

**Decision-making among Hadiya migrants:  
Digital technologies, borders, and brokers**  
Fana Gebresenbet, Addis Ababa University

**Abstract**

Irregular migration from the Hadiya community of Southern Ethiopia is predominantly to South Africa transiting through a number of Eastern and Southern African states. This paper argues that digital technologies empower and influence the decisions of irregular migrants only until they start their journey to Moyale, the first border crossing with Kenya. Even within their own villages and towns potential migrants use digital technologies to compliment and make meaning a pervasively existing socially sanctioned discourse which favours migration to South Africa. The digital technologies will primarily enable potential migrants to receive latest information on life and possibilities in South Africa from trusted relatives and family in South Africa, as well as safety conditions of the route. The moment after crossing into Kenya, the migrant will be delinked from the digital world and will have a mediated connection with the digital world through a broker, the one facilitating their migration. Migrants lose their phones and other valuables as they cannot get new SIM cards in the countries they cross into, they cannot re-charge their electronics, and they get stolen or change them for immediate necessities. As such, the mediated connection to the digital world makes the migrants dependent on the preferences, interests, and priorities of the broker. Thus, the digital technologies enable the exploitation and disempowerment of the migrants by brokers, who also play a crucial role in ensuring the dreams of migrants is achieved.

**Biography**

**Fana Gebresenbet** received his PhD from the University of Leipzig and is the Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University. He has conducted research on security and political economy, conflict and migration dynamics in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Among his recent publications include 'Lands of the Future' (co-editor, Berghahn, 2021), 'Youth on the Move: Views from Below on Ethiopian International Migration' (co-editor, Hurst, 2021) and "The Pretoria Agreement: Mere Cessation of Hostilities or Heralding a New Era in Ethiopia?" (co-written with Yonas Tariku, 2023).