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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Note</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisay Asefa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Remittances in Eritrea: An Exploratory Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fikrejesus Amahazion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutriton and Trade Liberalization in Africa</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismaelline Eba Nguema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the Voices of Maasai Women in Kenya: Ensuring The Well-Being of their Families through Collective Actions</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taeko Takayanagi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities and Challenges for Community Based Ecotourism Development: The Case of Alatish National Park; Northwest Ethiopia</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassegn Berhanu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental Authority on Development &amp; East African Community: Viability of Merger</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andualem Zewdie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Oil Price Shocks on Monetary Policy in Nigeria:</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Vector Autoregressive Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama Agyeiwaa Abrokwah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review of How Sub-Saharan Africa Can Achieve Food Security and Ascend Its Economy to the Initial Stages of Light Industrialization.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firkejesus Amahazion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial Note

This issue of IJAD features six papers and one book review for our African and global readers. The papers include various efforts that humans make to improve lives. The lingering theme often focuses on the ability of African countries to find ways to collaborate in ways that can improve life for all African people.

There is an attempt to understand financial remittances in Eritrea, where people, especially the youth, leave their land in droves due to “push factors.” In the future, Ethiopia and Eritrea can benefit from regional economic integration that allows the free movement of people, goods and services to expand their markets and contribute to peaceful relations. In addition, researchers address the improvement of nutrition and food security by liberalizing regional trade across Africa. The goal should be to redistribute economic growth so people have access to good health and a nutritious diet. There is also the ethnographic study into women leaders who should be valued and supported because the empowerment of marginalized women can raise self-confidence and pride that can contribute to harmonious, peaceful and vibrant communities.

By examining the opportunities and challenges regarding key historical and cultural attractions to create employment in local communities, the author addresses the responsibility of local and regional governments to provide infrastructure such as roads, electricity, housing including hotels, and education that make these areas attractive to tourists.

The role of regional collaboration between East African countries through regional organization, which would create Pan African integrated communities, leads to suggestions for combining the regional organizations of the IGAD and EAC by merging them into Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in eastern African and the Horn of African. But, integration requires strong political will and good governance to reduce regional conflict and move toward sustainable progress of all people in the region. The improvement of governance and leadership is important in reducing oil price shocks due to several global factors and internal mismanagement of oil revenues.

The book review of How Sub-Saharan Africa Can Achieve Food Security and Ascend Its Economy to the Initial Stages of Light Industrialization by Woldezion Mesghinna investigates how Sub-Saharan Africa can achieve food security, and believes this transformation can only be done with good governance and leadership that minimize corruption, conflict and repression in every state. Strengthening a diversified economy and enhancing human capital could move the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa toward regional collaboration as well as economic unity.

We hope these articles lead to discussion, reflection and positive action that can benefit the people of Africa.

Sisay Asefa, Chief Editor
Understanding Remittances in Eritrea: An Exploratory Study

Fikrejesus Amahazion, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Adi Keih, Eritrea

Abstract
Migration has been characterized as a fundamental component of the human experience, and today there are several hundred million international migrants around the world. Although migrants leave their home country, they maintain links, particularly through remittances. Economic remittances supplement the domestic incomes of millions of poor families and are vital for many developing countries. This paper explores economic remittances into Eritrea, examining the particular trends, amounts received, and how remittances are generally consumed. Additionally, the paper explores general perceptions about remittances and their impact upon society in Eritrea. Based on interviews and focus group discussions with individuals and households across Eritrea, as well as discussions with government sources, this paper presents important findings that help to clarify understandings of remittances in Eritrea. For Eritrea, a low-income, developing country, remittances constitute an important part of the economy and source of foreign exchange. Furthermore, they are a key source of income for many individuals and households. Remittances to Eritrea are mainly sent to family and relatives, and although they may be transferred via several different mechanisms, informal channels are predominantly used. Results also suggest that recipients do not tend to utilize remittances for productive investment expenditures. Generally, perceptions and views toward remittances are mixed, with both positive and negative perceptions being held and expressed.

Keywords: remittances, migration, development, finance, poverty, Eritrea, Africa, Diaspora

Introduction
Migration has long been characterized as a fundamental component of the human experience and today there are several hundred million international migrants around the world (King, 2012; McNeill & Adams, 1978). Although migration is often solely seen as a process that uproots persons from their home country and reintegrates them into a new society and culture, many migrants develop and maintain links with their country of origin and communities, particularly through remittances (Markley, 2011; Portes, 1999, 2010).

Economic remittances supplement the domestic incomes of millions of poor families and are vital for many developing countries (Mohamoud & Fréchaut, 2006; Omer & El Koury, 2005). They represent the second largest source of external finance and constitute a significant percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for many countries. In 2015, global economic remittances to developing countries reached approximately 432 billion US dollars (Lubambu, 2014; Ratha, 2005; World Bank, 2016), but exact figures on remittances are difficult to ascertain since many transfers take place through unofficial, unrecorded informal channels. However, there is broad agreement...
that remittances have become a key source of external funding for many developing countries, including Mexico, Bangladesh, Lesotho, Tonga, Vietnam, the Philippines, Somalia, and Tajikistan, amongst others (Lu & Treiman, 2007; Maimbo & Ratha, 2005; Ratha, 2005).

As a young, developing, low-income country, Eritrea is faced with a myriad of significant socio-political and economic challenges. Additionally, in recent years, the country has experienced a considerable rate of emigration. However, while Eritrean emigration has generally been documented and explored (Bascom, 2005; DIS, 2014; Harper, 2016B; Kifleyesus, 2012; Tewolde, 2006), closely linked economic remittances have received much less coverage or attention. Accordingly, this paper explores the issue of economic remittances into Eritrea. What are the particular trends and amounts received, and how are remittances generally spent or used? For example, are remittances spent on basic consumer goods or are they channeled into human and physical investments? As well, the paper examines general perceptions about remittances and their impact upon society in Eritrea. Are remittances perceived as positive and sustainable or as a negative development that can be harmful to households and the nation?

This paper is significant for several reasons. First, with very little academic work conducted on remittances in relation to Eritrea, the study sheds light on an increasingly important topic and serves as a useful foundation for further research. Moreover, given the growing international focus on the role of remittances within development finance, Eritrea, with a large dependence on remittances, merits greater attention. While remittances have generally been understood to be a significant component of the Eritrean economy, this paper presents important details about the particular mechanisms through which remittances may impact Eritrean households and the economy. As well, through utilizing in-depth interviews, the study provides a deeper understanding of issues that generally escape traditional standardized surveys. Last, the paper offers meaningful implications for Eritrean policymakers and can support more effective policy approaches for managing remittances.

**Literature Review**

Although migration was often characterized as a process uprooting persons from their home country and reintegrating them into a new society and culture, it has increasingly been understood that migrants do not sever their relationships and ties with their home country. Rather, they forge and sustain multiple linkages and exchanges with it, often in the form of remittances (Schiller & Fouron, 1999; Markley, 2011; Portes, 1999, 2010). Several types of remittances exist, including technological remittances, characterized by the knowledge, skills and technology that migrants bring back home upon their return (Goldring, 2003; Nichols, 2002), political remittances, involving the changes in political identities, demands, perspectives, and practices nurtured by new political ideas and values of returning migrants into their homeland (Fitzgerald, 2000; Perez-Armendariz & Crow, 2009), and social remittances, which are the diffusion and circulation of different social norms, practices and ideas into migrant-sending and migrant-receiving areas (King, Lulle, & Buzinska, 2016; Levitt, 1998, 2001; Markley, 2011). Economic remittances, which are most researched, basically refer to the transfer of money and goods from migrants to relatives or
friends in the origin country, and transfers can be sent via a variety of mechanisms or channels (IMF, 2009; Lozano, 1993). After foreign direct investment, they are the second largest source of external funding for developing countries (Lubambu, 2014; Maimbo & Ratha 2005; Ratha, 2005).

Economic remittances may be driven by a variety of motives. Based on evidence from household surveys and qualitative fieldwork, migrants may remit altruistically, to maintain ties to their families and communities, in exchange for favors or services (e.g. childcare or household tasks), or for self-interest, such as investment or future inheritances (Becker, 1974; Lucas & Stark, 1985; Poirine, 1997; Rapoport & Docquier, 2005; Sana & Massey, 2005; Stark, 1995). Remittances may also be sent to repay loans or investments. For example, migrants may send remittances to reimburse debts incurred prior to or in the process of emigration (Brown, 1997; Lucas & Stark, 1985). For many households, remittances serve as a form of insurance by helping to diversify earning risks. Specifically, since migrants often work in different geographical regions and economic sectors from other members of their household, their earnings, and subsequent remittances, can provide an important hedge to household earnings in the country of origin (Kapur, 2004; Ratha, 2013). Additionally, migrants also remit to insure against risks to their earnings in the host country (Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2006). Quite often, however, migrants combine a number of motives which are difficult to explicitly distinguish through survey or qualitative data, and these motives frequently also vary between migrants over time and across different settings (Garip, 2012; Lucas & Stark 1985; Niimi & Reilly, 2008).

Much of the growing literature on economic remittances examine the effect of remittances on social and development outcomes. Ratha (2013) suggests that remittances could play a key role as a significant “anti-poverty force” because they tend to increase the incomes of households in the developing world. For example, in a cross-country regression based on 74 low- and middle-income developing countries, Adams and Page (2005) found that a 10 percent increase in the share of remittances in a country’s GDP could lead to an average 1.6 percent decline in the poverty headcount. Moreover, a 10 percent increase in the share of remittances led to an approximately 2 percent decline in the depth and severity of poverty (Adams & Page, 2005). Additionally, exploring El Salvador, Rivera Campos and Lardé de Palomo (2002) found that remittances helped reduce the national poverty rate by 4.2 percent and the Gini coefficient from 0.55 to 0.53. Similarly, in an analysis of remittance flow in 33 African countries for the period 1990–2005, Anyanwu and Erhijakpor (2010) found that the level, depth, and severity of poverty declined as remittances increased (measured as remittances as a share of GDP).

Evidence also suggests that remittances may help increase the level of investment in human capital. For example, in an examination of remittances and education in El Salvador, Cox-Edwards and Ureta (2003) found that in rural areas the probability of a child from a household receiving a 100-dollar monthly remittance leaving primary school is 56 percent lower than that of a child from a household not receiving a remittance. In urban areas, the probability was only 24 percent. As well, using data from a nationally representative household survey in Ghana, Adams, Cuecuecha, and Page (2009) found that households in Ghana receiving remittances spent more at the margin on education compared to what they would have spent without remittances. Such “remittance-
inspired investments on education are important, because they can help to build human capital in Ghana" (Adams et al., 2009, p. 23). Likewise, in Ecuador, remittances increased school enrollment, significantly decreased the incidence of child work, especially for girls and within rural areas, and also served as a form of insurance by being utilized to finance education and choose the school type when households are faced with different economic shocks (Calero, Bedi & Sparrow, 2009).

In addition to supporting greater human development outcomes across a number of areas, remittances may positively impact savings, investment, and economic growth (Adams, 2003; Kapur, 2004; Ratha, 2013). For example, in a study of data spanning from 1980 to 2004 for 36 African countries, Fayissa and Nsiah (2010) found that remittances positively impacted economic growth by providing an alternative way to finance investments and helping to overcome liquidity constraints. As well, in a study of Pakistan, Adams (1998) found that international remittances had a positive and significant effect on the accumulation of physical assets in rural areas (i.e. irrigated and rain-fed land) by recipient households.

However, much work challenges these positive perspectives of remittances by showing that many recipient households spend remittances mostly on recurring household expenses, such as food, education, or health, while retaining only a small share for productive investments, such as acquiring land for farming or establishing a business (Clement, 2011; Lubambu, 2014; Meyers, 1997). For example, Lopez-Calix and Seligson’s (1990) survey of the role of remittances in financing small business in San Salvador found that, on average, only 16 percent of remittances were utilized for investment purposes. Furthermore, in an extensive review of the literature by Chami, Fullenkamp and Jahjah (2003, pp.10-11), the authors report that a “significant proportion, and often the majority,” of remittances are spent on “status-oriented” consumption, and that the ways in which remittances are typically invested – in housing, land and jewellery – are “not necessarily productive” to the economy as a whole. Generally, the evidence for remittances’ potential to promote or sustain economic growth is inconclusive (Lubambu, 2014; Ratha, 2013). Remittances may contribute to a culture of dependency and reduce recipients’ motivation to work and, thus, slow down growth, as well as contribute to significant inequalities (Chami et al., 2003; Lubambu, 2014; Ratha, 2005).

Research Design and Methodology

Between January 2016 and March 2017, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with individuals, households, and key informants across Eritrea. Individuals and households were selected through convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Key informants were from several educational institutions (e.g. the College of Arts and Social Sciences), the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Finance, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), and several private businesses.

Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1989), a particularly useful format since the study retained many exploratory features. Furthermore, open-ended questions offered respondents an opportunity to organize responses within their own
framework, thus, potentially increasing the validity of responses. While the interviews and questions were semi-structured, they involved many follow-up queries and creative locutions (e.g. “why” and “what else”) in order to further probe issues of merit or pursue clarity (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1989).

All interviews began after obtaining verbal consent and were generally conducted in person or by telephone. Conversations lasted between thirty minutes and two hours and were conducted in either Tigrinya or English, which are two of Eritrea’s three national working languages. During all interviews, hand-written notes were taken, with transcription, i.e. formal write-up occurred shortly afterward, often the same day, in order to reduce errors and ensure a high degree of accuracy and detail (Newing, 2011).

Additionally, the paper is guided by numerous informal conversations and small group discussions, and an extensive review of literature, data, and materials collected from an assortment of sources, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government ministries, and regional or global organizations, e.g. the United Nations Development Program and World Health Organization. Documents and materials examined included general surveys and reports, laws and guidelines, websites, newsletters, press releases or statements, government publications, and countless articles available from the Lexis-Nexis database or general online searches.

Data analysis is based on data triangulation: obtaining, comparing, and contrasting evidence from a wide range of data sources (Bieri, 2010; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Yin, 2003). Relying on multiple sources of data allows for the convergence of various lines of inquiry, strengthens validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Yin, 2003), and is important in gaining cumulative insights and acquiring a broader, richer perspective of remittances in the context of Eritrea.

Results

Eritrea

Eritrea is a young, low-income country located within the fractious Horn of Africa region. After waging one of the longest liberation wars of the 1900s, it eventually gained independence in 1991. Eritrea has an area of approximately 124,000 square kilometers, and is divided into six main political administrative regions (zobas) – Debub, Gash Barka, Maekel, Southern Red Sea, Northern Red Sea, and Anseba. Eritrea has a population of approximately 3.5 million people, which is distributed between nine separate ethno-linguistic groups, and its per-capita GDP is approximately US $700. The population of Eritrea is split almost evenly between Christianity and Islam, with each representing nearly half of the population (EPHS, 2010; IMF, 2016; World Bank, 2015).

Notably, Eritrea has made commendable progress within the health sector, especially upon the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); life expectancy has increased; maternal, infant and child mortality rates have been reduced dramatically; immunization coverage has rocketed; malaria mortality and morbidity have plummeted; and HIV prevalence has decreased considerably (Eritrea MDG, 2014; Pose & Samuels, 2011; UNDP, 2014; WHO, 2014). Although these developments reflect considerable progress, the country continues to face a variety of
significant issues, including poverty reduction, socio-political challenges, erratic rainfall and the potential for severe drought, infrastructure development, food security, a shortage of skilled labor, macroeconomic imbalances, regional conflict and instability, and international sanctions (AfDB, 2016; EPHS, 2010; Eritrea MDG, 2014; IMF, 2003; Pose & Samuels, 2011; World Bank, 2015).

Remittances

Eritrean emigration has a long, complex history dating back to the post-World War II period which was marked by economic recession amidst the abrupt end to the country’s industrialization drive under Italian colonialism. Emigration would continue and increase during the country’s protracted war for independence which lasted from 1961 until 1991 (Kifleyesus, 2012; Pool, 2001; Riley & Emigh, 2002; Tewolde, 2006). The conflict led tens of thousands of Eritreans to flee to neighboring countries, particularly Sudan, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Throughout the conflict, many households as well as the independence movement in Eritrea were dependent upon financial support from abroad. In 1987, for example, even though the number is questioned by some, it has been reported that 42 percent of households reported that remittances from Eritrean migrant workers based in Italy were their principal source of income (Tewolde, 2005). Ultimately, the staunch political advocacy and considerable financial backing of Eritreans abroad, with many contributing significant amounts of their income, were important in supporting many families and playing a positive role in helping bring about the country’s independence (Bereketeab, 2007; Negash, 1997; Pateman, 1990; Sorenson, 1990).

Since independence, emigration from Eritrea has continued due to conflict and a range of socio-political and economic factors (Bereketeab, 2007; DIS, 2014; Harper, 2016B; Kifleyesus, 2012; Tewolde, 2006). However, Eritrean migrants preserve strong links with their country and communities of origin, particularly through remittances.

Remittances make up a significant portion of the country’s GDP and are an important source of foreign exchange (Fessehatzion, 2005; IMF, 2003; Kifle, 2009; MDG Report, 2005; Sander & Maimbo, 2003; Tewolde, 2006; Yamauchi, 2004). Shortly after independence, annual remittances were estimated to be greater than US $70 million, thus exceeding annual official development assistance and foreign investment (Connell, 1997), while from 1993 to 2003, the ratio of remittances to GDP averaged 37 percent (IMF, 2003). Notably, from 1990 to 2001, Eritrea’s annual cumulative average remittances received placed it in the top ten in Africa (Sander & Maimbo, 2003), and in 2016, the African Development Bank (AfDB) reported that Eritrean remittances were “rising” (AfDB, 2016).

Although accurate and detailed recent or current national figures are unavailable, it is unlikely that overall trends for remittances in Eritrea have changed greatly. In 2009 and 2011, through United Nations Security Council Resolutions, Eritrea was placed under international sanctions, while Eritrean emigration has continued at a high rate – both factors which have likely contributed to sustaining the country’s dependence upon and large inflow of remittances.

Based on interviews and group discussions, remittances are a vital source of income for many Eritrean households. The vast majority of individuals and households stated that they receive
remittances, and suggested that remittances were fairly common to many households. Even those that claimed to not receive remittances acknowledged that they were in the minority and that most neighbors or others within their networks or community “regularly” received remittances (Acosta, Fajnzylber, & Lopez 2007; Orozco, 2006). As put by one male respondent, an electrician with a wife and five young children, “There are only a few [individuals or households] I know of who do not [receive remittances].” These findings correspond with previous work showing that remittances were highly common to many Eritrean households (Kifle, 2007; Tewolde, 2005).

While remittances are common to many households, there is considerable variance in terms of amount and frequency received. Interviews and group discussions revealed that some households receive several hundred dollars annually (i.e. US $100-300) while others receive considerably more (i.e. above US $1000). In terms of frequency, some households receive remittances several or numerous times annually (i.e. 4 or more), while others receive remittances only sporadically (i.e. 1-2 times). Although remittances are generally sent throughout the year, holiday or celebratory periods are particularly popular for both socio-cultural and practical reasons, e.g. Christmas, Easter, Eid, as well as funerals, births, birthdays, and weddings.

A common factor influencing the receipt of remittances is the general socio-political and economic status of Eritrean migrants abroad. Respondents suggested that when relatives or friends abroad were faced with challenges, e.g. unemployment, remittances tended to decrease or even completely cease. For example, one respondent stated, “Since my brother [residing in Western Europe] lost his job, he hasn’t sent much, and we only speak by telephone.” It is important to note that due to various factors, e.g. economic recession, many popular destination countries for migrants have revised their policies toward migrants and labor in recent years, thus negatively impacting employment prospects for migrants and, in turn, reducing their potential for remittances. In Israel, which in the mid-2000s was a popular destination for migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa, particularly Eritrea and Sudan, in recent years, migrants become subjected to harsh detention and expulsion, restrictions on employment, and both extreme backlash and hostility from the government and various segments of the Israeli population (Sabar & Tsurkov, 2015). One respondent with family members and friends based in Israel commented, “The [work] situation there has changed [negatively] in recent years. Without work, [you] cannot send money.”

**Motivating Factors**

In Eritrea, remittances are driven by economic survival. The ongoing “no war, no peace” stalemate with Ethiopia has eliminated important trade ties and a vital market, and although Eritrea has experienced economic growth in recent years reflecting improved economic activity and increased foreign investment, it remains a poor country with many living in poverty. Additionally, there are many single and female-headed households, particularly within rural areas. (AfDB, 2012; IMF, 2016; MDG Report, 2005; Rena, 2009; World Bank, 2015). According to the MDG Report of 2005, approximately 67 percent of the population was living below the national poverty line with 67 percent living in rural areas. Generally, salaries in Eritrea remain low, inflation is a challenge, and prices for many goods and services (especially imports) are high. Respondents
noted that economic survival for families without links to the diaspora (and thus remittances) is quite demanding. During one interview, a middle-aged single male living in Asmara outlined the challenges he faced receiving a salary of less than 900 Nakfa (Yamauchi, 2004) per month, “Just my [monthly house] rent is 1200 Nakfa...then you have everything else...food, clothes, other things. It is difficult.” In this context, remittances clearly represent a crucial lifeline.

An important dimension of the socio-economic situation in Eritrea is national service. All Eritreans between 18 and 40 years are required to participate in national service involving six months of military training and 12 months of civic duty. In practice, however, national service is often extended, particularly due to the ongoing “no peace, no war” stalemate with neighboring Ethiopia. Extended service and low salary mean that much of the working-age population struggles to provide for themselves and their family. Furthermore, although Eritrea is rapidly urbanizing, it is still primarily agrarian, with much of the population residing in rural areas and engaged in traditional agricultural activities (EPHS, 2010). Consequently, when people are engaged in national service, they are limited in their ability to contribute to household agricultural duties. Thus, remittances are a vital source of income for many households.

By sending remittances, migrants fulfill important traditional and customary familial duties and expectations to make a living and care for their immediate and extended families. While the government spends considerably on social security and services, offering subsidies for food and basic items, as well as providing free education and medical care, the country’s public welfare system is still underdeveloped and many individuals and households face considerable challenges (AfDB, 2012; UNHRC Report, 2009). For example, many Eritreans must continue to work well after the age of 65 (EPHS, 2010). The most common social safety net mechanism available is the Martyr’s Fund which supports the families of fallen soldiers (AfDB, 2012; Ghebrehewit, 2011). In the absence of large-scale public welfare, social safety nets are based on family networks and remittances. For example, during a small group discussion in Adi Keih (a small town located near the Ethiopian border), a number of young respondents emphasized the importance of familial bonds and ties before noting, “We don’t openly ask for money... they [family or friends abroad] all know the situation here and support us.” Similarly, another respondent from Keren simply stated, “Caring for family is part of our culture.” These perspectives are corroborated by the few previous studies examining remittances in Eritrea. A survey by Tewolde (2005) reveals that the main motivation for Eritrean migrants to remit was to support family, while an exploration of Eritrean migrants in Germany finds that nearly all migrant households remitted altruistically in order to “help close family members” (Kifle, 2009).

Additionally, since it is common for many migrants to receive financial support from family and friends prior to or during the emigration process, it is highly likely their remittances may also serve as exchange or repayment. For example, when asked to describe his household’s experience with remittances, Samson, a respondent from a small village south of Asmara, explained that the remittances his household received from his brother in Europe were used to “repay” relatives and close friends who had helped finance his brother’s original journey. A valid passport, exit visa, and international health certificate are required in order to leave Eritrea legally.
Transfer Mechanisms

Recent data about remittance transfers to Eritrea is unavailable. However, based on interviews, group discussions, and informal conversations, most remittances to Eritrea are sent via informal, unofficial channels. Many respondents detailed how friends or relatives abroad provided foreign cash remittances during visits or sent foreign cash remittances with personal carriers, e.g. friends, relatives, or trusted others. Once the remittance is received in Eritrea, it is exchanged within informal markets with local brokers or agents, who tend to be traders and small shopkeepers, but at unofficial exchange rates. These rates are often far greater than the official exchange rate. For example, while official exchange rates offer about 15 Nakfa per 1 US dollar, the informal market may offer between 30 to 60 Nakfa (GoE, 2013; Kifle, 2009). Importantly, although travelers have traditionally had to declare all currency upon entering and leaving Eritrea, the policy was changed in early 2013 via Proclamation No. 173/2013 (issued 23 February 2013), and declaration is now only required when bringing in or taking out amounts exceeding US $10,000 (GoE, 2013).

As well, many individuals and households described utilizing the “hawala” system, which is rooted in the strong, historical familial and network ties established within the large diaspora and involves transferring money through third persons, specifically, migrants who want to remit contact or give foreign currency to a broker abroad. The foreign-based broker then contacts a local broker who gives local beneficiaries their remittance in Nakfa but at unofficial exchange rates. Generally, this mechanism often also requires local recipients from many small, rural areas to travel to larger, urban areas (e.g. Asmara) to collect transfers.

While less common, some respondents also explained receiving money from abroad directly deposited into their local bank accounts. Although utilizing this method means that local recipients can draw on their remittances without paying fees associated with international money transfers, it is not widely practiced because exchange rates fall far below those within informal markets. Moreover, depositing fees incurred by migrants abroad make this method less popular. For example, during an interview, Almaz, a migrant living in North America and who regularly sent remittances to her elderly relatives through friends and relatives, stated, “It is cheaper to use [informal] methods.”

Although illegal and despite the fact that remittance receiving households do not incur service fees, informal systems have been popular in Eritrea for many years (Tewolde, 2005; IMF, 2003). Beyond the great discrepancy between official and unofficial exchange rates, informal channels are also preferred due to the general shortage of money transfer operators (MTOs), especially within rural areas, and because they are relatively simple. Informal channels are often quicker than formal channels, and they also do not require senders or recipients to establish accounts. Notably, this significance of speed and ease underscores the fact that one of the many
challenges for migrants and remittances worldwide is inefficient domestic banking services that delay final payments to beneficiaries (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005).

Importantly, in November 2015, the Government of Eritrea issued new Nakfa notes and also began to crackdown on black market exchange activities (Shabait, 2015). Shortly thereafter, unofficial exchange rates dropped to only slightly higher than official rates (fluctuating from 18 to 26 Nakfa per dollar), and many were deterred due to legal penalties. With these developments ongoing and in the process of unfolding, further exploration is required to understand their long-term implications.

Consumption

An important dimension of remittances is how they are utilized. Remittances may positively impact social and development outcomes, and promote savings, investment, and economic growth (Adams, 2003; Kapur, 2004; Ratha, 2013). In contrast, however, evidence also shows that many recipient households spend remittances mostly on recurring household expenses and retain only a small share for productive investments, such as acquiring land for farming or establishing a business (Clement, 2011; Lubambu, 2014; Meyers, 1997).

Based on interviews and group discussions, very few recipient households use remittances for investment expenditures (e.g. establishing small-scale enterprises). Instead, remittances are largely spent on basic household items or associated costs (e.g. monthly rent, food, clothes, medicine, etc.). The high proportion of remittances spent on consumption underscores how migration and remittances are part of the strategy of migrants and their families to escape poverty and raise their standard of living. In Eritrea, salaries are generally low, many live in poverty, and prices for goods and services are often high (especially imports) (IMF, 2003). Furthermore, many Eritreans lack access to insurance, credit (particularly women), or extensive social services, and are thus highly vulnerable to income shocks. Consequently, remittances serve as a vital coping mechanism and support subsistence consumption. During a discussion, a group of middle-aged mothers (both single and married) residing in the southern part of Asmara described how, rather than establishing microenterprises, the remittances they received were spent, “Mainly on food, clothes, and other [necessary] things around the house” (Tewolde, 2006) or education (Kifle, 2007), while another respondent explained that without remittances he would be unable to afford his costs of living.

In addition, respondents noted that conspicuous consumption also occurs. In a small group discussion about their experience with remittances, numerous respondents explained that remittances were frequently used to purchase status-oriented items. “You see people spending on different things...new phones...electronics...gold,” they pointed out. Several respondents also animatedly pointed out remittances were sometimes spent on large, relatively extravagant weddings, stating, “If you attend a wedding, it’s clear [the hosts] are receiving [considerable remittances]. All of the costs...food, band, guests....it isn’t possible with local salaries.”

Partly, basic and conspicuous consumption occur because, as some respondents explained, productive investments can often prove “difficult and expensive.” For example, the fees associated
with obtaining (and renewing) business licenses, operation, and maintenance are frequently high, and the remittances received by many, although increasing access to working capital, are not adequate to overcome these costs. “I would need more [remittances],” concluded one respondent.

Although not generally openly discussed or acknowledged by respondents, remittances are likely also utilized to support housing construction and emigration. While the former was officially suspended in 2005/6, houses have been built in various regions. Regarding emigration, it frequently occurs via illegal channels and often entails considerable costs. Notably, Eritrean government officials have suggested that remittances are being used to help “people leave Eritrea instead of supporting relatives at home” (Harper, 2016A).

**General Perceptions**

Throughout interviews, group discussions, and informal conversations, individuals and households shared a wide range of thoughts and perceptions about remittances. According to some respondents, remittances were “positive” since they allowed people to support family and friends. As put by one respondent, “the economy here [in Eritrea] is weak...so people leave, but [their remittances] help their families and sustain our economy.”

In contrast, however, other respondents were quick to mention potential drawbacks arising from remittances, suggesting remittances contributed to dependency. As put by several young respondents during an enthusiastic group discussion, “People have become lazy. [They think] ‘Why work when you can just get support from family abroad?’” This perspective is substantiated by previous surveys conducted in Eritrea illustrating that remittances reduce recipients’ incentives to be economically active (Arneberg & Pedersen, 2001). Importantly, through reducing labor participation, remittances in Eritrea can consequently inhibit economic growth.

Moreover, many respondents explained that remittances were only possible since people were emigrating, and that the discussion of remittances should be undertaken within this context. According to some respondents, although remittances were flowing in, the country was losing “its youth…its future…the productive capacity.” While the emigration of unskilled workers can offer crucial benefits to low-income, developing countries such as Eritrea via remittances and address unemployment or underemployment (Dayton-Johnson, Pfeiffer, Schuettler, & Schwinn, 2009; Ratha, 2005), the loss of skilled workers can pose significant drawbacks. Specifically, the emigration of the highly-skilled may lead to a loss of public resources invested in education and training, a reduction in productive capacity and productivity spillovers, a decrease in the economy’s ability to innovate or adapt to modern technologies, and a shortage in vital sectors, such as education or health (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005; Marchiori, Shen, & Docquier, 2013).

According to a diplomat in Eritrea, the potential benefits of remittances arising from emigration have been outweighed by a “serious capacity shortage” in the country (Harper, 2016A), while Yemane Gebreab, the Presidential Advisor, has noted that emigrants from Eritrea often represent a “loss” to the country since they are “young and well-educated,” and since the country has “invested a lot of resources and money” on them (Gebreab, 2016).
Conclusion

For Eritrea, a low-income, developing country, remittances constitute a large part of the economy and are a critical source of foreign exchange. Furthermore, they are an indispensable source of income and subsistence for a large number of individuals and households. Remittances to Eritrea are mainly sent to family and relatives, and although they may be transferred via several different mechanisms, informal channels are predominantly used. Additionally, results suggest that recipients do not utilize remittances for productive investment expenditures. Instead, remittances are interpreted as a short-term coping strategy that helps dependent households achieve a basic level of consumption. It is important to note however, that consumption toward other areas, e.g. housing and emigration, are likely understated. Generally, perceptions and views toward remittances are mixed. While many see remittances as beneficial and as a crucial source of support, others, in contrast, perceive remittances negatively, linking them to problematic issues such as unemployment and dependency.

Possessing a large diaspora, and with remittances constituting a large part of the economy and representing an important source of income for households, Eritrea can undertake several steps to better manage and leverage remittances for their effective use and potential contribution to development. For example, remittances can strengthen the formal financial infrastructure (e.g. improving technology), promote access to reliable and effective financial services particularly within rural areas, and increase the number of institutions that can transfer money. Encouragingly, according to officials, the country is planning to introduce or expand a range of financial or banking services, e.g. mobile banking, checks, credit, and debit. Importantly, greater access to formal and effective financial services, especially for rural areas, where there are significant gaps, can increase confidence, support the creation of assets, wealth, and investment, help reduce poverty, significantly reduce time and travel costs, promote greater use of formal transfer mechanisms and help channel migrants’ remittances into the formal financial system. Furthermore, a greater number of money transfer options will increase competition and reduce the costs and time associated with transferring money, lower informal market demand and encourage the use of formal transfer mechanisms, and potentially also increase the amount sent (Burgess & Pande, 2005; Ratha, 2003, 2013; Sander & Maimbo, 2003).

Importantly, with many recipient households utilizing remittances for basic consumption, Eritrea can promote financial education and literacy to increase investment and help recipients more effectively and productively manage and utilize their financial resources. Notably, financial education has been found to positively impact savings and asset creation (IOM, 2014; Tar & Voorips, 2012). As well, Eritrea can work to improve the investment climate in the country through, for example, establishing clear, sound, transparent economic policies, promoting accountability and good governance, and establishing premium interest rate policies. Such steps could encourage remittances and investment, and ultimately contribute to growth. Cross-country comparisons reveal that remittances are affected by the investment climate in recipient countries in the same manner as capital flow, however to a much lesser degree. For example, from 1996 to 2000, remittances averaged approximately 0.5 percent of GDP in countries with a “higher-than-
median” level of corruption compared to 1.9 percent in countries with “lower-than-median” corruption. Furthermore, countries that were more open (measured by trade to GDP ratio) also received larger remittances (Ratha, 2005).

As well, in order to improve the potential developmental impact of remittances, the government can consider linking remittances with micro-enterprise programs. Greater access to capital can encourage entrepreneurial and investment activity, help reduce poverty and inequality, and have a positive effect on growth (Demirgüç-Kunt, Beck, & Honohan, 2008; Honohan & Beck, 2007). In Eritrea, beyond lack of financial literacy and education, the considerable costs associated with business licensing, operations, and maintenance serve as significant barriers to entry. Consequently, linking remittances to micro-enterprises could provide key financing to start-up enterprises and promote the growth of the micro- and small-enterprise sector, ultimately increasing employment and income for many Eritreans.

Another important issue for consideration is the great discrepancy between official and unofficial exchange rates in Eritrea. With the difference quite sizeable, many Eritreans understandably turn to informal channels for transfers and exchanges. Ultimately, effectively addressing this discrepancy – for example, increasing the number of foreign exchange bureaus could increase competition and thus contribute to more competitive rates – would likely see more transfers conducted through formal channels, an improvement in trust and confidence in the government, and a reduction in black market or illicit activities.

While this paper sheds light on remittances into Eritrea, there was a range of limitations. Remittance figures remain difficult to estimate due to the fact that many transfers take place through unofficial channels, while data about the amounts transferred through formal mechanisms is unavailable. Lacking clear and accurate figures, full understanding of remittance magnitude, impact or implications (e.g. developmental outcomes), and potential policy reforms within Eritrea is limited. Additionally, although confidentiality was assured and respondents were informed about the study objectives, some respondents may have understated or been reluctant to disclose the amount of remittances received and information regarding their consumption. Remittances and related migration are sensitive topics in Eritrea, and some respondents were initially hesitant to share information. Accordingly, it is difficult to develop a fully accurate picture of remittances received in Eritrea.

Moving forward, beyond the need for better and more accurate data, future research can explore the long-term macro- and micro-economic effects of remittances. As well, while this paper explored remittance transfers between individuals and families, future research may examine remittance transfers by migrant communities or groups who make collective remittances to their home communities. Last, with remittances constituting more than economic transfers, future research can explore the extent, role, and potential impact of other types of remittances into Eritrea, such as social, technological, or political.
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Nutrition and Trade Liberalization in Africa

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Abstract
Trade openness and nutrition are concepts that are closely related. Openness could contribute to an improvement in nutrition under only certain conditions. These include improved export earnings, ultimately the import capacity of the countries participating in the exchange, and maintenance at a sufficient level of agricultural production. The objective of this article is to analyze the link between trade liberalization and nutrition in Africa.

Keywords: nutrition, trade liberalization, Africa.

Introduction
In theory, liberalization can influence nutrition in different ways. In fact, trade liberalization contributes to increased food availability. Due to trade openness, supplies would increase through imports. In other words, in a commercial opening situation, imports would complement the potential domestic production deficit. This reasoning is based on liberal theories. According to Ricardo (1970), international trade is beneficial for all the countries provided they specialize in the production of the good for which they have a comparative advantage (Diagne, 2013). That is, a country should specialize in the production of the commodity, which will cost it relatively less, and import the goods with the highest production costs. In addition to the theoretical contributions of Ricardo, Heckscher, Ohlin and Samuelson (Danby, 1998) developed the theory of factor endowments which would require specializations to be dictated by the presence of factors of production. Thus, "A country has a comparative advantage in the product that intensively uses the factor for which it has a relative factor abundance compared to its trading partner" (Mucchielli, 2001). For instance, African countries naturally have sunshine and vast tracts of land, so they would gain to specialize in the production of tropical agricultural products. Nevertheless, since they have little capital and more labor, they would gain by specializing in the production of agricultural raw materials.

In return, some countries would benefit from importing processed agricultural products. The result would be a large profit from exchange. Consequently, trade liberalization would lead, through specialization, to an increased profit from exchange, and hence, an increase in the incomes of the various countries participating in international trade. On this basis, as early as 1947, international exchange of agricultural products was created under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Later in 1995, despite the inclusion of special and differential treatment for developing countries, the World Trade Organization (WTO), like the GATT, considered that if each of the members specialized in the production of a particular product, the result would be an increase in their incomes (Jourdain-Fortier & Loquin, 2012). It is through
increasing their trade gains that African countries could probably ensure the food and nutritional security of their populations.

In times of growth, there is job creation, and thus, an increase in the economic accessibility of the population. Moreover, the benefits from openness could enable the public authorities to invest in the development of certain infrastructures necessary to promote the physical accessibility of the population to food through roads, storage and marketing of foodstuffs, and so on. However, not all specializations are equal. Due to the existence of the terms of trade, it is not always certain that the prices of agricultural raw materials exported by African countries are equivalent to the prices of imported foodstuffs. Similarly, poorly controlled open trade could destroy more jobs than it creates. As agriculture is a sector that employs a large share of the labor force in Africa, openness may contribute to the destruction of jobs in food production. Openness should therefore not lead to substitution of food production for imports. On the contrary, it should be used to solve the food deficit of production in Africa. Poorly controlled open trade could threaten the nutritional security of populations. Particularly, this would be the case in situations of food dependence. In the event of a significant dependence on imports, the stability of supplies may be broken as a result of external shocks. Moreover, liberalization does not necessarily guarantee that economic growth benefits everyone. Hence, the goal of the State should be to ensure that the fruits of growth are redistributed, so that the population can have access to a healthy and nutritious diet. Since nutrition is a particular area of importance for the good health of different populations, the trade liberalization processes that have been implemented in poor countries should have taken into account the different interactions between trade and nutrition. The objective should be to highlight the benefits of openness and reduce the risks it could entail. In Africa, this has not been the case. On the contrary, openness has been envisaged as a global solution to the economic and social problems of African countries since the 1980s.

In January 1995, with the accession of many African countries formerly under structural adjustment to the World Trade Organization (WTO), these countries desired to strengthen their interests for trade liberalization. But, what effect has trade liberalization of agricultural products produced on nutrition in Africa? Are nutrition and trade liberalization antagonistic in Africa? The aim of this article is to demonstrate that nutrition can only be reconciled with commercial openness under certain conditions. To do this, it will be necessary to present, on a historical plan, the food policies that have been carried out in the majority of African countries, then to draw the main implications of the accession of these countries to the WTO, while demonstrating the potential effects of openness on nutrition in Africa. This work cannot be finished without making proposals on the conditions for a possible reconciliation between trade liberalization and nutrition in Africa.

**Trade Liberalization and Nutrition in Africa: Background**

To ensure adequate nutrition for their population, most African countries have opted for a food extraversion policy. That is, they have had to rely on international trade to finance the food imports necessary to ensure adequate nutrition for their populations. In order to extract the foreign exchange needed to finance these imports, African countries have increased their specialization in
the production and thus, the sale of agricultural raw materials abroad. To understand the impact of extraversion policies on nutrition in Africa, it is important to review the evolution of these policies.

As soon as a country’s independence was achieved, trade liberalization was conceived as a means of solving food insecurity on the African continent. As a legacy of colonization, African countries were among the first to explore the pathways offered by food extraversion. Originally, agriculture was seen as a source of currency rather than as a means of ensuring food security (Sawadogo, 1977). The sale of agricultural raw materials at international level was to be used to finance food imports in order to feed African populations (Chaleard, 1996). Nevertheless, in the 1970s, this strategy showed its limitations. While prices of agricultural commodities fell on the international market, prices of food products increased significantly. This resulted in the inability of African countries to finance the importation of food products (Chonchol, 1975). During this period, exporting countries preferred to sell their surpluses rather than to allocate them for food aid. It is during this period that African countries officially questioned the policies of extraversion food, as well as the rules that regulate international commerce (United Nations, 1974). African policy-makers officially took pride in abandoning policies of food extraversion.

Henceforth, they advocated for food self-sufficiency. In other words, as far as food is concerned, African policy-makers considered that imports posed risks to the stability of the food supply. Officially, they preferred to focus solely on the development of domestic production. Nevertheless, in practice, the fact was far from political discourse, as African countries continued essentially to prefer food imports over domestic production. Moreover, in the 70-80’s, some authors wondered about the consequences of an exacerbated use of food imports to feed the populations of African. In Dakar, a gradual change in eating habits occurred. People gradually lost interest in traditional foodstuff to adopt a western pattern of consumption (Charvet, 1987). The consumption of millet and sorghum was gradually replaced by rice (Charvet, 1987). From then on, rice was considered by some African populations as a noble cereal.

During this period, the favoring of African leaders was increasing for the cities to the detriment of the rural areas. The decline in the consumption of traditional foodstuffs for the benefit of cheap commodities from abroad strengthened peasant poverty and accelerated the process of rural exodus (Owusu, 1998). In 1965, a non-published nutrition survey in Morocco showed that one tenth of the poorest populations often consumed fewer than 1600 calories per day (Dumont & Rosier, 1966). It was only at the end of the 1970s that African leaders gathered in Lagos and made the sad assessment of the policies pursued so far. The food extraversion policy that had been carried out in Africa had resulted not only in laying the foundation for food dependency but also in increasing rural poverty, and hence the inability of part of the population to access a healthy and nutritious diet.

Therefore, the African leaders decided within the framework of the Lagos plan to devote themselves to the development of food agriculture and to put an end to policies aimed at the exclusive development of raw materials. However, the period in which the Lagos plan was adopted was also that of the debt crisis in Africa. That is why most African countries turned to international financial institutions. Nevertheless, for these institutions the period of the "interventionist whole"
had to be completed. It was the time of the withdrawal of the State, so only the market would be able to solve the difficulties that African countries faced (Cousy, 2006). Liberalization as envisaged by structural adjustment advocated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were expected to solve the problems linked to undernourishment in Africa and, more generally, to food insecurity (Padilla, 1997). In practice, African countries had to be completely disengaged from the agricultural sector. They therefore had to strengthen their specializations by exporting more and more agricultural raw materials (or not) to the international market, thus ensuring supplies to African populations through increased imports. This situation resulted in a strengthening of the African leaders' bias towards the urban population and an impoverishment of the rural population (Madeley, 2002). In many cases, rural people had borne the cost of food readjustment for urban residents. The findings of the Ghana study by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) affiliated with Association of the World Council of Churches Related Development Organizations (APRODEV) are unequivocal. They found that imports of agricultural products was having a detrimental effect on the incomes of small farmers. The difficulty was for farmers to obtain adequate prices for their rice, soybeans, rabbit meat or mutton, due to competition with imports, and this had resulted in "discouraging" many farmers. As a result, "their incomes have fallen and the problem of undernourishment has worsened in the rural areas" (Madeley, 2002).

Therefore, rural populations had seen their economic ability to access a healthy and nutritious diet deteriorate. Beyond the rural population, what effect has the food extraversion had on the state's ability to finance food imports from African populations?

**Accession to the WTO**

Unlike the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (SAA) admits African countries for an indefinite period. Thus, the rules of the SAA determine the future of food policies in Africa, and therefore, the ability of African populations to access a healthy and nutritious diet. Accordingly, in line with the Uruguay Round Declaration, the new provisions on agriculture should enable African countries to increase their export earnings in order to finance food imports on the continent (Uruguay Round, 1986). Similarly, the effect of run-off, according to the increase of national wealth, should have positive effects on the populations and should also allow them to access healthy and nutritious food.

Therefore, during the Uruguay Round (RU), one of the concerns of African countries was the impact of agricultural liberalization on their ability to import food. Indeed, in a joint declaration, these countries expressed the "cornelian" choice they were facing was namely either to produce more food to feed their populations or to produce more export crops in order to generate foreign exchange (GATT, 1990). It would appear that under the Structural Adjustment Program (SAPs), African countries opted for the development of export crops. However, as early as 1990, these countries were aware that even in the event of an increase in their export earnings following the Uruguay Round (U.R.), it was not certain that they could sufficiently finance their imports (GATT, 1990). They insisted that special attention be given to food.
In addition to the preamble to the Agreement on Agriculture (SAA), which refers to the need to consider non-trade aspects such as food security, the WTO Members adopted a “Decision on measures concerning the possible negative effects of the reform on least developed countries and net food-importing from developing countries.” Specifically, the decision referred to the 1986 Food Aid Convention to:

- “raise the level of food aid;
- adopt guidelines to ensure that an increasing share of basic foodstuffs is provided to net food-importing or net food-importing developing-least-developed countries, in full as a gift and on favorable conditions;
- consider in the context of their aid programs requests for technical and financial assistance from the least developed countries and net food-importing in developing countries to improve their productivity and their agricultural infrastructure” (FAO/WTO, 2003).

By incorporating this last paragraph, members indirectly recognized that the goal of agricultural liberalization was not to substitute food imports for domestic production. On the contrary, it was to contribute to the food security of the populations of the undeveloped countries by allowing them access to imports to fill the deficit of their domestic production. Export earnings from international trade, on the other hand, must help them finance their imports. However, in practice, it seemed difficult for the WTO to force its members to consider the needs of the poorest countries. Similarly, one of the lessons learned from the crisis of the 1970s was that food aid worked well when food prices were low. Whereas, it was difficult to deploy when prices reached higher levels (Binswanger & Lutz, 2004). In 2008, as agricultural commodity prices reached historically high levels, despite the call for donations, aid became scarcer. Members preferred to sell their surpluses rather than directing them to food aid. Yet, even if this was not the primary goal of the Marrakech decision, if it had worked, under-nourishment would have less importantly affected African populations. Indeed, the degree of exposure of African countries was exacerbated by the large deficit in their food balance. Between 2007 and 2008, food prices in these countries increased by 74% (Golay, 2010). This resulted in the inability of African leaders to finance food imports, and thus, the inability of households to feed themselves adequately.

These decisions resulted in a significant increase in the number of undernourished people in Africa. During the crisis, the poorest households (those who spent 60-80% of their income on food) began to consume less nutritious food products (Golay, 2010). It was not surprising that hunger riots erupted throughout the continent: Burkina Faso, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Algeria, and others (Janin, 2009). It is therefore unnecessary to state that the Marrakech decision would not be implemented during the 2007-2008 food crisis.

Beyond this, the SAA normalized prohibitions and restrictions on the export of food products. Article 12 only requires "members instituting export prohibition or restriction" to give due consideration to the effects of their measures on food security in net importing countries (FAO/WTO, 2003). The obligation to notify the Committee on Agriculture as soon as possible before implementing a measure to prohibit or restrict the export of a food product could only work in the context of a remedial action taken by exporting members of like products. Again, as with
food aid, the problem was that export restrictions or prohibitions are most often implemented during food crisis situations. Due to the difficulty to speed up food aid in times of crisis, it was difficult to prevent a deterioration in the food situation in the net importing countries.

One of the factors that exacerbated the increase in agricultural prices in 2007 was the decision by some WTO members to restrict their exports in order to preserve the food supply of their populations. No fewer than 15 countries (China, India, Vietnam, and others.) restricted or even prohibited exports of certain commodities in order to prevent a possible national food crisis (Golay, 2010).

Beyond these aspects, the liberalization of agricultural products could undoubtedly have improved the food situation in Africa through improved export earnings of African countries, and ultimately their import capacity. The WTO Agreement on Agriculture through market access, domestic support disciplines and export subsidies could undoubtedly have contributed to an improvement in the import capacity of African countries. But, what were the results?

Mixed Results

Beyond the aspects that have just been examined, there are other areas of the SAA that could have improved the nutritional situation on the African continent. In fact, improved market access for African countries would have allowed them to increase their export earnings and hence their import capacity (Eba Nguema, 2016; FAO, 2001; GATT, 1986). However, it would appear that the share of exports from Africa has declined since the 1990s (WTO, 2015). This may be partly explained by the fact that the markets of their main trading partners (Western countries) continue to be among the most heterogeneous in the world (Chinotti, 2004). According to Olarreaga and Ng (2004), the tariffs of the OECD countries have increased 100%, especially for agricultural products. Paradoxically, it is precisely for these products that many African countries in principle have a comparative advantage.

The high tariffs of the OECD members resulted in tariff peaks. Tariff peaks refer to the difference between the average bound tariffs and the tariffs applied to certain products. In the quadrilateral of Canada, European Union, Japan and the United States, the average bound tariff on agricultural products remains very high, depending on the degree of processing products (Olarreaga & Ng, 2004).

The consequence of such a situation has been to increase the specialization of many Africans in the production of cash crops and agricultural raw materials, to the detriment of food crops. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the food dependency threshold has increased in many African countries (WTO, 2012). This is particularly the case in Lesotho (84.8%), Comoros (69.8%), Botswana (90.1%), Eritrea (58.6%), Algeria (70.7 per cent), Libya (91.8 per cent), Tunisia (60.2 per cent) and Morocco (53.6 per cent) (FAO, 2013). Despite the importance of foods imports in Africa, the production deficit is estimated to be such that between 2014 and 2016, the number of people who were undernourished rose to 220 million, compared to 176 million between 1990 and 1992 (FAO, 2015).
Behind the weakness of the quantitative intake of the nutrients to which the African populations has access, there is another concern, the effects of which are just as serious for the people who are facing it. This is the low micronutrient content of the foods consumed. In fact, a significant proportion of the population of sub-Saharan Africa still faces certain diseases, including anemia, stunted growth of children, and others (FAO, 2015). Among the nutritional diseases affecting the African populations, malnutrition and obesity are easily co-existent as the most serious (WTO, 2016). Maire and Delpeuch (2010) explain this paradox by the fact that poor people consume the cheapest imports on local markets. The latter are certainly high in calories but poor in micronutrients. In addition, the foods with sugars and rich in lipids are the most attractive for the poorest households. “In Africa, the number of children who are overweight or obese has nearly doubled since 1990, increasing from 5.4 million to 10.3 million” (WTO, 2016).

Among these populations, nearly 75% of small farmers and peasants remain the most exposed to malnutrition (Maire & Delpeuch, 2010). This is primarily because they have been excluded from development programs and plans. Despite the fact that rural areas continue to be the breadbasket of Africa, the agricultural policy abandonment on the continent combined with the disengagement of the State has only exacerbated the under-nourishment. In general, since independence, agricultural production has tended to regress or even stagnate. In 2011, production was only 2.4% in Central Africa, 3.7% in East Africa, 4.6% in Southern Africa and 4.3% in West Africa (FAO, 2014). These figures are representative both of the production of cash crops like tea, coffee, and cocoa, and of food. The low level of agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) can be explained in part by liberalization undertaken and thus by the disengagement of the State. Since independence, investment in agriculture has declined. Similarly, since the adoption of SAPs, input distribution has declined significantly while public spending on agriculture remains among the lowest in the world (Barrett, Christiaensen, Sheahan, & Shimeles, 2017; FAO, 2014).

In addition to the State's disengagement from agricultural policies, African farmers are faced with massive subsidies from the rich countries (Hoekman, & Olarreaga, 2004). Food imports are more competitive than local products. In West Africa, milk produced by Fulani farmers has become less attractive than imported milk powder (Golay, 2007). Far from affecting only peasants or African farmers, the use of massive subsidies also threatens the nutrition situation of the whole population. Indeed, in order to finance imports, African governments must first have the means to pay their food bills. Yet subsidies also affect agricultural products for which African countries have comparative advantages. One of the best known examples is cotton. From 2002 onwards, the US Farm Bill raised the level of subsidies to US producers, which resulted in overproduction of cotton in the following months. This in turn led to lower world prices (Stiglitz & Charlton, 2005). Despite the call from Mali, Chad, Benin and Burkina Faso for an elimination of support, some agricultural powers continue to support massive cotton production (WTO, 2016).

However, the FAO consider in one of its reports entitled “The State of Food Insecurity in the World” that economic growth contributed to improving food and nutrition security in many countries around the world (FAO, 2015). African countries who have seen the nutritional situation of their population improve are precisely those countries that have taken advantage of international
Conversely, African economies whose comparative advantage relies on agricultural commodities do not appear to have the ability to sustain economic growth. Hence, the need to reform the current rules governing international trade of agricultural products is evident. But, what reforms are likely to improve the long-term nutritional situation in Africa?

**Trade as a Means of Combating Malnutrition in Africa?**

The Rome Declaration on Nutrition recognizes that trade is an essential element in achieving food security and improving nutrition (WHO, 2014). Nevertheless, in order for trade to have a positive effect on the food situation in Africa, it would be necessary beforehand that the rules which dictate the insertion of the smallest economies should be adapted to the economic and social situation of these countries (Eba Nguema & Assoumou Ella, 2014). In other words, the multilateral trading system should strive towards greater equity in addition to greater openness.

As agriculture is a sector of vital importance to African countries, negotiations are expected to intensify in this sector. Agriculture should no longer be seen at the end of the Doha Round as only a source of currency for many African countries, but also as a means of achieving food security and ultimately improving nutrition (WHO, 2016). In concrete terms, the negotiations should aim at a revision of the rules, which apply to the three pillars of the current agreement on agriculture. Market access is a pillar of importance in achieving food security and improving nutrition. Better market access could enable African countries to increase their export earnings in addition to their import capacity. That is why it seems necessary that tariff peaks, tariff escalation and other similar measures should be eliminated, at least substantially, with a view to an effective opening of the markets.

Market access is a pillar of paramount importance for achieving food security and improving nutrition. Improved market access could enable African countries to increase their export earnings in addition to their import capacity. In accordance with what has been seen, import capacity is essential to the financing of food imports. Greater export earnings would enable African countries to provide their populations with more diversified imports, and therefore, food that is richer in micronutrients. Nevertheless, African populations may benefit indeed from economic growth through better integration into international markets. Therefore, it should be inclusive. Theoretically, according to the FAO (2015), stronger economic growth benefits the people in one way or another. At least because it creates jobs and contributes to increasing economic accessibility to food. The higher the income, the more likely people are to access better quality food. For international markets to be genuinely open to African countries, tariff peaks or tariff escalation and other similar measures need to be eliminated, or at least substantially reduced. All of these practices can be used for protection purposes. The tariff escalation, in addition to tariff peaks, discourages diversification and keeps African countries in the production of agricultural raw materials. Yet, diversification seems to be the cornerstone of sustainable economic growth on the African continent. Furthermore, in order for the opening up of the market to be truly advantageous for African countries, it is necessary that the decision on duty-free access to exports from the least
developed countries should be extended to all net importing developing countries of food products, because the latter depend directly on export sale of a few products to support their import capacity. However, better access to the market would not be enough to improve nutrition in Africa. For this reason, it would be wise for a substantial elimination of subsidies. Agricultural supports, when heavily used, create distortions in the flow of trade. Concretely, domestic support has a detrimental effect on African countries that increases supply and depresses international prices (Abdelmaliki & Sandretto, 2011).

In Africa, such a situation has the effect of further reducing farmers' incomes. Take the example of cotton. In West and Central Africa, 10 million people live directly on this crop (FAO/WTO, 2003). The cotton sector employs a large part of the rural population. This product enables farmers to have economic access to food and therefore to feed their families. For African producers, cotton is not a means of enrichment, but of survival. The decline in international cotton prices has resulted in a deterioration in the nutritional status of the populations directly dependent on it (Baden, 2004).

In addition, domestic support for food crops has effects similar to those described above. Imports are more competitive than locally produced commodities. Hence, the decline in the incomes of African farmers when they do not simply cease their activity. This situation does not threaten only the nutrition of the farmers, but also that of the whole population because supports have the effect of increasing food dependence on the international market. However, support also increases the vulnerability of these populations to external shocks. Indeed, from the disturbance of the international market, the prices of formerly cheaper imports increase considerably while the purchasing power of the population stagnates, hence, the development of food crises and the rise of malnutrition. The current draft reform of agricultural rules (known as modalities) is directed towards better regulation of domestic support (WTO, 2008). However, it is important to focus on prohibiting WTO supports because these are identified as having a greater trade distortion effect, or so-called orange box support. The modalities focus little on the blue and green category support. However, the blue box support should have been abolished in accordance with the provisions of the SAA due to their trade-distorting effects. In fact, only very few countries have the capacity to use it, because support of the blue box is mainly used by quadrilateral countries. In order to achieve a more equitable agreement, it would seem necessary to remove this category of support.

On the other hand, the measures of the green box are the subject of much criticism from some members, who consider that they are far from being neutral. These members argue that green box support can have as disruptive effects on the flow of trade as other categories of support. In the case of Cotton Upland, it has been shown that green box support can be used for subsidy purposes as well as supporters of the orange and blue category (WTO, 2005). Therefore, it seems necessary that these supports be better regulated. The green box should sort out the supports that are truly neutral and those that are not. The latter should be deleted.

Better regulation of subsidies would inevitably affect export support. This last category should be eliminated in accordance with the recent decision taken by the members. Nevertheless, it would be necessary that the elimination of export subsidies should not be partial, as it indicated
from the analysis of the recent decision, but that it be indeed total (WTO, 2015). In fact, today some countries continue to use these measures which create significant trade distortions and, in some cases, jeopardize the export earnings of African countries. This occurs when products subsidized by the major agricultural powers compete with products exported by African countries. The case of cotton illustrates once again this situation well.

It would therefore appear that the implementation of better regulation of agricultural trade at the multilateral level could have positive effects on nutrition in Africa. Trade liberalization and nutrition are not incompatible. More effective trade rules could, on the contrary, make trade liberalization a means of combating nutritional insecurity in Africa.

**Conclusion**

At the end of the Doha Round, the implementation of more efficient regulation of agricultural trade liberalization could to some extent have a positive effect on the nutrition of African populations. Nevertheless, such regulation should be accompanied by enhanced special and differential treatment to better support African countries in their trade liberalization efforts.

The effect is the condition of a readjustment of the commercial integration of the African economies at the international level. If trade liberalization could be a solution to improve nutrition in Africa, currently it's not the case. Nevertheless, although trade liberalization has had to some extent a damaging effect on nutrition in Africa, African countries cannot hope to improve the nutritional status of their people without international trade. Indeed, international trade is the cornerstone of a possible agri-food policy on the continent. It is indeed through trade that governments can implement nutrition programs or development plans that are indirectly aimed at improving the nutritional status of populations.

The need to trade internationally requires African countries to become more involved in the process of liberalization. However, a multilateral environment conducive to sustainable economic growth could keep African countries free from the conclusion of bilateral free trade agreements. At the bilateral level, power relations are more prevalent and developmental asymmetries are more important. There is no coalition of countries hoping to weigh in on trade negotiations. Economic partnership agreements signed by some countries in West Africa or under negotiation between the European Union and sub-Saharan African countries could, according to some preliminary studies, have a serious negative impact on food security and indirectly on nutrition in Africa.

**References**


Listen to the Voices of Maasai Women in Kenya: Ensuring the Well-Being of their Families through Collective Actions

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Abstract
This is an ethnographic study that provides insight into grassroots activities managed by Maasai women leaders in the Narok area of Kenya. Four women’s narratives were used as a basis of analysis to demonstrate their roles in facilitating grassroots activities to improve village women’s well-being despite gender discrimination and multidimensional constraints. The women’s group leaders commented that low literacy had a negative influence on Maasai women’s development; however, the issue of illiteracy could be overcome through cooperative learning during women group activities in their village. The results showed that the women’s group leaders played a facilitative role in improving women’s situations and everyday lives through knowledge sharing and collective social actions. An analysis of the narratives of four women demonstrated that: each woman has a unique experience of grassroots development activities that should be valued; and village women promote women’s empowerment and develop forms of resistance to gender inequality by accommodating men’s self-pride and different gender roles to ensure a harmonious society.

Introduction
While a scholarship concerning women’s roles in community development in Africa increases, a recent study highlights that there is capacity within a small community for some women to challenge their lack of participation in decision-making in a village community by developing their own sense of agency and contributing to development from within (Fraser, 2009; Hodgson, 2011; Trutko, O’Brien, & Wandner, 2014). Women can fully participate in small development programs. It is also argued in this article that sustainable development needs to be owned and controlled by local people based on their internal values.

However, not so much is known about Maasai women’s grassroots participation in community development from the women’s perspectives in Kenya. Little is clear about Maasai women leaders who actively organize a grassroots women’s group to build fellow women’s capacity to improve the well-being of their families and take initiatives in fighting against gender inequality which promotes the sustainable development of Kenya. Grassroots women’s groups are locally based and in most cases, women-led organizations that aim at empowering women and advancing women’s rights related to multiple forms of discrimination (Hodgson, 2011; UN, 2015).

Women’s issues are multi-dimensional and interlinked, including socio-cultural, traditional, and economic factors that affect women’s status. This is especially the case in the Narok County in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, where Maasai traditions and cultural practices are well preserved and practised. Due to the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages in the community, girls’ participation in education is affected and restricted (Chege &
Sifina, 2006; Takayanagi, 2014). Moreover, many girls are brought up to be subservient to men and are regarded as a gift from a father to a future husband (Chege & Sifina, 2006). Most women are expected to depend first on their parents, then on their husbands, and ultimately, on their sons. Because of this obvious gender inequality, women’s access to resources as well as even basic education is limited. Furthermore, while men act as bread-winners, herding cattle and protecting their households, women often carry out all household tasks (Saitoti & Bechwith, 1988). Therefore, these women are invited to explain their grassroots activities to make a positive social change in the male-dominant community.

This study examines how women group leaders facilitate grassroots activities with fellow women and how village women construct experiences, and utilize the skills gained and knowledge produced in relation to resisting traditional patriarchy to improve the well-being of their families. The interviewed women’s voices reveal some strategies and forms of resistance that have emerged from women group activities.

First women’s development in Africa is reviewed from a perspective of women. Then the research method is described and present four women leaders’ experiences of community development activities through grassroots women’s groups in Narok County, Kenya. Narrative analysis is used to value these interviewed women’s life experiences and examine how women leaders facilitate the activities with fellow women to overcome traditional patriarchy in Naork, Kenya. The article also attempts to analyze whether the development of women’s empowerment was promoted through collective action in their village.

**Women and Development in Africa**

As the focus of this study is village women’s activities that enhance their community’s development, this section presents a review of women development in Africa.

The policy direction to include women in development came from the first international conference organized by the commission on the status of women that the United Nations held in Mexico City in 1975. Through the establishment of the Women in Development (WID) approach, women’s issues were conceptualized in the development context. WID aimed to promote women’s economic development, and emphasized women’s productive roles.

WID seemed to be just another attempt to integrate women into male-dominated development programs, hence women were seen as a separate group to policy makers and development interventionists (Moser, 1993). Given that women are usually responsible for food production, nutrition and the family’s general welfare, it has been argued that women need better education and better technology for their household activities and better access to resources (Stamp, 1989).

For many feminists the WID approach was seen as a failure as it did not seek gender equality (Moser, 1993). The WID approach was observed to evaluate development by the adoption of Western technologies, institutions and values (Vavrus, 2007). The WID approach was criticized for being universalizing a “particular white Western middle class vision” (Jackson & Pearson 1998, p. 6).
Given the flows in WID, feminists in particular called for a new approach. This evolved as Gender and Development (GAD). The decade of the 1980’s saw a rapid growth in Gender and Development Policy (Ostergaard, 1992). GAD was conceived with a further advancement in the Women in Development approach that had failed to address women’s subordination. Ostergaard clearly distinguished between WID and GAD:

The concept of Women in Development is concrete and may lead to marginalizing women as a particular species with inherited handicaps. The concept of Gender in Development is abstract and opens up for the realization of women’s productivity in development” (Ostergaard, 1992, p.7).

As gender refers “to the qualitative and interdependent character of women’s and men’s positions in society,” the term gender relations means social division of labor between men and women (Ostergaard, 1992, p.7). Empowerment and participation have become crucial elements in the gender and development approach. While in the WID approach, women participation was addressed in development work, GAD concentrated more on decision-making processes in development programs. It was seen that women should gain power through gender-aware training to negotiate with men in the decision-making process in order to build an equitable society (Williams, Seed, & Mwau, 1994).

The GAD-related gender projects aimed to identify and challenge institutionalized patriarchy and gender relations in the domestic context that oppressed women (Moser, 1993). However, Fraser (2009) from a critical perspective argues that policy decisions supporting gender equality tend to be made by governments and international organizations without the consultation of girls, boys, women and men in local communities where the policies are implemented. Hence, the boundaries for participation in the decision-making process should be challenged as women could not participate but were those targeted by development programs. Fraser (2009) further suggests that the NGOs can play a role as a facilitator to translate the needs and thoughts of local communities to governments and donor agencies.

Monkman, Miles, & Easton (2008) suggest that the link between economic and political empowerment is difficult as financial resources are needed to enact other political and social transformations. This means that even if women in the African context could initiate their own economic independence, they would find it difficult to bring about other reforms towards gender equality. The everyday life of women is negotiated in the convergence of different cultural influences and constrained by different power structures (Monkman et al., 2008). In addition, the complex positionality faced by women in the intersection of multiple identity locations should be understood as “a social process related to practices where positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice)” (Anthias, 2001, p. 635). Women’s subordinated situations are subjected to a range of class, age, race and gender, hence each individual woman has a different life experience and different social issues to overcome (Voola, 2014).

Both the WID and GAD approaches have managed to integrate gender issues into mainstream discourse and practice in the field of international development as evidenced by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in China in 1995. In a post-2015 agenda,
comprising 17 goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set and agreed to by governments, international donor agencies and NGOs. One of the goals directly concerned gender: Goal 5 - “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls” (UN, 2015). However, feminist critics of the development policy and practice warn against the loss of critical reflection surrounding gender. For instance, Mohanty (1984) suggests that the incorporation of woman as a group based on biological universals, rather than social and cultural characteristics, has led to restrictive agendas for reform. Therefore, women’s interests have become a descriptor rather than a tool of analysis. Mohanty concludes that women are put into homogeneous groups such that “sexual difference becomes coterminous with female subordination, and power is automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (it means men), and people who do not (it means women)” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 344).

Several studies conducted in Africa provide empirical data for consideration. In Africa, in spite of active participation in the agricultural area, women are restricted from property ownership, land tenure systems, and access to finance, education and social welfare services due to socio-cultural factors (Hodgson, 2011; Kiptot & Franzel, 2011; Oduro, Baah-Boateng, & Boakye-Yiadom, 2011). Inequalities between men and women regarding assets, wages, education and employment still exist in Kenya (Chiuri, 1996). The assets or resources can be the means of production such as land and labor or capital/finances in the form of cash and/or credit. Some claimed that the traditional patriarchal systems in Africa were reconstructed under colonialism (1895–1963) in ways that benefited men, disadvantaged women, and strengthened male control over female labor and productivity (Chiuri, 1996; Hodgson, 2011; Kiptot & Franzel, 2011; Oduro et al., 2011). In addition, local chiefs became colonial functionaries who regained the power to allocate land (Chiuri, 1996; Kimani & Kombo, 2010).

Despite the hardships most women in Africa face, there have been a number of autonomous grassroots groups established by women that are committed to mobilizing resources to sustain women’s groups and activism. Local community and faith-based organizations provide opportunities for informal learning (Trutko et al., 2014). Such organizations also provide an opportunity for the organization’s participants to engage in informal network building. This has been true for some churches and grassroots women’s groups in Narok, as described by the women’s voices in this study. After becoming empowered through informal learning, women have excised their agency in response to oppressive daily situations (Papen, 2012). For instance, Adenugba and Adedoyin (2014) in Nigeria emphasized that if local, small-scale business women have access to networks and associations providing informal capacity development opportunities, their small businesses would improve. Hence, outside agencies need to support the learning needs of local women entrepreneurs (Davis, 2012).

This is also demonstrated well from the village women’s voices in this study. The local women brought a value to the field of women’s entrepreneurship, which promotes social justice, accountability, creating opportunities, providing access to local resources, and building the management capacities of women. Women’s rights, empowerment, health and reproductive rights,
water, education, and agriculture have been prioritized by many women groups in the research site of Kenya, which is described in women’s voices.

Given that this study is focused primarily on how women’s capacity can foster community development in Kenya, women empowerment is valued as a capacity that enables social change and women’s level of agency within communities. Women’s social networks and their roles as the managers of social relations put them in a central position within their communities to act as agents of change and community development (Carmen, 1996). Further, it is observed that women groups are effective in building individual confidence and empowerment while leading solidarity among women in development programs (Jackson, 2011).

**Methodology**

This study used an ethnographic study design with semi-structured interviews and observation. Narok North District of the Rift Valley Province in Kenya where the Maasai is dominant was selected as I had already established a rapport with local people during a previous research project conducted by a Japanese university between 2007 and 2009, and I was able to undertake ethnographic research in the community. The Maasai are semi-nomadic people and the centrality of cattle in Maasai life is highlighted by the women in the research site (Saitoti & Bechwith, 1988). As the primary goal of ethnography is to comprehend the socio-cultural contexts of a particular society (Atkinson, Delamont, Lofland J., Coffey, & Lofland L., 2001), ethnography was appropriate for my study. By participating in the grassroots women groups and literacy centre, observing and interviewing local people, I tried to understand the real life situations of local people in Kenya.

Data collection was conducted in Kenya during one six-month trip between April and September 2011. While twelve women’s leaders were interviewed, four women’s stories will be introduced in order to allow research participants to be heard and to demonstrate the value of women’s voices in particular. Ethics approval was obtained and procedures were followed in accordance with the standards of the University of Sydney’s Ethics Committee (number 02-2011/13592). A written informed consent was obtained from all participations.

**Results and Discussion**

This section provides the space to listen to the voices of the women group leaders’ experiences in women group activities and to hear of the roles they play in their groups.

There is an introduction to each research participant, highlighting her background and the activities she conducts in a women’s group. The first questions put to the participants were: How long have you been participating in a women’s group? What activities are conducted in your women’s group? What is your role in a women’s group? Questions were aimed at understanding the roles the women played in improving the well-being of their community. Lastly, women’s views on the future of Narok North District were also voiced in each narrative.

Each narrative was drawn from field notes and came via a local interpreter who spoke English, Swahili and Maa. Each woman was free to speak in a language they were comfortable
with in order to express their opinions to the researcher. While school teachers spoke to the researcher in English, other women spoke to the researcher in Swahili and/or Maa. All these names are pseudonyms.

**Narrative 1: Joan’s Story**

I am 48 years old and am a school teacher. All of my four children are educated. I participate in four women’s groups. One of the groups is about TBA (Traditional Birth Attendance). I am a secretary and have been in the group for five years. Most members are illiterate. The group members were invited for a seminar by a local NGO at school and were trained for a week as TBA, assisting mothers’ delivery. Some women in the villages are hesitant to go to the hospital, or some of their houses are very far from the hospital. Each member of the women’s group is given a bottle of zinc, soap, threads, a cutting object, gloves, and table size sheets during the seminar. I once attended a child-birth on a public bus. The group members made some red ribbons to raise awareness on HIV-AIDS and sent them to people in the U.S.A. We were told to wait for the payment of the ribbons, but we have never received any payment. In another initiative, the group members were provided with sunflower seeds and beans to plant and harvest. For instance, with a 2 kg packet of beans, each member had a harvest of 4-6 kg of beans and returned the original beans of 2 kg to the organization. However, I did not harvest any crops in 2011 due to a severe drought. The NGO also regularly organized seminars on cleanliness or health issues. There are 18 female members in the group. Members hold irregular meetings. I did not attend meetings for a while, yet I received updates of meetings from other members.

I also joined another group for the promotion of girls’ education and the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM). I have been a member of the group for 7 years and am a treasurer of the group. There are four male and 18 female members in the group. The group members visit schools to empower girls. We teach both boys and girls about harmful cultural practices such as FGM, early sexual activities, early pregnancy, and early marriages. The group also aims to create awareness of the effects of HIV-AIDS. The members also visit churches. I ask male members to discuss issues of girls’ education and FGM with men in the community. The negative aspects of FGM and early marriages are explained to women to promote girls’ education. When the group received funding from the National AIDS Council, we travelled to the interior region to talk about HIV-AIDS. The group described the benefits of empowering women at churches and schools, and showed female members as role models who impact girls’ education. The group has worked closely with an international NGO, World Vision, previously, but the NGO has disappeared from the region. I am well known in the community for rescuing girls who have decided to run away from FGM. When a girl escapes from her own house to my place, I coordinate with other members to transfer the girl to the District Education Office or Children’s Office for the Girl’s Safety. I would dress the girl in boy’s clothes and travel with her to the district offices by bus in the very early morning so that no-one in the community would see them. I hope to develop a grant proposal to establish a post-secondary education program for young people in the future. I expect that fellow women in the community, especially those who are not educated,
will change their attitudes and be self-reliant. I also hope that mothers can negotiate educational opportunities and early marriages with fathers on behalf of their daughters. Moreover, I hope that fathers retain their daughters in school, and men do not marry off their daughters. I also hope that girls will be empowered to be able to say no to FGM, early sex and marriages. Girls can stand firm and run away to a teacher, a rescue centre, or the District Children’s Office. I also expect that people become united and work together for a better future, and I also note an improvement in women’s empowerment and girls’ education.

Narrative 2: Rose’s Story

I am 56 years old and a mother of six children. I am a school teacher. All of my children are educated. I participate in three women’s groups and am a chairperson of one of the groups, which promotes girls’ education. The group has been in existence since 2001 and registered with the Division of Social Services at the local district office. With members, I have organized seminars at schools and churches to raise awareness of the issues of FGM and HIV-AIDS. Collaborating closely with Joan, I have also supported girls to escape from forced FGM practices that have resulted in them dropping out of school. By discussing and coordinating with the district offices, I assist Joan in moving rescued girls to the district office safely. I focus on psychosocial support and empowerment of girls and women.

The second group is a women’s self-help group aimed at improving the standard of living for women. I am the secretary of the group. The group has been in existence since 2009 and registered with the Division of Social Services at the local district office. There are 33 women in the group. The group’s major activities are to plant trees in order to improve the environment and also improve members’ livelihood, and provide households with a system for storage of rain water. The members plant 50,000 seeds in the forest to provide a nursery/young forest for local schools. Female members make bead ornaments and sell them in the market for income generation. I advise members to plant 25 fruit trees and another 25 ordinary trees at home. The fruit trees are essential to improve the nutrition of families. People know the needs in their community best, hence, they can work together to improve education, the economy and their livelihoods. Regarding colonization, village people have a distinct culture and dignity, but are colonized because they are illiterate. Outsiders came and the village people saw the outsiders as good, so they adopted everything from the outsiders. The outsiders left and village people lost their culture as a consequence. I hope and think economic empowerment is the only way for a woman to raise her status. As with this, a woman begins to have a say. A woman sells vegetables at the market and buys food for her family, and her husband notices that his wife contributes something for the home.

Narrative 3: Ruth’s Story

I am 47 years old and am a primary school teacher. I have a small grocery shop in the local market, and have hired a young man to assist me. I have been in a women’s group for five years, and I am the secretary of the group. The group aims at improving women’s daily needs and economic situation. Women are updated with new information or technology constantly through
the meetings. The group conducts a ‘merry-go-around’ micro-finance activity, i.e. each member contributes a certain amount of money to be given to a member as members draw lots to decide the order of the receiving the merry-go-round money each time. Meeting twice a month, each member contributes a sum of 500 shillings for the merry-go-around activity. On top of this money, each woman contributes 50 shillings for buying utensils for a member’s house. One of the members in turn receives this money to purchase utensils for her house. In addition, 50 shillings is also collected from each member to save in case of an emergency experienced by a group member. When there is a death in a member’s family, everyone contributes 200 shillings to organize a funeral. I expect that the women will become independent and learn not to depend on their husbands or to beg from other people.

Narrative 4: Sara’s Story

I am around 55 years old. I have not gone to school. However, I have attended an adult literacy class for a few months. (At the time of the interview, Sara was engaged in building a new Maasai house for her family, whilst still carrying out all the household tasks.) I also look after the domestic animals. I make traditional Maasai ornaments to sell in the village. As some women do not know how to produce ornaments, they contract me to make special ornaments and accessories, especially for weddings.

I have been the chairperson of a local church committee for 10 years. I organized a water project with a local NGO. The church women’s group collected 2000 shillings from each woman for the project, and the NGO contributed some funds to the project. A water tank was distributed to every family in the church to harvest rain water. When one of the female church members has a problem, or a woman gives birth, fellow women from the group fetch water and firewood for the woman. Fellow women purchase new clothes and utensils for new-born babies. Women of the church also contribute some money and milk for the mother. After worship services, women remain to discuss issues at church. Women actively participate in church activities. I actively encourage village women to attend church. There are two types of meetings at church that I organize: (1) meetings of senior women to act as role models for young women by teaching them about social rules; (2) meetings of young women to encourage them to love their husband and children, and to be hard working. People do not abuse other people, and they become good people after attending church activities. I hope to have a peaceful community where all children are taken to school.

Discussions of the Women Group Leaders’ Narratives

This section focuses on the findings and discussion of what women group leaders have experienced when implementing activities in an informal group. Their narratives highlight that gender is a factor that has affected them in many ways and that collective action against gender inequality and poverty alleviation is essential. It also is apparent that the interviewed women respect differences within their group (Crenshaw, 1989).
Women’s Grassroots Activities, Development and Empowerment

Joan, Rose, and Ruth obtained higher education (teacher training college). Sara did not receive ‘formal education’, but had an experience in attending an adult literacy class for a few months. Joan, Rose and Ruth each had a formal job as a school teacher. Sara was a farmer and also had a small business selling Maasai traditional ornaments. It can be said that the beadwork aimed to help the grassroots women generate income by selling it in the market or village. These women view their families as the ones who most ensure maintenance of hegemonic womanhood for the Maasai and as the space where tradition and cultural rituals are taught and enforced.

Three out of the four women reported that they participated in one group. Joan, however, participated in three women’s groups, and Rose was affiliated with three different women’s groups. While three women did not mention their groups’ formal registration, Rose stated that two of her three women’s groups were registered with the division of social services of the local district office. The size of membership ranged from 18 to 33 members. The groups were comprised of women and men. They scheduled and conducted their own meetings. The activities of the groups led by these women reflect an adherence to colonial legacies of education, but also a process of decolonization and emancipation of women and girls. The processes that can be seen as decolonization and emancipation include micro-financing and protection of young girls from the traditional FGM.

The interviewed women often mentioned their distinct methods of micro-finance activities such as the merry-go-round, and public health related activities including action related to TBA, HIV-AIDS, FGM and actions towards ensuring access to clean drinking water. While Joan mentioned TBA as the group’s activity, other women described tree planting, small businesses, water supply and micro-financing as the purpose of the group activity.

First, Joan and Rose described their involvement in the promotion of girls’ education through a women’s group in which they coordinate and collaborative in rescuing village girls who were to be married off or were to be forced to undergo the FGM practice. With Joan and Rose’s high level of motivation for the promotion of girls’ education and women’s empowerment, Joan and Rose had also been involved in outside school activities.

In Joan’s second group for promoting girls’ education and the abolishment of FGM, the group partnered with another NGO to facilitate more effective programs. As funded FGM programs by the outside NGO, World Vision, in Narok were withdrawn from the region, NGOs of developed countries tried to control their economic resources without proper consultation with grass-roots groups (Hulme & Edwards, 1997). Having a connection with government officers, Rose was an effective resource person who could convey women’s needs to national development strategies (Mohanty, 2003).

Health and women’s issues have been the major concern for the women’s groups, since in their male-dominant society, the men have made decisions on the practice of FGM and arrangements for a marriage. Mothers accessing public health information and understanding health guidelines have an effect on children’s health (Nutbeam, 2000). Nutbeam (2000) suggested that community based health education is crucial for village people to overcome structural barriers.
to health. Carmen (1996) also noted that for a project to be effective, it had to be owned and controlled by group members. In this case, the members took control of the direction of their projects. Joan had opened a space for girls to raise their voices via the group and within the activities produced by the group (Spivak, 1985). Joan was aware of the local communication mechanisms and hindrances imported by the local patriarchal system. Hence, she asked her male peers to discuss harmful cultural practices with fathers and senior male leaders. Joan attempted to work harmoniously with all the members of the community (Tamale, 2006). Based on the context and who she was speaking with, she applied different communication channels. Applying different communication channels, Joan was able to convey her message to her community members.

Second, being a secretary of the TBA group, Joan had established the sense of togetherness within the group (Mohanty, 2003). Joan also recognized the importance of cooperation and solidarity, and had formed an effective communication mechanism that was constantly updated with the outcomes of group meetings. Joan reported that her illiterate colleagues were comfortable in discussing and exchanging ideas with her. This implied that a space for women to express themselves had been created in the group, a place from which to speak and be heard. As highlighted by Batliwala (2002), grassroots groups often feel that they are dominated and used by counterparts of developed countries. The story of Joan’s group activity making red ribbons for American citizens illustrates Batliwala’s point. Living in the postcolonial country of Kenya, it seems that women group members did not examine the red ribbon project organized by American people critically which resulted in a failure of the project. This also highlights the power imbalance between the local women’s group and the external group in America.

Third, Rose led two other women’s groups aimed at improving socio-cultural opportunities through micro-finance and environmental programs. Rose exercised her capacity of human agency, which, as noted by Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland (2006), one manages a development program based on creative knowledge. In doing this, Rose analyzed issues from both inside and outside community perspectives. Rose promoted the idea that income-generating activities would develop women’s capacity of self-reliance.

Rose also understood and identified the fundamental factors of poverty and lack of the power of women in the community. Rose recognized the value of low cost technologies with which village women could manage small-scale businesses with locally available resources such as beadwork (Akube, 2000; Schumacher, 1974). Rose was also aware of the significance of cooperation and solidarity that groups created for local women (Mohanty, 2003; Oyewumi, 2001). By learning and working together, women could conduct a sustainable development program. Moreover, Rose acknowledged that local women could take the initiative to manage community development programs based on their needs, rather than being imposed upon by outsider interventions. As Allen (2008) suggests, a collective empowerment approach to running programs had been adopted in the village context.

Furthermore, similar to Joan, Rose had effectively opened a space for village women to speak out about their views on community issues. Rose’s activity demonstrated how a space can be opened up in order for subaltern women to be heard (Spivak, 1985). By learning and working...
together in a group, the women had developed confidence to manage income-generating activities. This was one of the aspects of adult learning highlighted by Knowles (1973) and Freire (1976), where adults can learn based on their needs and develop self-empowerment in seeking solutions. While Rose acknowledges the positive side of the Maasai culture regarding communalism and mutual cooperation, Rose was concerned about the negative influence of colonization on the Maasai culture.

Fourth, in the case of Ruth, through the village women’s method of micro-finance, the group had developed a high level of mutual trust to run a continuous micro-finance activity. Ruth also explained how the merry-go-round activity was managed. As the women of Ruth’s group spent the merry-go-round money on utensils, this indicates that women are managers of their house and spend money on their families instead of their personal interest. Ruth encouraged fellow women to be independent through the micro-finance activity, and women identified the most urgent needs to spend money on (World Bank, 2003). This small grassroots micro-credit activity was managed and controlled by the local women and was observed as effective and emancipating. The small micro-credit program empowered women to work collaboratively (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002; Phillips, 2015). In this instance, micro-finance literacy had been acquired through informal learning. Orality was the dominant mode of exchange for new information and knowledge in the group (Knowles, 1973). By meeting regularly, these women could discuss issues and gain access to new information. Women had their own space in the women group meetings to find solutions to overcome problems based on their needs. Initiatives to improve the well-being of their families had been taken by the women. Women utilized local resources and knowledge to organize their activities, so they did not have to rely on outside funding. The group produced a method of saving money for emergency cases, and it became meaningful for them (Goetz & Gupta, 1996). As Ruth highlighted, self-reliance among village women had been cultivated through cooperation and solidarity, which was in keeping her collective empowerment approach (Allen, 2008; Maathai, 2008) for prevention of poverty (Carmen, 1996; Huiskamp & Hartman-Mahmud, 2007).

Fifth, Sara was well aware of the severe impact of droughts on village people, and exercised her capacity to manage the water tank project in cooperation with a local NGO. This counters the view that illiterate people have very little capacity to organize and manage development projects, and negotiate outside expert assistance to implement projects. In Sara’s case, the project was organized by her and her colleagues. Carmen (1996) and Pradervand (1989) strongly highlight the point that village people are critical players in evaluating urgent needs and have a capacity to implement development projects by themselves. Sara’s water tank project in collaboration with an NGO highlights an effective and cooperative partnership. Both the NGO and the church-based group contributed to distributing a water tank to each member of the church. This partnership between a local women’s group and an NGO was more effective than the partnership introduced by Joan’s narrative because, perhaps, it was to self-define the nature of the project.

Sara facilitated collaborative, informal learning among women to produce ideas to solve issues (Jeffs and Smith, 2005; Rogers, 2004). This implied that Sara recognized the importance of
solidarity and togetherness among people. She placed importance on senior women’s life experiences, which reinforced Knowles’ (1973) views on processes of adult learning. In addition, Sara emphasised the perseverance of tradition and values to pass down to future generations (Omolewa, 2007). Literacy that supports preservation of culture was discussed and promoted at the women’s meetings. Sara recognized the importance of learning from experiences and actively supported the building of spaces for women to exchange their opinions and ideas (Spivak, 1985).

On a separate occasion, grassroots women’s groups led by Joan, Rose and Sara collaborated with local NGOs or district offices to advocate for FGM abolishment, girls’ education and water resource issues. External organizations played a vital role as a facilitator (Fraser, 2009). In each situation, the collaboration supported members’ views and respected their gender and social status within society, while it strengthened their networking and collective action.

The activities of women’s groups are directly structured by their immediate needs. Gender not only was manifested as some part of women’s groups agendas, but also arose as a social issue to tackle. This represents an effective example promoted by the GAS approach, in which the involvement of women in the decision making process is stressed. This was particularly clear when the women discussed their traditional practice of FGM, girls’ education and the heavy household tasks during and after pregnancy. Aspects of the Maasai culture and patriarchy were visible in their narratives as they told stories of their group activities.

The leaders, especially Joan and Rose, observed patriarchy and cultural stereotypes as negative factors, and Rose and Ruth agreed with the women that a lack of financial resources would disempower women. The leaders criticized the harmful practice of FGM, early marriages and the low level of literacy. They argued that some elements of the Maasai tradition forced the women to remain under patriarchal domination. However, the information that the women acquired from the activities taught them to reduce or completely eliminate some of these hardships. Hence, these women’s group leaders emphasized skills and knowledge that allowed the women to participate in decision making processes (Trutko et al., 2014).

Collective social actions hold promise for real social transformation within Narok in Kenya. From a perspective of the women’s leaders, they had power through collective social actions, spoke their opinion in public, and acted as women leaders in their community. Because of the women leaders’ support and collaborative informal learning, other group members could view the community and themselves in it differently. Group members seemed to understand that they were strong in their collective voices working towards change. The women taught and learned from each other.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the key research questions in this study through the opinions of women group leaders of women’s grassroots activities impacting the improvement of the status of women in Narok, Kenya, and women’s collective action in the village as effective in ensuring the well-being of their families.
Overall, the interviewed women group leaders expressed the view that the low literacy levels hinder women’s development. Women group leaders also commented that gender inequality is apparent in the decision-making process in various situations. However, they are also aware of the power and knowledge that village women have to improve the well-being of their community. In addition, they also confirmed that the issue of illiteracy could be overcome by cooperative learning being applied to generate necessary skills. The data illustrated that the women group leaders play a facilitative role in inducing informal learning, and they also attempt to improve women’s low status in the community by providing knowledge and raising women’s economic activities.

In regard to the negative cultural practices of early marriages and FGM, women group leaders are keen on eliminating these practices and promoting education for girls. All of these activities have been conducted under the method of adult learning (Knowles, 1973) in which adults learn based on their needs and experiences. The comments of the women group leaders also confirmed that orality is a dominant form of passing on information among village women. Overall, village-based women’s groups take initiatives and manage projects within their capacity and resources. This is the essential aspect of continued sustainable development.

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Opportunities and Challenges for Community Based Ecotourism Development:  
The Case of Alatish National Park; Northwest Ethiopia

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Abstract
Contrary to traditional forms of tourism such as mass tourism, ecotourism has widely been recognized as an economic diversification and developmental tool, and an appropriate approach for conservation of natural resources for destinations with tourism heritage possessions as it provides protection and economic incentives. The aim of this study is to assess opportunities and challenges for community-based ecotourism development. A mixed research approach was devised and a cross-sectional research design was used. Tools of primary data collection were questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews and observation checklists. Secondary data were collected from related articles, research and documents obtained from offices. Quantitative data was computed using SPSS version 16.0. The findings revealed that opportunities for community-based ecotourism development are key historical and cultural attractions in the park’s vicinity, undifferentiated geological features with diversity of wildlife, the potential to develop cross-border tourism, potential benefits of ecotourism for local employment and an increase in global demands for ecotourism. Challenges for community-based ecotourism development are global warming and desert expansion, habitat depletion and degradation of natural resources, and diseases like malaria. Plus, a lack of basic infrastructural development such as roads, electricity, telecommunications, accommodation facilities, stakeholder collaboration, promotion and marketing, and human and financial resources are in a poor condition to meet the satisfaction of tourists and locals. The main conclusion drawn from the study is that if properly planned and managed, the park has the potentials for ecotourism development as well as cross-border tourism since Alatish is trans-national park sharing boundaries with Dinder National Park of Sudan, and hence, tourists can get experiences from natural attractions and cultural manifestations of both Ethiopia and Sudan.

Keywords: community-based ecotourism, opportunities, challenges, Alatish National Park

Introduction
Contrary to conventional tourism, ecotourism has widely been promoted as an economic diversification and development tool, and an appropriate means for conservation of natural resources for destinations with tourism heritage possessions as it provides conservation and economic benefits (Charnley, 2005). Though Africa is noted for untapped tourism potential, its underdeveloped tourism sector is attracting only 5.1 % of the total tourist arrivals in the world.
Of this minimum share of tourism, a considerable proportion of visitor arrivals are taken by South Africa and Northern African countries (Kiringe & Okello, 2006).

The situation in Ethiopia is even worse; it shares only 0.9% of Africa’s total tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2012). On the one hand, its tourism potential is diversified because of natural attractions that include some of the highest and lowest places in Africa along with immense wildlife of which some are endemic, fascinating historical traditions, cultural monuments of ancient and medieval periods, mosaics of peoples from about 80 nations and nationalities, and festivals and relics of the Ethiopian Orthodox that open a window on the authentic world of the oldest civilization. In addition, the country is relatively peaceful, and its people are hospitable towards guests (Walle, 2010). Despite the fact that Ethiopia is endowed with various cultural and natural attractions with high aesthetic values of which ten picturesque cultural and one natural outstanding heritage attractions are registered by United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites and being the first in Africa to have the highest number of World Heritage Sites, the country is one of the least to benefit from the tourism industry in Africa.

According to Young (2012), Ethiopia has 21 national parks, 20 controlled hunting areas, 4 biosphere reserves, 80 national priority forest areas, 2 wildlife sanctuaries, and botanical gardens with unique wildlife, and marvelous topographic land features accompanied by cultural manifestations that are compatible for ecotourism development and wildlife conservation. The loss of such diversified tourism resources could detrimentally affect community-based ecotourism development and diversification of wildlife. Analogous to this, due to the difficulties of implementing community-based ecotourism in practice, the expected amount of return could not be achieved. Wildlife, which is a pillar for ecotourism development in many national parks, is under threat from human encroachment, poaching for subsistence and commercial purposes, habitat degradation due to deforestation, encroachment of incompatible land uses, and uncontrolled fires that create ever increasing human-wildlife conflicts (Tefera, 2011).

Experiences show that many tourists come to Ethiopia mainly for the historic route and the tribal communities of the Omo Valley. The trend of visiting destinations, especially new national parks, is very limited in Ethiopia. Having recognized the significance of Alatish National Park from the point of wildlife diversity, recreational and economic values, national and international significance in acting as a green belt in combating the expansion of the Sahara and Sahel desertification in the region, its potential for ecotourism development and wildlife conservation was established in 2006 with declaration number 38/2006 (Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, 2012).

Alatish National Park, found in Quara Wereda and near Dinder National Park in Sudan, is an ideal site for an ecological corridor to wildlife conservation, cross border tourism and ecotourism. Even though the park is rich in natural beauty, diversity of fauna and flora as well as cultural and historical heritages in its vicinity, it is rarely visited by tourists. Why is this so? This research tries to investigate the opportunities and challenges of community-based ecotourism development in Alatish, and identify why ecotourism has not been developed in spite of amalgamations of so many attractions and possibilities.
There have been some valuable studies conducted at Alatish National Park. For instance, Hailu Menale Wassie (2011) studied the potentials and challenges of Alatish and Dinder National Parks for implementing trans-boundary park cooperation, while Mengesha and Bekele (2008) investigated the diversity and relative abundance of birds of Alatish National Park. However, none of these studies provided a portrait on the subject of the development of community-based ecotourism.

The objective of this study has been to assess the opportunities and challenges of community-based ecotourism development.

**Methods and Materials**

**Location**
Alatish National Park (Figure 1), with an area of 2665.7 km² and located at 11°47' N and 12°21' E, shares its boundaries to the south with the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, to the west with Dinder National Park in Sudan, and is 1080 km from Addis Ababa and 330 km from the historic town of Gondar. Its rainfall ranges between 500-1500 mm (Amhara National Regional State Culture Tourism and Parks Development Bureau, 2009).

![Figure 1. Map of the Alatish National Park, area of study (Alatish National Park Office, 2008)](image)

**Study Design**
A mixed method research approach was employed as it provides more comprehensive answers to research questions that go beyond overcoming the limitations of a single approach.
Sources of Data
To attain the significant contribution of the effective use of a variety of data sources for data triangulation, both primary and secondary sources of data have been used to collect the required information for this particular study. Primary sources of data include questionnaire, focus group discussion and key informant interview methods as well as personal observations. In addition, relevant scientific journals and academic articles, published and unpublished materials describing the park, office reports, documents from park offices, culture and tourism offices, the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, and the wildlife conservation authority were the major sources of secondary data.

Data Gathering Tools - Key Informant Interviews
Structured and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with two park officials, one culture and tourism expert, and one natural resource expert. A focus group discussion incorporated 6 informants - one park expert, one natural resources management employee, two scouts, one local representative, and one elder. Plus, questionnaires were organized in the form of a Likert scale and some open-ended items for both local and tourism experts.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique
Five kebeles found near buffer zones of the park (Bambuha, Gelegu, Mahadid, Diza Gumuz Wuha, and Bermil Terara) with a total number of households, 802, 613, 431, 425 and 575 respectively, were selected (Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Amhara Regional State, 2007). The total sample size was determined using the Israel formula (1992).

\[ n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \]

Where \( N \) = the total population that will be studied, \( n \) = the required sample size, \( e \) = the precision level which is = ± 5%, and the confidence level is 95% at \( P = ± 5 \) (maximum variability). Therefore, the sample size for five kebeles, \( n = 167 \). In this way, 167 sample households were identified. A random systematic sampling method was employed to ensure the representativeness of the study population (Creswell, 2003). To do so, the first household was randomly selected, and thereafter, every tenth household was visited. To determine the sample size of each kebele from the total sample size of 167 respondents, a percentage (ratio)(p) was calculated as total sample size (n) divided by total number of households (study population) (N) (Endaweke, 2011 in Berhanu & Teshome, 2018). Mathematically, this is expressed as \( p = \frac{167}{2846} = 0.058 \). The sample size for Gelegu is \( 802 \times 0.058 = 46.5 \approx 47 \); for Bambuha, \( 613 \times 0.058 = 35.5 \approx 36 \); for Mahadid \( n = 431 \times 0.058 = 24.9 \approx 25 \); for Diza Gumuz Wuha \( n = 425 \times 0.058 = 24.6 \approx 25 \); and for Bermil Terara \( n = 575 \times 0.058 = 33 \).
Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative data analysis, the data was gathered using the questionnaire that first arranged and organized in tables and calculated frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. In addition to the SPSS version 16.0, MS-Excel was employed for designing charts and graphs (bar and pie charts) to show the results.

Narration and descriptions were employed in the case of the qualitative data analysis. Data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations were analyzed systematically by condensing and summarizing information.

Ethical Considerations

While undertaking interviews and focus group discussions, the full consent of each person being selected for interviews and FGDs was first asked kindly. The objective of the study was expressed in brief. Every participant was informed that the aim of the study was not to blame anybody, but rather to collect relevant information pertaining to issues under investigation, and that they could access the final report of the research.

Results and Discussions

Opportunities for Community-Based Ecotourism Development

Abundance of potential tourism resources of the region (cultural and natural). Statistical data results of the ecotourism potential analysis of tourism experts indicated that Alatish National Park has a diverse range of geographic features: gorges, cliffs, rock formations, watercourses /streams, soils, and landforms (mean = 4.44, std. deviation = .527); a rich history and culture such as historic villages, burial grounds, and indigenous sacred sites (mean = 4.11, std. deviation = .333), and an abundance and variety of indigenous fauna and floras (mean = 4.56, std. deviation = .527).

Cultural resource attraction in the vicinities of Alatish National Park. There are many historically and culturally important potential tourist attractions near Alatish National Park. Among these are Tewedros’s birthplace (Tewedros Ketema), Emerior Tewedros’ cave, the baobab tree of Haile Sellasie, the cemetery sites of Abrham Deboch and Moges Asigidom, Mahibere Silassie Monastery, the town of Metema Yohaness, churches and monasteries, such as Diza Mariyam, Tekilehayimanot Washa, and the Monastery of Wefta Giyogis Chergie Maryam. Since ecotourism is purposeful travel to undisturbed natural areas with the aim of studying the natural and cultural resources in and around protected areas while improving conservation of such resources, the availability of potential cultural attractions could diversify the experiences of visitors and elongate their length of stay.

The birthplace of Emperor Tewedros II. Tewedros Ketema, located about 25 km east of the park, is a village where the most visionary founder of modern Ethiopian civilization and glorious leader called King Tewedros II was born in 1818 to Ato Hailu and Emmete Atitegeb. The
village has the historical sites of Chergie Mariam where the Emperor was baptized and Tewodros Cave (Tewedros Washa) where the emperor spent his time as a bandit. According to local informants, this natural cave has water inside, was manmade, and has holes used to shoot enemies. This historical site is an ideal tourism attraction for historical researchers and tourists.

**Mahibere Silassie Andinet Monastery.** According to religious fathers, the Mahibere-Silassie Andinet Monastery (Figure 2) was established during Abbra We Atsibeha in the 4th Century. It is located 121 km from Gondar City, and 23 km from Derek Abay, a village on the Azezo-Metema Road, and it takes three hours on foot to cover the 23 km from the main road to the monastery. After a two hours trip, there is a gate called the Gizit ber (Command Gate) after which walking is permitted only with bare feet. Females shall not go beyond here, and any packed food and beverages are strictly forbidden. It is here that Emperor Tewedros II attended his education on religion, history and wisdom. Precious church treasures of ancient religious and historic manuscripts can be found in the monastery (Alatish National Park Office, 2008).

![Figure 2. Left. Mahibere-Silassie Andinet Monastery; Middle. Gizit Ber; Right. Emperor Tewedros II Cave (National Park Office, 2008)](image)

**Mettaa Yohanis.** This is a small historic town named by emperor Yohannes IV, and located in the North West of the country near the Ethio-Sudan border and 182 km from Gondar City. It is here where King Yohanis IV was wounded by Dervish Mahadist of Sudan in 1889 at the battle of Mettoma. According to local elders, near Mettoma Yohanis, there is holy water called yemariyam wuha (Saint of St. Virgin Mary) that emanated from the bottom of the mountain when Yohanis IV prayed to God before his death (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Left. Plaque for Emperor Yohannes IV; Middle. Yohanne’s Mountain; Right. Tekilehaymanot Washa (National Park Office. 2008)](image)
**Tekile Hayiamnot Washa.** According to local elders, this cave has been used as not only a secret place where many church treasures, including Tekile Hayimanot’s Ark of the Covenant, were hidden from Mahadist of Sudan’s (Derivish) attack for five years (1888-1893), but also where mass and other church services have been undertaken during difficult times.

**Cemetery site of Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom.** Ethiopia’s gallant patriots Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom (Figure 4) were fighting for the sovereignty of Ethiopia and threw bombs that wounded the Viceroy Graziani and some thirty of his colleagues at Genet Leul Palace in 1937. They left Addis and tried to escape to Sudan via Tewedros Ketema, Quara. Unfortunately, they were seized by the Agew people of Bambuha Kebele, the adjacent area to the park, and presented to an Italian war leader named Bermundy of Saliya (*Tewedros Ketema*). Bermundy sentenced the two patriots to be crucified and buried at a village called Daza. In 1941, after Emperor Haile Sellassie I had been returned, the skeletons of the patriots were relocated to Addis Ababa. The cemetery site of the two heroic patriots is 25 km from the park and surrounded by stone.

**Baobab hewn tree cave of Emperor Haileselassie I.** During Italian aggression, the emperor was in exile in England for five years. After the Italian evacuation, the emperor was returned to his homeland country via Sudan and took a rest for one week in a tree called a baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) hewn cave palace at Omedla near the Ethio-Sudan border. According to local informants, this tree palace was carved by the Gumuz community and can accommodate about 10 people. The name Omedela was also given to the former national police football club to memorialize the site.

*Figure 4. Left. Baobab hewn tree palace; Right. Former cemetery of Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom (National Park Office, 2008)*

**Intangible cultural manifestations.** Alatish National Park is surrounded by the ethnic communities of Agew, Gumuz, Datsen, Amhara, and Qemant with their fascinating traditional cultures, linguistic compositions, dances, and religious festivities. In addition, the natural resource utilization of these cultures are the most striking social entities of Alatish National Park and its vicinities (Marye, n.d.).
The potential to develop cross-border tourism for trans-boundary cooperation. Due to the fact that both Dinder and Alatish National Parks have similar climatic patterns, topographic landscape, fauna and flora composition, common rivers of Alatish, Ayima and Gelegu, as well as the common tribal communities of Gumuz, the area is ideal for developing border tourism where tourists can get experiences from the natural attractions and cultural manifestations of Ethiopia and Sudan. This type of tourism is a tool to develop cross-border cooperation in tourism, to promote cultural and ecological balance and integrity, and to formulate common policies for use and conservation on both sides of a border (Timothy, 1999). Trans-boundary cooperation has the potential of contributing to the protection of migratory species, water bodies, and scenic landscapes that cross boundaries, of reducing the over-exploitation of resources on one side of a border, as well as of creating peace and stability to mitigate the illicit traffic of antiquities and other precious cultural treasures.

Besides cross-border tourism, Alatish National Park, being located in between the historic town of Gondar, the marvelous and spectacular Semen Mountain National Park and Dinder National Park of Sudan of which the former two destinations of Ethiopia are registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the latter is a UNESCO Biosphere Site, has the opportunity to be visited by visitors of other popular destinations.

Increased global demand for ecotourism. Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide. It depends on the conservation of natural landscapes and wildlife, so that using ecosystems in this way can jointly promote human well-being and biodiversity conservation if well managed. The political and social stability of Ethiopia is accompanied by smiling as well as welcoming faces in general, and the region in particular has the potential of motivating tourists to visit the park and cultural manifestations in its vicinity. Responses from tourism experts indicated that the park has the potential for catching the attention of international and domestic researchers in the field of biology, medicine and pharmacology, ornithology, zoology, geology, natural resource management and/or conservation, and others who want to study rodent species, snake types, and fishery and aquatic species.

According to Dolnicar (2006), there is a growth of special interest in ecotourism that involves learning-while-travelling, such as wildlife viewing, attending festivals, cultural appreciation and nature study which are triggered by advances in global communication and information technology. Among wealthier societies at any rate, many people are now getting access to a huge volume of information about protected areas and travel options through the Internet and other communication technologies.

The potential benefit of ecotourism for employment opportunity. Interview results indicated that the establishment of the park gives both permanent and temporal employment benefits, road access from Gelegu to Mehadid then to Marwuha, Bermil as well as from Bemure to Bambuha, and a water supply to locals at Mahadid Kebele. The community is employed whenever there is construction of roads and water supply, and scouts are selected from local
communities. More importantly, with bright hope, the community will gain benefits by participating in guiding, renting pack animals, and socio-cultural exchanges with visitors provided that the community-based ecotourism is well developed in the region. Equally important, if ecotourism is developed, basic infrastructure for health centers, schools, the water supply, telecommunications and road access will be furnished to the community.

**Natural attractions of the park.** Topographic features of Alatish National Park are dominated by a plain interrupted by some hills (viewpoints), rivers, streams and gorges. The major viewpoints of the park are Amtish, Amrakuba, Mulugeta Mountain (Figure 5), Negil, Amdok Twin Mountain, Bermil, Tsequa, Almetani and Dimir of which Almetani (about 900 m above sea level) is the highest place, and Qeruba is the lowest place.

![Figure 5. Left. Amdok; Middle. Mulugeta Mountain; Right. Flat plain of Alatish (National Park Office, 2008)](image)

**Water resources of Alatish National Park.** In terms of water resources endowment, Alatish National Park is located in the Blue Nile drainage basin of Ethiopia, and the Eastern part of the Blue Nile and Gilgel-Abbey sub-drainage basin. The major sub-drainage basins in the Quara woreda are: the Shinfa, Ayima Drainage Basins, or Rahad and Dinder drainage basins respectively in Sudan, and the Gelegu River (GMP, 2009).

**Existing Challenges for Community-Based Ecotourism Development**

The challenges related to ecotourism development are roads (mean = 1.67, std.dev = .500), telecommunications (mean = 1.56, std.dev = .5287), shopping and hotels (mean = 1.33, std.dev = .500), finance (mean = 1.77, std.dev = .667), health facilities (mean = 2.00, std.dev = .500), sewage treatment (mean = 1.78, std.dev = .441) and lack of promotion and marketing. Even though Alatish National Park acts as a green belt in combating desert expansion and is located between the famous World Heritage Sites of the Semein Mountains National Park and the royal enclosure of Gondar as well as the Dinder National Park of Sudan, it lacks appropriate marketing and promotion (mean = 2.00, std.dev = .886). A study was conducted by Eshetie (2012) regarding potentials, challenges and opportunities for community-based ecotourism development in the national parks of Ethiopia. In the case of Borena Saynt National Park, South Wello, Ethiopia, the findings are inconsistent with the results of Alatish National Park.
Global warming, desertification and diseases. The diverse impact of global warming, desertification and diseases in wildlife is extreme to Alatish and its vicinity due to the Sahara and Sahel Desert expansion, which also impedes ecotourism development since ecotourism largely depends on the natural beauty, fauna and flora of a destination.

Equally important, there are habitat depletion and degradation of natural resources. These include recurrent fires (mean = 4.51), hunting (mean = 4.45), unwise utilization of fishing, water stress especially during dry season (mean = 4.45), migration of birds and mammals (mean = 4.49) to Dinder National Park of Sudan, and human-wildlife conflict (mean = 4.29). Other compelling challenges are nature based constraints such as global warming causing high temperatures, desert expansion, and diseases like malaria.

Poor access to road transportation and electricity. The absence of all-weather roads to Gelegu Town not only affects ecotourism development but also other socio-economic activities of trade and agricultural investment in the region. In addition, there are inadequate public and private transportation services especially from Gendawuha, the capital of Mettema, to Gelegu, the capital of Quara, since there are difficulties for direct transport between the two towns. For instance, the researcher used three types of vehicles, which included from Gendawuha to Shinfa the use of a normal bus, from Shinfa to Dubaba the use of an Isuzu offering people as cargo, and from Dubaba to Gelegu by a minibus, to cover 132 km, and the road is not asphalted. In addition, the park is about 40 km from Gelegu Town, and the road is very difficult even in the dry season and impossible to travel during muddy summer times.

Regarding the electricity supply, there is recurring on-off power in Gelegu Town. According to local informants and personal observation, sometimes, the power is off for more than a week.

Tele-communication facilities. The respondents shared that there is no telecommunication service at kebeles of Quara Wereda other than Gelegu Town. There is only one wireless telephone in each kebele said local informants. Personal observation and key informant interview results indicated that even in Gelegu Town the network of telecommunication is irregular and there is almost no internet facility in the town. Statistical data of tourism experts also indicate similar results for very poor telecommunication facilities (mean = 1.56, std. deviation = .527).

Accommodation, shopping and health facilities. With regard to accommodation facilities, personal observation results indicated that there are poor provisions for food and beverages, and almost no existence of public toilets and a waste disposal system in Gelegu Town. Concerning shopping, there is no adequate shopping. However, there are markets at buffer zones of the park near Bermil Kebele with souvenirs that fascinate visitors. Regarding banks and postal offices in Gelegu, there is only one Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and no post office. Health
facilities are also poor in the town, and patients take medical treatment either in Gendawuha or Gondar.

**Human resource problems.** Interview results with park officials indicated that there are only 31 scouts, which is not enough to keep and monitor the park. To manage the park effectively, there should be at least 100 scouts, along with one marketing and promotion expert, one natural resource management expert and two additional wildlife experts. In line with human resources of the park, responses in interview results revealed that there are no plant and animal science professionals who are in charge of monitoring the health of at least the major animal and plant species and no inventories have been undertaken with the exception of some researchers who conducted a study on some species such as rodents and birds.

**Lack of stakeholders’ cooperation and integration.** As per the results of interview and focused group discussions, there is no good integration between stakeholders and the park office. For instance, the buffer zone of the park is managed by natural resource management without collaboration with the park office. In addition, according to the interviewees, justice and police officers evaluate some criminals or illegal activities of hunting, fishing and other unsustainable resource utilization as minor cases, and sometimes, they leave the case without any penalties. In line with this, the park office has limited the capacity to enforce regulations of the park resources as indicated by the tourism expert SPSS result (mean = 2.44, std. deviation = .882).

**Inadequate financial allocation.** Conservation of wildlife and park management is an expensive task, and a lack of adequate financial resources for such activities is one of the most profound difficulties facing park managers. Tourism experts reported that the financial allocation of the park is not sufficient, which has resulted in few management and conservation activities, and a lack of equipment for the park, i.e. the latest GPS, video-cameras, and gun materials for scouts.

**Conclusions**

The results of the study demonstrated that the existing challenges for community-based ecotourism development in Alatish National Park are poor basic infrastructure and facilities such as roads, electricity, telecommunications, accommodations, health institutions, banking and shopping services to attract prospective tourists to the region. Other constraints for community-based ecotourism development are a lack of government body cooperation and integration, a lack of finances which results in inadequate promotion and marketing activities, an insufficient number of skilled staff, and an inability to manage tourism resources. The study also indicated that natural challenges such as global warming and its effects like extreme climatic variation of high temperature and excessive rainfall, as well as water stress and diseases like malaria, are threats for community-based ecotourism development.
The study illustrated that Alatish National Park, being rich in a variety and abundance of fauna and flora, striking topographic features, and rivers, as well as the vicinity’s cultural attractions and ethnic groups, make it an ideal place for wildlife conservation and community-based ecotourism development. Generally, the area has significant potential in terms of biodiversity conservation (ecology), tourism and recreation, scientific research and education, and social and economic values.

In addition, opportunities to develop community-based ecotourism are the increasing global demand for ecotourism, the potential of the Alatish National Park to develop cross-border tourism or trans-boundary cooperation, and potential benefits of ecotourism for local employment opportunities. Most importantly, Alatish National Park is the only natural barrier that acts as a guard or green belt in preventing the expansion of the Sahara and Sahel Deserts from the adjoining Sudan region so that conservation of the park is a must.

**Recommendations**

- To mitigate human caused threats for wildlife survival, there should be an evident need for biodiversity conservation to be formally addressed as an issue at all levels of society. Education and training programs could be given at schools, clubs and associations, such as youth associations, environmental association clubs, mini-media clubs at schools and farmers associations and at religious places to encourage dedication towards conservation, raise consciousness of the essential role of wildlife in the function of the ecosystem, and ecotourism’s ethical and economic values, as well as its recreational and aesthetic significances, and the role of Alatish National Park as a guard or green belt in combating the expansion of Sahara and Sahel Deserts to the region.

- One of the most devastating factors for wildlife and habitat destruction is the impact of nomads from neighboring countries, in particular the Felata of Nigeriya, Minamir of Eritrea and Rubtan of Kenya with their huge amounts of cattle that excessively depend on the natural resources of the park, which puts the park in jeopardy. So, the federal government should take measures through diplomacy to evacuate these nomads from the park since this action is beyond the capacity of the park office.

- Artificial ponds and dams should be constructed at different sites of the park to retain water in the dry season and reduce daily and seasonal migration of wild animals, especially in the northern part of the park at Amjale and the southern part of the park at Ayibeza, Yelkuk, Bayiwa and Tsequa that are sites where abundant wildlife including elephants is found.

- To avoid clashes over policies and programs, there should be integration and collaboration among government bodies and other stakeholders. For example, the adverse effects of settlement and investment programs on the environment and natural resources should be taken into consideration, and feasibility studies related to adverse impacts on the national park should be conducted in a holistic manner among natural resource conservation and land administration, park office management, and culture and tourism of host communities, then possible reduction mechanisms prior to the commencement of programs should be forwarded.
In order to develop community-based ecotourism in Alatish National Park and its vicinity, basic infrastructure and facilities should be developed that is compatible with wildlife and the natural ecosystem. More importantly, parallel with ecotourism development and since the region is famous for agricultural investment of sesame and cotton, the development of basic infrastructure would facilitate development, trade and living standards of the community.

After infrastructure and facility development, the next issue for ecotourism development is its promotion and marketing so as to attract prospective visitors and to maximize benefits to the region.

References


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Abstract
Constituting a regional economic community has immense benefits to the societies within a given region. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) would play an inevitable role in increasing people to people interactions and gradually forging interdependence in different sectors, which used to limit government to government. Often, such bondage within given RECs among states in general and societies in particular paves the way to address the ills of the respective societies in a collaborative manner. In fact, it is plausible to argue that there is a conducive environment to constitute and build up RECs in the present globalizing world. Parallel to the global trend, Pan Africanism promotes the integration of economies and people under RECs. The establishment and development of RECs in different parts of Africa is among other things tantamount to laying the founding blocs for the aspired United States of Africa. Merging the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and East African Community (EAC) into the larger East African Community like it has been happening in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) is a novel idea. Such a merger would serve as a vehicle for a prosperous and peaceful larger East African Community and consequently would facilitate the integration of Africa. Given that, the research is designed to scrutinize the viability of a merger between the IGAD and EAC. To meet this objective, the study has set out two basic research questions: What are the viable conditions to merge the IGAD and EAC? What are the possible challenges to the merger of the IGAD and EAC? Finally, the study, to achieve its objective, employed a qualitative research approach which used a wider review of secondary data.

Keywords: merger, RECs, IGAD, EAC, cooperation, opportunities, challenges.

Background: Regional Economic Integration
Regional economic integration is as old as the independence of African states (Jiboku, 2019). Surprisingly, the East African Community (EAC) was constituted before 1960, which is referred to as the African independence year. Since the 1960s, a significant number of African leaders have called for one Africa. The first generation leaders’ regional integration visions were primarily motivated by political unification, which stimulated economic integrations. Later, the idea of political unification was accompanied by the economic policy of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). Accordingly, the African ISI policy envisioned freeing Africans from their economic dependence on the developed world, which compromised political
independence. With that objective, sub-regional integrations were proposed, but failed (Kritzinger-van Niekerk, 2004).

In fact, from the start, a qualified number of reasons were cited for the breakdown of Africa’s integrations. Largely, the presence of too small markets, a lack of commitment from governments, exclusionary policies that discouraged the private sectors, and protectionism were identified as causes for the failures. Following the ISI’s failure, African’s second generation in the 1980s gradually resorted to a policy of open doors. Among other things, the drive for regional integration became central within the open door policy (Kritzinger-van Niekerk, 2004).

The road to economic integration takes multiple paths and phases. Consequently, regional economic groupings take variant institutional organizations as well as objectives. The grouping ranges from simple cooperation like the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to the well solidified Economic Union and in an exceptional case, it takes to the Political Union (Abdi & Seid, 2013; Thisen,1989). Often, regional economic integration would set up by two or more states initiatives. Depending on the benefits drawn from such co-operation, the integration gradually grows into a higher one (Gessesse, 1996; Tadesse, 2004; Thisen, 1989).

Today, the idea of regional integration has received wide currency throughout the world. That is why most of states become members of one or more regional economic communities (Abdi & Seid, 2013; Jiboku,2019).

**Legal and Practical Basis for IGAD-EAC Integration**

Promotions of regional integration are at the heart of economic and political objectives of Africa. In view of this, it is relevant to discuss rationales, experiences and legal backings of an IGAD and EAC merger. So, this paper precisely highlights these points.

Regional integration has become African’s question. African leaders in numerous forums have underlined the importance of greater coordination and harmonization among regional economic blocs. In that regard, the Abuja 1991 Treaty took the lead. The Abuja Treaty laid a foundation for the establishment of the African Economic Community. Based on the Abuja Treaty, the Constitutive Act of the African Union of 2000 planned to employ regional economic blocs as its building pillars for the envisioned United States of Africa (ECA & AU, 2006; Jiboku,2019; Maruping, 2005).

In addition to the Abuja Treaty and the Constitutive Act of the AU, crafting regional economic integration, as well as different international economic groupings, has been something preferred by donors. So, establishing economic blocs, notably stronger ones, has become attractive everywhere (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014).

Among the regional economic groupings that are assumed to be the founding blocs of the AU, one is the bigger Eastern African Economic Community (IGAD & EAC, 2013 In this region, the larger East Africa is a home for about 26% of Africa’s population, comprises 22% of Africa’s land mass, and 16% of the combined African GDP in 2009 (AfDB & ADF, 2010). In this envisioned region, there are two blocs, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC), respectively. Geographically, the region encompasses
Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan (which includes South Sudan), Tanzania and Uganda (AfDB & ADF, 2010). Among the listed states, Comoros and Seychelles are neither in the IGAD nor EAC membership lists, while the newly born South Sudan has joined the IGAD soon after its independence on 9 July 2011 (Berhe, 2014; IGAD & EAC, 2013).

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was established in 1986 using the name Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) with six member states: Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda (Clapham, 2017; Berhe, 2014; Saleem, 1992). IGADD was established with objectives of addressing drought and facilitating development within the region. After a decade journey, in 1996 IGADD was transformed into the IGAD and also incorporated Eritrea as a new member country. What is more, after the birth of South Sudan in July 2011, it acceded to the IGAD as an eighth member country (Zewdie, 2016, 2017).

Furthermore, Berhe (2014) and Mesfin (2012) noted that the transition from the IGADD into IGAD came with additional mandates. The additional mandates included the duty of keeping peace and security within the IGAD. Under such a mandate, IGAD has been doing a lot in promoting peace and security in the region. Contrary to that, its records of accomplishments in regional economic integrations are insignificant. One can draw this from the study that was conducted by the AfDB & ADF (2010) on intra-regional trade in eastern Africa from 2000 to 2008. The same research indicates that trade among the Horn of African states was small in volume as compared to the EAC.

East African Community (EAC)

Contrary to the IGAD, the EAC has a long, established history. It was constituted in 1917 by present-day Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Since its establishment, the EAC has been subjected to dissolution and re-launching more than once. For instance, soon after independence in the early 1960s, member states brought the demise of the EAC, and re-launched it in 1967. However, EAC stayed for only a decade, between 1967 and 1977, then was dissolved for a second time. The reason for the EAC’s dissolution in 1977 was ideological and economic disputes that occurred among the three member states. The EAC, after a decade and a half absence during 1977-1991, underwent its resurgence in 1991. As compared to its predecessor, the 1991 EAC came with extended goals. On top of that, in 2007, Rwanda and Burundi acceded to the EAC, which increased its members from three to five (Lunogelo & Mbiliny, 2009).

The EAC has worked hard towards a customs union that has envisioned harmonizing fiscal and monetary policies as per the agreement of January 1, 2005. Primarily, it abolished tariff and non-tariff trade barriers among members. The EAC has already established the ‘Common Market’ area as of July 1, 2010 and has issued common passports to facilitate internal travel. In general, the EAC has grown toward harmonization of economic and monetary policies along with
economic integration (AfDB & ADF, 2010; Jiboku, 2019). Even though, the EAC has had a long journey in liberalizing trade among its member states, the larger volume of its trade is with the developed countries in the north. In addition, there are also some limitations to intra-regional trade, such as some restrictions on labor and capital movement, and some tariff and non-tariff trade barriers (AfDB & ADF, 2010).

Within the mentioned contexts, the IGAD and EAC member countries have started to look for a possible merger. Towards this goal, the IGAD and EAC heads of state and governments convened on October 12, 2013 in Addis Ababa. At the end of a day-long discussion, the heads of state and governments announced that they mandated their respective foreign ministers to examine the feasibility of a merger (IGAD & EAC, 2013). Until the present, the study and discussions on the merger are in progress.

In general, the international context of the Abuja 1991 Treaty, the Constitutive Act of AU, and, in particular, the October 2013 IGAD-EAC Communiqué give legal and practical grounds for the merger of the IGAD and EAC.

Feasibilities and Challenges to IGAD-EAC Merger

Viabilities of IGAD-EAC Merger

When examining integration vis-a-vis its viability, certain variables are taken into account. These are: “…geographic proximity, complementary economic contexts, converging political values and policies, allowing the flourishing of trade across national borders as well as the will and capacity to push the process forward” (Tadesse, 2004, p. 120). Conventionally, these variables are taken as checklists to gauge the feasibility of merger except there is a difference in the weight assigned to each (Gessesse, 1996).

Different scholars argue that the ongoing merger of the IGAD-EAC is a failed journey (Sabala, 2014). They say that the merger of the two blocs does not meet the minimum conditions. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether those scholars exhaustively and effectively gauged those indicators of merger vis-a-vis the facts on the grounds. Therefore, hereunder, this study is set out to scrutinize the feasibility of the merger in eastern Africa vis-a-vis the aforementioned yardsticks. Accordingly, the discussions on the viabilities of an economic merger in the broader East Africa region are presented as follows.

Geographical contiguity. According to Tadesse (2004) and Kritzinger-van Niekerk (2004), geographic proximity is one condition for a successful merger. Kritzinger-van Niekerk (2004, p. 9) noted the importance of geographic contiguity in the following manner, “adjacency... the entire sub-region must become a set of contiguous countries, providing a ‘unified’ geography base for markets, especially factors and infrastructure services.” In line with the geographic criterion, EAC and IGAD states easily meet that condition. The EAC and IGAD countries are contiguous and have an overlapping boundary. Each member state in the would-be-merging region must share a border with two or more of the member states, which eases communications to build
in roads. For instance, Ethiopia, of the IGAD, borders six out of eleven members of larger East Africa. Next to Ethiopia, Kenya shares borders with five of the IGAD countries. The least connected country is Burundi, which is bordered by two countries of the larger East Africa (AfDB & ADF, 2010). Hence, one can draw from this that the merger would meet the geographic condition.

Beyond proximity, sea outlet is another geographic factor that accelerates integration. In the would be broader East African Community, five states do not have sea outlets. The remaining six countries are endowed with sea outlets. In fact, out of six sea outlets in the region, Eritrean and Somalian ports are inaccessible to neighboring states due to some regional and international reasons. Among other things, the UNs Security Council resolution passed sanctions against the Eritrean ports. The Security Council, among other things, adopted Resolution 1907 (UNSC, 2009) against Eritrea on December 23, 2009 because Eritrea found supporting terrorists and dissidents of Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and, in general, for its action of destabilizing the Horn of Africa (UNSC, 2009). In fact, starting from July 2018, Eritrea has improved its relations with its neighbors, especially with Ethiopia. Following that, Eritrea’s ports became open for use except for infrastructural problem.

As noted above, five of the regional states are landlocked. The list includes Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. In other words, accessing the sea requires the landlocked countries to establish cordial relations with those states endowed with sea outlets (Zewdie, 2016). Of course, when relations are built, both landlocked as well as states with sea outlets will benefit.

Being landlocked by nature and consequent economic calculations encourage intra-regional trade. The trade by the landlocked states outside their region would incur greater port and transportation costs. Studies show that port and transportation costs are challenging for landlocked states. According to the ECA and AU (2006, p. 12) study, “For landlocked countries, transport costs can be as much as 77% of the value of exports. It costs about $1,500 (including insurance) to move a car from Japan to Abidjan, and more than three times that to ship the same car from Addis Ababa to Abidjan.” The port and transportation costs can place economic pressure on landlocked states to push for integration or commercial cooperation, and this holds for East African landlocked states. In short, it is a blessing in disguise to have integration in Eastern Africa.

**History.** Almost all states in East Africa are colonized save Ethiopia. Regarding colonial masters, more than half of these countries remained under the British, which is one historical similarity and tie. For instance, the British colonized Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania (after the defeat of Germany in World War I), Sudan (which includes South Sudan), and Somalia (British Somaliland), and stayed in Eritrea between 1941and 1951 as the protectorate. Also, Britain remained in Ethiopia between 1941and the late 1940s as an allied force. Burundi, Rwanda and part of Tanzania remained under Germany. Later on, the former two passed to Belgium. Eritrea and Somalia (Italian Somaliland) remained a colony of Italy. Of course, Ethiopia also fell under Italy’s occupation between 1935 and 1941 (Zewde, 2000). These are historical facts that demonstrate how
countries in the region have shared a history of colonialism, and at least one colonial master colonized three or more of the current East African states.

Scholars like Sabala (2014) invoke colonial history to criticize the proposed integration in Eastern Africa, but his argument seems self-contradictory. He argues for the EAC to stay as it is, instead of merging with the IGAD which has a different history. Nevertheless, he did not seem to consider the history of colonial experiences within the EAC. As stated above, Burundi, Tanzania and Rwanda stayed under Germany until the defeat of that country in WWI. Then, they went to Belgian with Tanzania which was partly under Britain, while Uganda and Kenya remained a British colony.

Sabala (2014) and like-minded scholars describe the integration of the two east African communities as a failed journey. They reason that the IGAD and EAC have a different colonial history. The question is if mere historical difference relates to failure, then why do they promote the EAC as a successful integration since they had been colonized by Britain and Germany? Again, the West African - the appreciable journey of integration between ECOWAS and UEMOA (Jiboku,2019) - experience refutes such an argument. Regarding colonial history, ECOWAS states were British colonies, whereas UEMOA were French colonies (ECA & AU, 2006). On top of that, Iheme (2004) explained that the ECOWS region is made up of four language blocs, which include Spanish and Portuguese. So, if the West Africans and EAC have had successful integration which passed through different colonial history and various linguistic blocs, and again if Germany and France which were historical enemies established the EU, why would it not work if the EAC and IGAD forged together?

**Overlapping membership.** The overlapping membership between the IGAD and EAC can be considered as one condition that facilitates their future viability for integration. Kenya and Uganda are members of the EAC and IGAD. Besides their overlapping membership, these two countries, respectively, rank first and second in economic power in the region (Healy, Cramer, Styan, & Leonard, 2009). Being members to both groups and their relative economic power should enable them to serve as a steppingstone for the integration of the two blocs. Moreover, almost all EAC and IGAD countries are member of a broader REC that is the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (Moges, 2008). Their membership to COMESA, tells a lot about their track record of working together and the benefits drawn from membership in RECs. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that if the regional countries have the experience of integration to larger RECs such as COMESA, why would integration fail for relatively smaller bloc like the East African states?

**Economic complementarities: Cross border trade.** Economic ties, specifically trade in Eastern Africa, are not a new development. Trade between communities in Eastern Africa precedes the independence of IGAD and EAC states. Even at present, as is true for other regions in Africa, the informal or unregistered trade among the communities of regional states is common (El-Hardallo & El-Battahani, 1996; Gessesse, 1996). For instance, according to Lunogelo and
Mbiliny’s (2009) study, intra-African illegal trade in the early 1990s was more than threefold of the legal one. This reveals the size of the trade volume and also the cross-border bondage. Even though this trade principally follows informal patterns, they are proof of the presence of real supply and demand across borders.

Economists name different factors as the driving forces for cross-border trade. Gessesse (1996) stated that both official as well as unofficial trades is driven by Demand and Supply factors. When it comes to the reality on the ground in Eastern Africa, illegal cross-border trade is successful. In fact, being illegal does not make informal cross-border trade stay alive in the region, but adds economic complementarities. Therefore, the question is, why should the expected economic merger in Eastern Africa be questioned due to a lack of economic complementarities? This is what the paradox rests on! Gessese (1996), Thisen (1989), Ayalew (1992) and El-Hardallo and El-Battahani (1996) have answers for it. According to them, there is an artificial lack of economic complementarities. Primarily, the problem rests on the economic policies followed by governments. Their policies have deficiencies in giving proper attention to proper economic sectors. Despite the endowments of abundant natural resources, the region is dependent on two, or a limited number of, colonial economies for export. Such deficiencies, which often portray cross-border trade, are taken as artificial problems rather than real ones.

Today, oil in Sudan and South Sudan, potential hydropower energy in Ethiopia (Berhe, 2014; Eshetu, 2012; Zewdie, 2015, 2016); natural gas in Rwanda, Tanzania and Somalia, and relative industrial power in Kenya and other EAC countries can be taken as evidence of the presence of economic complementarities (Zewdie, 2015). Therefore, countries in the region are not solely dependent on primary agricultural products. Energy, industry in addition to food grain production are potential comparative advantage areas. Some cite dependency on primary agricultural products as a major barrier to intra-regional trade (Moges, 2008; Sabala, 2014). From that, some project that the fate of an IGAD-EAC merger will be gloomy.

Nevertheless, close observation on the potential and some encouraging integrations among the member states could falsify that such assertions are at least partly wrong. For instance, after the 2000 Ethiopia-Sudan Comprehensive Agreement in April 2002, the two countries signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which positively impacted trade and integration between the two countries. Following the agreement, bilateral trade increased significantly between 2002 and 2011. Eshetu (2012) in Zewdie (2016) explained such a growth of trade between the two as follows: “The total trade flows (exports plus imports) between the two countries increased by 2,304.8 % during the same period” (p. 161).

Besides, Mesfin (2012) recorded that Ethiopia’s exports to as well as imports from Sudan has increased from time to time. Regarding the increase of Ethiopia’s import from Sudan, he cited the import of $1.42 billion worth oil from Sudan in 2010 alone. On top of that, Ethiopia alternatively uses Sudan ports. Similarly, Ethiopia’s goods find their way to Sudanese markets, including the export of 100 MW of hydropower. Sudan is not only destiny for Ethiopian merchandise but also a market for young, jobless Ethiopians. According to Mesfin (2012) in Zewdie (2016:p.161), about 140,000 Ethiopians legally have jobs and job permits in Sudan.
Similar to Ethiopia- Sudan and at varying degrees Ethiopia-Kenya, and Ethiopia-Djibouti trade connections are encouraging. Both Sudan and Kenya trade with and also provide port facilities for Ethiopian goods. Very recently, in addition to infrastructural connections and age-old trade, Ethiopia has started to export hydropower to Kenya and Djibouti (Zewdie, 2016), which speaks loudly to the increase in areas of cooperation and trade, though small. What is more, Uganda as well as Kenya’s exports to South Sudan, though the latter has been in civil war since the end of 2013 (Zewdie, 2017), was among the cases that can be mentioned as a practical starting point to regional economic integration.

The success stories of the EU also inform the possibility of integration around two or more comparative advantage areas and work to add some through time. The EU started as European Coal and Steel Communities (Tadesse, 2004). Therefore, there should be no problem if the IGAD-EAC merger starts around energy, food grain production and industry. Sabala (2014) and Moges (2008) portray the EAC as a success story. Contrary to that, Sabala (2014) invokes the EAC-IGAD merger as a failure among other things due to a lack of economic complementarities, but the five EAC member states, which are praised by both scholars as success stories, are also known for their dependency on primary agricultural produces like coffee, tea and maize. So, the questions are, why are these countries successful in intra-EAC economic integration, and why is the larger East African merger with more or less similar conditions doomed to fail?

Indeed, the regional states’ economies are mostly dependent on agricultural products; surprisingly most of them are short of satisfying domestic demands. In particular, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea, which account for more than half of East African population, fulfil their food deficits through import (Zewdie, 2016). On the other hand, there are also states in the region producing food grains in excess, especially in the EAC. So, the existing food deficit in the mentioned IGAD countries will become markets for the East Africans who produce food grains in excess. Again, this will put under scrutiny the common critique that says East African states are primary agricultural producers; therefore, it hampers intra-regional trade.

**Infrastructure.** Infrastructure is another factor taken into account to check whether regional integration will be feasible or not. Therefore, the research, in trying to elaborate the in/feasibility of the merger between the two regional bodies, will first bring into the picture some of the factors that fall under infrastructure. These are inland and on-air connections, financial institutions, ports, energy, and the private sector. In that regard, the bigger east African region is poor in infrastructure. But recently, there are improvements in road connections. In fact, in terms of telecommunication and banking, the IGAD lags behind the EAC (Mesfin, 2012; Zewdie, 2015). Comparatively, the EAC is by far connected by road and air; and has coordinated financial institutions. For instance, Kenyan banks have branches in Rwanda, Uganda and Sudan [South Sudan] (AfDB & ADF, 2010). Whereas regarding port access, six states have coastal lines. Of course, as aforementioned, practically four are functional. So, endowment with sea outlet and the presence of port infrastructure are also an addition to the integration.
Moreover, the shortage of power is one of the challenges that has slowed and will also be expected to slow the regional industrialization effort and access to electric power in East Africa. To address this current and future challenge, the region already established the East African Power Pool in February 2005. The aim is mainly to pull regional power capacity towards regional integration and benefit. So, to this end, the utilization of regional rivers is taken into consideration. In particular, Ethiopia has taken the responsibility of connecting the region through hydropower (Eshetu, 2012; Mulu, 2010; Zewdie, 2015 & 2016).

What is more, the regional states, in particular Rwanda, Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania, signed the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) in 2010 regarding the overutilization of the Nile River (CFA, 2010). The CFA was signed for hydropower generation among other things. Beyond signing treaties, though small, there are cases that can be cited as a good start regarding electric power connections. Ethiopia has exported hydropower to Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti, which is an addition to the existing infrastructure. In addition to hydropower, bear in mind that Sudan and South Sudan are petroleum producers, which is a crucial source of energy and input for economic integration (Berhe, 2014; Zewdie, 2015 & 2016).

Furthermore, the participation of the private sector has an indispensable role in the economic integration of the region. In this regard, Sudan has a larger class of merchants among regional states (Tadesse, 2004). Therefore, addressing trade and non-trade barriers would encourage the private sector to invest in their region.

**Political willingness, values and stability.** Finally, the political willingness, values and stability of the region are among the preconditions for possible economic integration. Eastern Africa has been characterized by war and other odds (Clapham, 2017; Olika, 2011). In fact, among other things, addressing these evils has been indispensable in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). But, it is essential to note that the region has shown certain improvement in the field of security.

The regional politics have shown relative stability when compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Power transfer through ‘elections’ has become a regional trend. However, elections are always contentious. Regional governments and institutions struggle to solve regional political and security problems in collaborated manners. Just to mention major ones: the IGAD’s role in promoting peace in Somalia began with the establishment of the Transitional Federal Somalia government in 2004 (Menkhaus, 2007; Ofcansky, 2006; Olika, 2011) and remained up to taking a lion’s share in deploying their forces in the Somalia-African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) under the auspices of the AU. Furthermore, the establishment of the East African Standby Force also talks a lot about regional states’ commitment towards addressing their regional insecurities on their own. What is more, the settlement with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Civil War by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and the current IGAD’s effort of brokering South Sudan’s peace are some of the indicators of commitment towards regional peace and security (IGAD, 2014; Zewdie, 2017).
To sum it up, the region meets most of the feasibility criteria for integration. Hence, there is an opportunity to merge the EAC and IGAD into the larger EAC. But, this does not mean that the region is free of challenges.

**Challenges to IGAD-EAC Merger**

It is expected that certain challenges have encircled the IGAD-EAC merger. Most of them are typical for RECs in Africa. The problem starts with a number of export commodities. Commonly, the regional states depend on two or three commodities in their export trade. Also, these commodities are mainly produced by targeting markets in the north rather than in the region (ECA & AU, 2006; De Melo & Tsikata, 2014; El-Hardallo & El-Battahani, 1996; Gessesse, 1996; Thisen, 1989). Of course, such dependency on few commodities for export in turn artificially creates a lack of economic complementarities (El-Hardallo & El-Battahani, 1996; Gessesse, 1996; Thisen, 1989). However, it is an artificial problem. But, as long as such scenarios continue unchecked, it remains a challenge to the integration.

Another challenge to an expected economic merger would be tied to the abolishment of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers in the intra-region. As it is well known, regional state revenue is dependent on tariff and non-tariff sources. So, the integration could jeopardise states in that they could lose certain shares of their revenue. What makes the problem severe is that in the short term, they will not develop the capacity to compensate for such losses (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014; Healy et al., 2009; Lunogelo & Mbiliny, 2009). Therefore, such a scenario will be another area of challenge to the assumed regional integration of East African states.

Furthermore, to a degree, trade imbalance will be a challenge to the integration itself. In the ongoing IGAD-EAC merger, one or two states are relatively strong economically. Kenya is repeatedly mentioned as it will benefit from this integration. It is relatively true that Kenya has assumed the economic power in the region, particularly in the manufacturing sector (Healy et al., 2009; Kritzinger-van Niekerk, 2004).

The EAC-IGAD merger, like other RECs, takes a top-down approach. The AU took the initiative of merging the EAC and IGAD, but it excludes the private sector and other stakeholders from consultation and participation (IGAD-EAC, 2013). In line with that, Jiboku (2019) argues that African regional integrations are elitist projects. Thus, it is high likely that the ongoing integration will suffer because of having shallow bases.

Overlapping membership is another challenge to the larger East African merger. It is true that each Eastern African state, on an average, has joined into two or more RECs (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014; ECA & AU, 2006; Maruping, 2005;). Overlapping membership, among other things, reduces a state’s loyalty to a given integration. Besides, states may fail to execute agreed upon policies in their respective territories due to the conflicting nature of policies of respective RECs (De Melo & Tsikata, 2014; Healy et al., 2009).

Another critical challenge to RECs in East African integration is their visible weakness in terms of institutional organization, capacity, and necessary infrastructure. Financial institutions, roads, ICT and energy would be expected challenges to an EAC-IGAD merger. Infrastructure,
which can ease regional economic integration, is mostly in the infant stages (AfDB & ADF, 2010; De Melo & Tsikata, 2014; Healy et al., 2009;).

Finally, political willingness, stability in the democratization process, and security are among critical factors used to gauge the feasibility of economic integration. In that regard, East Africa is far from meeting these requirements. The recent civil war in South Sudan, unstable Somalia and piracy, the Ethiopia-Eritrea boundary conflict, Darfur, Sudan and South Sudan’s unsettled boundary and oil issues, contested elections all over the region, terrorism and terrorist attacks in Kenya and Uganda, Rwanda and Uganda’s intervention and conflict in the DRC, the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda, and internal instabilities in Ethiopia and Eritrea are contexts that play against integration or at least make it sluggish. What is more, such insecurities discourage the FDI (AfDB & ADF, 2010; Healy et al., 2009; Olika, 2011). Consequently, illegal trade is promoted.

**Conclusion**

There is no question about the benefits that could be drawn from creating regional economic blocs. Merging the IGAD and EAC into a larger East African Community could be happening to bring peace and security to the area. In that regard, it is worth mentioning the establishment of the East African Standby Force. Such a merger would be a vehicle to realize a broader prosperous and peaceful East African Community. The AU and international community encourage and support regional economic integration. On top of that, the continuation of isolated economies and efforts will not take the region a long distance in the ‘globalizing’ world.

So, the creation of a larger East African Community is a vehicle to realize a prosperous and peaceful East Africa. However, the road towards the envisioned merger of the IGAD and EAC is not free of challenges. The challenges include conflict, poor infrastructure, overlapping membership, and lack of political willingness and commitment, which potentially undermine the move towards integration. Therefore, the integration of the EAC and IGAD into a larger East African Community seems farfetched but not impossible.

**References**


Effect of Oil Price Shocks on Monetary Policy in Nigeria: A Vector Autoregressive Analysis

Ama Agyeiwaa Abrokwah, Ambassador Enterprises

Abstract
This paper examines the effects of oil price shocks on interest rate, real GDP and real effective exchange rate in Nigeria using a vector autoregressive (VAR) model. The results from the impulse response function suggests that positive oil price shocks have no effect on the interest rate (monetary policy), real exchange rate and real GDP. This result suggests that monetary policy in Nigeria does not respond to oil price shocks. Both the impulse response functions and variance decomposition analysis to a large extent confirmed that oil price shocks are only able to explain a small proportion of the forecast error variance of the variables under consideration.

Keywords: oil price shocks, impulse response function, variance decomposition, JEL Classifications codes: C01, C51.

Introduction
Nigeria is currently the largest oil producer in Africa, the 13th largest producer of crude oil in the world, the 6th largest crude oil exporter, has the 11th largest proven crude oil reserves in the world, and has an estimated 37.1 billion barrels of oil reserves, which places Nigeria as the second largest in terms of oil reserves on the African continent. Yet, due the economy’s heavy reliance on crude oil and the instability in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria is vulnerable to shocks in world oil prices. The instability in the Niger Delta region has resulted in a significant drop in the amounts of crude oil production at onshore and shallow offshore fields. Crude oil production dropped from about 1.8 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in December 2015 to about 1.4 million barrels per day in 2017. The country’s crude oil exports have also been fluctuating over the years. There was a decrease from 2.1 million bbl/d in December 2015 to 1.7 million bbl/d in December 2016 according to the Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) data (2018). The Nigerian economy has consistently relied on the export of crude oil for foreign exchange earnings and revenues. The export of crude oil accounted for over 83 percent of export earnings, 77 percent of government revenues and 10 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016. Nigeria has also been exposed to oil price shocks through massive importation of refined petroleum products since the collapse of local refineries in the late 1980s. Currently, Nigeria imports almost 85 percent of refined products for local consumption.

The continuous fluctuations in oil prices has posed many economic challenges for several oil exporting, developing economies that are heavily reliant on revenues from oil exports. There is therefore the need for extensive research to determine the effects of shocks to oil prices on
economic and monetary variables in order to provide policy recommendations to policy makers in these countries.

The impact of an oil price shock on any particular economy depends on several factors among which are: the magnitude of the shock; the duration of the shock (persistence); the dependency of the economy on oil (energy fuel mix and intensity); the immediate policy response to the shock; and the state of the economy before the shock (absorptive capacity or vulnerability). A number of recent theoretical and empirical studies have provided insights into the macroeconomic implications of oil price shocks. However, very limited work has been done on the association between oil price shocks and monetary policy. Most studies have examined the oil price - monetary policy linkage for industrial economies, especially the United States and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Balke, Brown, & Yucel, 2002; Bernanke, Gentler and Watson, 1997). The role of oil price shocks in net oil-exporting developing countries has not been sufficiently covered in the literature. This paper studies the impact of oil price shocks on monetary policy and some macroeconomic variables.

Studying the role of monetary policy distinguishes this study from earlier research studies that have dealt with oil price-output relationships in the context of developing countries, notably Nigeria. This study uses a vector autoregressive (VAR) model to examine the impact of oil price shocks on interest rate, real gross domestic product (GDP) and the real effective exchange rate in Nigeria. Hamilton’s (1996) Net Oil Price Increase (NOPI) was used as the oil price shock measure.

**Literature Review**

According to Barsky and Kilian (2004), increases in oil prices have been held responsible for recessions, periods of excessive inflation, reduced productivity and lower economic growth. However, they conclude in their paper that disturbances in the oil market are likely to matter less for U.S. macroeconomic performance than has commonly been thought.

With regard to the response of monetary authority to oil price changes, Bohi (1989) asserted that, if a classic supply shock explains the principal effects of an oil price shock, energy intensive industries should be the most affected after an increase in energy prices. However, since he found no relationship between these industries and their level of energy-intensity as well as no statistically significant effects of oil price shock on the business cycle of four countries, he concluded that the restrictive monetary policy carried out by the central banks of these countries accounts for much of the decline in aggregate economic activity in the years that follow oil price increases.

Similarly, results by Bernanke et al. (1997) clearly support this view and demonstrate that if following an oil price shock, the Federal Reserve had not increased interest rates, the economic downturns that hit the U.S. might have been largely avoided. In particular, they show that the U.S. economy responds differently to an oil price shock when the federal fund rate is constrained to be constant than in the case in which monetary policy is unconstrained. In the unconstrained case, a positive oil price shock leads to an increase in the federal fund rate and a decline in the real GDP. With the federal funds rate held constant, Bernanke et al. (1997) find that a positive oil price shock
results in an increase of the real GDP and of the inflation rate. According to their findings, these results show the important role of the real effects of oil price shocks due to the monetary policy response.

Herrera and Hamilton (2001) challenged the conclusions of Bernanke et al. (1997) on two grounds. First, they found that both the nature and magnitude of the actions suggested by the U.S. central bank are sufficiently inconsistent with the historical correlations as to call into question the feasibility of such a policy. Second, they demonstrated that if a longer lag length is considered even when the federal fund rate is kept constant, an oil price shock still yields a sizable reduction in output, which implies that monetary policy has little effect in easing the real consequences of an oil price shock. The analysis of Herrera and Hamilton is consistent with those of other authors who show that counter-inflationary monetary policy was only partly responsible for the real effects of oil price shocks that hit the U.S. during the last thirty years.

As outlined so far, the literature on an oil price monetary policy relationship has focused mainly on developed countries. In the case of developing economies, Adusei and Pastuszyn (2007) examined the relationship between the world oil price and the aggregate demand in Ghana, via the interest rate channel by means of a cointegration analysis. They found that monetary policy is initially eased in response to a surge in the price of oil in order to lessen any growth consequences but at the cost of higher inflation. The ensuing higher inflation, however, prompts a subsequent tightening of the monetary policy.

Mahmud (2009) used structural VAR to study the impact of innovations to oil prices on inflation, money supply, interest rate, government expenditure, GDP per capita growth rate, exchange rate and manufacturing output in Nigeria. He concluded that oil price shocks have distortionary effects on macroeconomic aggregates. The study, therefore suggests that in order to curtail the macroeconomic distortions associated with oil price increases, monetary authorities should have a closed cap on inflationary pressure. However, only the balance of payment ratio and the exchange rate are found to be significant, but the author explains his results as though all variables are significant.

This paper seeks to add to the literature focusing on the developing economy, oil producing countries, particularly African countries, where the literature seems almost non-existent. Specifically, this paper evaluates how the monetary policy in Nigeria, the largest crude oil producer in Africa, responds to oil price shocks.

**Empirical Analysis**

**Data description**

This paper studies the impact of oil price shocks on monetary policy and some macroeconomic variables. Quarterly data from 1981Q1 to 2013Q4, a total of 132 observations for each variable, is used for this study. The variables used are interest rate, real gross domestic product (RGDP), the real effective exchange rate (Naira/Dollar rate) and the price of oil (a measure of oil price shocks). Interest rate was used, particularly the discount rate as a measure of monetary
policy, since it is used by the Central Bank of Nigeria as a monetary policy measure. The macroeconomic variables used are the real gross domestic product (RGDP) and the real effective exchange rate. The real GDP serves as a measure of economic activity, while the real effective exchange rate captures changes in revenue as a result of relative changes in the exchange rate (Naira per dollar). Also, the real GDP and exchange rate are widely used in the literature as measures of macroeconomic activity. All of the variables with the exception of the real GDP were obtained from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) International Financial Statistics data-base. The data for real GDP was obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria statistics database. With the exception of the interest rate and oil price shocks, all the variables are seasonally adjusted and in logarithm format.

**Methodology**

First I performed an Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test to determine if the variables have unit roots. The variables would be differenced to induce stationarity following the results of the ADF test. In addition, the Johansen cointegration test was used to test for cointegration among the variables. If there is no cointegration, an estimate of a three variable vector autoregressive (VAR) model was used to capture the short-run relationships among the variables. If the variables are cointegrated, a vector error correction model (VECM) was estimated to capture the long-run relationships among the variables.

A vector autoregressive (VAR) model was estimated with a Choleski decomposition to create impulse response functions (IRFs) as well as variance decompositions (VDCs) for my estimation. The Cholesky decomposition examines the contemporaneous relationships among the variables in the model based on the Cholesky ordering. The impulse response functions examine the response of a particular variable in the system relative to a shock in another variable in the dynamic system, whereas the variance decomposition analysis helps to explain how much the forecast error variance of a particular variable in the system is explained by variations in the other variables and the variable itself.

Each IRF and VDC is based on a four-variable VAR model in this order: (1) an indicator of the oil price shocks; (2) the interest rate; (3) the log of real effective exchange rate; and (4) the log of real GDP. The ordering of the oil price indicator was first in the ordering because the world crude oil price (international variable) is used to generate the oil price shock measures. This ordering imposes the reasonable assumption that oil price shocks have a contemporaneous effect on monetary policy and economic variables within the quarter.

The most challenging feature identifiable from the oil macroeconomy literature is the measure of oil price shocks to be used for analysis. The traditional, also linear, measure of oil price shocks in the literature as popularized by Hamilton (1983) is the quarterly changes in real oil prices, which is constructed as the first log differences of the oil price variable and expressed as:

\[ \Delta O_t = \ln O_t - \ln O_{t-1} \]

However, in this paper, the Hamilton (1996) approach was followed, which is the most commonly used approach in the literature. Hamilton (1996) proposed a net oil price increase
(NOPI) measure on the basis that not all oil price increases impact the behavior of rational agents. Hamilton argues further that a measure of how an oil increase alters household and firm spending decisions would be a comparison of the current oil price to its historical path. He specifies NOPI as:

\[ NOPI = \max[0, (\ln(\text{OP}_t)) - \ln(\max(\text{OP}_{t-1}, \ldots, \text{OP}_{t-4}))] \]

The above specification is used to compare the oil price for the current quarter with the previous four quarters’ prices. The amount by which the log real oil price in the current quarter exceeds its maximum over the previous last four quarters is used, while oil price increases less than this benchmark is assumed to be zero.

**Empirical Results**

The first part of the analysis is the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test for unit roots. From the results in Table 1, and using a five percent level of significance, there is the presence of unit roots in all the variables with the exception of net oil price increase (NOPI). Three variables are non-stationary and hence standard regression analysis if applied is likely to produce spurious results. The non-stationary variables to induce stationarity was differenced, and the results show that the first difference of the variables is stationary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest Rate (IR)</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Real Effective Exchange Rate (LREER)</td>
<td>-2.32</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Real GDP (LGDP)</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Oil Price Increase (NOPI)</td>
<td>-6.75***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff Interest Rate (DIR)</td>
<td>-10.62***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff Log Real Effective Exchange Rate (DLREER)</td>
<td>-5.76***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff Log Real GDP (DLGDP)</td>
<td>-11.62***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*** Imply statistical significance at 1%, ** Imply statistical significance at 5%.

Table 2 shows the results from the Johansen Cointegration Test. The results indicate that there is no cointegrating equation at the 5 percent level of significance. Since the variables are not cointegrated, I proceeded with a vector autoregressive (VAR) model estimation which captures the short-run relationships among these variables.
Table 2

*Johansen Cointegration Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized</th>
<th>No. of CE(s)</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Trace Statistic</th>
<th>0.05 Critical Value</th>
<th>Prob.**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.79</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At most 1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.49</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At most 2</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Series: Interest Rate, Log Real Exchange Rate, Log GDP  
Trace test indicates no cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level,  
* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level  

**Impulse Response Functions.** Figure 1 shows the impulse response functions (IRFs) of the response of interest rate, real GDP and real exchange rate to oil price shocks. With regard to the response of monetary policy to an oil price shock, from the IRF, it can be observed that a positive shock to oil prices does not have a significant effect on the interest rate (monetary policy). This suggests that the Central Bank of Nigeria does not respond to positive oil price shocks by changing the level of the interest rate. This implies that oil price shocks affect macroeconomic variables directly but not through monetary policy.

For the real effective exchange rate, there is a positive response up until the 7th quarter after which there is a negative response for the rest of the entire period to a positive oil price shock. This response is however insignificant over the entire horizon.

From the IRF, it can be observed that a positive shock to oil prices has an initial positive and then negative but insignificant effect on the real GDP. This result shows that positive oil price shocks have no effect on economic activity in Nigeria.
Figure 1. Impulse Response Function.
**Variance Decomposition.** The variance decomposition helps in explaining how much the forecast error variance of a particular variable is explained by variations in the other variables and the variable itself. Table 3 presents the VDCs. The results show that the real GDP, real effective exchange rate and interest rate solely and strongly account for their own fluctuation through the period when oil price shocks have a 0 - 1.46 percent, 0 - 1.36 percent and 0 - 3.5 percent influence on all three variables respectively from the 1st - 12th quarters.

Table 3

*Variance Decomposition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>DLGDP</th>
<th>DLREER</th>
<th>DIR</th>
<th>NOPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance decomposition of DLGDP:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>96.05</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>95.22</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>94.94</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance decomposition of DLREER:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>83.03</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>78.94</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>77.20</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance decomposition of DIR:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>98.92</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>79.47</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>69.56</td>
<td>3.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.21</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>62.54</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variance decomposition of NOPI:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>94.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>96.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>96.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interest Rate (IR), Log Real Effective Exchange Rate (LREER), Log Real GDP (LGDP), Net Oil Price Increase (NOPI), Diff Interest Rate (DIR), Diff Log Real Effective Exchange Rate (DLREER), Diff Log Real GDP (DLGD).

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

This paper examines the effects of oil price shocks on interest rate, real GDP and real effective exchange rate in Nigeria using a vector autoregressive (VAR) model. The results from the impulse response function suggest that positive oil price shocks have no effect on the interest rate (monetary policy), real exchange rate and real GDP. This result suggests that the monetary
policy in Nigeria does not respond to oil price shocks. Both the impulse response functions and variance decomposition analysis to a large extent confirmed that oil price shocks are only able to explain a small proportion of the forecast error variance of the variables under consideration. Oil price shocks, as revealed by variance decomposition, accounted for less than 4 percent of the variations in the GDP, real effective exchange rate and interest rate. Hence, I find evidence of a muted effect of oil price shocks on the Nigerian economy. Although a policy of diversification is usually recommended for economies that depend solely on oil revenue, the applicability of such an option appears unclear from what has been found in the case of Nigeria.

References
Book Review


Reviewed by Fikrejesus Amahazion, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Adi Keih, Eritrea

Food is a basic human need and a fundamental human right. However, despite rapid technological and developmental advancements over the years, as well as the preparation of countless action plans and development pledges by international agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), global summits and conferences, individuals, and governmental agencies, food security – generally understood as a situation in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life – remains a great and pressing concern in many countries. According to various international and global agencies, institutions, and organizations, including, amongst others, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), nearly 1 billion people around the world – predominantly in Asia and Africa – are currently suffering from starvation and malnutrition.

While food security remains a global issue, one of the most affected regions is sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which has long been synonymous with hunger, food aid, and haunting images of starving children with emaciated bodies. Notably, Africa has the highest prevalence of undernourishment in the world, and the continent also has the world’s greatest levels of severe food insecurity, affecting 27.4% of the population – nearly four times that of any other region. Annually, tens of millions of children across SSA suffer from stunting and wasting, and children under the age of five are 14 times more likely to die than those in developed countries. Ominously, in light of the region’s projected population growth rate, alongside its stagnant increase in agricultural production, the number of people within the region burdened by extreme poverty, malnutrition, and hunger is expected to significantly rise in the coming years.

Paradoxically, however, while it continues to spend tens of billions of dollars annually on food imports, Africa possesses the potential not only to feed itself, but also to be a major food supplier for the rest of the world. According to numerous analyses, the continent has approximately 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land, constituting roughly 60 percent of the global total.

It is in this context that Woldezion Mesghinna presents *How Sub-Saharan Africa Can Achieve Food Security and Ascend Its Economy to the Initial Stages of Light Industrialization* (2016, Dog Ear Publishing). Consisting of 881 total pages that comprise 21 chapters neatly divided into three broad unified sections, Mesghinna’s monumental treatise aims to provide a step-by-step approach, primarily based on science and engineering outlines, to achieving food security and fostering economic growth and diversification in SSA.
The book begins by outlining the underlying problems leading to food insecurity and develops plans for how some constraints may be overcome. According to Mesghinna, although the reasons for production of low crop yields are multifaceted and complex, the principal causes of extremely low crop yields in SSA arise from a mix of both natural and man-made causes. Specifically, the main cause of low crop yields is lack of adequate moisture necessary for vigorous crop growth and production, and a lack of crop requirements not related to moisture, including farm inputs and appropriate modern farming practices. In addition to natural and man-made factors, Mesghinna discusses the rapid population growth of SSA, which outpaces the capacity of rural farmers to produce sufficient food for their own households and their respective countries’ populations.

How to move forward? Mesghinna acknowledges the need to reduce rapid population growth, offering several recommendations, including providing females with greater access to education and with easy, affordable access to family planning and birth control. In addition, he discusses how, traditionally, the approach to solving food insecurity has involved using any one or a combination of the following: the development of large-scale multi-farm irrigation systems, as opposed to improvement of small farm-specific systems; government investment in a green revolution; and the provision of farm chemicals and selected seeds to small rural farmers at subsidized cost. Although this approach – which the author terms as “the old ways of doing things” – retains some positive merits and benefits, it is associated with significant execution and operational costs that have largely been ineffective, and is deemed generally inappropriate for SSA.

Instead, Mesghinna suggests that overcoming constraints to achieving increased crop yields and agricultural production in SSA requires the introduction and widespread implementation of science-based agricultural methods coupled with improved and pertinent technological practices. Contrary to accepted wisdom and general assumptions, Mesghinna illustrates, through an assessment of the climate, soil, water, and natural resource conditions of SSA at the macro level, that the region, in fact, possesses favorable conditions to grow a wide range of crops for food, feed, fiber, spices, and medicines.

Through the implementation of enhanced farming practices and technology, the crop and agricultural production of small rural farmers moves from subsistence to surplus. Although this is a notable step in and of itself, ensuring that SSA is able to achieve long-term sustainable agricultural production is dependent also on achieving diversified sustainable economic development. The achievement of diversified sustainable economic development is fundamental to the transition or “evolution” of an economy from agrarian-based to one that is based on other additional economic sectors, such as manufacturing, services, and energy development, amongst others. Thus, long-term sustainable development and food security entails not only the implementation of methods and practices to achieve increased crop and agricultural production, but also on dynamic multi-sector economic systems and educational reform.

Mesghinna astutely points out that improved crop yields and agricultural productivity will lead to food surpluses, declines in food prices, and pressure on farm profits, which
may ultimately drive small farmers out of business. Since a substantial percentage of SSA’s population depends on farming and agricultural for livelihood, this development could lead to a massive loss of incomes, displacement, and unemployment (especially since many workers lack the skills sought by employers outside the agricultural sector). Accordingly, he describes how any systematic effort to promote the widespread adoption of holistic reengineered agricultural production methods in rural SSA must also include establishing programs to foster the diversification of rural economies to generate new employment opportunities for potentially displaced farmers and farm workers.

While the first section of the book, consisting of chapters 1 to 4, focuses on identifying the primary barriers to achieving food security and discusses plans and strategies for overcoming the constraints and promoting surplus agricultural production, the rest of the book addresses the more technical and elaborate moisture and non-moisture requirements of crops. In part two, constituting chapters 5 to 14, Mesghinna focuses on the topic of maintaining adequate crop soil moisture by discussing a range of reengineered rainfed crop production methods (RRCP) designed to facilitate maximum use of direct rainfall and local water sources to increase on-farm soil moisture and thereby the resulting crop yields. For example, chapter 6 discusses the methodologies for analyzing factors affecting hydrologic processes and estimating surface runoff generation and peak flood flows for rural watersheds, while chapters 8 and 9 are dedicated to the investigation, design, and construction methodologies of small and medium earthen dams.

Subsequently, the third section, comprising chapters 15 through 21, addresses a range of non-water-related practices that farmers may adopt, including restoring degraded or depleted soils, controlling weeds, pests, and diseases, seed selection, and integrated management of watershed resources. For example, in chapter 17, which specifically addresses the threat posed by insects and pests, the author presents nine separate strategies that do not involve expensive (and often harmful) chemical insecticides to control pests and combat insects. Importantly, while these sections are highly technical and scientific, they are supported by step-by-step examples, detailed solutions, clear designs and formulas, numerous illustrations, and helpful appendices that will prove indispensable in the application of the recommended methods and strategies.

Although the book is comprehensive and extremely detailed, it is slightly surprising that Mesghinna does not offer a deeper discussion of the socio-political and entitlement (e.g. Sen) dynamics of food security and hunger. Increasingly, food security and hunger have been understood as political creations which must be ended by, if not involve, political means. As well, although the discussion of rural development authorities (RDAs), essentially a governmental body dedicated to rural development and which serves as the “boots on the ground” for implementing food security and socio-economic developmental programs, is useful and relevant, it may have been strengthened by incorporating the use of a case study or exemplary model. It is true, as Mesghinna points out, that each country may have a different form or structure of RDA; however, a case study or exemplary model would have illuminated salient points and strengthened the author’s claims, and seems pertinent, particularly since the success of many of the author’s recommendations is largely and directly dependent on the performance of RDAs. Overall,
however, these are very minor criticisms for a text that makes such an important contribution to the food security and broader development discussion and knowledge base.

Ultimately, Mesghinna’s work is thought-provoking and highly impressive. It is well-written, replete with detail, comprehensive, and offers a fresh approach – albeit based on decades of international experience, considerable study, and extensive analysis – to further understand and help address a long standing regional and global issue. Although it is a large book focusing on a complex, multidimensional issue, it is presented in an easy-to-read style, and its general structure, in that it is sub-divided into three cohesive sections, makes it very user-friendly and allows for it to be used in a variety of ways. It will be of great interest to Africans and Africa observers, as well as those generally interested in the topics of food security and development. Furthermore, the book will serve as a key resource and valuable guide for rural engineers, development agencies and individuals, various governmental institutions related to agricultural and water-resources development, technical and vocational programs and students, agricultural and nonagricultural extension agents, and farmers and agricultural workers as a reference manual and handbook.