

## Migration service as a re-integration business

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### Abstract

“Funding needed to assist over 100,000 Ethiopian migrants returning from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, the IOM announced on March 30, 2022. Roughly 11 million USD were calculated to be needed to provide “post-arrival assistance”. “Ethiopia is appealing to donors, UN agencies, and other humanitarian actors for generous support”, the call continued, mentioning in a subordinate clause that about 750,000 Ethiopians currently reside in KSA, that more than half have traveled through irregular means, and therefore will “need to return home”. A year later, after bringing “home” over 130,000 citizens, the Ethiopian government’s Disaster Risk Management Office declared the end of the assisted repatriation program. Ironically, the government simultaneously announced “the opportunity of a lifetime” for some 500,000 women to become domestic workers in KSA, swallowing concerns over human rights abuses in a bid to tackle unemployment, collapsed state finances, and international debt. Meanwhile, regional blocks, including the EU, are vigorously involved in preventing “illegal Ethiopian migration”, e.g. by financing billboards and engaging famous local musicians to warn against the dangers of unauthorized journeys. The effects are negligible. The paper will focus empirically on the state structures, organizations, and actors that process returnees, particularly (real and presumed) trafficking victims, into vulnerable and docile recipients. Theoretically, the paper will advance understandings of the migration industry and the infrastructures around it in dialogue with critical feminist critiques of international domestic worker schemes and the “rescue industry”.

### Biography

**Ninna Nyberg Sørensen** is a cultural sociologist and ethnographer interested in global migration dynamics. In her work as senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies, she explores the relationship between regular and irregular migration, multidirectional movements and its gendered forms, the workings of the migration industry, migrant disappearances and trafficking in persons. She is also interested in the connections between climate change, mobilities, and humanitarian interventions. Ninna currently leads a larger international research group exploring children and youth’s perceptions of climate change in Ethiopia and how such perceptions influence their mobility aspirations, capabilities and needs. For the project’s duration (2023-2027), she is attached to Addis Ababa University and the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa.