



**Exploring the Experiences and Perceptions of Women's Migration and Its Implications for  
Agricultural Productivity: A Study of Kobo Woreda, *Semen Wollo, Ethiopia***

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## List of Diagrams

Diagram 1: Theoretical framework of the study

Diagram 2: Conceptual framework of the study

Diagram 3: The major push and pull factors of rural women forced to migrate in Kobo woreda

Diagram 4: Coping Strategies of Households After Women's Migration

Diagram 5: rural women migration and its implication for agricultural output

## List of Tables

Table 1: Data triangulation

Table 2: The profile of the university professors

Table 3: A summary of the profile of the 28 migrant women interviewees

Table 4: means of income for migrant women

Table 5: production of teff, wheat and maize annually

## List of Maps

Map 1: Geographic location of the study area

## List of Acronyms

**AAU:** Addis Ababa University

**CSA:** Central Statistics Agency

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**HH:** Households

**IGOs:** Intergovernmental Organizations

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration

**KII:** Key Informant Interview

**MOLSA:** Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

**NELM:** New Economics of Labour Migration

**NGOs:** Non-Governmental Organizations

**WU:** Wollo University

## Operationalization of terms

**Agricultural productivity** - efficiency and output of farming activities, typically measured by the quantity of crops produced per labor. So, for the sake of this paper agricultural productivity is synonymous with agricultural output.

**Debo:** a traditional way of working together for large, labor-intensive activities, such as plowing, sowing, weeding, or harvesting on voluntary base without any money exchange. The host farmer provides traditional food (*injera*) and drink (*tella* (local beer) ) for the workers as a form of gratitude for their collective effort and done in a reciprocal way.

**Injera:** Ethiopian most common traditional food, a spongy flatbread that serves as a staple food.

**Male headed household:** - a household were most day to day decisions necessary for the survival of the household is made by a residing male adult.

**Migrant:** is a person who is born in kobo woreda and who is residing and working in Addis Ababa and has a family and property in the study Woreda.

**Migration:** relocation of individual (temporary or permanent) from Kobor woreda to Addis Ababa

**Rural women migration** = female outmigration

**Teff** - cereal used to make *injera*

**Wonfel:** it is a labor-exchange system involves fewer people and can be more regular or organized in cycles and done when tasks are smaller and can be handled by fewer people

**Woreda:** is, Amharic term, which means a district-level administrative division in Ethiopia

**Seasonal labour** - are from households that have limited lands or resources of their own residing around kobo woreda. In return, local villagers seek temporary employment on other farms to supplement their incomes, especially during peak agricultural seasons.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	iii
List of Diagrams .....	iv
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Maps .....	iv
List of Acronyms .....	v
Operationalization of terms .....	vi
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3 Objective of the study.....	3
General objective .....	3
Specific objectives:.....	3
Research questions .....	3
1.4 Significance of the study.....	4
1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study .....	4
CHAPTER 2 .....	6
1.2 Theories on migration and agricultural productivity .....	6
1.2.1 What is migration.....	6
1.2.3 Theories of migration from rural to urban areas in poor countries.....	7
1.3 Theories of agriculture productivity .....	8
1.4. Theoretical framework of the study .....	8
CHAPTER 3 .....	10
3.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES .....	10
3.1.1 The role of women in agriculture.....	10
3.2. What are the reason, socioeconomic, women forced to migrate from rural to urban areas in poor countries? .....	10
3.3. Conceptual framework of the study.....	11
CHAPTER 4 .....	13
4.1. Methodology .....	13

4.2. Research Design .....	13
4.3. Data Collection Methods.....	13
4.5. Data triangulation .....	15
4.6 Challenges of doing the research.....	20
CHAPTER 5 .....	22
5.1. Context and area of the study.....	22
5.1.1. Selection of the study area .....	22
5.1.2. The Farming System.....	23
CHAPTER 6 .....	24
6.1. Finding and analysis.....	24
6.1.1. Introduction.....	24
6.2. The Push Factors .....	24
6.2.1. Economic Hardship:.....	24
6.2.2. Violence and Security Threats .....	27
6.2.3. Gender Inequality .....	28
6.2.4. Lack of basic Services .....	29
6.3. Pull Factors.....	30
6.3.1. Economic Opportunities and Better Job Prospects: .....	30
6.3.2. Better Healthcare Services .....	31
6.3.3. Improved Living Conditions and Infrastructure .....	32
6.3.5. Social and Cultural Freedom .....	33
6.4. Coping Strategies of Households After Women's Migration .....	36
6.4.1. Hiring Seasonal Laborers.....	36
6.4.2. Reducing Cultivated Land.....	37
6.4.3. Switching to Less Labor-Intensive Crops .....	38
6.4.4. Receiving Remittances:.....	39
6.4.5. Relying on traditional cooperative Labor Systems .....	40
6.4.6. Diversifying Income Sources.....	41
6.5. Women migration and its implications on agricultural output or productivity .....	42
6.5.1.Labor shortage .....	43
6.5.3. Shift in Farming Practices: .....	47
6.5.4. Social and economic burdens on remaining family members:.....	47
CHAPTER 7 .....	50

7.1. Conclusion and recommendation.....	50
7.1.1. Conclusion.....	50
7.1.2. Recommendation .....	52
References .....	54
Appendix .....	67

## **Abstract**

Agriculture is the backbone of Ethiopia. The role of women in agriculture is very immense. The internal migration of rural women from Kobo Woreda, Ethiopia has been gradually growing year after year. While their contributions to agricultural productivity are crucial, little attention has been made to the impact on agricultural output. The causes driving this migration are various and complicated. The study gathered data from a diverse group of informants to ensure triangulation. Some studies found that rural-urban migration of women has insignificant impact on agricultural output and even remittances provide economic benefits and investment in agricultural inputs, while my study found drawbacks outweigh benefits. When women migrate, it not only leads to a shortage of physical labor, but also contributes to the loss of customs, skills, and traditional knowledge. Additionally, the remittances they send are often insufficient and inconsistent.

## **Relevance to development study**

Using thematic analysis, the study highlights the crucial role women play in agriculture and the void they create, highlighting the need for support in rural development. Analyzing how women migrate affects agricultural output may aid in the development of policies that support rural families and find a temporary or permanent solution to the problem. Most research focuses on men out migration and its effect on agriculture by disregarding women migration. Identifying the reason why women migrate and pinpointing its effect on agricultural output is very crucial for development as agriculture is the backbone of the country. So, this research is helpful for broader debate on several insights like rural women migration, gender labor dynamics, diverse rural livelihood, gender and development, migration policy, and addressing rural-urban migration challenge. In a nutshell, in the study area the number of women is almost proportional to men, a development agenda in the area that excludes women would not make any difference, so policy makers need to see this gap and work towards to fill it.

**Key words:** *rural women, migration, kobo woreda, implication, agriculture, productivity, output*

# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

In Africa, agriculture has a vital role in maintaining livelihoods, promoting economic growth, and averting starvation (Diao et al. 2010). Agriculture benefits the environment, fosters economic progress, and feeds billions, primarily in underdeveloped countries. It preserves biodiversity, water, and land for future generations while creating employment, money, and facilitating international trade (Eshetu et al.,2016).

Rural-urban migration is a common phenomenon in Ethiopia, particularly in regions frequently affected by drought (Miheretu, 2011). Migration is one of the most important demographic and socio-economic phenomena worldwide, which to a great extent reflects the patterns in developing countries (Findlay and Wahba, 2013). In Ethiopia, rural-to-urban and international migration trends have been on an upward trajectory; these have also entailed women in increased proportions today(Fernandez, 2011). Migratory urbanization is, therefore, a common phenomenon in Ethiopia, but especially frequent in regions that are frequently afflicted with drought (Miheretu, 2011).

Though most studies focus on male out migration and ignore the women out migration, the participation of women in agriculture is of key importance in as much as improvements in this sector and productivity in general are closely related to their involvement (Sharma and Badodiya, 2016).

The migration of Ethiopian women has complex implications for agricultural productivity. While the remittances and transfer of skills offer some potential benefits, it can also bring changes in the composition of agricultural labor and influence resource availability (Adenugba et al. 2013).

Ethiopian women's migration, inter and intra, has complicated effects on agricultural output. Remittances and skill transfers may have some advantages, but they may also alter the makeup of agricultural labor and have an impact on the availability of resources (Adenugba et al. 2013). In order to design appropriate measures that minimize the possible consequences of women's migration while simultaneously using its advantages for agricultural development, stakeholders and policymakers must have a thorough understanding of these dynamics. Migration patterns among rural women often have an influence on agricultural production, especially where agriculture is considered the mainstay of

livelihood (FAO, 2021). A similar case was reported in Kobo Woreda, Semen Wollo zone, Ethiopia, where women's migration had a great influence on agricultural productivity (Miheretu, 2011). Though women account for half of the population in Ethiopia, little attention has been given to the women's migration and its implications for agricultural productivity.

In recent years, the notable rise in rural outmigration, especially among women, has been drawing considerable attention due to the possible implications for agricultural output and household income in developing countries like Ethiopia (De Brauw, 2014). Kobo Woreda, located in the Semen Wollo Zone, is notable for its high rates of female migration. This study aims to investigate the influence of rural women's migration on agriculture and agricultural output in Kobo Woreda, Ethiopia.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Migration among rural women is an intricate and very fast changing phenomenon that necessitates further study endeavors. Although previous studies have shed light on certain elements of female migration from rural to urban areas, the ongoing discussion is still limited to a single perspective.

Migration of rural women is the complex interplay of factors at the regional, cultural, economic and individual levels so more inclusive research needs to be conducted to understand what leads women to migrate and what follows. Such study is essential to inform services and policies that are specifically customized to meet the needs of migrating women, given the complexity of their experiences (Durrah et al. 2024; Roberts et al. 2004).

Women migration poses a challenge on agricultural sector as women play a paramount role in the sector in different ways (Kawarazuka et al. 2020). According to the CSA (2013) almost halve of the population in the kobo woreda are women, any development plan including agricultural practices could not be successful by ignoring the fifty percent of the population.

Development policy and strategies are hampered by the lack of evidence-based insights (Behague et al. 2009) so, it is essential to comprehend the reasons behind women's migration and its effect on agricultural productivity. In rural Ethiopia, most households rely on agriculture for survival, especially in places like Kobo Woreda. Women are key contributors to farming, but their migration to cities is raising concerns about how this affects agricultural productivity. Understanding these issues will help to create better policies to reduce the negative effects of migration on farming in rural Ethiopia.

Existing research, such as (Abebaw, et al., 2020; Asfaw, W, 2010,et al; Arega, et al., 2023; Bassie, et al., 2022; De Brauw, A., 2014; Eshetu, F. and Mekonnen, E., 2016; Ezra, M. and Kiros, G.E., 2001; Eshetu, et al.,2023; Vo, D.H., 2023; Gibson, M.A. and Gurmu, E., 2012; Hermans, K. and Garbe, L., 2019; Kosec, et al., 2018; Ochocho, A., 2019; Tesfaye, T., 2019; Vo, D.H., 2023; Woldemariam, et al., 2023; Wondimagegnhu, B.A., 2012; Worku, G.B., 2021; and Zeleke, et al., 2008.) focuses on analyzing or investigating the connection between male migration , agriculture, and food insecurity. There is, however, a significant gap in the literature when it comes to the relationship between women's migration and its implication on agricultural productivity or output. This study therefore attempts to address the following goals.

### 1.3 Objective of the study

#### General objective

Assessing the implication of rural women's out-migration on agricultural productivity in selected villages of the Kobo Woreda, Semen Wollo.

#### Specific objectives:

1. To assess the change of women's out-migration on agricultural practices and output.
2. To investigate the actions taken by households to deal with the absence of women in the agricultural field.
3. To understand the implications (socioeconomic) women's decision to migrate from rural to urban locations.

#### Research questions

##### *General*

What are the influences of rural women's out-migration on agricultural production and household income in selected villages of the Kobo Woreda, Semen Wollo?

##### *Specific*

1. How Will the women out-migration change agricultural practice and output?
2. What are the strategies employed by households to deal with the departure of rural women and their success in maintaining their means of living?

3. What are the implication, socioeconomic, women forced to migrate from their home?

## 1.4 Significance of the study

Economic expansion has traditionally depended heavily on agriculture. Every area in the world that has developed a robust, diversified economy did so by first establishing a solid agricultural foundation (Hazell, 2017). Agriculture is the pillar of the Ethiopian economy as majority of the population used as a means of livelihood. “Many of the world's poorest countries rely heavily on agriculture, which serves as a key source of income for people living in rural areas.” (Mukherjee and Fransen, 2024. p.2). Ethiopia's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture.

Agricultural sector accounts for 85% of the foreign earnings and provides livelihood for 80-85% of the population of the country (Berhane et al., 2018; Broussard, 2013; Damtie, 2022). It employs close to 85% of the workforce that exists in the country ( Broussard, 2013, and Damtie, 2022). As per the study of (Berhane et al., 2018; Broussard, 2013; Shiferaw, 2022), agriculture contributes about 40%-45% of the GDP in Ethiopia. So, it is very hard to assume development without agriculture. Fostering agricultural productivity and studying the reason why its productivity is decreasing is a key.

Till now no research has been conducted showing the nexus between agricultural productivity and rural women migration in kobo woreda, semen wollo Ethiopia as most research focuses on male out migration and its effect on agriculture; hence the federal government in general and the local woreda and the regional government in particular of Ethiopia will benefit from this research in formulating suitable development policies pertaining to the issue.

I believe that the findings of this study will provide inputs for researchers, NGOs, IGOS, local and national government, development practitioners, policymakers, and any interested body in the subject.

## 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Time and budgetary limitations prevented me from doing the investigation to the fullest extent possible. Because of this, the research only covered two rural kebeles (Keble 1 and kebele 2) in the region and concentrated on evaluating the effect of rural women's migration on agricultural output in Kobo Woreda, Ethiopia. Moreover, different variables may affect the result of the study like the ongoing war during the study and different epidemics. For comparison reasons, non-migrant households have to be taken in for this study, but due to aforementioned reasons, they were not included. The study also did not include remaining women in HHs, such as sisters or daughters of

those who left. As a result, there is insufficient data to make generalizations about the problem as a whole. However, in order to improve the study's dependability and credibility, I was very careful while choosing the participants, making sure they represented all significant stakeholders. I tried to cross check all the data through triangulation mechanism.

# CHAPTER 2

## 1.2 Theories on migration and agricultural productivity

### 1.2.1 What is migration

Though no international agreed up on definition, migration is the movement of people from one geographical area to another, and it may involve residence for either long-term or short-term periods (Katuli ,2013). In the context of developing countries, rural-to-urban migration becomes a significant phenomenon where individuals move from rural areas to urban centers. Migration is a complex process influenced by the various factors that dominate it, of which search for employment opportunities, better educational facilities, and infrastructure—most times lacking in rural areas—take center stage (Nweke, 2019). Again, socio-economic factors like income inequality, attraction to urban areas, and desire for a standard level of living largely influence migration patterns (Srivatsa, 2015). Migration of the youth for job and education opportunities does not by nature mean that they are not interested in farming, since many of them express the desire to move back to their origin (Eckert et al. 2019).

Internal migration within a developing country from rural to urban areas is a very complex process with many driving economic, social, and cultural factors. Though the major causes are jobs and a better lifestyle, the dynamics of migration are with many thrusts and outcomes. Addressing the root causes of migration, such as inadequate rural development, could help alleviate the imbalance between rural and urban areas and promote more reasonable population distribution (Kondo et al., 1995; Nweke, 2019; Rondinelli, 1983).

Some researches on agricultural productivity focus on the importance of sustainable and adaptive agronomic practices in the face of changing climatic conditions (Dubey et al. 2020; Elhag, 2023; Pisante et al. 2012). Others stress technological and economic problems ( 2024; Andrianarison et al. 2021; Pandey et al. 2024). The theories of agricultural production are broad and linked, encompassing economic models, technical improvements, and sustainable farming methods (Andrianarison et al. 2021; Dubey et al. 2020; Elhag, 2023; Hassine & Kandil, 2009; Li et al. 2013; Parimalarangan, 2023; Pisante et al. 2012).

Data demonstrates that a combination of factors including innovation, education, credit system at the same time trade rules and efficient use of resources also contribute to increased agricultural productivity (Parimalarangan 2023). No single factor determine the agricultural productivity.

### 1.2.3 Theories of migration from rural to urban areas in poor countries

The reason why people migrate from their origin to other places are explained in theory called push – pull factor theory. Pull elements such as better employment options and amenities urging outsiders to converge towards urban centers where facilities are available (Katuli 2013; Mutandwa et al.2011), the need for better living conditions and infrastructure along with educational opportunities figure prominently (Mulungu, 2012; Mutandwa et al.). As a push factors environmental degradation, economic challenges, rural poverty, lack of government support and poor policy (Jedwab et al.2015; Mianabadi et al. 2021) could be mentioned. The historical background and social-cultural factors have also played an important role in determining patterns of migration (Ge et al., 2020). Concerns like sustainable income through wage and high possibilities of securing job for migrants, which are traditionally the major difficulties in rural areas, are increasingly being eclipsed by more crucial elements in the transition from the rural to urban (Gebre, 2020).

Women migrate into the urban centers in search of good job opportunities and financial autonomy, especially found in informal economies. Gender-based discrimination and lack of good working conditions structurally depress the gains made with this migration. According to Pickbourn (2018), economic need is now actually one of the biggest motivators for today's migration; however, most developing countries actively de-incentivize rural-urban migration on the grounds that it is destabilizing. That has resulted in less funding in support of migrant women and fewer positive results that could have been achieved.

The most contemporary theories of migration, especially regarding agricultural productivity, quite widely take into account the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) model, which postulates that not isolated individuals but rather households or larger units with strategies of risk reduction and constraints overcoming make decisions concerning migration (Li et al., 2013; Shi, 2018). Numerous studies have investigated the effects of migration on agricultural output, namely through the mechanisms of remittances (Eghan and Adjasi ,2023; Kapri and Ghimire ,2020; Li et al., 2013) and the adjustment of labor distribution(Kapri & Ghimire,2020).

## 1.3 Theories of agriculture productivity

Various theories of agricultural productivity take into account a wide range of variables, such as migration, technical innovation, trade liberalization, education/knowledge, financial accessibility, and agronomic practices.

According to Human capital and knowledge theories, knowledge is crucial in farming, as a knowledgeable farmer is more likely to employ different techniques to boost agricultural productivity including modern methods that can enhance production (Maertens et al.,2020). Different research also claim that education and training are the most effective ways of building human capital that will unleash productivity. To put bluntly, if farmers know more, they grow more.

## 1.4. Theoretical framework of the study

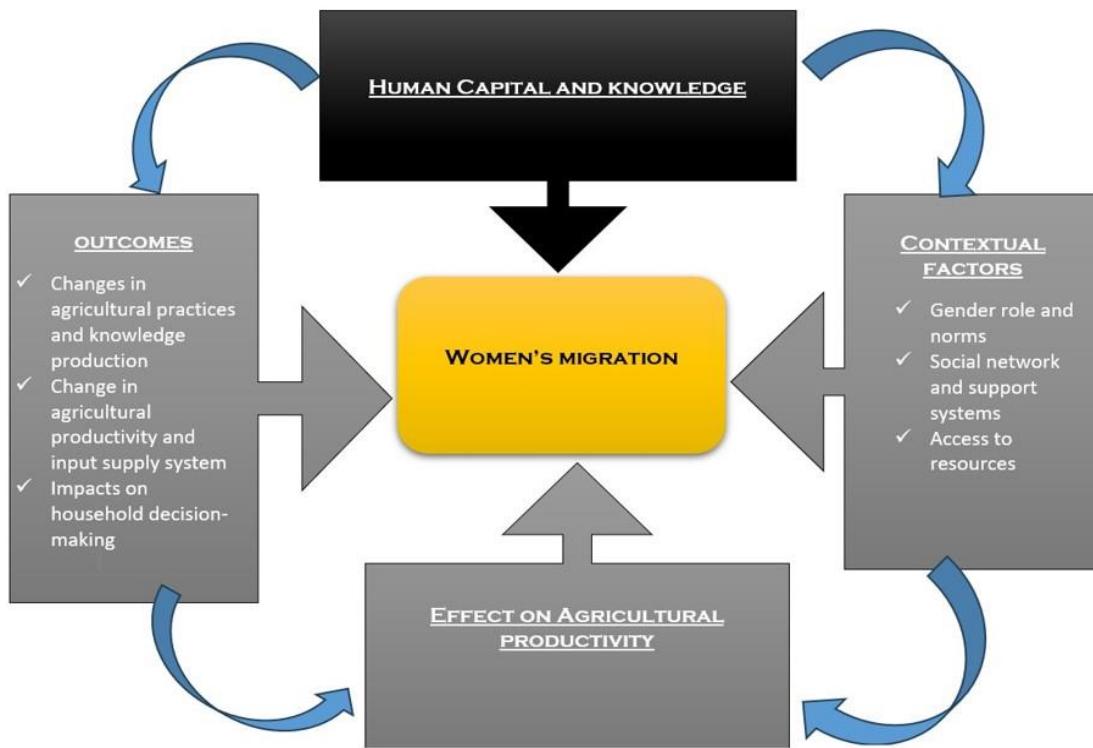
The central point of knowledge and Human Capital Theory is that Knowledge plays a paramount importance like physical and financial capital (Becker, 1964). Based on the theories of knowledge and human capital, this research argue that the migration of women may have an adverse effect on agricultural output. They leave and take their knowledge of agriculture with them, which results in a skilled labor shortage that may reduce the efficiency of output. Furthermore, the scarcity of labor could lead households to employ less efficient farming methods, further diminishing productivity. Investigate the reason why rural women's decide to migrate, what was their agricultural obligations, and the effects of their absence on household structures and farming practices are influenced by conventional gender roles and norms.

How rural women's migration impacts agricultural output relies on a range of issues, including government legislation, traditional farming techniques like *debo* and *wenfel*, gender norms, and access to resources. These variables can either enhance or minimize the impact of women's migration on farming production.

This study conducted in kobo woreda tries to show a thorough understanding of the complicated nexus between women's migration and agricultural productivity taking in to account different factors. The theory help to see a range of contextual factors impact the migration of women. These characteristics impact the decisions made by women to migrate, the methods in which they engage in

agricultural systems, and the prospective implications of their absence.

**Diagram 1:** Theoretical framework of the study



**Source:** *Adopted from Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz's theory of Human Capital and Knowledge Theories, 2024*

# CHAPTER 3

## 3.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURES

### 3.1.1 The role of women in agriculture

Women in fact, participate in agriculture, women play a crucial role that is often overlooked (Paroda ,2019; Roy ,2022; Ali & Kumar 2024; Omokore & Yusuf 2010). They nearly involve in all facets of farming, from preparation through to selling the produce; however, their potentials are compromised in many cases due to social and economic burdens (Mulema et al., 2019).

Women also take part in activities from land preparation to marketing while doing all the farming work. There are different ways in which they engaged in farming depending on factors such as their place of residence, age, social class and ethnicity (Wanjiru 2021). In this context, for farming to develop in a sustainable way and for women to be accorded equal opportunity in the agriculture sector, the concerned stakeholders require favorable policies and programs which address the issues faced by the women in farming, adopt gender-sensitive methods, and promote empowerment of women (Akokuwebe et al., 2021; Ali & Kumar, 2024; Chadel et al., 2022; Hamidah & Wahyurini, 2023; Mulema et al., 2019; Omokore & Yusuf, 2010; Paroda, 2019; Roy, 2022; Wambui, 2021; Wanjiru, 2021).

### 3.2. What are the reason, socioeconomic, women forced to migrate from rural to urban areas in poor countries?

Women typically leave the countryside due of economic reasons and obstacles associated to their gender. They are also striving to shift their responsibilities as they transition from country to urban life (Imran et al., 2013). In locations like China, land policy assist sustain the ties between rural and urban regions (Liu & Jia, 2021). Their tie with rural community forced them to go back to their rural origin. Many women go back and forth between rural and urban regions, preserving strong links to the countryside (Englund, 2002).

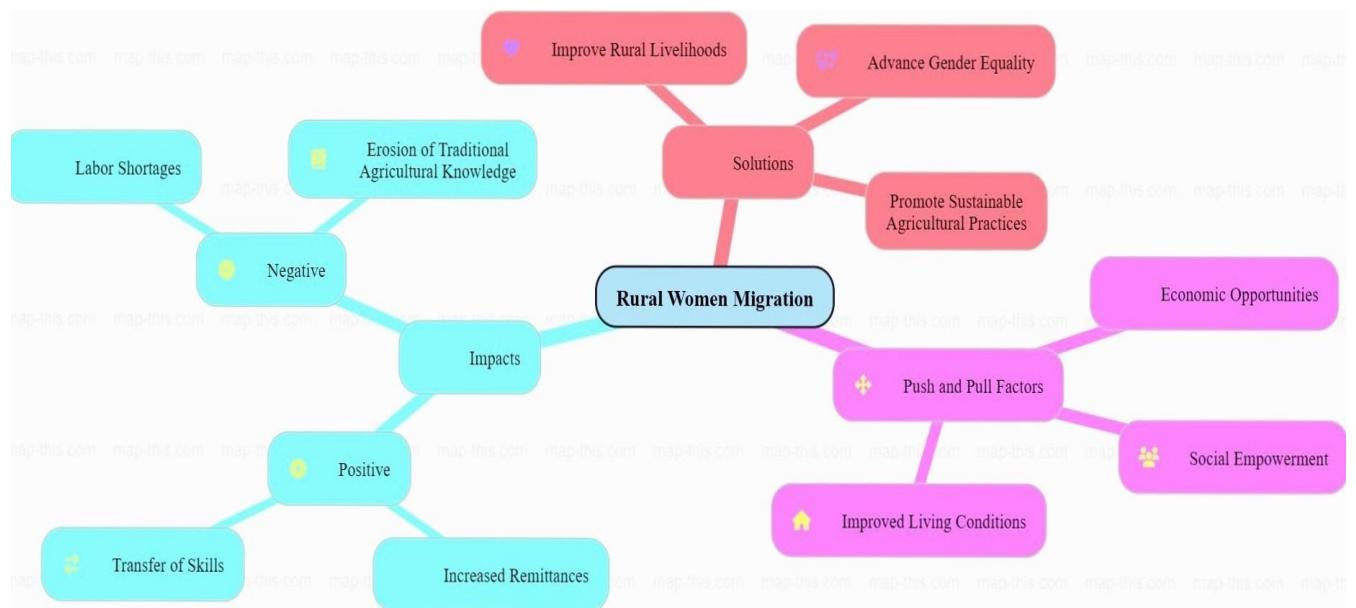
Women leave rural regions for numerous reasons, include performing activities such as farming, taking care of livestock and poultry, household, and healthcare (Brydon & Chant, 1990). Western feminists occasionally urge women to relocate to cities to escape conventional male-dominated roles (Imran et al., 2013). However, moving to cities doesn't necessarily alleviate these challenges (Liu & Jia, 2021).

Women are actively involved in agriculture and need quick aid to achieve the rewards they deserve. Social and political variables, especially gender stereotypes, impact both men and women in farming, although women are the ones most in need of help (Ali & Kumar 2024; Omokore & Yusuf 2010).

### 3.3. Conceptual framework of the study

The migration of rural women from rural to urban areas is caused by a mix of circumstances, including both push and pull forces (Hare, 1999). They are driven away from their rural areas by a number of causes, including but not limited to poverty, unemployment, a lack of services, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and social instability (Hill, 1994). On the other hand, they are attracted to urban areas by pull factors such as higher career possibilities, enhanced access to services, increased personal autonomy, and preexisting social networks (Hoffmann et al, 2019). Because of remittances, the transfer of skills, and the reduction in land pressure, this migration has the potential to have a favorable impact on agricultural productivity. Nevertheless, it also has unfavorable repercussions, such as a lack of available labor, the disappearance of traditional knowledge, an imbalance between the females and males and the neglect of family farms. To effectively address issues and capitalize on migration, it is crucial to implement comprehensive policies that support sustainable agriculture, gender equality, and rural livelihoods.

**Diagram 2:** Conceptual framework of the study



**Source:** Own sketch using various literatures, 2024

# CHAPTER 4

## 4.1. Methodology

The objective of my study was to understand the effect of rural woman migration on agricultural productivity. A detailed and careful study was done so as to be able to address the research questions and to achieve the research objective. I hired a team of five data collectors for primary data collection depending on their education experience and past exposure to data collection. Data was collected through a range of methods (KII-Key Informant Interview and semi-structured interview) from different groups of respondents.

The participants involved were:

- Family heads of migrant women (25 participants)
- Migrant women (28 participants, selected using snowball sampling)
- University professors from Addis Ababa and Wollo Universities (6 participants)
- Agricultural extension workers (6 participants)
- NGO workers involved in the relevant issues (6 participants)
- Government officials (6 participants)

A checklist was used for both semi structured interview and for key informants so as to ensure that all key issues are covered during the discussion and interview.

## 4.2. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design, which would avail the researcher with a clear picture of the effects brought forth by women out-migration. Qualitative data collection methods elicit a rich description of social problems and draw out experiences, beliefs, and opinions of participants. (Khuzaiyah et al., 2023; Twis et al., 2019; Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2022).

## 4.3. Data Collection Methods

The primary places where migrant women from all over Ethiopia most often go to *Merkato* (largest marketplace in Ethiopia found in Addis Ababa) and *Megenagna* (marketplace found in Addis Ababa) in order to get brokers to start their first job and small business. Accordingly, the interviews with migrant women were conducted in both *Megenagna* and *Merkato*, where they are easily accessible to

anyone. Using snowball sampling to get all migrant women from kobo woreda data have been collected in those areas. According to the data, some of the informants (migrant women) have already started small businesses in *Merkato*. All the key informants were interviewed from their office and some agricultural extension workers were interviewed while they were in their field work.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KII):** Interviewed with 24 respondents including Professors from Universities of Addis Ababa and Wollo Universities (6), Agricultural extension workers (6), and NGO workers (6) and federal and regional government officials (6).
- **Semi structured and in-depth Interviews:** Conducted with migrant women (28 participants), selected using snowball sampling to check the major reasons behind their migration, the obstacles they are facing, and the perceived implications of their absence on their families. In addition to migrant women twenty-five family heads of the migrant women to explore the community-level implications of women's absence on agricultural labor and practices and the coping mechanisms.

**Secondary Data:** Other supplementary to the above-mentioned techniques of data collection, this study also used secondary sources data. Therefore, data useful for this research work were obtained from the Kobo Woreda and Semen Wollo municipalities, the Woreda Agriculture and Rural Development office, as well as other published and unpublished documents available from different government and non-government organizations.

**Sampling Strategy:** Study participants were recruited purposively and through the snowballing technique. eligibility criteria for family heads of migrant women were selected using community heads and agricultural extension workers of the locality to obtain a best-fit representation of migrant women's households. The migrant women participants were recruited using snowball sampling technique.

**Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data. All the information gathered from informants was coded to draw a connection between different perspectives and experiences of the informants, and I used ATLAS.ti software to analyze the data. All the key themes were analyzed.

#### 4.4. Ethical consideration

The study's goal was explicitly communicated to all participants, who were given the opportunity to participate or reject. Confidentiality was a focus, and a coding system was employed to safeguard participants' identities. So, all the names of participant mentioned in this research are pseudo names.

#### 4.5. Data triangulation

Triangulation is said to be the most effective way of enhancing the validity of the research results through application of various methods and approaches (Meydan and Akkaş, 2024)). It is a good way of approaching research as this will help the researcher overcome the disadvantages of qualitative research (Begley, 1996). Therefore, triangulation is an important technique to enhance validity and reliability of findings of research (Begley, 1996; Meydan and Akkaş, 2024; Perlesz, and Lindsay, 2003; and Thurmond, 2001). Accordingly I tried my best to triangulate all the data through various mechanisms, the following table(1) clearly shows what information is required for this study, from whom the required information was collected, and how the information was collected and analyzed.

Table 1: Data triangulation

Specific objectives	Unit of analysis	Observation unit/data source	Methods of data collection/analysis
<b>1. To understand the reason why women migrate</b>	Socio-economic conditions of women	(a) migrant women (b) head of family (c) academicians (d) government officials	(a) semi structured interview (b) KII
<b>2. To assess the strategies used by households to deal with the departure of women</b>	Alternative strategies used by households for addressing decline of women in agriculture	(a) household heads (b) agriculture extension workers (c) academicians	(a) Semi structured interview (b) KII
<b>3. To assess the change of women's out migration on agricultural practice and output</b>	Change agricultural practice and output	(a) head of family (b) agricultural extension workers (c) government officials (d) Academicians	(a) Semi structured interview (b) KII

Source: Own data, 2024

The age of the interviewees (migrant women) ranges from 19 to 37 with an average age of 28. They are all in their productive age which makes them similar in this respect. Regarding their marital status, of the 28 interviewees, 2 are single, 21 married, 2 divorced and 1 widowed. So, the majority are married.

Table 2: The profile of the university professors

	Position	Years of experience
Interviewees 1	MA in Migration studies (AAU)	5
Interviewees 2	MA in Sociology (AAU)	4
Interviewees 3	MA in PSIR(WU)	3
Interviewees 3	PhD in Migration studies (AAU)	1
Interviewees 5	MSC in Agricultural Economics (WU)	3
Interviewees 6	MA in Economics (WU)	5

Source: Own data, 2024

To gather comprehensive information, it was necessary to include diverse fields of study from different academicians, table (2) outlines the characteristics of university faculty members interviewed for this study. These interviewees come from different academic disciplines, like – Economics, Political science and International Relations (PSIR), Sociology, Agricultural Economics, and Migration Studies. Their professional experience range from one to five years, combining both new insights and established knowledge.

The Agricultural extension workers (6 participants) were also interviewed as key informant, and they do have experience spanning from 3 years up to 6 years of experience in the field and 3 of them have BSC and 3 of them have MSC in agriculture economics. NGO workers participated in this study are working in NGO called Agri Service Ethiopia, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ORDA Ethiopia.

Table 3: A summary of the profile of the 28 migrant women interviewees

SN	Personal information			Migration Details		Education and Skills
	Age	Marital status	Number of children	Duration of stay in the Addis	Level of education/grade	Vocational or technical training or any other
1.	28	married	3	3	Grade 2	No
2.	34	married	2	4	Grade 3	No
3.	32	Married	4	5	Grade 10	No
4.	29	married	2	3	Grade 5	No
5.	30	married	3	5	Grade 5	Yes
6.	32	married	2	4	Grade 10	No
7.	27	single	0	3	Grade 7	No
8.	35	married	2	4	Grade 0	No
9.	34	Divorce	3	3	Grade 2	No
10.	32	married	4	3	Grade 3	No
11.	32	married	2	4	Grade 2	No
12.	33	married	2	5	Grade 10	No
13.	37	divorced	3	3	Grade 8	No
14.	35	widowed	3	5	Grade 3	No
15.	28	Married	2	4	Grade 10	Yes
16.	27	married	2	3	Grade 5	No
17.	26	single	0	4	Grade 2	No
18.	32	married	4	3	Grade 10	Yes
19.	30	married	3	3	Grade 3	No
20.	32	married	3	4	Grade 7	No
21.	31	married	2	5	Grade 10	No
22.	28	married	2	3	Grade 8	No
23.	27	married	3	5	Grade 9	No
24.	29	married	2	4	Grade 10	No
25.	30	married	2	3	Grade 8	No
26.	32	married	3	3	Grade 9	No
27.	31	married	2	4	Grade 10	No
28.	32	married	2	5	Grade 0	No

Source: *own fieldwork, 2024*

As the table (3) above indicates, the maximum age of the women is 37, and the minimum is 26. The average age is 31. All participants in the study had lived in Addis Ababa for more than three years,

with an average stay ranging from 3 to 5 years. On average, they stayed for four years. Regarding their educational level it ranges from grade zero up to grade ten. The average grade level is grade six.

Precisely the table above (Table 3) presents the demographic characteristics of women migrants interviewed and summarized below;

1. Age Group: The interviewees are mostly aged between 31–40 which represent women with substantial household and farming responsibilities, which can influence agricultural productivity.
2. Education Level: The majority of women have finished their elementary schooling and have basic reading and writing skill yet due to their busy schedule like house keeping and taking care of the house work their access to postsecondary education is restricted.
3. Family Size: one important factor indicating their burden in and out of the house is their family size which ranges from 4 up to 6 children. When examining their migration choices and how their absence impacts the labor pool available for agriculture, this element may be significant.

This demographic profile (age, education level, and the size of the family) suggests key insights how the migration of women influence the agricultural output

In connection with the 25 interviewed male head of the family, only two of the twenty-five male heads of households have completed the fifth grade. The remaining twenty-three are illiterate and have never attended school. Pertaining to their marital status all are married and their wife are found in Addis Ababa. The average family size for the respondent households was found out to be 4. Which is slightly higher than the regional average of 4.7 (CSA, 1994). The minimum family size in the sample respondents was found to be 1 whereas the maximum was 10 persons.

### **Means of income**

I categorize their means of income in to four sections as domestic work, informal Sector Jobs, service Industry, and small business Ventures.

Table 4: means of income for migrant women

	Domestic work		Informal Sector Jobs		Service Industry		Small Business Ventures	
House maid	Cleaning, cooking, childcare in temporary base	Selling goods in local markets (e.g., fruits, vegetables, handmade crafts).	Small-scale trading (food, small household items) or running a kiosk.	Working in hotels, restaurants, or cafes as cleaners, waitresses, or kitchen assistants	Employment in beauty salons as hairdressers or beauticians.	Running small businesses like teahouses, food stalls, and petty shops.		
No	3	4	8	4	6	2	1	Total= 28

Source: *own fieldwork, 2024*

### Land Holding

The traditional system of inheritance in the country, coupled with a significant population pressure and land fragmentation, leads to small sizes of landholdings for most of the rural households in Ethiopia (Beyene, 2022). As represented, the average size of landholdings for male-headed households in the study area ranges from 0.5 to 2 hectares.

According to agricultural extension workers and local government officials of the area this size is affected by various factors, including farming methods, household traits, and geographical location (highland, midland, or lowland).

### Participants: Experts, NGO workers and government officials

All the participants in this study come from a variety of backgrounds, each offering unique perspectives on the issue of rural women's migration and its implications on agriculture in Kobo Woreda. The university professors, from both Addis Ababa University and Wollo University, have spent years researching rural development, migration, and agricultural economics. Many of them have

more than ten years of experience in this field of research, not only at the academic level but also at the grassroots level among the local communities. All the information taken from migrant women, household family of migrant women and agricultural extension workers had been cross-checked by academicians too. Since they have extensive research experience in the issue.

The agricultural extension in Kobo Woreda , workers involved in this research ,has been working directly with farmers for the last five to fifteen years. As they are working with the rural communities, they have a good knowledge of the issue of the topic.

Participant of NGO worker in this study are the workers that are active in various community development that address rural development through gender equality and livelihood-empowerment strategies. They implement community development projects, provide assistance to migration-affected families, and offer alternative livelihoods for rural people.

Both local and federal government officials were also used as sources for this study. Their backgrounds are as follows: the officials involved are working in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and are senior officials in the Employment Promotion Department and the Labor Migration Department at the federal level, as well as regional or local government level.

Data collection was from the fourth of July to the twelfth of August 2024. The process had taken five weeks. Data collection through interviews was beneficial in giving the data collectors an opportunity to witness day-to-day activities and living conditions to link the information they provided and their condition since all interviews were conducted in households or workplaces of household migrant women and families of migrant women. The criteria for choosing the interviewees with rural women migrants were age, place of residence in Addis, and apparently their sex. When selecting migrant women, various factors were considered, including economic condition, the length of their stay in Addis, their level of education, and whether they had friends or relatives already residing in the city.

#### 4.6 Challenges of doing the research

During the data collection period (from July 4 to August 12, 2024) the ongoing internal battle between the federal government and the so called *Fano militia* in the Amhara region created major obstacles for data collection.

The data enumerators have experience in how to collect data during this difficult time and they do their best to collect data from migrant family heads but conducting focus group discussion was not successful due to the situation of the area as gathering was not possible.

The migrant women and their heads of family was very suspicious about the relevance of the study and they were asking the data enumerators a question like “who they are?” and “why this time?”. But since the enumerators are native speakers of *Amharic language* (*a language spoken by the rural community of kobo woreda*) and communicate very well about the objective of the research and fixed the problem. There was also data registration problem like the total number of migrant women and the total number of agricultural production in the area was not accurately recorded and known. It was very challenging to collect data from some government officials due to their busy schedules. Additionally, some were unwilling to give interviews and had to be replaced by other government officials. Thanks to the commitment and flexibility of my enumerators, I could collect high-quality data despite these setbacks. The fact that my enumerators were fluent in *Amharic* was greatly helpful for making initial contacts less suspicious to the migrant families. Although discussions with groups were not possible, individual interviews provided great input. Flexibility in working with alternative government officials also ensured comprehensive data collection at this stage, giving a strong base to my study.

# CHAPTER 5

## 5.1. Context and area of the study

### 5.1.1. Selection of the study area

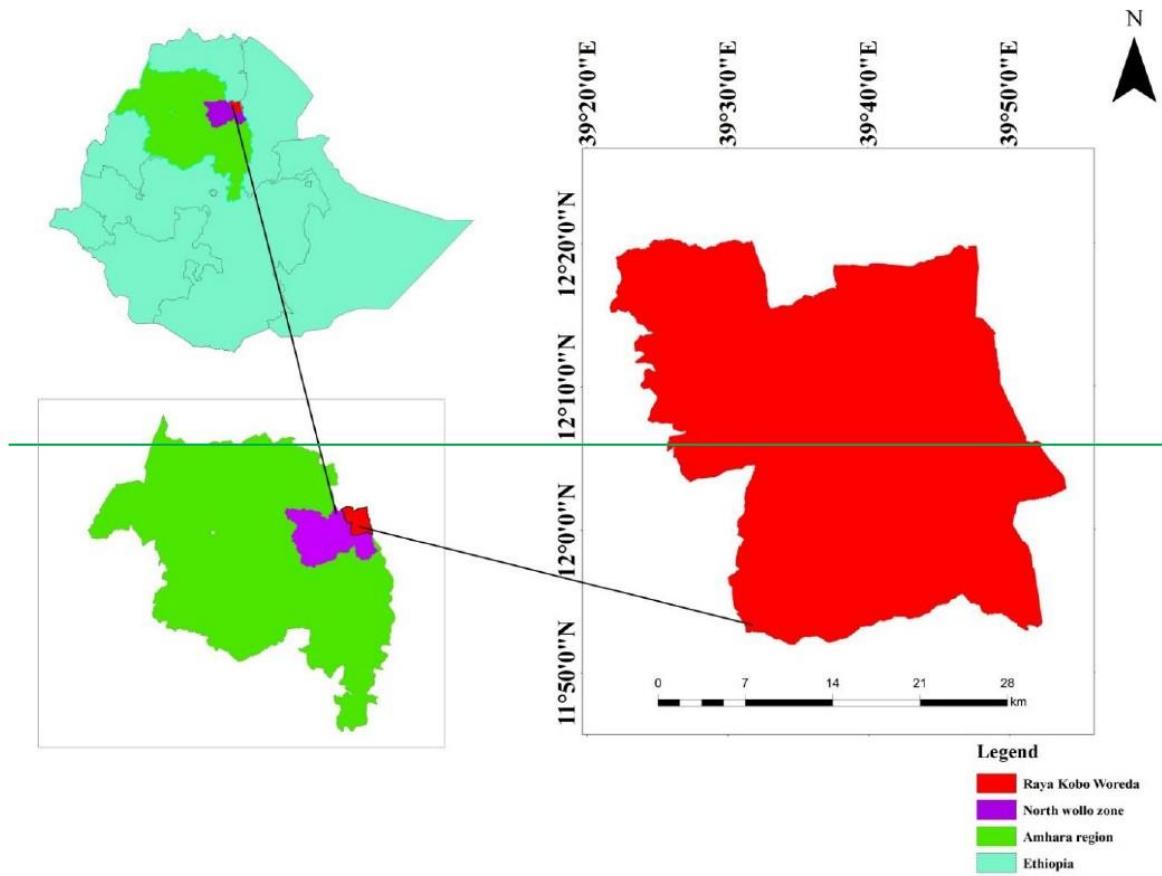
Kobo woreda in Amhara region as a case study, was selected purposively for several reasons. Among the several reasons, the Woreda is an ideal case study for understanding national issues due to its significant patterns of women's migration and its agricultural background. Semen Wollo, particularly Kobo woreda, has been one of the districts that are witnessing high rates of female formal and informal migration in both domestic and international work (Abrham, 2017; Dessiye & Emirie, 2017; IOM, 2024 and Ya, 2016).

The total population of the Woreda in 2017 is estimated to be 275,981 (138,726 male and 137,165 female). Out of the total population 218,102 (108,737 male and 109,365 female) live in rural areas whereas 57,789 peoples (29,361 male and 28,428 female) live in the urban area of the *woreda* (CSA, 2013). According to the city municipality data, Raya Kobo woreda comprises 43 rural and six urban kebele administrations.

In addition, according to RKWAO (2015) there are 49,841 rural households in the study area. The study area represents an agriculturally potential area with high livestock population density. Mixed farming system is practiced in the area with crop production dominating livestock rearing (Abrham, 2017).

According to the local government officials of the area the migration women from Kobo woreda to Addia Ababa is increasing alarmingly and extensive training about the harsh consequence of the migration was provided in collaboration with different government and non-government organizations though the result is not as expected.

**Map 1:** Geographic location of the study area



**Source:** *Semen Wollo municipality, 2024*

### 5.1.2. The Farming System

According to agricultural extension worker and confirmed by all informants, the most dominant cereals in the area are teff and wheat. According to all agricultural extension worker of the area and all the informants, teff and wheat were the two predominant crops in the area. These two grains form the basis of the local diet and economy. The farming system in the Woreda is a mixed farming system where the crop sub-system and the livestock sub-system are equally important to each other (Belete, 2006). The kobo woreda is characterized by an intensive traditional subsistence-oriented agriculture system (Hidaru et al, 2022; Teshome, 2017; and Sisay et al, 2024).

The agricultural system is labor intensive all through the year. Labor is required to level fields, create and maintain terraces, cut and carry fodder to animals, turn the soil of fields to be sown several times rather than once (Abrham, 2017).

# CHAPTER 6

## 6.1. Finding and analysis

### 6.1.1. Introduction

Assessing the impact or implication of rural women's out-migration on agricultural output in Kobo woreda, Semen Wollo, Ethiopia, is the study's main objective. The first of the three specific objective is to assess how women's out-migration has affected agricultural productivity and practices. Finding out how families handle the problem of women's absence from the agricultural field is the second specific objective. The third is to identify the factors that led the women to migrate. Let's begin with the third objective of the study.

As the data gathered from the migrant women and key informants indicates the major factors triggers women to migrate was classified as push and pull factors.

## 6.2. The Push Factors

### 6.2.1. Economic Hardship:

Internal migration in rural communities, particularly in the global south or developing countries, is one of the most complex and comprehensive processes in the reshaping of rural communities (Schewel & Fransen, 2018). Rural-urban migration has been one of the livelihood strategies common among households and individuals whose lives are characterized by conditions of poverty, scarcity of resources, and economic insecurity (Kassegn, 2020).

As a result of slow adoption of modern farming methods, poor quality of the soil, and frequent drought, agricultural production was poor in these two areas. Hence, the earning of money for rural households is not enough to lead their life.

The reason being economic insecurity, which influences rural women in kobo woreda to have the desire of traveling to urban areas seeking good employment opportunities. Here, their goal is to find employment that will allow them to send money home, easing the financial burden on their families. This pattern demonstrates how poor rural economic conditions affect agricultural output and contribute to population changes when women leave rural areas in pursuit of financial security for their family.

The observations of NGO worker Hana Gebremedhin highlight even more the financial difficulties driving women's migration from rural communities like Kobo Woreda. She says, "Based on our experiences in rural communities like Kobo Woreda, it is clear that, whether internal or external, one of the main causes of women's relocation is obviously economic difficulty. Many women find themselves subsistence farmers, depending on antiquated farming methods and erratic rains." This point of view is consistent with studies by Hassan and Tularam (2018), which show how rural populations all throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are affected by environmental elements including temperature and rainfall variations.

These ambiguities of the environment create a difficult backdrop for rural women to take a call on pursuing more regular and formal jobs in towns.

These observations reveal the level of interplay between environmental and economic forces in rural settings where women-most sensitive to climate conditions-depend on subsistence farming. This vulnerability does not affect only productions but also influences migratory patterns since women seek opportunities to reduce such instabilities and make sure of better opportunities for themselves and their families. The local economy is very limitedly diversified, with agriculture largely unproductive and inefficient; hence, little extra income is available. "While NGOs like ours do their best trying to overcome such hurdles through providing vocational training, access to microloans, and climate-resilient agricultural practice..." says Hana Gebremedhin, an NGO worker, highlighting these difficulties (Gebremedhin 06, 2024). This approach demonstrates a substantial mismatch between local measures to aid women and the forces that continue to promote migration. The extent of economic suffering in communities like Kobo Woreda means that many women still regard migration as the most feasible option to financial stability.

The economic strains that rural women confront are exemplified by an informant with migratory women (from kobo to Addis Ababa) Almenesh Becha: "We work tirelessly on the land, but the yields are meager. We really don't have enough to support our families and put money down for the future" (Almnesh Becha 08, 2024).

The majority of migratory women migrate from rural areas due to the inability to economically support their families with very limited land access, generate enough amounts of money, or cope with the continuing agricultural harvest losses. This is consistent with Davin (1996) and Lyu et al. (2019) findings that with the resource scarcity and declining agricultural returns, rural women are highly

affected by their search for better economic opportunities elsewhere. In poor rural economies, very low agricultural productivity and resource constraints have been the motivating factors in the migration of women in search of better livelihoods to support their families and secure economic stability.

This sentiment was clearly stated by Beletu Desta 09, a small business owner in Addis, who remarked, "with that small plough of land, how is it possible to feed all the families? I think farming is not enough anymore," underscoring the financial difficulties many rural families face. Similarly NGO workers Bayush Bekele, added "Women typically migrate to different places in search of better possibilities due to traditional gender norms and the lack of opportunities in rural areas"(Bayush Bekele12, 2024).

Informant like migrant women and household migrant family and cross checked by other key informants economic hardship was the main reason that triggers women to migrate, and of course the decision of migration was made in consultation with their families. In order to provide for their three children, one migrant woman described how her own husband pushed and urged her to go to Addis Ababa and send money back. "We were unable to support our three children due to challenging circumstances. I had no choice but to migrate; my family approved of my decision, which was the only one I had" (Tehune Ebabu 22,2024).

Women's choice to migrate is frequently driven by deep concerns about poverty and is made in an effort to ensure household survival by maximizing and diversifying income through remittances (Bridge, 2005). Families employ migration as a tactic to enhance their household's overall financial status (Akhigbe & Effevottu, 2023; Kishtwaria et al. 2007 ). According to the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) framework, this strategy aims to boost income while also helping families manage risks related to agriculture, market failures, and limited access to credit or insurance in their communities (Stark and Bloom,1985).

Belay Mandefero, a professor at AAU, claims that "social, economic, and environmental issues are driving women from rural communities like Kobo Woreda to Addis Ababa. The long-term impacts on their home towns are more complicated, even while moving to the city can provide these women and their families with temporary financial relief. Developing comprehensive policies is necessary to address the underlying reasons of rural women's migration" (Belay mandefero 06, 2024).

## 6.2.2. Violence and Security Threats

According to local officials and key informant interview, a rising number of rural citizens, especially women, have migrated to metropolitan areas as a result of the battle between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which lasted from November 2020 until the Pretoria Agreement in November 2022.

Of the 28 rural women migrants interviewed, 6 admitted that this conflict was partly a reason for their migration into the capital city, Addis Ababa.

A migrant from a remote farming hamlet named Amina Yusuf described her experience:

"Leaving was not an easy option. When the federal government waged war on the TPLF, the agricultural work that my family had been doing for generations was abruptly altered. Before long, our village's safety was under jeopardy. The sound of weapons was getting louder every day, and there were rumors of soldiers approaching. For fear of becoming entangled in the violence, we were no longer able to carry out our farming activities" (Amina Yusuf 23, 2024).

Conflict-related migration of rural women is consistent with research by Abdulkadr and Neszmélyi (2021), which shows that violence severely disturbs rural communities, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural work is often heavily steeped in culture and tradition. In a similar vein, Abdullah (2016) finds that one of the strongest forces behind migration is conflict, which frequently pushes vulnerable populations—such as rural women—to seek refuge in cities. From an academic perspective, this creates a compelling debate: while economic factors are often cited as primary migration drivers (Adepoju, 2008), conflict-related displacement has emerged as a critical factor, particularly in politically unstable regions (Wondimagegnhu & Zeleke, 2017).

Nonetheless, other academics contend that blaming rural women's relocation only on conflict ignores the socioeconomic disadvantages that rural communities face. Wondimu and Gebremedhin (2019), for example, argue that although war speeds up migration, underlying poverty, a lack of infrastructure, and restricted access to healthcare and education are already strong drivers of movement. According to this perspective, conflict merely intensifies pre-existing push factors, serving as a catalyst rather than a standalone cause.

The discussion underscores the complex factors driving rural women migration, where the interplay between conflict and economic difficulties intensifies the movement of women from rural areas. This viewpoint emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of rural women's migration patterns, recognizing both the immediate risks of violence and the persistent socioeconomic obstacles they encounter in Ethiopia's countryside like kobo woreda.

### 6.2.3. Gender Inequality

Other push factors contributing to the migration of rural women include chronic and systemic discrimination based on gender that is deeply entrenched in rural culture. About 18% of migrant women reported gender inequality as a cause of their migration in kobo woreda. In almost all the rural households, women are denied access to resources and opportunities to participate in decision-making and to acquire more education, which diminishes their capabilities to explore better livelihood opportunities (Yorke et al., 2022). Males are typically positioned as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in these rural settings, while women are limited to tasks that give them minimal influence over the household's financial circumstances (Deere & León, 2001). These structural inequalities are "push" factors that motivate women to move in pursuit of more personal freedom and economic empowerment.

The story of 26-year-old immigrant Yeshi Tola exemplifies this relationship. "In Kobo, I was made to feel like a second-class citizen: unable to practice my agency, no one listened to me, and I constantly thought, 'why must I stay here when there are options in urban areas like Addis Ababa?'" she said, looking back on her life before moving (Yeshi Tola 21, 2024). Her experience is typical of many rural women who see migration as a means of achieving financial security and independence. She overcame early adversity to launch a small business that enables her to provide for her family back home. It is from such an individual transformation that migration can encourage not only economic mobility but also changes in gender roles within the family and the community.

According to studies like (Ahmed, 2020;Yorke et al., 2022), This type of migration is very often a response to the limitations imposed by rural living on women's lives, where social and economic mobility is constrained both by policy lacuna and cultural norms. Migration, for rural women, may also serve as a way of breaking free from binders of societal and cultural roles placed upon them that involve maximum domestic chores with minimum economic participation(UNFPA, 2007). Inheritance and property ownership laws, for example, are usually in men's favor in rural Ethiopia, with the effect of denying women security of land tenure. According to Deere and León (2001), a major factor that pushes many women to cities, where the possibility of ownership and economic power appears more accessible, is their incapacity to protect their property rights.

Furthermore, expectations of urban economic possibilities might work as a "pull" effect, even in cases when

metropolitan regions themselves may provide limited prospects, according to economic models of migration as those put out by Todaro (1976). In order to overcome the constraints imposed on them by their rural communities, rural women are frequently driven by the perceived chance to achieve financial independence (Cranford, 2006). Thus, for many women, the experience of migrating becomes a means of achieving self-empowerment and broader social acceptance that would be hard, if not impossible, to attain in their rural environments.

#### 6.2.4. Lack of basic Services

Deep rooted poor living conditions, such as absent of healthcare, educational, and infrastructure facilities within rural areas like Kobo Woreda, affect women's lives and usually forces many women to migrate to other parts of the country. Migrant women and key informants interviewed identified this as one of the push factors. One of the migrant women interviewed, Selamawit Ferew, recounted her experience with the health facility:

" I remember the birth of my firstborn, it was a situation in which I almost lost my life, as in our neighborhood, there was no ambulance, no health center, and no appropriate medicine. An ambulance couldn't make it to our village, since it was raining and the road wasn't paved. The community took the responsibility of taking care of me; they carried me on a traditional wood bed from underneath, supported by four people, and brought me to the nearest healthcare center. Even though I reached in the late night and bleeding, the doctors said to my husband, 'take her somewhere else, since we don't have oxygen and other facilities,' and finally I delivered my child safely through a traditional midwife" (Selamawit Ferew 17,2024).

Similarly, 19-year-old Almaz Shenkutie, another migrant rural woman, spoke more at a macro level about infrastructure and the absence of opportunities for livelihoods " besides the lack of basic health and educational services, there is limited alternative sources of income due to the absence of main infrastructures like road and water." (Almaz Shenkutie 20, 2024). For rural communities, sustainable sources of income are highly dependent on basic infrastructure, which in turn helps them to have alternative means of livelihood.

The lack of such basic facilities and infrastructures, particularly health-related, may be the primary driver for the migration of women, according to Choi & Kim 2021. Similarly, in my research, the major causes which make migrant women relocate in Kobo woreda are a lack of health facilities as 12% of

the informant agree. Probably, these migrants reduce the tendency to migrate if the health facilities in rural areas increase (Arora ,2024).

### 6.3. Pull Factors

Besides to the push factors there are ample causes that enforce rural women to leave their origin as a pull factors. Below is a thematic presentation of the main pull factors behind women's migration as the data from the informants reveals.

#### 6.3.1. Economic Opportunities and Better Job Prospects:

According to all informants of migrant women and key informants too, women migrated in search of jobs with more secure incomes than the seasonal farm work.

Although urban employment frequently involves low-wage work in domestic or informal sectors, it is viewed as comparably better than subsistence farming or unreliable rural labor. Tacoli (2012), who highlights economic opportunity as a key factor driving rural-to-urban migration, confirms this tendency. Most of these women move into urban areas such as Addis Ababa for possible opportunities in the service sector as domestic work, small-scale companies, or as informal trade. Tihun Belay, a migrant women working as a housemaid in Addis Ababa, described her motivation: "My hamlet served as a hub for agriculture, the primary means of generating revenue, albeit insufficient for basic survival. I got information from my cousin, who had relocated to Addis, suggesting that there were chances accessible in metropolitan districts, including occupations from cleaning private spaces to the opportunity to create a small company. Compared to subsistence farming, this looked to be more hopeful" (Tihun Belay 08, 2024).

However, the economic attractiveness of urban relocation is varied and not necessarily favorable for women. Kuschminder (2017) believes that economic progress is not necessarily the major reason for female migration, since many migrant women endure underemployment in metropolitan areas, frequently receiving salaries that fall below subsistence levels. "Although migration can provide increased employment opportunities in urban areas, the quality of jobs, especially for women, remains low, with many employed in low-paying and unstable positions" (Kuschminder, 2017). This inference implies that although cities provide a larger choice of work prospects, the positions accessible to female migrants, particularly those from rural regions, tend to be unstable and low rewarded, typically in the informal sector.

Further complicating the scenario, Key Informant of this study Dr. Getahun (2024) from Addis Ababa University says, "The economic incentives for rural-urban migration are particularly strong in Ethiopia. Urban locations provide more numerous career alternatives, including in the informal sector, which might be enticing for women from rural areas where job choices are severely limited." (Getahun beuketu 03,2024) . This reinforces the view that the promise of urban work is nevertheless alluring, even when the economic benefits may be limited, since urban centers provide possibilities that rural economies lack totally.

Educational ambitions are sometimes promoted as a possible "pull" factor in migration; however, for many rural women, urgent economic survival takes priority over educational aims (Parmar & Singh, 2020; Sørensen, 2016). This is evident in the present study, where economic challenges in rural regions, along with the chance of obtaining better-paying employment in cities, emerged as the key motivators for migration. Research indicates that rural women place a higher priority on economic survival than educational access, with education being a secondary issue for many (Sørensen, 2016).

These are attributed to more women migrating to urban areas in search of greener pastures in terms of jobs, send remittances back home, which the family largely invests in agriculture in terms of seeds, fertilizers, and equipment. In that way, these remittances indirectly enhance agricultural output. On the other hand, it creates labor shortages in rural communities, as it disrupts the transfer of the important farming knowledge, which mostly occurs among the younger generation about agricultural skills.

The New Economics of Labor Migration theory (NELM) frames migration as a household strategy to improve the family income and economic security of its members rather than as a means of individual gain per se. In Kobo woreda, greater economic opportunities coupled with better job prospects were identified by key informants as major pull factors for rural women's migration. This aligns with the premise of NELM that one could consider migration to be a response aimed at improving household stability and financial well-being.

### 6.3.2. Better Healthcare Services

In this study, access to healthcare facilities was revealed to be as one of the pull factor that initiated women to migrate, particularly for women who were pregnant or had other health difficulties in distant places with underequipped health care. The availability of better clinics and hospitals in urban locations like Addis Ababa and Dessie(the capital city of wollo) was regularly noted by respondents as

a motivating factor for relocation. This need is vividly highlighted by the experience of 17-year-old Kobo Woreda migrant Almaz Kebed. "Access to electricity and roads was quite limited in Kobo Woreda. After losing my first baby because we couldn't get to the hospital in time, I understood that I needed to move to the city for better healthcare. I intend to bring my entire family to Addis Ababa." (Almaz Kebed 17, 2024).

The awful reality suffered by rural women who lack access to crucial healthcare services are brought to light by this study. Better healthcare services are seen as desirable, however some studies claimed that it is a lesser factor for relocation. Adepoju (2008) observed that while better healthcare may entice migrants, it is never the key incentive, especially for younger, single women who generally put a larger priority on job or education than on access to healthcare. Even when urban places offer greater healthcare, young migrants may not always consider this when making their selection. Most informants of migrant women declared that healthcare facilities and needs are "luxuries" compared with other shortages in their area. Better health care services are not the primary reason for leaving, but rather a secondary one, as indicated by the majority of respondents. Urban healthcare is superior, but it doesn't necessarily matter to young migrants. Most seek job first, then healthcare (Adepoju, 2008). Therefore, the key motive for migration is still economic opportunity, even if healthcare facilities in places like Dessie and Addis Ababa offer a powerful enticement, particularly for women with health-related concerns. This reinforces the more general results that the major motivations of migration are economic hardship and career possibilities, with healthcare functioning as a supplemental aspect.

### 6.3.3. Improved Living Conditions and Infrastructure

Rural women migrate from their origin to urban areas in search of better living with improved infrastructures such as electricity, clean water, and a decent place to stay. Nine of twenty-eight migrant women in this study indicated infrastructural deficiencies as a reason for their migration. For instance, Alemitu Setegn, age 28, explained, "... I mean, at least, survival is what is most important to me, so that I make sure my family and I have something to get by on. Here in Addis, compared to life in my previous rural village, I get clean water, electricity, and housing, so it feels luxurious here." (Alemitu Setegn 12, 2024). This confirms that urban infrastructures attract rural dwellers, which is in line with the study of , Satterthwaite and Tacoli(2003).

Contradict to this assertion, one of my key informant from Addis Ababa, Professor Getachew Abebe, says infrastructure draws rural migrants but boosts their aspirations beyond metropolitan reality.

“Most of the migrants believe that moving to urban centers like Addis Ababa will immediately avail them of better infrastructure. In reality, this often does not materialize since many end up in informal settlements with inadequate services; thus, the very same challenges they had been experiencing in rural areas are replicated in a dense and competitive environment.” (Getachew Abebe 4, 2024).

Another key informant in my study, Wollo University's Professor Alemnesh Fikru, also expresses such concerns, emphasizing that urban migration, especially when based on infrastructure needs, might be a double-edged sword. “Urban areas offer better infrastructure in theory, but in practice, access is limited by socioeconomic status. Migrants, particularly women from rural backgrounds, are more likely to settle in areas with insufficient facilities, thus repeating a cycle of deprivation” (Almnesh Fikru 6, 2024). These insights underscore Potts' (2012) findings, which challenge the assumption that urban migration automatically leads to better living conditions, as many rural migrants end up in informal settlements with scant access to the very amenities they sought in the city. In urban areas, migrants face shortages of houses and basic infrastructure because the cost of living is very high (Dasgupta, 2019; Patel et al. 2020).

### 6.3.5. Social and Cultural Freedom

Many women from rural regions are lured to cities in quest of more freedom and independence, since traditional roles in their communities may sometimes restrict their options and keep them bound to certain obligations at home and locally (Connelly et al., 2010; Davin, 2005; Xiong & Liu, 2021). For them, relocating to an urban context offers an avenue to question these conventions and achieve new freedom, allowing them to take responsibility of their own life in ways that may not be feasible back home (Srinivasan, 1997).

Interviews with migrant women and key informants in my study too, mentioned that the goal of social and cultural autonomy is an incentive for rural Ethiopian women transferring to urban areas. Many women consider cities as areas where they may break away from the stringent traditional gender norms common in rural Ethiopia. A migrant women living in Addis Ababa now named, Beletech Tefera, a 32-year-old migrant, remarked, “In my village, women are anticipated to marry and remain at home, yet in the city, I have the opportunity to work and make my own decisions” (Beletech Tefera 23,2024). This view mirrors Chant and Radcliffe's (1992) theory that migration permits women to develop freedom and explore new social roles.

Dr. Sarah Aklog from Addis Ababa University endorses this position, adding that “urban areas or cities with a more diverse and inclusive community can provide rural women with autonomy and the capacity to challenge patriarchal norms” (Aklog Aklog, 2024). These results are similar with Gaetano's (2015) research, which implies that relocation to metropolitan regions might give women not just with economic prospects but also a feeling of social freedom. However, other scholars think that the freedom connected to urban migration may be considerably overestimated.

Nevertheless, other researchers challenge that the freedom associated with urban migration may be overestimated. Yorke et al. (2021) imply that although migration may bring new possibilities, social barriers persist, especially for low-income female migrants. According to Yorke et al. (2021), “while migration can provide some women with more freedom, city life often brings new social pressures, especially for low-income female migrants.” This approach disputes the premise that metropolitan contexts generally provide women more freedom, pointing out that urban living might impose new types of social limitations and inequality.

Despite these critical opinions, data from this research reveal that the women questioned felt substantially more emancipated in metropolitan settings than in their rural beginnings, where conventional expectations were greater. Professor Getnet Alemu from Wollo University underscored this issue, noting, “For many rural women, the city offers an escape from the roles imposed on them. “Even with challenges, rural women often feel a greater sense of empowerment in urban areas” (Getnet Alemu 12, 2024). The perspective emphasizes the importance of context in understanding the impact of migration on social freedom, acknowledging that urban living often provides significant progress for women from rural backgrounds as compared to their previous living condition.

#### 6.3.6 Peer and Family Networks in Urban Areas

Social networks help rural women relocate because they depend on assistance from city-based family and friends. According to Massey et al. (1993), pre-existing migrant networks stimulate further migration. Moving to a new area may be difficult without previous information; migrants typically require someone to assist them settle in. Networking becomes a major draw.

Informants of this study, Askal Alemu said, “My sister had already relocated to Addis Ababa, and when I arrived, she helped me settle in by assisting with a job search, creating a linkage with brokers, and finding a place to live” (Askal Alemu 12, 2024). However, further evidence undermines the idea

that social networks usually benefit migrants. According to Sørensen (2016), social networks may provide basic assistance but also constrain women to low-wage, exploitative occupations due to limited employment options inside the network.

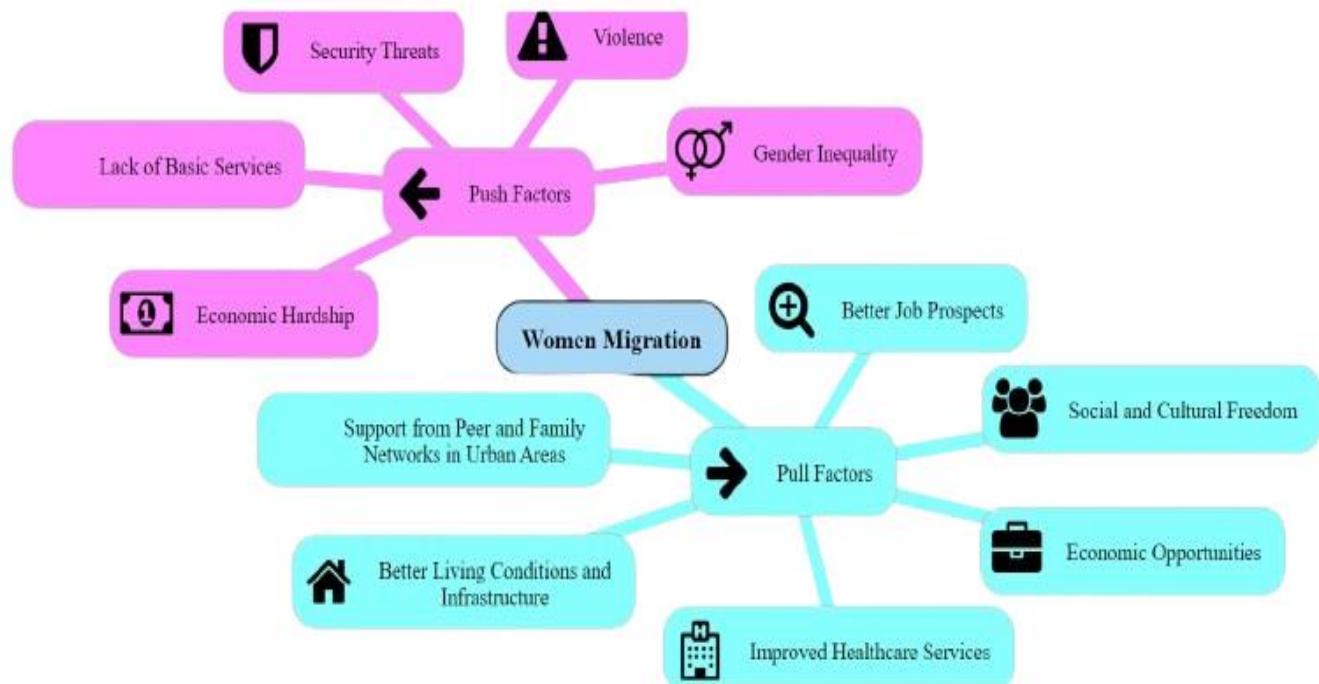
This study has highlighted several key pull factors influencing rural women's migration to urban areas in Kobo Woreda, yet these factors do not hold the same weight for every migrant. Economic possibilities, education, and infrastructure are typically highlighted as motivators, although they are often unequally distributed or less effective than expected. Although metropolitan areas provide more social freedoms, post-migration women may face increased gender exploitation and disadvantage.

This study has highlighted several pull factors influencing rural women's migration to urban areas in Kobo Woreda, including social and cultural freedom, improved living conditions and infrastructure, better healthcare services, economic opportunities and job prospects, and peer and family networks in urban areas. Most of the rural women migrant also reported economic opportunities and career improvements as the primary reason for migration. The findings also support the study conducted by Afsar in 1999, Eze in 2016, and that of Tacoli in 2012: rural-urban migration is always motivated by the quest to seek improved employment opportunities, as urban areas offer a greater scope for finding jobs compared to rural towns.

In interviews, migrant women said that even low-paying urban jobs - for example, domestic work or small business employment - have the potential to be much more sustainable than subsistence farming in rural villages. Many women see employment opportunities in urban centres as a more stable source of livelihoods with which to support themselves and their families than the very limited opportunities available in their hometowns.

Key informant interviews also stress that economic factors are at the core of rural-to-urban migration though not a sole factor. As Dr. chalie yehun from Wollo University described: "Though increased infrastructure and access to health care are variables, economic opportunity is the major motivator. Women typically regard metropolitan work as a good method of supporting themselves and their family" (Dr. chalie yehun 11, 2024). Along the same lines, Dr. Feseha Getneh from Addis Ababa University reasoned that "for many rural women, the city represents opportunity, financial independence, and self-sufficiency that rural life simply doesn't offer" ( Feseha Getneh 05, 2024). In sum, whereas causes for rural women migration into the urban areas like Addis Ababa may be varied, one key and very important driver could be the prospect of better economic conditions that may be found there.

**Diagram 3:** The major push and pull factors of rural women forced to migrate in Kobo woreda



**Source:** Own sketch based on the finding, 2024

## 6.4. Coping Strategies of Households After Women's Migration

In the study area, rural women, has migrated to Addis Ababa. What mechanisms the remaining households use to fill this gap is the second specific objective of this study. This theme analysis considers how 25 male heads of households have coped with the migration of their wives into urban areas and dealt with the absence of women contributors in the agriculture field. Academics from AAU and WU universities, agricultural extension workers, and personnel from non-governmental organizations offer their perspectives on the achievements and difficulties of the strategies used by households.

### 6.4.1. Hiring Seasonal Laborers

The employment of seasonal laborers is a common strategy to address labor shortages in the study area, particularly during critical agricultural periods such as planting and harvesting. Informants highlighted, however, that this is often just a short-term fix rather than a sustainable solution. Out of 25 household informants, 12 (or about 50%) said that employing seasonal labor was somewhat beneficial, since it enabled them to maintain their agricultural operations. Nevertheless, the economic

pressure of paying for labor caused an extra hardship for many farmers, whose finances were already stretched tight.

Alemayehu Belete from Addis Ababa University remarked, "While employing seasonal laborers may provide temporary relief, it is unsustainable for households that lack financial resources. In Wollo, many households cannot afford regular outside labor, which will eventually lead to a decrease in farm productivity" (Alemayehu Belete 07, 2024).

This underlines the financial burden faced by lower-income families as they seek to mitigate labor shortages by temporary employment. Complementing this, Martha Kebede from Agri Service Ethiopia underlined that " Whereas seasonal workers can fill up the labor gap in a relatively short period of time, this is temporary. For long-term sustainability, investments in mechanization or affordable laborsaving technologies are paramount." (Martha Kebede 08, 2024). From the here standpoint, the shortage of manpower in agriculture is better tackled by the application of small scale technology.

Household factors, like size, wealth, and social networks, often determine reliance on seasonal laborers, but it is usually external factors that ultimately affect their overall effectiveness, such as migration and drought, in the study area. Hiring seasonal labour enhances agricultural productivity but is largely affected by migration and drought, among other factors (Berlie ,2015). A number of low-income rural households rely on seasonal wage employment for just a short period of time. The cost of hiring workers is very expensive; thus, its adoption is difficult to do, hence the irregular agricultural yields in most cases.

#### 6.4.2. Reducing Cultivated Land

In rural Ethiopia, the migration of rural women frequently results in a labor shortage, forcing households to reduce their agricultural area by renting half or more of their land to neighboring farmers. In my study, 11 of 25 respondents (45%) reported reducing the size of their farms to correspond with their reduced labor capacity. 7 out of 11 (approximately 65%) reveals that this method enabled their preserving subsistence-level farming to fulfill the day to day household food consumption. On the contrary, the remaining 35% voiced apprehensions regarding their incapacity to cultivate surplus crops for commercial purposes, which adversely affected their income. Mesfin Bekele, agricultural extension worker in Wollo, indicated that "the reduction of cultivated land is a practical short-term strategy, but in the longer term, families lose the opportunity to produce more

products for the market, which slows down economic development and increases vulnerability to food insecurity." (Mesfin Bekele1, 2024).

Similarly, informant from Wollo University, agricultural economist Wondwosen Getachew stressed that "the reduction in household landholding size could limit their opportunities to obtain higher income from surplus production, which in turn could increase food insecurity, along with financial instability in the longer run." (Getachew Wondwosen, 03, 2024).

As per the study made by Maharjan et al. (2020) and Ofuoku & Aganagana (2018), rural women migrate, which causes a loss of labor; this will then lower agricultural production as unplanted fields follow from this. The long-term implications affect food production in the local sense and the livelihood of the community. Smaller farm sizes decrease labor issues but further increase food insecurity and financial instability-especially for farmers who solely depend on farming as a source of their livelihood.

#### 6.4.3. Switching to Less Labor-Intensive Crops

The shift of growing high-labor-intensive crops to those that are labor-efficient has been adopted in the study area to cope with the shortage of agricultural labor. The change from labor intensive crops like teff and wheat, and others to less labor intensive crops like legumes and barley has been taken as a better option. These crops such as teff and wheat, which are labor-intensive, are being substituted with less demanding crops such as legumes and barley. Of the 25 households, 10 (40%) stated that they had to resort to other plants because their household labor was small. Out of these, 70% or, 7 out of 10, was successful in this strategy and reduced the number of workers while sustaining agricultural production. The crops that were substituted earned lower income due to lower market demand according to 30% of the respondents. Dr Birhie Alemu, an agronomist and lecturer at wollo University, said: "A good temporary reaction is switching to less labour-intensive crops particularly in the areas experiencing the labour shortages. The problem then is finding crops that require little labor and that bring good prices on the market." (Birhie Alemu 01,2024). Similarly, Amsale Ayalew, an agricultural development officer working in an international NGO stated, "...such households need to adopt drought-resistant and less-labor intensive crop types. A more effort is needed in connecting farmers to those markets that offer better prices." (Amsale Ayalew 03, 2024).

This strategy is not new it is been used by farmers in different countries in different time, for example in India Farmers are moving from low labor-intensive crops like groundnut and black gram to high labor-intensive crops such rice, sugarcane, and cotton (Vidhyavathi et al., 2021).

While shifting less labor crop helps to keep the labor capacity challenge under control, this often leads to reduced household income due to the lower market value of alternative crops. In practice, the approach is feasible but requires complementary support in market access for economic sustainability in the long term among these households.

#### 6.4.4. Receiving Remittances:

Remittance income from migrating spouses is, in a sense, a significant source of income for many rural families; it supports capital expenditures for increased productivity and agricultural inputs, allowing households to invest in resources(Bassie et al., 2022). In my study area, such money is often used for local consumption, in the purchase of agricultural produce, or for hiring manpower at peak farming seasons. Among 25 participants, 14 (55%) of them indicated that they received remittances from their wives residing in urban areas (Addis Ababa), with these funds being instrumental in preserving the household's financial stability. Nine (60%) of the 14 families said that remittances are a reliable source of income. However, five families (40%) said that it is difficult to organize agricultural operations based on remittances because of their inconsistencies. According to Dr. Adanech Kassa, a migration and development expert from AAU, "Remittances provide financial assistance in times of limited agricultural labor or harvest failures, but their irregularity and over-reliance may hinder efforts to maintain and increase agricultural production." (Adanech Kassa 04, 2024).

They usually act erratically; besides, dependence on remittances could undermine attention to agricultural production. Along this line of observation, Berhanu Tsegaye 03, 2024, from the FAO recalled that although remittances help alleviate temporary financial burden, households dependent on this source often neglect farming, which could translate to a long-term loss of productivity in agriculture. While remittances are important for households, their irregularity makes it difficult to have long-term plans. Besides that, too much reliance on remittances may have the potential to shifting away from agricultural productivity improvement and making families dependent on sources of revenue external to farming. Tadesse et al. (2021) hint at the fact that rural out-migration can also boost agricultural production by increasing farm capital stock through remittances. However, irregularities and overdependencies call for a balanced approach with priority in financial support and sustainable development toward resilience. The majority of migrant women reported, and households confirmed, that they do not send money regularly due to fluctuations in their income. Of the total households 14 (55%) which receive remittance from their wives residing only 4 (28.57%)

receive money regularly, but the rest of the majority did not do so. Household were mentioning that it is not only the irregularity, but the amount was not as they expected, though other factors like inflation were also mentioned.

According to the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) hypothesis, remittances have the potential to boost agricultural output and promote rural development. However, my findings contradict this assumption since the remittances were insufficient and inconsistent.

#### 6.4.5. Relying on traditional cooperative Labor Systems

In the study area, as a coping mechanisms to solve the problem of women migration, traditional cooperative mechanism have been considered by the households. Cooperatives empower households by pooling resources and sharing responsibilities, enhancing their livelihoods and fostering community. The most common traditional cooperative mechanism in the area are called “debo” and “wenfel”. See the meaning and difference in the operational definition section of this paper.

In traditional forms of cooperative labor including “debo” and/or “wenfel”, households in rural areas of Ethiopia can pool resources and meet the needs of fellow households by working in each other’s fields especially during the planting or the harvesting seasons which is so important.

Of the 25 participants, 13, or 50%, reported relying on this type of cooperative network to ease shortages in labor due to the migration of their spouses.

Of the households using this strategy, 10 respondents, which is 80%, mentioned that such systems have allowed them to continue farming activities at no extra financial cost. The remaining 20% explained that urban migration has reduced available labour and has thus negatively impacted the viability of such mutual assistance systems. Tesfaye chala, community-level agricultural extension worker, reflected that;

*“Debo and wenfel have been successful for centuries; unfortunately, migration is breaking these traditional approaches. For every migration from a rural setup, the workforce reduces, and the management of such systems becomes even more challenging as less people become available to maintain agricultural practices and customary cooperation. This leads to a decline in core services of farming practices which could easily create a vicious circle worsening problems even for those who would have remained behind.”*  
(Tesfaye Chala 03, 2024).

Sociologist Mahlet Tafa, similarly, a specialist in rural livelihoods, suggested cooperation but observed that "the viability of these arrangements are threatened by out-migration." She opined that such networks must be strengthened and alternatives sought for long-term sustainability (Mahlet Tafa 5,2024). Shortages of labor are confronted through cooperative labor systems, its sustainability is undesirable from the threat of out migration. Sustainability on a long-term basis depends on the resolution of the problem of labour shortages along with community relations.

#### 6.4.6. Diversifying Income Sources

Since depending solely on agriculture is becoming hard and not enough to sustain their lives, some of the households in the study area have shifted to other forms of earning or engagements, and these are the nonagricultural ones. Some examples are handicrafts, cattle farming, and small businesses that could be mentioned. Respondents (7 out of 25 respondents, or 30%) involved in such a venture in order to provide supplementary income.

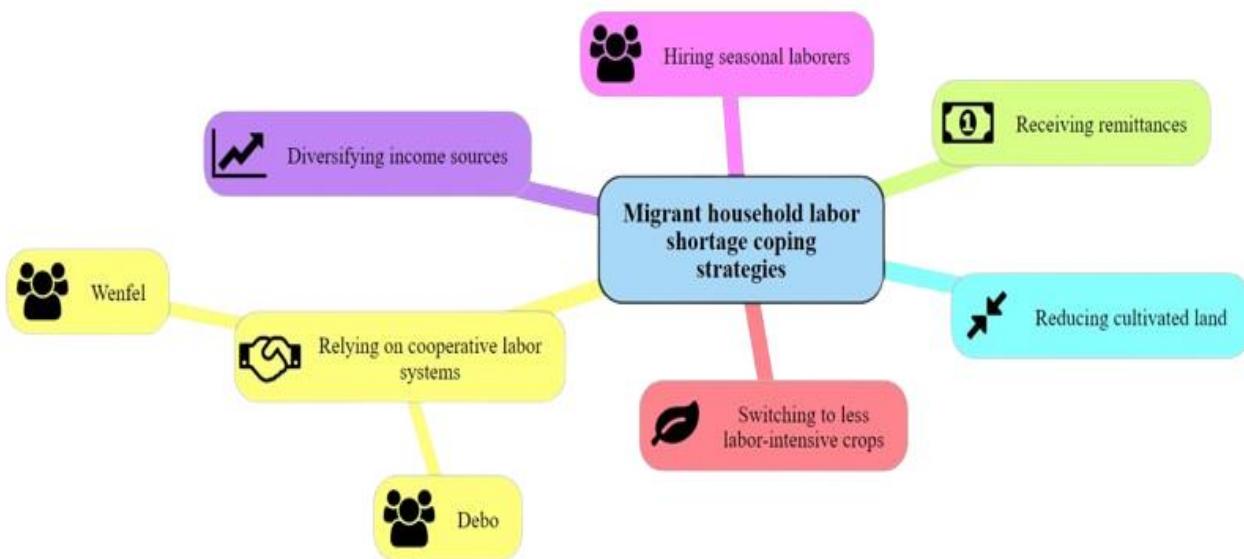
Of the households interviewed, five respondents-70% reported that this strategy generated more income, while two respondents-30%, were not able to advance their new venture due to lack of initial capital and limited market access. As pointed out by Dr. Tadesse Kadisa, a researcher in rural development at AAU University, "When rural households are forced to adopt migration, then diversification is very crucial as many research works reveal, but the downside of it is such affected households cannot maximize on such diversified livelihoods because of lack of finance, business knowledge and market for production". Similarly, Simret Gebru, World Vision Ethiopia's program coordinator, reiterated that "households need access to microcredit and market infrastructure for income diversification to work. Despite doing everything in their power, they are nevertheless vulnerable without such assets at their disposal" (Simret Gebru 6, 2024).

Income diversification thus becomes a practical strategy employed to alleviate labor shortages in agricultural activities. Still, this potentially viable approach heavily depends on both market opportunities and capital. The absence of both makes it hard for the household to perceive income diversification as an implementable and sustainable option.

To sum up, the shortage of agricultural labor force in a household has severe implications on the agricultural production and natural resource management effort in any household (Belete ,2006). Households in the study area experience labor shortages due to female outmigration. These households employ a set of varies strategies that help them to alleviate labor bottlenecks and maintain

agricultural production. While hiring labor, reducing cultivated land, changing crop types, traditional cooperative system, receiving remittance and diversification of income sources provide some relief in their own ways, they also come with constraints that lower their long-run effectiveness. Key informants of the study stress that structural issues, which include access to technology, finance, and labor-saving approaches, are what will be of essence in ensuring a continued rural livelihood amidst the continued rural women migration.

**Diagram 4:** Coping Strategies of Households After Women's Migration



**Source:** Own sketch based on the finding, 2024

## 6.5. Women migration and its implications on agricultural output or productivity

The absence of women in agriculture has a multiple implication that cannot be attributed to just one reason. The migration of rural women has been contributing much to the changes in farming practice and productivity in Raya Kobo Woreda. Family heads, agricultural extension workers, and local government officials reported decreased agricultural output since women were no longer doing tasks like weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing efficiently. Here under I put all the major factors in theme as mentioned by informants.

### 6.5.1.Labor shortage

Though women role in agricultural sector is very immense their contribution is very undermined and not recognized very well (Ngan,Op, 2022). They represent 43% of the world's agricultural labor force and are a key player in attaining Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Henry, 2021).

In Ethiopia especially in rural part of the country it is very common to cultivate the land together with whole family, everyone including kids have a role in agricultural activities and women are especially important in all aspects of this work. The FAO (2023) estimates that women constitute over 60% of labour in food production, cooking, household chores, and child-rearing.

The women, therefore, besides their physical work, contribute a great deal of valuable knowledge on the management of crops, sustainable farming, and food processing, a skill that is indispensable in assuring food security at both the community and family levels (Fabiyi & Akande, 2015).

Their labors not only maintain the efficiency of agricultural and food systems but also increase farm productivity. An agricultural extension worker, Tesfay Ketemaw, of the area asserted the above point;

“Farming suffers greatly when women go in search of better possibilities elsewhere. Their absence throws off the entire system, resulting in lower output and the generational loss of important traditional agricultural knowledge. Their absence causes critical chores to be completed more slowly or inefficiently, which has an immediate impact on the success of the crop” (Tesfay Ketemaw 04,2024).

Families experience this difficulty on a deep level. A farmer named Abebe Yalew, whose daughter migrated, related his experience: "We don't have enough hands to plow the fields since my daughter went. We had to quit cultivating teff because we couldn't handle the workload without her." (Abebe Yalew 09,2024). This story explains the role of women in small-scale agriculture. "Families may not keep up after allowing a family member to go for a better career elsewhere, which puts additional burden on their means of subsistence and results in lower returns," said an informant at Wollo University who requested anonymity.

According to the most majority of migratory women, financial troubles and the necessity to support for their family prompted them to migrate regularly. But due to their absence, farming operations now confront scarcity of man power, which has shifted family preferences for less labor-intensive crops. University researchers from AAU noted the larger consequences of these developments, "Women

leaving their communities produce a disturbance to conventional agricultural practices, which leads a progressive transition towards less labor-intensive crops. This change could have long-term effects for the region's food security." (Bekele Habtu 01, 2024).

Agricultural extension worker, Tarekegn Tafa, of the area asserts that, farms in the region are running behind schedule on crucial agricultural activities. "Many farms cannot handle the demands of the growing season without women." (Tarekegn Tafa 06, 2024). Fabiyyi & Akande (2015) argue that women are quite crucial and essential members of labor, especially in the most vital labor-intensive jobs, including weeding, harvesting, processing, and marketing. This is supported by the Feminization of Agriculture Theory, which recognizes that women have recently gained in importance within agriculture; hence, it argues that female labor is increasingly becoming essential in the rural agricultural system (Deere, 2005). The many inputs of women into agriculture should be appreciated if there ever has to be long-term success and sustainability within agriculture.

#### 6.5.2. Decline of agricultural outputs

It was very clear that rural women in the study area migrate in order to improve their life and family life by sending money to their family. But as most informants indicate (migrant women households, agricultural extension workers, and local officials) in the study area, the result was not as expected. Both the household and migrant women expect that they will get a better job, send more money, and boost their agricultural productivity, yet it was not as intended.

Almost all except (3 out of 25) householders reported a sharp decline in agricultural production due to labor shortages. One of the respondents testified, "When my daughters and wives came to help, we used to have more crops, but now our harvests are less." This is further confirmed by the agricultural extension staff: " Production on many farms has still not yet reached levels attained prior to the women migration, especially for staple crops such as teff and corn".

According to the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), the migration of rural women could be viewed by families as a strategic choice in furthering economic security or accessing resources that would otherwise not be available locally. Remittances from migrated rural women can, be used for adopting new technologies, investment in agricultural inputs, and even smoothing family income. These remittances have even helped families to invest in drought-resistant crops, hire workers, or purchase better equipment that could help the households make up for a shortfall in labor and raise productivity. The NELM hypothesis summarizes migration, which is likely to improve family income

and is important in terms of its effects upon remittances (Stark and Bloom, 1985). However, it's also critical to see and examine the opportunity cost. When women migrate, they will send money to their family to support their family, but what about their absence creates in the agricultural field. Their migration is not only creating physical labor shortage but also skill, knowledge, custom and tradition. One migrant woman, Askale Yehualshet, expressed her agricultural knowledge in the following manner:

“Agriculture comes naturally to me since I was raised in an agricultural household. I learned from my mother how to prepare the land, choose seeds, and raise crops according to the type of soil and climate. My mother once said that knowing the requirements of the land is essential to bringing forth its greatest qualities, much like knowing people. I learned which plants grow best together, when to sow and harvest, and even how to control pests without purchasing pesticides.” (Askale Yehualshet 25, 2024).

This clearly depicted how women are sources of knowledge and how they transfer their knowledge to the next generation.

Local government officials, local families of migrant women, and agricultural extension workers of the area, are testifying that indeed, over the past four years, there has been a significant decline in agricultural productivity. Agricultural Extension worker Bishaw Alemu pointed out, "In 2020, before the wave of women's migration in the kobo woreda, the average yield for the major crops like teff, wheat, and maize was 3.5 tons per hectare, while in 2023 the average decreased to 2.1 tons per hectare" (Bishaw Alemu 4, 2024).

The aforementioned claim was confirmed by another agricultural extension worker named Yehesew Taye. "We have witnessed an even more significant decrease in the case of teff production, a crop that requires a lot of labor; yields dropped from an average of about 2.8 tons per hectare in 2020 to about 1.4 tons per hectare by 2023." (Yehesew Taye 5, 2024). This suggests a 50% drop in output, mostly due to women relocating from rural to urban areas.

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the local government officer report, the period between 2020 and 2023 saw a considerable surge in the migration of women from rural regions in Kobo Woreda, pushed mostly by economic constraints and the promise of greater work possibilities in metropolitan centers and overseas. As noted by Kobo Woreda officials, the movement of women from their homes has resulted in a huge drop in agricultural production as

several critical stages such as planting, weeding and harvesting are actually not done. The men are given more duties than they are able to accommodate which has caused local authorities to caution the dangers of food insecurity in the long run. A data from informant household also reveals the above fact.

Table 5: production of teff, wheat and maize annually

Year	Teff yield(tone/hectare)	wheat yield(tone/hectare)	wheat yield(tone/hectare)
2020	2.8	3.6	4.2
2021	2.3	3.1	3.9
2022	1.9	2.7	3.5
2023	1.4	2.1	3.0

Source: *Kobo Woreda's agricultural office*,2024

The above table (5) clearly shows that the yearly field of the product of migrant women household declining. Even though the figure indicates that agricultural productivity/output is decreasing from year to year, it is unsafe to claim that the cause of this decline is exclusively due to absence of women, though the absence of women in agriculture creates knowledge gap, increased work load on the remaining family and labor shortage, other factors should be taken in to account.

According to the WU staff interview, “The ongoing conflict with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), unfavorable weather, limited fertilizer availability, and the need for more efficient agricultural practices may be the reasons for the decline in product yield” (Belete Gashu 03, 2024).

According to NELM, improvement in households' income through remittances might have been the major cause of the rural women's decision for migration. This is an issue that bears two edges: whereas remittances are believed to maintain economic stability, out-migration of females reduces agricultural production, as reflected in the decline in yield of maize, wheat, and teff. In Kobo Woreda, this draws attention to a trade-off where family economic strategy via migration is unintentionally resulting in poorer agricultural yield, creating problems for local revenue creation and food security.

In conclusion, Kobo Woreda's agricultural office data supports NELM's view on the economic trade-offs associated with migration, indicating that while migration may have short-term economic advantages, it also runs the danger of compromising long-term food security and agricultural output in rural areas. The migration of women is not only creating physical labor shortage but also skill, knowledge, custom and tradition.

### 6.5.3. Shift in Farming Practices:

The other implication of women's migration has been seen in shifting farming practices because there were fewer hands available. The majority of the informant farmers in Kobo woreda, who provided information, disclosed that as the availability of labor in their homes dropped, they were compelled to change the agricultural techniques that they had previously utilized.

A household head named Gashaw, whose wife and daughter are currently living in Addis Ababa, said: "Considering the work load in cultivating teff, I have decided to shift to planting maize and sorghum as they need less labor compared to teff." (Gashaw Geta 22,2024). This perspective is supported by a number of studies. For example, one study conducted by Holden and Bezu (2019) concluded that labor migration in Ethiopia led to changes in farming practices. Notwithstanding possibly lower economic returns from labor-saving crops, labor-intensive crops have gradually been substituted with labor-saving ones. According to Scoones, 1998, this adaptation, however, poses a threat to sustainable agriculture in the long run, as recommended by international organizations such as the World Bank. Food security and income from families are being jeopardized as a result of the shift (World Bank, 2023).

### 6.5.4. Social and economic burdens on remaining family members:

One important issue mentioned by all the informants was the extra burden and shift division of labor on the remaining family members and its effect on agricultural productivity.

According to informants working in Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) named Medekisa Tolla, "the shift in labor division, driven by factors like migration, has led to decreased production, posing a serious threat to the long-term sustainability of agricultural outputs" (Medekisa Tolla 7, 2024). As per to Connell's Theory of Gender Division of Labor (2002), Significant effects may result from changes in roles between men and women. The change in roles has impacted family dynamics and loaded men with burdens as they now have an extra responsibility of taking care of the home aside from their daily jobs. This change has had a notably specific impact on farming communities regarding productivity.

When women migrate, males are typically expected to take on more domestic and agricultural chores(Kassa, 2023), putting additional burden on them and, as a result, affecting their overall performance. Changes in household roles may have considerable consequences for agricultural output,

in particular in rural areas affected by migration. Men are expected to take on duties traditionally performed by women, resulting in inefficiencies in both household and agricultural operations (Mekonnen & Alemayehu, 2022).

This imbalance may have detrimental effects down the road. According to agricultural extension workers in the area, men are facing significant challenges due to the division of labor and the heavy workload.

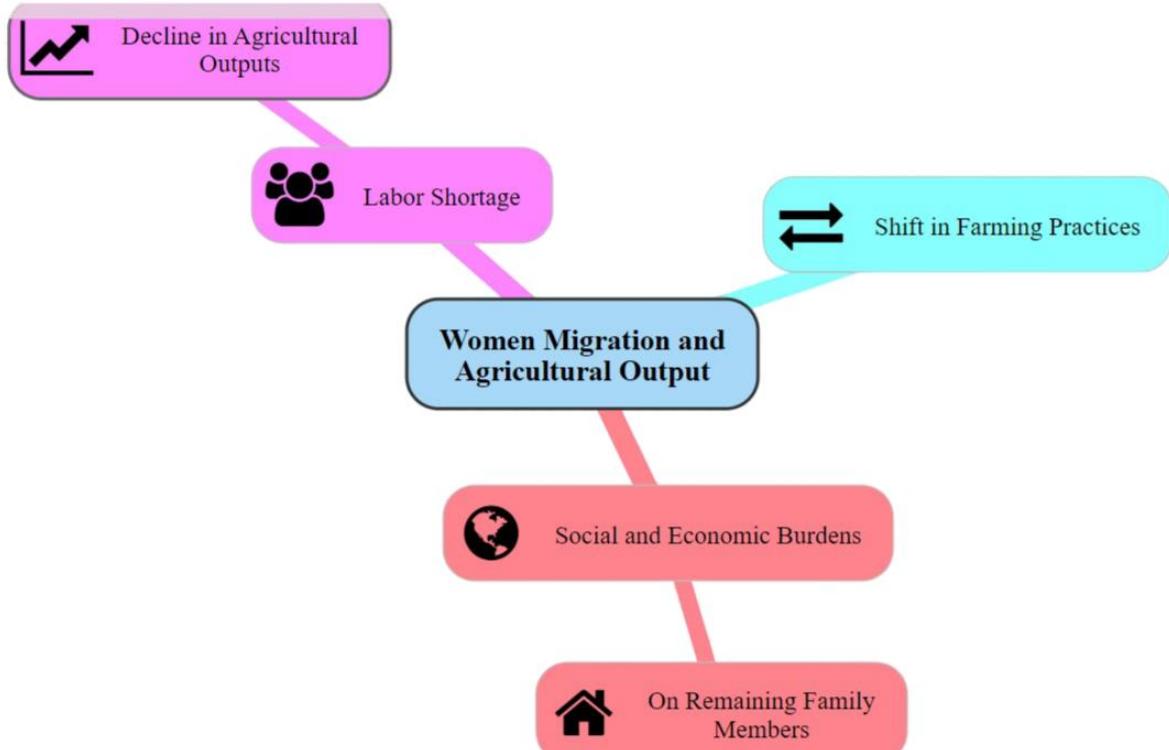
“The agricultural yield declines when insufficient time and effort are allocated to efficient crop management, endangering the financial stability of these households. The lack of women's experience in domestic work and farming also prevents important agricultural information from being shared throughout the community. The social and economic security of rural villages in Kobo Woreda is increasingly in jeopardy as traditional labor divides collapse and men's workloads rise.” (Worku Mulualem 04, 2024).

The migration of women has caused changes in family gender norms, according to local agricultural extension workers: "Men are now taking on responsibilities traditionally managed by women, including childcare, housework, and even crop cultivation." The vast majority of migrant homes in Kobo Woreda support this view. Despite the need of this role shift, it draws attention to the greater effort that men are taking on as well as the vital role that women play in preserving balance and productivity in rural farming homes.

Men try to take on these responsibilities, but many lack the specialized knowledge and abilities that women have traditionally contributed, particularly in important agricultural and household duties like planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing like threshing, winnowing, and drying. Grain milling and other traditional and cultural food processing jobs also need women. Women's essential contributions to the smooth operation of domestic and agricultural systems are highlighted by the fact that this skill gap often results in decreased output on the farm and in the home.

The protracted disruption has unpleasantly harmed agricultural productivity and the general wellbeing of households. Kebede Abebe, a head of household, stated, "I am struggling with the dual responsibilities of agricultural labor and household chores, resulting in mental and physical strain, negatively affecting the farm, and leaving the home in continual disorder" ( Kebede Abebe 9, 2024). This highlights the significant social and economic burdens placed on the remaining family members, who are required to undertake extra responsibilities in the absence of women.

**Diagram 5:** rural women migration and its implication for agricultural output



Source: own sketch based on the finding, 2024

# CHAPTER 7

## 7.1. Conclusion and recommendation

### 7.1.1. Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to assess the implication of rural women's out-migration on agricultural productivity in kobo woreda, semen wollo, Ethiopia. Three other specific objectives were that the study shall seek to; first, assess the change of women's out-migration on agricultural practices and output; this objective focuses mainly upon changes in agricultural practices, including techniques used and evaluating their effectiveness in the absence of women. The second is to find out what the households do to cope with the situation of the women's absence from the agricultural field; this objective tries to portray the role of women in agriculture, which encompasses peculiar knowledge and contributions that the women can make, and after whom alternative means the household pursues upon their migration. This objective focuses not only on agricultural practice but also on the means of alternative livelihood, seeing if it is or is not successful. And thirdly, what are the implications-socioeconomic, women being forced to migrate from home? This objective is altogether different from the above two objectives, since this objective explores the causes of women's migration, including social, economic, and cultural factors, political, or even religious factors if any. Using Kobo Woreda as a case study. Seventy-seven informants, including migratory women, migrant women families, agricultural extension workers, academicians, NGO workers and government officials, participated to the research.

Agriculture is the major source of living in developing nations like Ethiopia, where more than 80% of the population lives on subsistence farming. In Kobo Woreda, women's migration has been growing year by year, and their absence from agriculture has created major disruption, however it has not gotten appropriate attention. The majority of the study focuses on male migration and its impact on agricultural productivity; the women's migration and its implication on agriculture is overlooked, as the practice of agriculture is mostly attributed to men.

The data suggest that, although other variables play a role, agricultural output in rural Kobo Woreda is dropping owing to women's migration. The motivations for migration are various, with both push and pull influences noted. Push factors include economic hardship, violence, security threats, gender inequality, and lack of basic services, while pull factors consist of economic opportunities, better job

prospects, access to healthcare, improved living conditions and infrastructure, social and cultural freedom, and peer and family networks in urban areas.

To cope with labor shortages, migrant households have adopted strategies such as hiring seasonal laborers, reducing cultivated land, switching to less labor-intensive crops, receiving remittances, relying on traditional cooperative labor systems like “debo” and “wenfel”, and diversifying income sources. The implications of women's absence on agricultural production in the study region include labor shortages, a drop in agricultural output, shifts in farming techniques, and greater social and economic responsibilities on the remaining family members.

Based on the theories of knowledge and human capital, this research suggests that the migration of women may have an adverse effect on agricultural output. They leave and take their knowledge of agriculture with them, which results in a skilled labor shortage that may reduce the efficiency of output, though NELM's theory of migration argue that the remittance is advantageous, and it is a strategy to diversify income, in the study area the money rural women send is not enough and consistence. The migration of women is not only creating labour shortage, bu also caused some knowledge disparities. This knowledge transfer gap is mainly contributed by migrant women, who offer agricultural skills mainly to the growing-up generations who are just starting agriculture.

This means that though remittances reduce financial distress for few HHs in the study area, absence of women constrains labor, skills and knowledge that are potential within the community. This twofold effect supports NELM's theory of migration being a complex strategy that implies both costs and benefits within rural economies. The migration of women results in two important things that is labor shortages and remittances, which both positively and negatively affect the remaining rural households. On one hand, rural woman migration causes labor shortages and burden on the remaining family in households. On the other hand, remittances from these migrating women bring an economic advantage to the households and investment in agricultural inputs. For example, the econometric analysis carried out by Bassie et al. (2022) shows that rural-urban migration, per se, has an insignificant effect on agricultural output, while its resultant remittances have a positive and significant effect. The finding would, therefore, mean that the financial advantages gained through migration may, in some instances, make up for the loss of labor (Bassie et al., 2022). In contrast, my study shows that the drawbacks are greater than the benefits, as the migration of women is not only creating labour shortage but also skills, and knowledge.

### 7.1.2. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the research the following recommendation has been formulated.

- The forced migration of rural women contributes to a number of consequences, both for their families and their native communities. Governments must enact comprehensive measures to address the root causes of migration. The majority of rural women in the study area are compelled to abandon their origin owing to deprivation of economy, gender disparity, and insufficient basic amenities in their place of origin. Investing in rural development is vital to lessen these push forces. By enhancing access to basic infrastructures like healthcare and education governments may provide further possibilities for women and their families. Enhancing rural healthcare, particularly for maternal and reproductive health, might diminish the necessity for women to pursue better treatment elsewhere. Addressing gender disparity is vital. Legal changes and community activities that safeguard women from assault and prejudice are vital milestones. By fostering a more supportive and equal environment in rural regions, governments can minimize the economic constraints that push women out of their homes. This will lead to more stable households and better agricultural output.
- Households affected by women's migration have evolved many ways to sustain their livelihoods, although many of them are ephemeral and insufficient. To assist these families become more self-reliant, the government should promote and advise them to diversify their income. Encouraging rural households to engage in non-agricultural activities like small-scale companies or growing better animals can minimize their reliance on farming alone. Expanding access to microfinance programs, especially for women-led households, will allow families to participate in new initiatives and better their financial status. Additionally, remittances provided by migrant women are an source of income for their families and give temporary relief so, to maximize the advantages of these remittances, the government might shall create short term training and assistance programs to help people spend this money effectively, such as investing in new farming techniques or purchasing better agricultural supplies in support of the government loan.

➤ Agriculture is a key for the economy of the country, but women are constantly leaving their origin and agricultural sector is facing a problem, therefore; to overcome the issues posed by rural women's migration on agriculture, the government should establish targeted policies that lessen the push forces driving migration and assist the agricultural sector. Policy development largely requires the problem acknowledgement and definition by the politician. "The selection of policy tools relates strongly to the perceived nature of the problem and the politics involved. This calculation may vary strongly by policy 'sector'... it also relates to the problem definition (because there is no objective or apolitical definition of policy problems)." (Cairney, 2020, p.22). Without clarity on the problem and a jointly shared understanding, it is indeed very difficult to achieve any solution. The migration of women from rural communities like Kobo Woreda has produced labor shortages, resulting to decreases in agricultural productivity. The encouragement of agricultural mechanization and labor-saving technology is one feasible policy measure. Machinery subsidies or loans may be granted to farmers by the government in order for them to ease the strain of labor supply decline. Specialized training on modern farming methods should be provided to the remaining family members so they can continue agricultural production. Laws must be created that can plan for and encourage cooperative work arrangements, such as "debo" and "wenfel", as a means to reinforce community resiliency. Such cooperative solutions may enable communities to cope better with labor shortages.

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# Appendix

## **Interview Questions for Agricultural Workers, Professors, NGO Workers, Government Officials**

### Introduction

This study is being conducted as part of my Master of Arts (MA) degree in Development Studies. Its main goal is to understand how women's migration is affecting agricultural productivity in certain rural areas of Ethiopia, specifically in Kobo Woreda, Semen Wollo. The research is purely for academic purposes and has no commercial or external interests. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your input will be crucial in helping us understand the current situation and the effects migration is having on agriculture.

### Section 1: Background

1. Field of expertise and year of experience?
2. Do you have an idea about rural women migration Kobo Woreda?
3. if yes, what do you think the main reasons why women are leaving their area of origin?

### Section 2: Agricultural Productivity and Migration

1. Based on what you've seen or any data you have, how has women's migration impacted farming in Kobo Woreda?
2. Is there a discernible shift in labor availability?
3. Has this affected agricultural outputs?
4. What were the main tasks given to the women during farming and are now altered by their absence?
5. What effects on seasonal farming activities and agricultural production has rural women's migration produced?

### Section 3: Household Coping Mechanisms

1. How can households and communities deal with the loss of women's agricultural labor?
2. Are there any substitutes, like hiring help or relying on other family members or any other traditional methods?
3. Have you seen any new farming techniques or strategies being adopted because of women's migration?
4. Will remittance support the migrant women household in fostering their agricultural practices? If yes, how?

### Section 4: Socioeconomic impact

1. Have there been any apparent differences in family income, educational prospects, or community access to basic services like healthcare as a result of rural women's migration?
2. How has this changed social life and relationships in the community?

3. How has women's migration affected traditional gender roles in rural homes?
4. Are you noticing changes in who takes on responsibilities at home or in the community?
5. Has decision-making in households or communities changed due to women's migration? If yes, how?

#### Section 5: Policies and Interventions

1. What policies or actions have been, or would you suggest, to address the effects of women's migration on agriculture?
2. Are there any government programs or NGO (either local or international) initiatives that are helping families affected by women's migration?
3. What steps could be taken to minimize the negative impact of migration on agricultural productivity?
4. Do you have any recommendations for improving the livelihoods of rural communities in light of women's migration?

#### Section 6: Closing

1. Do you have any other insights on how women's migration affects agricultural productivity in Kobo Woreda?
2. From your perspective, what are the essential key areas where more research is needed pertaining to the issue we raised, migration and agricultural productivity?

## **Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire for Migrant Women in Addis Ababa**

### **Section A: Background Information**

#### **1. Demographic Information:**

- Name (optional):
- Age:
- Marital status:
- Educational background:
- Number of children (if any):
- Previous occupation in rural area:
- Current occupation in Addis Ababa:

#### **2. Migration Details:**

- When did you migrate from your home in Kobo Woreda?
- What were the main reasons for your migration? (e.g., lack of employment opportunities, poverty, conflict, marriage, education)
- Did anyone encourage or facilitate your migration to Addis Ababa?

### **Section B: Life Before Migration**

#### **3. Household and Economic Situation:**

- What was your household's main source of income before you migrated?
- What role did you play in agricultural activities back home (e.g., farming, livestock care, household chores)?
- How was your household's financial situation before you left? Was it sustainable?

#### **4. Challenges Faced:**

- What challenges did you face in your home area that influenced your decision to migrate (e.g., economic hardship, limited access to resources, social pressures)?

### **Section C: Migration Experience and Urban Life**

#### **5. Employment and Living Conditions:**

- What kind of work do you do in Addis Ababa? Is it different from the work you did in rural areas?
- How do you find living and working conditions in Addis Ababa compared to your life in Kobo Woreda?
- Have you been able to find stable employment? If yes, what kind of work?

#### **6. Income and Financial Contribution:**

- How much income do you typically earn per month?
- Are you able to send money back to your family in Kobo Woreda? If yes, how often and how much do you send?

#### **7. Social Life and Adaptation:**

- How has your social life changed since migrating to Addis Ababa? Do you feel integrated into the urban community?
- What challenges have you encountered in adapting to urban life (e.g., housing, health care, discrimination)?

## **Section D: Impact on Agriculture and Household Back Home**

### **8. Connection with Household:**

- How often do you communicate with your family back in Kobo Woreda?
- Has your absence affected agricultural productivity in your household? If yes, how so?

### **9. Support for Household:**

- Do you support your household financially or in any other way from a distance?
- How has your migration affected your family's income and agricultural productivity? Has the support you provide helped them cope with your absence?

### **10. Women's Role in Agriculture:**

- Do you think the absence of women like yourself has a significant impact on the agricultural productivity of rural households? Why or why not?
- Do you have prior knowledge of agricultural practices, and who teaches you?
- How do you feel about the changes in agricultural practice and output in your family's home since you left?

## **Section E: Broader Migration Experience**

### **11. Benefits of Migration:**

- What benefits have you experienced since migrating to Addis Ababa? (e.g., financial independence, personal growth, new opportunities)
- Have you been able to improve your own and your family's living standards through migration?

### **12. Challenges of Migration:**

- What challenges have you faced in Addis Ababa, especially as a woman migrant (e.g., safety, job security, housing)?
- Have you faced any discrimination or barriers to employment as a rural migrant woman?

### **13. Future Plans:**

- Do you plan to stay in Addis Ababa, return to Kobo Woreda, or migrate elsewhere? Why?
- What do you think needs to change in rural areas to reduce the need for women to migrate to urban centers?

### **14. Recommendations:**

- What would you recommend to improve the conditions for women in rural areas like Kobo Woreda to prevent the need for migration?
- How can the government, NGOs, or communities better support migrant women in urban areas like Addis Ababa?

**Dear Participant,**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to gather insights for my research on “Exploring the Experiences and Perceptions of Women’s Migration and Its Implications for Agricultural Productivity: A Study of Kobo Woreda, *Semen Wollo, Ethiopia*” Your participation is extremely valuable in helping me understand “women’s migration and its impact on agricultural productivity in rural Ethiopia”.

This interview will follow a semi-structured format, meaning we have a set of questions to guide our conversation, but you are welcome to share any thoughts, experiences, or additional information you feel is relevant. Your responses will remain confidential, and no personal identifiers will be used in the final report.

The interview will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes, and your honest responses will contribute greatly to the research outcomes. Please feel free to ask for clarification on any questions, and if at any time you are uncomfortable or prefer not to answer a question, that is completely fine.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time.

Thank you again for your time and valuable insights.

Sincerely,

Ephrem Ahadu Helawi(for)  
International Institute of Social Studies  
The Hague, Netherlands,

Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire for Family Heads of Migrant Women

**Section A: Background Information**

**1. Demographic Information:**

Name (optional):	Age	gender	Household size	Educational background	Occupation

**2. Household Composition:**

- How many people live in your household?
- How many women used to live in your household before migration?
- How many women currently live in your household?

**Section B: Women's Migration**

**3. Migration Details:**

- When did the woman/women in your household migrate?
- What were the primary reasons for their migration? (e.g., economic reasons, lack of opportunities, marriage, etc.)
- Where did they migrate to (e.g., urban areas, other rural areas, abroad)?

**4. Socioeconomic Factors:**

- What was the economic situation of your household before the women migrated?
- Did the women in your household contribute financially before their migration?
- Has their migration improved the economic situation of the household through remittances or other means?

**Section C: Impact on Agriculture**

**5. Agricultural Practice Changes:**

- How has women's migration affected your household's agricultural practices (e.g., land cultivation, crop production, livestock care)?
- Are there any specific agricultural tasks that were previously done by women that are now difficult to manage?
- Have you made any changes in your agricultural techniques due to the migration? If yes, what changes have you made?

**6. Agricultural Output:**

- Has the reduction in women's labor affected the quality or quantity of agricultural output?
- Before the women in your household migrated, how many quintals of the following agricultural products did you typically produce each year?
  - **Cereals (e.g., Teff, maize, wheat, sorghum):**
  - **Pulses (e.g., beans, lentils):**
  - **Vegetables (e.g., onions, tomatoes):**
  - **Fruits (e.g., oranges, mangoes):**
  - **Other crops (please specify):**

After the women migrated, how many quintals of these same products do you now produce annually? (2020- 2023)

- **Cereals:(teff, wheat and maize))**
- **Pulses:**
- **Vegetables:**
- **Fruits:**
- **Other crops (please specify):**

**Section D: Coping Strategies**

**7. Household Adaptation:**

- How has your household adapted to the absence of women in agricultural activities?
- Have you had to hire labor to replace the women's contribution to the farm? If yes, what challenges have you faced in doing so?

**8. Alternative Strategies:**

- Have household members, including men or children, taken on roles previously performed by women?
- Have you diversified your income sources to cope with the departure of the women? If yes, how? (e.g., engaging in non-farming activities, small businesses, etc.)

**9. Effectiveness of Coping Strategies:**

- Have these strategies been effective in maintaining agricultural productivity and household income?

- What challenges have you encountered in implementing these strategies?

**Section E: Broader Impact of Migration**

**10. Social and Economic Impacts:**

- How has women's migration affected the social structure of your household (e.g., relationships, roles, responsibilities)?
- Has the migration led to any long-term economic benefits or hardships for your family?

**11. Support Networks:**

- Are there any community or government programs that support households affected by women's migration?
- How have these programs helped or failed to address the challenges your household faces due to migration?

**12. Future Outlook:**

- Do you think the migration of women will continue in the future? Why or why not?
- What changes would you suggest to help households better cope with women's migration, particularly in agriculture and household income?

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