Building local strategies to reduce broker trafficking and sexual abuse of migrant girls in Ethiopia

RESEARCH INSTITUTION
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TEAM MEMBERS
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CONTEXT
Rates of urbanization in Ethiopia are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and research shows that internal rural-urban migrants are markedly young and female. That rural-urban migrant females are frequently runaways from child marriage or make the migration transition outside of a protective family unit, results in a migration transition that is particularly perilous for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), exacerbating their vulnerability to sexual abuse and trafficking.

Recent research in Ethiopia reveals that job placement brokers pose both a risk and, at times, a mechanism of support for migrant AGYW. Brokers (known as delalas in Amharic) are intermediaries or ‘go-betweens’ who are active in job placement, connecting employers with employees and frequently supplying households, restaurants and bars with domestic workers, waitresses, bar staff and commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC). Newly arriving migrants frequently turn to brokers to help place them into jobs, especially when they migrate without a job already in place. The Population Council’s previous research demonstrated that brokers may represent a significant risk to girls, with many taking advantage of their lack of familiarity and naivete to sexually exploit them or traffic them into sex work/CSEC.

PROJECT AIM
The aim of the project is to develop, monitor, test and document a gender-responsive intervention to disrupt the risk faced by migrant girls at the point of arrival into towns and cities where they encounter brokers/labour intermediaries/traffickers. In partnership with a local NGO, Organization for Prevention Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS), we will create a cadre of licensed and certified ‘safer’ brokers to ensure that trustworthy, professional and supportive brokers assist girls to find safe positions upon arrival into cities. We will also support a group of community-based female ‘migration allies’ to provide girls with information and resources upon arrival, to assist in their acclimating to the urban environment and not fall prey to deception at the hands of unscrupulous brokers. Furthermore, the capacity of local law enforcement, transport authorities, and local government administrations will be strengthened. The research includes a longitudinal qualitative study of the pilot project, combined with an integrated management information system that tracks the volume and patterns of migrants served. In-depth interviews will be conducted among recent female migrants as well as project affiliates: brokers, arrival allies, law enforcement and transport workers and staff from NGO partners.

STUDY CONTRIBUTION
This pilot study sheds light on a neglected facet of AGYW’s migration experience: their interactions with brokers and the potential SGBV and trafficking risk this introduces at the point of arrival into cities. The result of this work will be greater attention to safety issues at migration arrival points, including local resources that are supportive of migrants’ safe and protected transition and AGYW who are equipped with knowledge, skills and resources to avoid the pitfalls of engaging with people who harm them, sexually exploit them or traffic them in dangerous forms of work. Ultimately, lessons from this project will guide other low- and middle-income settings with similar gendered patterns of migration, trafficking and risk for female migrants, in designing and implementing programs to address trafficking and sexual exploitation at a point of high risk for AGYW.