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A possible alternative to illegal migration in South Wollo (Ethiopia)

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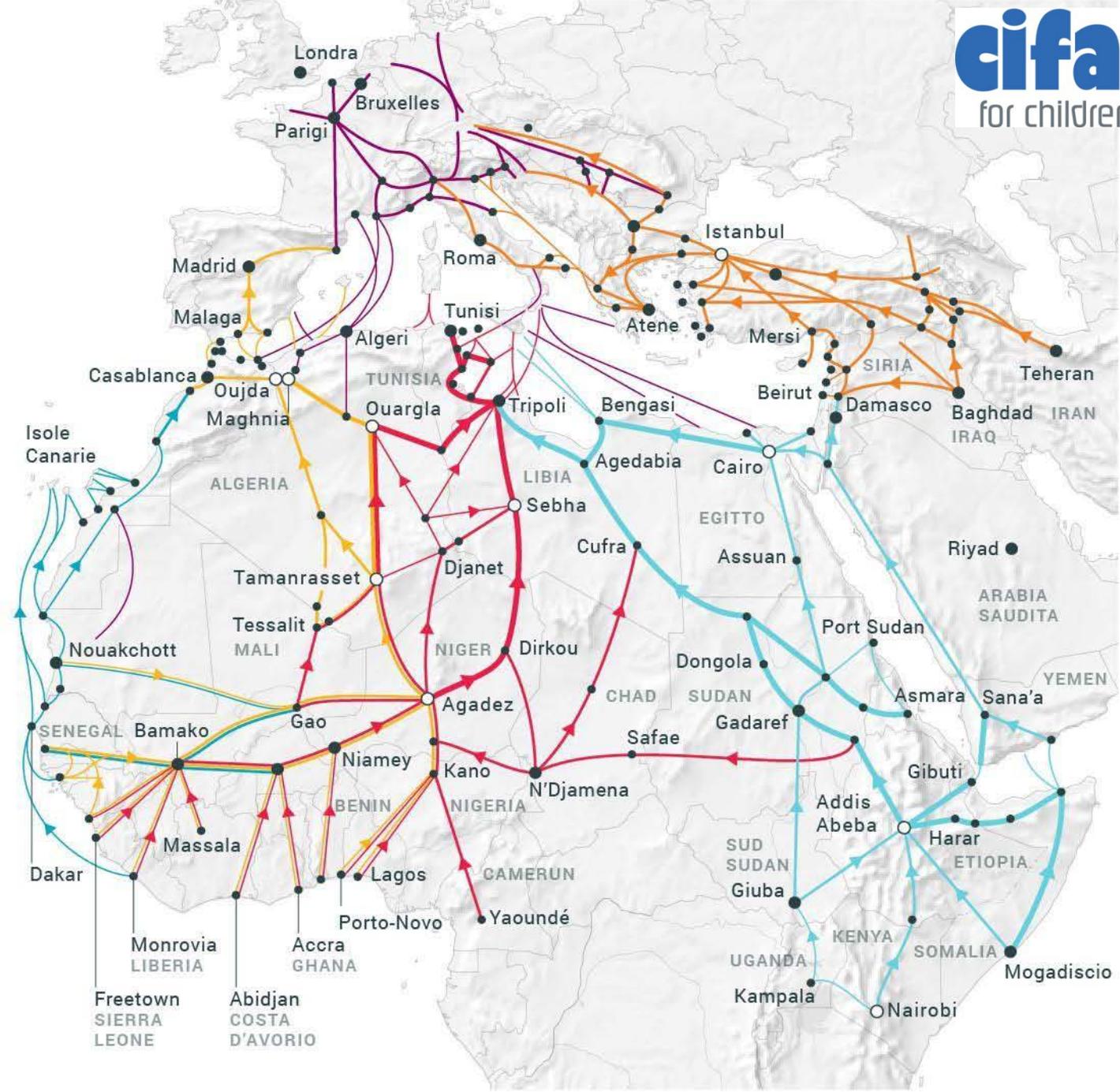


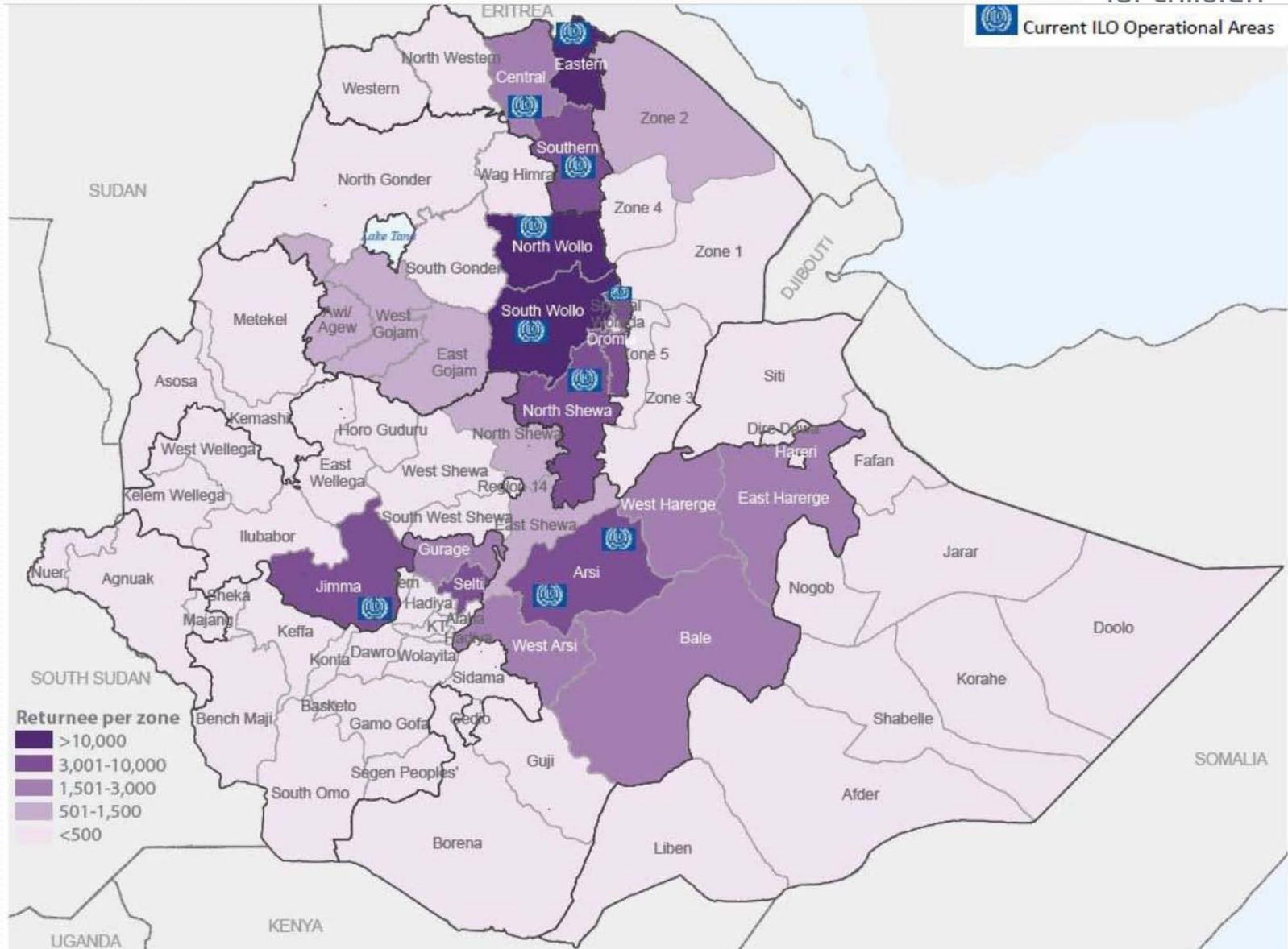
CIFA ONLUS

- CIFA Onlus (**International Centre for Children and Family**) is an Italian NGO based in Turin and established in **1980**. CIFA is working in developing countries such as **Ethiopia, Togo and Cambodia**, in partnership with local organizations to address the plights of vulnerable societies with special focus on supporting **children, girl's education and women empowerment**. Accordingly, CIFA in partnership with its Ethiopian local partners (local authorities and CSOs) has been engaged for the past 10 years in supporting primary school **children and girls** attending high school who come from poor families and also in **economic empowerment of poor women**.

The Migration Projects in Ethiopia

- “A possible alternative to illegal migration – Economic empowerment of potential migrants and awareness raising among the communities in South Wollo, Ethiopia”, 2016-2017
- #Myroots – Intervention of support of potential migrants in the socio-economic and socio-sanitary area of South Wollo in Ethiopia, 2017-2020





UNOCHA Map of returnee locations and ILO operational areas in the action 'Support to the reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia', 2015.

Four sectors approach:

- Support **income generating activities** and access to job opportunities, with special focus on young people and women;
- Support to local communities' resilience and living conditions also by improving the quantitative and the qualitative supply of **basic services** (health; SACCOs);
- Information and **awareness raising campaigns** and actions (Social and Community Theater, University of Turin), and
- **Field research** on migration (“Magnitude, Determinants and Effects of Illegal Out-Migration from South Wollo Zone, with a particular Emphasis on selected Woredas” conducted by the Wollo University)

Lessons learned/1

- One first broad consideration refers to the relation between development projects and migrations. An analysis of the **mandate of development NGO projects** will identify the **fight to poverty** as one of their core goals. “Development cooperation has the primary principle to fight poverty and not to manage migration flows” (Stocchiero, in IADC, 2017). Also, taking into consideration the EU treaties, EU commitment towards development cooperation passes by poverty reduction and not by migration management (Funk, Mc Namara, Pardo, Rose, 2017). NGO projects are chiefly accountable with the purpose of poverty reduction and their action should not be seen as a practice in contrast with the **current migration policies**, that are now focusing on the **management of the flows**, or with development trends, that show that development aid to lower-income countries generally leads to increase migration flows instead of decreasing it (the so called **migration hump**). Current reality is that migration control has become a priority of the EU, where the management of the flows have taken over development arguments. This notwithstanding, **in the long term development and poverty reduction should still remain the ultimate goal of NGOs’ work and interventions, while current measures to contrast illegal migration should be seen as a mean to be used in the short term.**

Lessons learned/2

- Programmes should take into consideration the **economical dimension of the migration phenomenon** and of the migration business. Countries of origin and of transit find themselves between the incentives of programmes based on the **principle of conditionality**, used by EU as a mean to ensure cooperation on migration management, and the **important revenues of migrants' remittances** (as high as 22.4% of Gambia's GDP, but 1% of Ethiopia's (World Bank, 2016)). At the same time the business of migrants' smuggling represents a meaningful source of income for **entire communities along the routes who have become dependent on them**. Corruption is another side effect of the phenomenon, where local authorities at grassroots level also benefit, as much as smugglers and money dealers, from the **migration business**. All these factors make it difficult for the EU to establish an efficient cooperation with countries of transit and origin.

Lessons learned/3

- The **cultural dimension of migrations** is equally relevant since the phenomenon, as in the case of South Wollo, has become so widespread and common that almost every household is touched in a way or another by the departure of at least a relative or a friend. The **lack of awareness** about the risks of migration has shown not to be the core problem: prospective migrants are rather aware of the dangers of the journey, of possible violence, abuses and even death that they can meet on the way. However a mis-perception of the positive aspects of life in destination countries and a rather irrational overemphasis of success stories distort a sound evaluation of migration given by prospective migrants and their families, who often see migration as the only way to improve their livelihood. It is **necessary therefore to build a new perception of migration** contributing to change the current culture of migration; hence awareness creation activities are still a fundamental component in migration projects and in fact they are generally incorporated in interventions implemented by NGOs. However awareness raising actions should go beyond the **testimonies of the returnees** about their challenging experiences and consider to include also other approaches such as **work with school teachers and students as well as communities**.

Lessons learned/4

- Keeping in mind the multi-dimensional roots of migrations, it is crucial to maintain a **multi-sector approach**, which is encouraged by the IADC and applied in many development programmes. **Support to job creation and to income generating activities** alone cannot contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic tissue and therefore ease the drive to migrate. Provision of **social services, health services, education programmes and policies**, are all tools that have an impact on households' livelihood and also have an impact on families' income. Considering that migration is a phenomenon that cannot be stopped in the short term, its management must necessarily **include regular migration channels**: local development policies, programmes and actions should go hand in hand with controlled but feasible migration **measures implemented by destination countries**. It is noteworthy - but it would also require some reasoning - that **all legal migration channels disappeared recently from any EU migration policy**. In Ethiopia legal out-migration was banned by the government, with the consequence to induce to an explosion of illegal migration, but the enforcement of the new 2015 proclamation and bilateral agreements with neighboring countries will help to mitigate the worse forms of illegal out-migration.

Lessons learned/5

- Main constraints to an integrated approach and to effective results are also linked to the **lack of coordination of different actors**, where EU is fragmented and strongly conditioned by the political impact of the migration “crisis”, while **fragile states** like Ethiopia struggle to develop adequate internal measures and development policies or to implement those already existing. In the case of Ethiopia, and South Wollo in particular, **legal and political framework to tackle migration issues is available** but there is lack of serious political will to implement effective control over illegal migration or develop measures and policies to foster development and mitigate causes of migration. The **Illegal Migration Task Force** established by the government as a inter-department unit that should act at various levels of the administrative structure is not implemented. An adequate **attention to law enforcement** should therefore be given in project design and adequate actions implemented both at central and local level. Very important is therefore to ensure that programmes on migration **include components aiming at promoting good governance** with the aim of strengthening both government institutions and civil society.

Lessons learned/6

- It is worth here also to mention briefly some of the recommendations drawn by the IADC research programme (IADC, 2017). Migration should be managed through local policies that should: develop comprehensive migration and youth policies built with the aim to create **decent work opportunities**; encourage migrants' households to **invest their earnings** in a balanced way and diversify strategies to prevent the risks linked to low levels of sustainability; include negotiations for **better integration of migrants in destination countries** and for the protection of their rights; support the trend of **Ethiopia as a labour exporting country** with ad hoc labour and education policies that enhance vocational trainings; strengthen **social services at local level**, including reintegration of returnees and protection of left behinds, particularly children; include measures aiming at enhancing the positive **impact of financial remittances** of migrants **on the local rural and urban communities**, mainly by the financial inclusion of migrants and their families and better **management of financial institutions**.

Conclusion

- Considering the demographic trend of sub-Saharan Africa, with a population that in **2050** is expected to double (passing **from current 1.2 billion to 2.4 billion**), the migration problem might go out of control and short term management measures might not be sufficient.
- Root causes of migration are very complex and profound, which stem from **economic backwardness**, are emphasized by **fragile states' weaknesses** and are hindered by the beneficiaries of the **new huge business** as well as by the **lack of cooperation among actors**.
- **Only multi-sector programmes that respond to very long-term strategies can therefore lead to significant results.**

grazie

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