified to a situation where migrants' risk management strategies turned out to be the driving force of serious shocks. In other words, as local market was dictated by global level forces, migrants' risk management strategies indisputably made the migrants mere price takers, often reflecting their powerlessness.

The above-referred informants further pointed out the interdependence between crop failure and market shock intensified by bad weather, which could reduce both the quantity and quality of sesame product. The situation reflected migrants' double exposure to the effects of both rainfall variability

and market globalization as noted by O'Brien and Leichenko (2000; 2008). Put briefly, the findings demonstrated the extent to which internal migration was integrated to the environmental condition of the place of destination and global economic processes.

One more contributing factor to low sesame price is ECX's standardisation of sesame as Humera-Gondar and Wollega types. The former is given high standard and hence fetches high market price. Focus group participant migrant farmers argued that ECX set standards and related prices did not entirely depend on sesame types but on the region in which sesame was being produced. In this case, sesame produced in some parts of migrants' destination (e.g. Jawi District), although believed to have the same quality as the Humera-Gondar type, was labelled as Wollega type and assigned low price.

Generally, the lesson is that irregularities in the global market, the vagaries of weather and individual migrants' risk management strategies interact with each other in driving and enhancing the vulnerability of migrants to low market price. Here, one can imply that market shocks are produced by networked factors that converge at destination.

3.2.5. Crime shocks

As alluded by focus group discussion participants at origin and police officers at District and Zonal level police offices at destination, crime shock (theft, breaching agreements and conflicts) were common to all types of migrants, even if with varying features. The vulnerability of migrants— mainly casual wage labour migrants— to theft was partly associated with their mobility with money from place to place in search of jobs. It was also related to absence of legal support, inadequate banking services in some destinations and limited experiences of migrants to use banks. However, police officers make some efforts to create awareness among migrants about existing crime risks and the possible measures to take at the destination and places of transition. The government also requires investors to pay casual migrant labourers' wage in urban areas to avoid or minimise the risk of theft. As noted by focus group participants, as a risk reduction strategy, migrants moved in groups to support each other in case of insecure state of

affairs while casual wage labour migrants moved to employers who were less likely vulnerable to theft and other forms of shocks.

Breaching agreements and subsequent conflicts may take diverse forms across different types of migrants. For instance, investors sometimes breach contracts entered into between them and casual wage labourers in the form of delayed payments or under payment or refusal of payment at all. In the case of crop farming migrants, migrant farmers who took part in the FGDs noted that land holders sometimes demanded additional payment contrary to what was agreed upon. Occasionally, land holders wittingly or unwittingly entered into double agreements where they sharecropped or rented out the same plot of land to two migrants, increasing competition and then serving as a source of conflict[5] between the two migrants or between migrants and landholders. Focus group participants further noted that there were situations where migrants were regarded as 'illegal settlers', mainly in Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State of Ethiopia. This made migrant farmers live in a 'climate of fear.'

According to the FGD participants, the key factor behind contravening contracts, especially against casual wage labourers, was lack of written binding agreements between wage labourers and employers, creating little room to seek legal support. It was also noted that breaching contracts and conflicts sometimes occurred when potential employers that were exposed to crop failure and market shock, directly or indirectly, transferred the shocks to wage labourers, often in the form of underpay or no pay that led to conflict, which also indicated linkages among shocks across different types of migrants. This demonstrated interdependent or networked vulnerabilities.

Focus group discussion participants and police officers indicated migrants' use of various strategies to manage their vulnerability to crime shocks. As ex-post coping strategy against risks of agreement violations, migrants tried to get their payment by reporting the case to police officers. In this regard, migrants used existing written agreements, if there was any, in their attempt to settle contract violation.

Apparently, migrants' exposures to the various forms of shocks were partly attributable to temporary rural-rural labour migration occurring in the context of explicit and implicit unwelcome attitudes of the Ethiopian government towards migration. These attitudes are reflected through the national population policy that has a clear article to hold back rural-urban migration (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1993) and the Land Policy that requires landholders to settle permanently in their *kebeles* as a requirement to ensure their landholding rights (FDRE 2005b). These contradict the constitutional rights of migrants. The Ethiopian constitution provides the 'right of citizens to freedom of movement' (Article 32) (FDRE 1995a: 91), 'the right to access land without payment' (article 40) (FDRE 1995a: 98), and 'the right to engage freely in economic activity and pursue livelihoods of his choice anywhere within the national territory' (article 41) (FDRE 1995a: 99). This is a reflection of the mismatch between the constitutional rights of citizens and some policy objectives of the government.

Generally, migrants' vulnerability becomes more complex due to various types of migration, interdependence among shocks, overall and specific contextual factors of various shocks and migrants' responses to shocks. The results of this study resonate with the findings of Rigg and Salamanca (2009) about managing risk and vulnerability in Thailand, where the complexity of vulnerability makes it harder to understand 'where risks originate, how they are transmitted, how they are experienced and how they are managed.'.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This article sheds light on the vulnerability of migrants which is largely constructed by multiple and interdependent factors and forces over which migrants have no or limited power to control. Those factors include regional and national institutional set ups, national economic liberalisation policies, global economic structure and environmental variables that operate at various scales but converge at destination. Based on this insight, the following conclusions are drawn.

Firstly, there is casual chain of vulnerability to a specific set of shocks. For example, bad-weather-induced crop failure results in exposure of migrant farmers or investors to loss of earnings. Therefore, although one form of shock may appear more severe or dominant than the other depending on the type of migration, it is noteworthy to assume the integrated views of exposure to shocks because shocks are interdependent and impose multiple effects. Hence, comprehensive policy measures are important to deal with multiple and interrelated shocks rather than considering single-shock-oriented policy measures.

Secondly, migrants are not totally passive in the events of their exposure to shocks. They adopt a variety of ex-ante and ex-post responses (risk management strategies) to diverse covariate and idiosyncratic shocks. Some responses are important to reduce risks; others are inappropriate that they introduce more severe shocks. As there are shocks that can be managed by migrants, it remains unfortunate that some are beyond their capacity. This demands mainstreaming migration into national and lower level development policies and strategies to reduce migrants' exposure to shocks and to enhance their capacity to manage risks.

Thirdly, exposures to shocks are experienced and also manifested in various ways across different types of migrants or even within the same type of migrants. Shocks become hard to understand due to the overall and context-specific factors for vulnerabilities. In the same way, migrants' vulnerability tends to be diverse, complex and dynamic which need to be understood accordingly.

Finally, a possibly better opportunity obtainable through temporary rural-rural labour migration is nothing but a gain made from the informal, less protected, and highly globalised and risk prone nature of migrant life at destination. Although the study does not provide evidence on the persistence of migration related vulnerability and the repercussion it creates, short-term effects of shock may persist and negatively change the livelihoods of migrant-sending households permanently. The extent to which migrants' shocks at destination induce livelihood vulnerability to migrant-sending households warrants future enquiry.

Acknowledgments

We would like to appreciate the contributions of the two anonymous reviewers for allowing us to improve some parts of the article. We also thank the Association of African Universities, University of Gondar, Addis Ababa University, and 'Building Climate Resilience in the Blue Nile Basin' project of the College of Development Studies, Addis Ababa University, for the financial support they provided to a larger research project from which this article is extracted.

End Notes

[1]*Kebele* is the lowest and smallest unit in the Ethiopian administrative structure.

[2]*Hilla* refers to 400 handful bundles of sesame (Geremew *et al*. 2012).

[3]Growing period is a time-span required for a given crop to grow and mature (Gill 2003).

[4]At the time of data collection, the average exchange rate was US$1= Birr 20.1651.

[5]Quite often, in Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State, a conflict between a migrant and a local land holder can be transformed into a kind of ethnic-based conflict, which can cause eviction, loss of property or even death of several migrants.

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