

# Why Refugees Choose Ethiopia as their Destination? Lesson from Sherkole Refugee Camp of Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** Ethiopia is the second largest host of refugee populations in Africa, next to Uganda. Currently, there are a number of refugee camps in almost all directions of the country. They can be categorized as Somali refugee camps (Eastern camps), Sudanese refugee camps (Western camps), and Eritrean refugee camps (Northern camps). All of the refugee camps in Ethiopia as their names imply, are established to shelter refugees from neighboring countries who seek protection in Ethiopia. In the Western camps, there are refugee settlements in two regions of the country, i.e., Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states. The Western camps are predominantly occupied by Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees since the two regions share a border with these countries. However, one of the refugee camps found in Benishangul-Gumuz region has unique characteristics since it is a destination for refugees from countries that do not share a direct border. This article argues that, other than crossing the immediate border to seek safety and protection, there are also additional factors that contribute to choosing a destination for refugees. These factors include different narratives refugees perceive about their destination and political and economic situation in the refugees' destination. Qualitative methodology was used to explore the issue. In particular in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were the main sources of information. The results of this research show that in addition to sharing a border, the refugee policy of the destination, historical relationships as well as economic opportunities were factors that attracted refugees from non-neighboring countries to Ethiopia.

**Keywords:** Border, Non-Neighboring refugees, Refugees, Refugee destination, Sherkole

## 1. Introduction

By integrating all of these historical criteria in its definition of the refugee, the 1951 Geneva Convention stopped the historical process of extension of the refugee notion, while also delimiting the refugee concept by designating it as the antonym of the postwar citizen. The term "refugee" was thus hijacked by the West a long time ago. The Western European countries that played a key role in the 1951 Refugee Convention defined a refugee in the most restrictive and self-serving terms conceivable. Despite the law's claim to impartiality, legal categories are artificial and historically contingent in the sense that they do not represent natural or preset groups of people, but rather constrain them.

The refugee Convention, which contains 45 provisions, was ratified by 29 countries in 1951. The right to seek asylum was originally included in article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, it was insufficient, and the 1951 declaration was very inclusive in terms of refugee rights. For the first time in 2014, the number of refugees in the world surpassed the number of individuals who were displaced during WWII. The UNHCR today has 148 member countries, up from 29 when it was founded (UNHCR, 1967).

There are different arguments regarding refugees' choice of destination. Ruegger and Bohnet (2018) argued that the refugees' choice of direction is influenced by spatial, temporal, and cultural pull factors. The spatio-temporal pull model of the flight direction of refugees suggested by these researchers explains that many ethnic groups live in more than one country. These transnational ties affect regional politics, in terms of information exchange, trade, common interests, and migration processes. Consequently, the risk of becoming a refugee is not equal for all groups living in a country. According to this argument the countries that border the settlement territory of an ethnic group involved in conflict tend to be the most attractive to refugees. Hence, forced migrants do not arbitrarily spread out to their home country's neighbors.

Fostering the above argument, Holland *et al* (2016) argued that refugees' can be attracted towards Wealthier countries, those with larger social welfare states, and those with large populations of earlier migrants tend to have the highest number of asylum applications. Yet, they say refugees often end up in neighboring countries, which do not necessarily provide the greatest economic opportunities.

Similarly, Chand (2015) outlined geographic proximity, economic advantage, and relative stability as pull factors for refugees towards their destinations. Chand also investigated how people tend to make decisions based on what is better in the given situation, has a lower adjustment cost, and is accessible, even if another ideal choice exists.

According to Alessandro (2004), social networks, family ties, and economic links are crucial elements that attract more migrants to a certain location. These practices reveal the existence of social networks between distant locations; they have a significant impact on the region from which migrants originate; they underpin migration as a domestic group strategy; and, finally, they provide information about current opportunities and forecast future migration flows.

Aside from the economic and social aspects that asylum seekers evaluate, the destination's politics and policy are critical. Asylum seekers' preferred destinations, according to Czaika (2009:10), are places where they expect to have a poor probability of being accepted, which encourages them to migrate. Information about the asylum application process, as well as the possibility of deportation to the country of origin, are factors that refugees and asylum seekers consider so as to decide on their destination.

This article is going to show how refugees' choice of destination is different as a result of various factors. It tries to reveal how refugees from neighboring countries and refugees from non-neighboring countries choose Ethiopia as their destination. It will also show how the refugees' reason to leave their country influences their destination choice. Unlike the above arguments provided by the mentioned researchers, this article explores narratives and historical relations' contributions towards destination choice of refugees.

## 2. Methods

Qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences are socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Berg, 2001:15).

Qualitative approach of data collection, which includes observation of events, and cases in the area, in-depth interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion, and case studies, are sources of my study.

The data for this article was collected between 2016 and 2021 for writing a PhD dissertation. During April 2016, the researcher visited all of the five refugee camps in Benishangul-Gumuz region and collected preliminary data. The major fieldwork was conducted for one month in April 2017. During this period key informant interview (KII), in-depth interview (IDI), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with refugees, the host community, UNHCR,<sup>1</sup> ARRA,<sup>2</sup> and other members of the government offices at regional level. In August 2019 the second major round fieldwork was conducted. Generally seventy three in-depth interviews with refugees from different countries were made during the fieldwork periods. Refugees from different nationalities were asked the reason for leaving their home country, the trajectories of their migration as well as their reason to choose Ethiopia as their destination. The open ended questions and the follow up interviews also provided the researcher an opportunity to explore the refugees' experience during their journey and their expectations from their destination.

Six focus group discussions were also conducted with various refugee groups and host communities. The focus group discussions were organized in the way that keeps the homogeneous nationality among the refugees so as to freely discuss about the common motives behind their refugee fellows in choosing Ethiopia as their destination. The Focus group discussions were conducted by aspiring to triangulate the information obtained from individual informants.

Twenty five key informant interviews were conducted with the host government representatives at regional and federal level. The empirical data obtained from the fieldwork were supplemented by findings from a desk review. There is also a continuous virtual follow-up and conversation with the informants so as to update some facts and to make the research updated. All the names exposed in this text are pseudonyms of the informants' for the sake of the informants' safety. Finally the data was transcribed word by word, thematically categorized and finally interpreted.

The article has three sections. The first section is about the overall refugee situation of Sherkole refugee camp. The second section is about the reason for refugees to leave their homeland and how the refugees' preflight information about their destination helps them to choose their destination. The final section shows how refugees from different countries join Sherkole refugee camp and their evaluation regarding their preflight expectations.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Overview of Refugees Camp in Benishangul-Gumuz Region

The Benishangul-Gumuz region is a unique destination for refugees because it is the only region of the country that hosts refugees from various countries. It is also a 'tri-junction zone' where the borders of Sudan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia meet

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<sup>1</sup>UNHCR, United Nations Higher Commission for refugees.

<sup>2</sup>ARRA, Agency for Refugee and returnees Affairs.

today on the south side of the Yabus River. James (2013) explained that the Benishangul-Gumuz region was the first place to host refugees in the sense of the 1951 UNHCR definition. According to the 1951 convention of article 1, a refugee is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, 1951).

According to James, from 1987–1989, Uduk ethnic groups gained settlement around the present day Tsore near Assosa, in a locality already known to the Uduk as Langkwai, where their grandfathers used to go for hunting. However, the refugees left Langkwai and went back to Sudan in the early 1990s due to the political turmoil in Ethiopia. This shows that there was a refugee settlement before the Sherkole refugee camp around the place where today's Tsore refugee camp is found. But it was demolished when the Uduk went back to South Sudan in 1990, and there was no other refugee camp in the Benishangul-Gumuz region until Sherkole was established in 1997.<sup>3</sup>

There are about 60,000 refugees living in five refugee camps in Benishangul-Gumuz region (UNHCR, 2019). Most of the refugees came from Sudan and South Sudan. However, there are refugees from the Great Lakes region such as Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. Bambasi, Tongo, Sherkole, Tsore and Gure are the five camps in the region. The oldest camp is Sherkole followed by Tongo, Bambasi, Tsore and Gure. Tongo is the biggest refugee camp with 20,000 refugees followed by Bambasi with more than 16,000 refugees.<sup>4</sup> Gure is the newest and the smallest camp with 8,000 refugees.

**Table 1.** Summary of refugee camps in BGR.

No	Name of the camp	Zone/Woreda	Establishment year	Number of refugees
1	Sherkole	Assosa/Homosha	1997	11,028
2	Tongo	Assosa/Mao-Komo Special woreda	2011	20,000
3	Bambasi	Assosa/Bambasi	2012	16,000
4	Tsore	Assosa/Homosha	2015	11,000
5	Gure	Mao-Komo special woreda	2017	8,000

Reference : ARRA regional office at Assosa, August 2019

### 3.2 Sherkole Refugee Camp

There is no written record about the establishment of this refugee camp. As a result there are different stories about the history of the camp. According to a Sudanese informant who came to Ethiopia in 1997, the camp was established by a group of Sudanese people who entered Ethiopia via Guba. Informants also remarked that there was a frequent seasonal Sudanese movement to and from Ethiopia in the late 1990s.

The first Sudanese civil war (1955-1972) ended with the Addis Ababa Treaty (provide date) was the period when most Sudanese migrated to Western Ethiopia. This migration was revived during the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005). During both periods, Ethiopia was the main destination for refugees escaping the deadly civil war (Fahami, 2012:4). Before the session of South Sudan (Wondwosen, 2009:1), the Republic of Sudan shared the longest border with Ethiopia, approximately 1600 kilometers, prior to the session of South Sudan (Wondwosen, 2009:1) It is obvious that there was a prolonged civil war between the central government of Sudan and the rebellion of South Sudan, SPLM/A which perceived that the South Sudan was left as a periphery and excluded from central power as well as development. Sherkole camp was established to serve Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees who had crossed the border and wanted to get asylum in Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup>

James (2013) argued the Blue Nile civilians as of early 2013 came to Sherkole following aerial bombing of the rebels, and the continued influx of people from the Blue Nile state of Sudan triggered the expansion of the camp and getting its current shape. According to the refugee central committee (RCC) chief of Sherkole refugee camp, the camp was first established by the present day South Sudanese refugees who entered into Ethiopia via Yabus and reached in Abrhamo, a place bordering Ethiopia in Benishangul-Gumuz region with the present South Sudan. On the other hand, other groups of refugees joined the camp from North Sudan via Kurmuk.<sup>6</sup> Due to a fluid border between Ethiopia and Sudan, people from both sides moved freely and lived temporarily without being registered as refugees. This made it difficult to trace who were the first refugees under the legal protection of ARRA and UNHCR.

As mentioned above, Sherkole refugee camp is a unique camp because it is the oldest camp in the region and it is composed of refugees from different countries such as Sudan, South Sudan, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Liberia.<sup>7</sup> Currently there is no space to host more refugees. Yet, there is a continuous arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. The new arrivals hope to find relatives or their own ethnic groups to temporarily host them until they get a shelter of their own. Currently, the camp shelters

<sup>3</sup>KII with Tsore Camp Coordinator, April 2017 Tsore refugee camp.

<sup>4</sup>Information obtained from the ARRA office of Bambasi refugee camp 2017

<sup>5</sup>Sudan and South Sudan were the same country before south Sudanese independence in 2011.

<sup>6</sup>KII with Sherkole Refugee camp, RCC chair, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>7</sup>KII with sherkole refugee camp coordinator, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

2855 households and 11,028 registered refugees and asylum seekers. The camp has 9 zones and 44 Blocks. The Zones are Zone A, Zone B, Zone C1, Zone C2, Zone E, Zone F1, Zone F2, Zone G1 and Zone G2.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2.** Organization of Sherkole Refugee camp.

Name of Zone	Number of refugees and asylum seekers	Nationality and Ethnic Group
Zone A	824	Maban and Darfurian
Zone B	2092	Maban Maban, Equatorial and Agnuwak of south Sudan
Zone C (C1 and 2)	3630	Darfurian and Arabs Funji from Sudan
Zone E	1530	Nuba, Uduk and Darfur from Sudan and Brun, Shuluk, and Nuer from South Sudan
Zone F (F1 and 2)	2180	Great Lakes region
Zone G (G1 and 2)	377	Great Lakes region

Source: ARRA, August 2019

It is to be noted that the numbers in the above table do not show exact and static figures. The number of refugees fluctuates because of the continuous arrival and departure of refugees and asylum seekers. Such a fluctuation is observed even in weekly reports because of the mobility of refugees and asylum seekers to different places in search of jobs. According to the information obtained from the ARRA office in the camp, the zoning of refugees is made based on their nationality and ethnic group to avoid intra-ethnic conflicts. Zone A is predominantly composed of Maban and Darfurian groups. Zone B is dominantly occupied by Maban, Equatorial, and Agnuwak communities from South Sudan. In zone C1, there are Darfurians and Arabs. In zone C2, most of them are Funji from the Blue Nile state of Sudan. Some Nuba tribes also live in Zone C2. Zone E is composed of six ethnic groups from Sudan and South Sudan. These are Nuba, Uduk, and Darfur from the Blue Nile state. Brun, Shuluk, and Nuer are from South Sudan in zone C1. As indicated hitherto, the majority of refugees in Sherkole are South Sudanese. Among them, the Maban take the first place in number followed by Dinka, Shuluk, Nuer, Agnuwak, Morle, Equatorial, and Brundiyo. These refugees are among more than 64 ethnic groups in South Sudan.<sup>9</sup> Zone F and Zone G are occupied by the Great Lakes refugees such as Congolese, Rwandese, and Burundians, and there are also refugees from Liberia, Cameroon, and Tanzania.

The camp has formal and informal structures in which the latest structure was established after conflict in 2015 among the Great Lake refugees. The formal refugee camp administration is composed of refugee central committee (RCC) members at the top. RCC has a chairperson elected every two years and serves as a go-between the refugees and the camp administrators. Next to the RCC, there are Zonal leaders that represent each zone. Each zone also has different blocks with block representatives called block chiefs. *Umdas*<sup>10</sup> or police also exist under each block chief. The smallest administrative structure is a one-to-ten organization. It is composed of 10 refugees and one person, among the ten, is responsible to report every day activities of his or her members to *Umda* or block chiefs. The formal structure is more responsible to services and protection that refugees get from ARRA and UNHCR. It is also serving as governance and administration.<sup>11</sup> The informal structures serve more of the social, economic and religious needs of the refugees. In the informal arrangement are religious associations, women associations, and youth associations. Disability association, market community, local police or *Shorta* who manage the day to day activities in the camp are included.

The Camp Sherkole is found in one of the three Zones of Benishangul Gumuz region called Assosa Zone. The indigenous people to the area of Sherkole Refugee Camp are the Berta people who have different religion, physical appearance, culture, and language from the refugees who came from the Great Lakes Regions.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the Berta community who is the dominant host, people from other parts of the country collectively known as Habesha also exist surrounding the refugee camp. The Habesha, so named for their more brown color skins, were resettled in the mid-1980s as part of the government's policy of resettling famine-affected people from the Northern and Southern highlands as well as the Western lowlands. Most of these are ethnic Amhara, Oromo, and Tigreans, but they also include a variety of ethnic groups from Southern Ethiopia. Currently, the highlanders constitute around 24 percent of the regional population (Dereje, 2013:110).

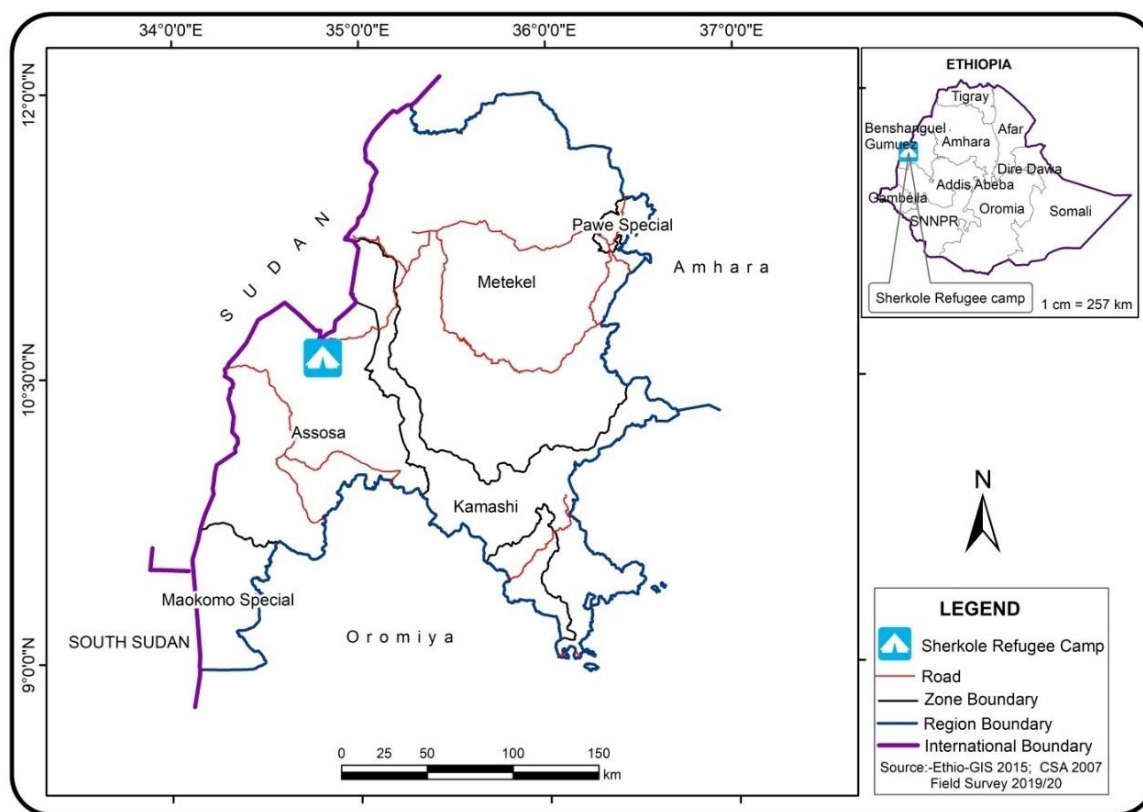
<sup>8</sup>Table 1 said that Sherkole refugee camp contains 11,028 refugees. However, the number of refugees in the camp may fluctuate due to the continues arrival and leaving of refugees.

<sup>9</sup>KII with RCC chairman, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>10</sup>a Sudanese local term to say police.

<sup>11</sup>KII with ARRA camp Coordinator of Sherkole refugee camp, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>12</sup>KII with ARRA protection officer, August 2019 Sherkole refugee camp.



**Figure 1.** Map of Sherkole refugee Camp (source: compiled by the researcher).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Reasons for Departure

War, insecurity, violence and impoverishment are the most frequently mentioned and overarching reasons stated by many refugees around the world about their exile. Yet, personal stories of many informants about how they actually left their homeland show the reasons are actually many and personal. Hitherto, all of the interviewed refugees may not tell their true reasons for leaving their countries. Moreover, I understood most of the refugees told the stories that might be acceptable about their collective identity and are favorable to be accepted by the host state to get legal status.

The refugees who are living in Sherkole refugee camp are predominantly South Sudanese and Sudanese who escaped civil war and conflict to Ethiopia at different times. Most of these refugees came to Sherkole by crossing the immediate border with Ethiopia during war and conflict.

The Republic of Sudan was the country that shared the longest border, about 1600 KM, with Ethiopia before the session of South Sudan (Wondwosen 2009:1). Sudan also faced a prolonged civil war between the central government of Sudan and the rebels of South Sudan (SPLM/A) which struggled to end the marginalization of South Sudanese from the political participation and development of Sudan. However, after the independence from Sudan, South Sudan could not entertain peace and the discontent continued (Schomerus *et al* 2013:4). After the peaceful secession on 9 July 2011, conflicts broke out in Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile regions. The conflict in the two areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile states resulted in several internally displaced persons (IDPs), i.e., 222,000 in South Kordofan in 2013 and 176,000 in Blue Nile state (Strachan 2016). The civil war and political crises in Sudan and South Sudan resulted in a large number of refugees fleeing to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Since the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia directly shares a border with Blue Nile state of Sudan, it is one of the destination of refugees and asylum seekers from this area. By the end of 2011, approximately 20,000 people from the Blue Nile region had fled to Ethiopia via the Benishangul-Gumuz region's Ethio-Sudan border (UNHCR, 2012:3).

Moreover, the region received additional 20,000 refugees in Sherkole and Tongo camps,<sup>13</sup> from the transit center of Admazine and 10,000 refugees who resided among the local population near the border. In January 2012, UNHCR secured the Government agreement on a site for a new camp in Bambasi, which is hosting 16, 000 refugees.<sup>14</sup> Overall, Ethiopia hosted

<sup>13</sup>KII with Tsoré refugee camp RCC, March 2017, Tsoré Refugee camp.

<sup>14</sup>KII with Bambasi refugee camp coordinator, April 2017, Bambasi refugee camp.



905,831 registered refugees and asylum seekers as of August 2018. Among these, 485,000 of them were South Sudanese who were settled in Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regional states of Western Ethiopia Such as.<sup>15</sup>

Kunz (1981) emphasized that ethnic conflicts in Africa resulted in events involving refugees from Burundi and Rwanda who were displaced to each other's countries as well as Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. The majority of these refugees were displaced by the ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi.

The effect of the Hutu and Tutsi conflict is seen in Sherkole Camp too. There are a significant number of event related refugees', to use the term by Kunz, most of which are the Tutsi 'who are alleged to have been forced out of their country due to the problem with the Hutu or their government. However, the types of persecution and fear vary across different countries in the Great Lakes region. Most Congolese refugees claim that they left their country because they were discriminated against and attacked for being Banyamulunge, a type of Tutsi group in Congo. A Congolese refugee who came to Ethiopia in 2010, stated that, he left Congo because he is a Banyamulunge and his ethnic group is not recognized by the DRC government.<sup>16</sup> Explaining the root cause of the conflict in Southern Kivu where Banyamulunge reside in Congo, another 67 years old informant told me the following:

We are the Tutsi community in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwanda is a neighboring country to the DRC, and previously, Kivu was part of Rwanda. We are the Tutsi of Kivu. Historically, we are Rwandan, but geographically, we are Congolese due to colonial boundary demarcation. Our grandfathers and ancestors were Rwandese, but we became Congolese after colonization. Thus, Rwanda was our homeland. That is why we speak Rwandese. But today, the Congolese do not recognize our rights. They tell us 'you are Rwandese' because we speak Rwandese. All the other Congolese are against the Banyamulunge in Congo. The problem was aggravated after the 1994 Rwanda genocide. They always attack us, there is group terrorism. So we do not have peace. In our culture, we Tutsi are Nilotic cattle keepers. Thus, we need more water and pasture land for our cattle, and we also move to different places. Our cows are sometimes taken by rebellious groups. They arrested Tutsi simply because they were a minority. When I was young, I saw my parents suffering. Tutsis in Congo were suffering until today.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, the Burundian refugees also claimed that the Hutu and Tutsi political and power competition complicated their lives in their home country. A 32-year-old Burundi refugee living in Sherkole told me that in her home country, she led a relatively modest life. She had a good job, a house, and a car. According to her, in Bujumbura, there is a strict social boundary between people who claim themselves to be Hutu and Tutsi. She is Tutsi but married to a Hutu husband. This occasion changed her life because intermarriage between the two ethnic groups is unacceptable. Thus, she left her good job and comfortable life and decided to leave Burundi with her husband. They left their country and migrated to Kenya and then to Ethiopia.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, there are also other refugees who have similar reasons for leaving their homeland. Discrimination and personalized violence, instead of general conflict, forced a significant number of people in the Great Lakes region to become refugees elsewhere. Such violence and discrimination have a basis not only in the society; they are also entrenched in state institutions and state personnel. Consolidating this argument, another 25 years old woman said that she came to Sherkole refugee camp because the Burundian government killed her father and her three brothers. She claimed that her father was a Tutsi and her mother was a Hutu. Her father was killed for being a Tutsi. She stated that the Hutu and Tutsi conflict is still active in Burundi. This woman left her country due to the fear of living in an uncertainty. She arrived in Ethiopia from Burundi after a long journey.<sup>19</sup>

Another 30 years old Burundian woman who left her country because of persecution outlined her experience as the following:

My father is a Tutsi. He was killed by Interahamwe, a Hutu militia, in 2008. My mother is a Hutu. When we went to see our mother's relatives, they ignored us because our father is a Tutsi. When we went to see our father's relatives, they also ignored us since our mother was a Hutu. Then I decided to go someplace where I would not see such division and discrimination. Finally, I ended up in Ethiopia<sup>20</sup>

However, there are also refugees in Sherkole camp that the Tutsi attribute to Hutus. According to the refugees from the Great Lakes who identify themselves as Tutsi, the Hutus also come to the Ethiopia refugee camp impersonating them as Tutsis to search for resettlement opportunities. This point was interesting in the course of the study since the interaction among the Great Lakes refugees was vital in the process of understanding the overall interaction in and around the refugee camp. According to the information obtained from ARRA and UNHCR, 'there is no refugee or asylum seeker, registered legally with the Hutu identity'. Moreover, there is no way to differentiate the refugees as Hutu or Tutsi by the protection office of the camp. However, at the informal level, both those who claimed themselves to be Hutu and Tutsi were identified.

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<sup>15</sup>Relief Web Updates, April,2018

<sup>16</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, May 2019, Addis Ababa.

<sup>17</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, April 2017, Kubrhamsa town.

<sup>18</sup>IDI with Burundian refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>19</sup>IDI with Burundian refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>20</sup>IDI with Burundian refugee, April,2017, Sherkole refugee Camp.

There are also refugees from the Great Lakes countries who are neither Hutu nor Tutsi and whose reasons for departure are not related to the conflict between the two groups. These refugees left their country due to ethnic conflict, which is not the concern of Hutu or Tutsi. Unlike many Congolese who claimed that they came from Southern Kivu, some Great Lakes refugees came from Northern Kivu. According to a 34 Years old refugee from North Kivu, he was neither Banyamulunge Tutsi nor Hutu, he left his country in 2002 because of the tribal conflict among three ethnic groups, i.e., Lendu, Himma, and Kaku. He belongs to the Kakuma group and he left his country to escape the conflict.

Morrice (2011:3) argued that personal narratives of refugees as a source of knowledge and understanding of the refugees' world should be stressed to understand both the individual and social history and biography of refugees. Thus, individual narratives of refugees about their up-rootedness should be argued in the broad historical and social context also. This might help to reduce misleading interpretations of individual refugees about their reasons for being up-rooted.

Scholars emphasized the importance of incorporating the specific reasons for refugees to leave their home country, as opposed to the legal and structural reasons and rhetoric of refugees and migration. In this regard, war by itself couldn't be the only reason to leave one's own home place. Deraa (2017:1) argued that South Sudanese refugees in Uganda came unplanned, violently and unwillingly torn away from everything they knew and often having to leave behind valuable belongings and loved ones. Others came in their own time, seeking to make use of the provided facilities like schools and health care due to the failing economy in South Sudan. In this aspect, it is only logical that each individual experiences their displacement differently. Thus, besides the massive exploitation and the threat of war, some refugees narrate some specific reason for crossing the border.

A 28 years old South Sudanese refugee pointed out that he came to Ethiopia to escape from the conflict between Maban and Dinka in South Sudan after the independence. He has seen many people bombarded, including his family, in front of his eyes. When the war broke out between the supporters of Riek Machar and Steven Salva Kiir, he ran away with a group of children, and with the support of people, he arrived in Ethiopia. It took 45 days to cross the border into Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

Another 45 years old South Sudanese refugee pointed out that he came to Sherkole to look for his wife and two children. He decided to come to Ethiopia after hearing that somebody saw his wife with her children in Sherkole. Both of these refugees are war victims from the neighboring country. However, the former directly escaped the war and came to Sherkole, whereas the latter came to Ethiopia to look for his family. War refugees are not aware of their destination and the consequences of their movement. Moreover, they are uncertain about going back to their home countries. Specifically, refugees who arrived in Sherkole refugee camp from South Sudan between 2013 and 2018 are direct victims of ethnic conflict between Nuer and Dinka and they only traveled for a maximum of two days to arrive at the Ethiopian border.

Many refugees from neighboring countries have experience of coming back and forth between their homeland and Sherkole camp. Whereas refugees from the Great Lakes regions have also experience of living as refugees and asylum seekers in more than one country. Academic literature also refers to 'circular migration', the repeat migration from home to host areas. However, Great Lakes refugees are not exclusive categories that focus on the unique experience of double-exile. They also comprise other special types of refugees, such as seasonal migrant workers (Sievert 2016:2).

All the above cases were compiled from the field script to show that within the general rubric of war as a cause, there are personal reasons to leave home country and to live in exile. Some reasons for leaving the homeland are not deliberate and are triggered by unconditional factors such as brutal conflict. This is clearly shown by refugees from Sudan and South Sudan. On the other hand, the Great refugees' cases show that their reason for leaving their home land is both active conflict and prolonged ethnic tension and instability in their home country.

#### 4.2 Determining factors of Refugees' Destination

There are different arguments regarding the choice of the refugees' destination. Some authors assert that refugees are involuntary migrants and ultimately dependent on institutional forces. As a result, they have no choice in the direction of their flight. Other researchers also argued that even if the flight of refugees is not deliberate and involuntary, there are still some rooms that give them an opportunity to decide their destination. Holland *et al* (2016:9) also argued refugees, especially those not fleeing an active conflict zone but instead fleeing persecution should decide on their destination before leaving their home country. They also argued that migrants value access to jobs and asylum rights more than the economy of the receiving state, religious affinity, and migrant networks. Refugees are likely to prioritize safety and security in their decisions. The main concern of refugees is having a steady source of income coupled with a safe environment.

Ruegger and Bohnet (2018:67) also argued that no matter how refugees are supposed to leave their homeland involuntarily, their decision to choose their direction of migration can be under their control. This can be seen by the significant number of refugees from the same country choosing different destinations. Refugees can still consider better opportunities to choose their destination.

Ruegger and Bohnet (2018:67) identified four significant factors that are interwoven and determine the refugees' destination. The first one is geographical proximity and accessibility of the destination. The second factor is networking and relationships, which include smugglers, brokers, as well as refugees' connections and information about their destination Hein (1993: 49) elaborated on this point by claiming that refugees use social networks to facilitate their flight and use their relationships with friends and relatives to arrange their flight. The third factor is refugees' consideration of economic opportunities, including better life and job opportunities. The fourth one is ethnic linkage with neighboring countries and historical narrations about their

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<sup>21</sup>IDI with South Sudanese refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

destinations as important factors in choosing a destination. Perhaps the existing narratives help the refugees to establish peaceful interaction and rapid integration with the host community (Schmeidl, 1997). The coming sections are going to present each of the four reasons in accordance with the empirical data in the case of Sherkole refugee camp.

#### 4.2.1 Geographical proximity and Accessibility

Spatial proximity has been mentioned as the major reason for choosing a refugee destination. Refugees are reliant on spatial nearness, and most of the time, attempt to reach in countries adjacent to their home land.

There are different reasons why refugees choose a neighboring country as their destination. First, most refugees do not have legal documents, identity cards, or other facilities to travel far from their home place. Refugees from Sudan and South Sudan leave their homeland and come to Sherkole camp by crossing a few kilometers. This shows that most of these refugees are the residents of border areas, and they left their homes immediately when war and conflict broke out. As a result, their journey is less planned and most of them leave behind their documents.

Another reason that refugees may choose a neighboring country is their desire to stay close to their country of departure. Schmeidl (1997: 296) argued that forced migrants may not move beyond neighboring countries, in part because they want to return to their places of origin as soon as possible. Most of the refugees also want to maintain connections with the home state for different reasons (Jacobsen, 1998: 29).

Refugees from Sudan and South Sudan do not have a major challenge of crossing the Ethiopian border. There are many gates between Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. As mentioned above, most South Sudanese refugees use the Abbramo to get into Ethiopia. There are also Sudanese refugees who get into Ethiopia through the Guba, Damazen and Kurmuk borders. According to James (2013:245), Kurmuk was established as a frontier police post in 1910 and continued to serve as a cross-border trading town. There is now a "Sudanese Kurmuk" and an "Ethiopian Kurmuk" on the flanking borders.

According to the interview with refugees from Sudan, some refugees have yards in their homeland area, and they want to go back to their homeland during the harvest season and get back to Sherkole during the dry season. Still, a significant number of Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees have a huge number of herds of cattle. Therefore, their cattle are not strong enough to go a very long distance, and they want to stay with their cattle in the border areas. Refugees from Sudan's Nuba and Blue Nile states claimed to have crossed into Ethiopia via the road that connects Ethiopia and Sudan. Dinkas and Shuluk from Southern Sudan also get into Ethiopia using Abbramo. Others also came directly through the Kurmuk border gate. The Sudanese and South Sudanese underlined in the FGD held with them that the journey to Ethiopia is mostly taken in masses or groups in order to decrease the risk of being attacked by the rebellion groups in the jungle. However, the journey is not the same for men and women. According to female focus group participants, they suffered the most from a lack of food, and carrying their children on their backs made their journey more difficult.<sup>22</sup> The South Sudanese refugees who came from Maban also came through Yabus on foot, and then by car from Yabus to Kushim on the Ethiopian border. After screening, refugees get into the transitional center in Ashura, which is supervised by IOM, and after screening, refugees get into the transitional center and are then relocated to different camps.

However, the spatial proximity argument that works for the Sudanese and South Sudanese does not work for refugees from the Great Lakes region. Almost all of the interviewed refugees from the Great Lakes stated that they do not prefer to stay in the neighboring countries for different reasons. In the first place, the refugees perceive that their adversaries also live in the neighboring countries. As a result, they do not feel safe in neighboring countries. In fact, the refugees first fled to neighboring countries, where they tested how unsafe it was to stay for a long period of time. Consequently, they preferred to go far. Refugees from the Great Lakes region have neither stayed in a neighboring country nor have the intention of going back home permanently or moving back and forth. All interviewed refugees from this region strongly stated that they only wanted to resettle abroad or, if not possible, work and live in Ethiopia. A 34 years old Congolese refugee who came from North Kivu pointed out that by the time he escaped from North Kivu, he was only 5 KM away from getting into South Sudan. However, he didn't prefer to go to South Sudan because he knew that South Sudan was found in worse condition than Congo. Thus, he moved to Uganda, which was 17 KM away, where he stayed for six months before coming to Ethiopia.<sup>23</sup> Strengthening this argument, FGD discussants of Great Lakes refugees underlined that staying in the immediate neighboring country is not preferable and they want to go far from the neighboring countries due to ethnic rivalries among ethnic groups dispersed across countries of the region.

#### 4.2.2 Networks and Connections

Holland *et al* (2016) argued that previous waves of migrants often provide information about destination countries. They are also sources of funds for migrating, and for support once migrants arrive. This information and support lower the cost of migration and make migration a realistic possibility for poorer migrants. Obviously, the agency impacts flight patterns because many refugees depend on networks of human smugglers and traffickers.

In this regard, discussion with my informants suggested that there is a network of brokers and human smugglers that work to transit refugees and migrants from central Africa to Arab countries especially to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, by considering Ethiopia as a transit country. Refugees aspiring to further migration to the Middle East or European countries use Ethiopian refugee camps as transit places. After reaching Ethiopia and spending some time in the camps, refugees abandon their camp life and continue their journey through different routes to different Arab countries via Djibouti, and some of the m

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<sup>22</sup>FGD2 with refugees, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>23</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.



also try to go to different European countries by using the Sudan-Libya route. A 33 years old Congolese refugee living in Sherkole camp since 2013 described that he came to Ethiopia to go to Djibouti with his three friends. When he arrived at the Ethio-Kenya border, his friends who had been in Sherkole refugee camp told him how to reach Addis Ababa. After joining his friends in Sherkole, they had arranged a journey to Sudan via Metema with Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants. However, he couldn't get the money he was asked by the smugglers and he couldn't move away from Sherkole refugee camp while his friends left him and moved to Sudan. Yet, he didn't hear from his friends afterwards. Additionally, his wife also left him to try the sea route through Libya to Europe after she got financial support from her sister in Austria, and she was successful in getting into Italy.<sup>24</sup>

Another 25 years old refugee from Congo came to Ethiopia to transit to Qatar after hearing about the huge job opportunities in Qatar in relation to the World Cup 2022. By the time he was in the Uganda refugee camp, his friends who had been in Ethiopia told him about the job opportunities in Qatar and the route via Ethiopia. After arriving in Ethiopia, he and his friends escaped from the camp and started their journey to Djibouti. However, they were unlucky. Before they reached Djibouti, they were arrested in Dire Dawa by the Ethiopian security forces. Then, they were deported to Addis Ababa's ARRA office. 14 of the 30 refugees caught in the journey were placed in the Sherkole refugee camp, while the rest vanished and there was no information about them.<sup>25</sup> Thus, refugees, especially many Great Lakes refugees, use Ethiopia as the hub and transition to the Middle East and Europe. They also use the network of their previously arrived friends as well as smugglers. Yet this is not the only reason refugees choose Ethiopia as their destination.

A relative or a family member who had arrived earlier facilitates new migration. Some Great Lakes refugees come to Ethiopia following their family members and relatives. Some refugees coming to reunion with their families, whom they had been separated from in their home country FGD with the Great Lakes refugees suggested that some refugees are lonely and have no family members or relatives around them in the camp. This makes camp life even more distressful. During August 2017, there was one Cameroonian refugee in Zone G, this woman came to Ethiopia in 2016. She used to work in the UN office in Cameroon and she sought asylum in Ethiopia due to some secret related to her French husband.<sup>26</sup> Thus, for refugees like her who do not have any relatives or other refugees from their home country, life will become more difficult and traumatic. Some refugees, thus, encourage their family members to join them in the camp if life in their home country is not much better than life as a refugee.

Narrating his experience, One Congolese refugee said that when he came to Ethiopia 20 years ago, he didn't know any Congolese refugees in Ethiopia. He also remembered that first he was relocated to Gambella refugee camp. The refugee camp in Gambella was occupied by refugees from Nuer and Agnuak and these refugees called him Habesha because they perceived that he was an Ethiopian Habesha. Even some of the refugees sought to attack him. As a result, ARRA protection officers isolated and gave him a shelter inside the ARRA compound. Moreover, he was the only refugee from Congo at that time. Thus, he was transferred to Addis Ababa as an urban refugee and finally joined Sherkole after many Congolese refugees had already been admitted to Sherkole refugee camp.<sup>27</sup>

The other challenge of forced migrants is separation from their family members while they are *en route*. Many informants from the Great Lakes region and also from Sudan and South Sudan confirmed that they were separated from their family members, friends, and people they knew in their homeland during their journey. As a result, their journey and mobility became stressful and difficult. For some of the forced migrants, the family separation influenced their travel direction and reshaped their journey.

Two women refugees from the Blue Nile region of South Sudan said that when they came to Ethiopia, each of them left their children in Sudan. Then their children joined them in Sherkole Camp after three years. The children had planned to go to Kenya instead of Ethiopia, but Elizabeth and Marta convinced them over the phone to come to Ethiopia. Then Elizabeth's two girls and Marta's five children came to Sherkole, where they met their mothers in Sherkole and are still living together.

In fact, refugees are attracted to countries where they have their relatives, families or people they know. Because of the networks they have, it eases their lives when they live as refugees. Moreover, refugees feel safe when they live with their own ethnic group. According to my observation, the result of the fieldwork also confirmed that most of the refugees live in groups, and the structure of the camp is also organized based on the refugees' ethnic and family connections in order to increase their feeling of safety. In this regard, the ARRA program officer of the camps in the Benishangul-Gumuz region said that refugees who do not have any family members or relatives are sent to Addis Ababa to live as urban refugees. This is to protect refugees who have no relatives from any attack in the camp and also to give them more security. In this regard, refugees are arranged to live with their own ethnic group or family members, and the refugees who have no relatives or family members may feel insecure. Hence they get a chance to live as urban refugees.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Refugee policy and security of the Destination

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<sup>24</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>25</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, August 2019, Assosa town.

<sup>26</sup>IDI with Cameroonian refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>27</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>28</sup>KII With regional ARRA program officer, August 2019, Assosa town.

The knowledge of migrants about the conditions in their destinations, including the economic conditions and better job opportunities, the security situation and freedom from oppression, better access to education and to medical care than in their home country, and reunion with family, are some of the things that are more or less incorporated into the refugee policies of the host countries.

Ethiopian refugee response policy includes repatriation, resettlement, and integration (UNHCR, 2012). Refugees from the Great Lakes region revealed that they chose Ethiopia as their destination because they heard that the Rwandese refugees who arrived in Ethiopia in 2002 got immediate resettlement. Then, many refugees from the Great Lakes region followed them and presented them as Tutsis to get asylum. The Sherkole refugee camp coordinator also said that the reason for the Great Lakes refugees' coming to Ethiopia was to get rapid resettlement to a third country. Therefore, resettlement policy is one of the factors that attracts refugees towards their destination.

Security situation and relative peace in a country also attract refugees who are living in other countries' refugee camps. In this regard, many refugees from the Great Lakes regions and from Sudan and South Sudan came to Ethiopia refugee camps after spending some time in other refugee camps. In Sherkole refugee camp, there are many Congolese refugees who came to Ethiopia after visiting refugee camps in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. A 60 years old Congolese refugee in Sherkole camp told that in 1996 he was in Mudende refugee camp of Rwanda and stayed there for eight years. But the Interahamwe militias attacked the refugees in the camp and killed many refugees and he lost his relatives in the camp. Thus, he left that camp and returned back to Congo. Then, after some years, the war broke out again in North Kivu of Congo. However, he didn't decide to go again to Rwanda. According to him, he decided to choose some other peaceful county and that was Ethiopia.<sup>29</sup>

A 24 years old Burundian woman refugee also told me that she went to Uganda and after three months she came to Ethiopia. She expressed her feeling as follows:

... Ethiopia is a country where I started sleeping well. Everything is good here and I am enjoying my life. In other African countries raping women is very common. Our women were raped by anyone in the bush. But here in Ethiopia such kind of crime is less common. I saw in Uganda policemen were also raping women. They deceive women refugees. They use our weakness. They know that we are illegal migrants and we need shelter and food. Thus, they negotiate with the male refugees for money and the women are forced to sleep with them.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, if they stayed at another campus in Kenya or Uganda, they think that they are not far from their own country thus still they feel insecure. They still move further and arrive in Ethiopia. 24 years old Congolese narrated her experience as follows:

...when I arrived in Uganda, I saw the same people who were hunting me; when I arrived in Kenya, I saw the same people who were chasing me starting from my country; when I arrived in Ethiopia I started hearing the language that I am not familiar with. I also started to see new faces and new physical appearance, beautiful people. Then I believed that these people are nice, look like angels and they may not hurt me.

Refugees are not ultimate migrants who plan and map their destination. Due to this they move into different places until they arrive in some places and get refugee status. Before getting the legal refugee status and get into the place where they get protection, they navigate to different places. This in turn gives them the opportunity to interact with different people and states. High costs of mobility, violence and criminality, lack of food and shelter, separation from family members or friends are some of the challenges that refugees experienced in their mobility to their destinations and presented as follows.

Sherkole refugee camp receives asylum seekers and refugees in two ways. First, asylum seekers arrive at ARRA head office in Addis Ababa and then ARRA assigns them to Sherkole camp. Refugees coming from the Great Lakes regions have two major entry points. Most of the refugees from the Great Lakes regions get into Ethiopia from Kenya through Moyale. After reaching Moyale, they go to Addis Ababa ARRA head office. Then ARRA sends them to Sherkole refugee camp. Second, there are gateways to Ethiopia from South Sudan such as Abrahamo and from Sudan mainly Giesen, Damazen and Kurmuk. Refugees that enter through these border towns and places are received and screened by IOM, ARRA and UNHCR personnel who work in the border checkpoints. After screening, such as preliminary interviews, asylum seekers are transported to refugee camps. In Addition to South Sudanese and Sudanese refugees, quite few refugees from the Great Lakes come through Ethio- Sudan and South Sudan borders and join Sherkole refugee camp.<sup>31</sup>

Seeing their trajectories, refugees from the Great Lakes regions first go to Uganda, then to Kenya and finally enter Ethiopia through Moyale. These refugees travel by car and on foot for several days. Moreover, most of them also stay for considerable time in different countries both by choice and involuntary.

Stories of different refugees confirm that the trajectories of migration to Ethiopia look similar for many of the Great Lakes region refugees. Many refugees from this region transited through Uganda and most of them do not want to stay in Uganda. Thus, those migrants continued their journey further to Kenya or Ethiopia. They do not apply to get refugee status in Uganda. As a result, they stay in Uganda at their own expense. From Uganda, they cross to Kenya and then finally to Ethiopia.

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<sup>29</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, August 2019, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>30</sup>IDI with Burundian refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>31</sup>KII with ARRA regional Program Officer, August 2019, Assosa town.

Most of the refugees that entered Ethiopia through the Kenya border also witnessed that Ethiopia is relatively a safer country than Kenya and Uganda. Ethiopian people are respectful of refugees and they do not force anyone to change religion or identity. Moreover, people show direction of the required place without asking for money. Some Ethiopian people even contribute their own money to facilitate refugees' journey to ARRA or UNHCR offices. Moreover, Ethiopia's open door refugee policy has also its own contribution in allowing refugees from non-Neighboring countries. Ethiopia's refugee policy is welcoming for refugees from different nationalities. In September 2016, at the United Nations Summit on Refugees in New York, the Government of Ethiopia was among the 193 countries to sign the New York Declaration. The Declaration put forth a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which focuses internationally on measures to simplify pressure on countries that welcome and host refugees, supporting the self-reliance of refugees, expanding access to resettlement, and fostering conditions that enable refugees to return voluntarily to their home countries. Moreover, the CRRF aimed at improving rights and expanding services to benefit both refugees and host communities. The nine pledges include potential provisions to ease the refugees' restrictions on matters of freedom of movement, labor rights, and access to services, livelihoods and resources (World Bank, 2018:7).

#### 4.2.4 The Banyamulunge Story of ancestry with the Ethiopia people

Ruegger and Bohnet (2018) argued that the ethnicity of refugees enables them to examine their flight direction. Castels (2003:28) also strongly recommended the essentiality of historical understanding of both the refugee sending and receiving societies to study specific forced migration situations.

Tutsi refugees believed that their relation can be traced back to Abyssinian highlands. Their ancestors migrated to South wards in search of water and grazing land, through Kenya and Uganda and then to Rwanda where the Hutu people lived. Every Tutsi refugee would invoke this narrative to establish a historical relatedness with Ethiopians. 63 years old Congolese argued that all of the Banyamulunge, even those who are not educated, know the Tutsi origin is Ethiopia. Others also learned that Ethiopia is a unique country in Africa and Ethiopians have a special relation with the Tutsi people. As a refugee, choosing Ethiopia as a destination is also choosing their ancestral homeland.<sup>32</sup>

Our ancestors said that we are from Ethiopia. By the time our killers started killing us in 1994, they threw many bodies of dead Tutsis into Lake Kivu shouting 'go back to Abyssinia where you came from'. That is why we decide to come to Ethiopia as refugees even though Ethiopia is far from Congo.<sup>33</sup>

Some informants tend to identify a particular ethnic group that has historical relation with the Tutsi. One 24 years old Banyamulunge from Congo said that the Oromo people of Ethiopia have the same culture as his ethnic group. He also added that the Tutsi dancing culture, social and economic practices, and their physical outlook resemble the Oromo people.<sup>34</sup> The data obtained from the field showed that the information supports the Hamitic theory. Specifically, the Banyamulunge who came from Southern Kivu claimed that the reason of choosing Ethiopia as their destination was the historical tie between Ethiopia or the former Abyssinia with the people what were known as Tutsi cattle keepers from Ethiopia, but they flee to search grazing land for their cattle then they go through Kenya, Uganda and to Rwanda.

Ruegger and Bohnet (2018:67) explained trans-border ethnic linkages are strongly correlated to spatial proximity because kinship connections are mostly found in regionally concentrated and contiguous territories. Therefore, refugees can easily decide to move to countries where there is ethnic linkage. Thus, the nearby potential host countries with cultural linkages to ethnic kin are most likely to pull refugees. In this regard, Sudanese refugees from the Blue Nile state who entered Ethiopia using the Kurmuk border are a good example. In the first place they have kin groups on the Ethiopian side because they are historically interrelated groups. There are also many ethnic groups in border areas of Ethio-Sudan that have dual identity and live on both sides of the country. In this regard the Nuer and Berta are good examples.

Regarding ethno- historical linkage between non-neighboring countries, the experience of Great Lakes regions that come into Ethiopia is a bit unique. This is because most of the Great Lakes refugees who came to Ethiopia confirmed that they are not feeling safe in neighboring countries due to the presence of ethnic groups that they perceived as their enemies.

## 5. Conclusion

There cannot be one or a few *apriori* known reasons to explain refugees' choice of their destination. Rather several interwoven reasons could exist, those reasons being in the range from conscious voluntary choices to unconscious involuntary ones. Some refugees seem to choose their destination taking into account future economic gains as well as historical and sentimental factors. Other refugees may simply escape away to any direction a security situation that forced them to flee would allow. Refugees choose a destination for one or several reasons at different degrees of voluntary or forced decision. Refugees from the Great Lakes region who entered Ethiopia through Kenya transit at least through Uganda and Kenya to reach Ethiopia. However, most of the refugees escaped from the war and they do not have enough money to pay for transport. Thus, they stayed in Uganda for unintended time to get money to go to Kenya. Some of them did not have original plans to leave Uganda but since most of the refugees in Uganda came from other countries who share the same problem of ethnic conflict with the former, they do not

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<sup>32</sup>IDI Congolese refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>33</sup>IDI Congolese refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

<sup>34</sup>IDI with Congolese refugee, April 2017, Sherkole refugee camp.

feel safe in Uganda. Thus they engaged in different activities in Uganda, such as prostitution, daily labor and other criminal activities to generate money for further travel to Kenya.

Generally, the trajectories of migration of refugees about their destination and their mapping and projection to their final destinations are a milestone to build interaction in the host state as the empirical evidence showed. The main point that I argued in this regard is since refugees are forced migrants and they are not certain about their journey they bring different stories to justify their choice of arrival. In choosing their destination still there are many factors which work together and help them to make decisions. Finally, the refugees' narratives about their destination can contribute to their stay in the host country as a refugee and this is the central point which enforced me to talk about refugee narratives. Moreover, the whole process that refugees pass through to get into their destination has also a contribution to the relationship that they establish with the host community. The article also concludes that Ethiopia, as the hub between East Africa and the gulf, as well as the headquarter for African Union and has a long history of hosting refugees from different countries contributed to being preferred by refugees who come from both neighboring and non-neighboring countries.

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