

## **I. Introduction**

Often, labour market research focuses on exploring the drivers of unemployment, labour productivity of wage employees in the formal sector and issues of employment relations of workers with formal contractual arrangements (Girma and Kedir, 2005). In Ethiopia and similar developing countries in Africa, there is also a specific strand of literature focusing on child labour, and migrant income (remittances) (Haile and Haile, 2012). Hence, labour market research often misses to investigate the characteristics and determine the number of domestic workers - a group of vital service providers. With the growing international migration of women abroad on short-term wage contracts, there is a growing body of research focusing on the study of Ethiopian domestic workers abroad particularly in the Middle East (Fernandez, 2011). There are rights-based studies on domestic work in Ethiopia (Gebremedhin, 2016). In this paper, we focus on the domestic labour market and document the characteristics and determinants of paid and unpaid domestic workers within Ethiopian private household using a large quantitative survey data collected from 1994 to 2004<sup>1</sup>. This is because domestic work is expanding in Ethiopia, however there is limited attention given to it by researchers.

While studying those in self-employment, informal, unprotected, low waged, insecure jobs, the extant literature rarely focuses on domestic workers (paid and unpaid) who provide vital services within private households. Live-in servants are very common in the urban scene and are in paid contracts. Some provide their services to private households as visiting domestic workers. Equally in households where affordability of employment a domestic worker is a challenge, domestic chores (cleaning, cooking...etc) are routinely carried out by children or young person. Those in the latter group constitute the majority of domestic service providers in Ethiopia. Much of the existing research and policy focus is on protecting the rights and security of foreign/migrant domestic workers. There is a dearth of quantitative survey-based studies that focus on domestic workers that work within nations. Survey data is often used to study poverty, labour market transitions, determinants of formal employment and unemployment ignoring a specific form of informal employment at the centre of vital service provision in the economy. Domestic work is growing in Ethiopia and it is mostly undertaken by women and has welfare consequences mainly due to the lack of decent working arrangements (e.g. length of hours of work, amount of wage paid, vulnerability to

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<sup>1</sup> We are focusing on datasets from 1994 to 2004 because there are no recently collected comparable longitudinal data on domestic work from household surveys.

abuse,..etc). Hence, this paper will analyse both descriptively and analytically the factors associated with the incidence of domestic work in urban areas of Ethiopia.

There is a growing body of evidence on the number of migrant domestic workers who leave for the Middle East mainly from different provincial regions of Ethiopia (Fernandez, 2011). Domestic workers who often come to cities to work for private households are overlooked (Jones et al. 2014). ILO published a detailed report on domestic workers focusing on the protection of their rights, formalising domestic and the international dimension of domestic work (ILO, 2016). In 2011, ILO passed a bill which serves as a convention for the protection of domestic workers. Both documents emphasise the rights and the contractual arrangements that need to be in place to protect domestic workers who are working in countries other than their home country. The majority of academic literature and reports of multilateral organisations are mainly concerned with the plight of migrant workers who are recruited as domestic workers to serve households abroad. Therefore, it is appropriate to study the characteristics and situation of an expanding number of domestic workers that are employed and work within households in their own country.

In Ethiopia, almost all of the individuals who earn a living as live-in servants are Ethiopians. Most household survey-based research particularly by economists tend to emphasise investigating the welfare of children and the elderly within households neglecting live-in domestic workers. We have limited knowledge of the size of domestic work sector and the number of individuals identified as domestic workers in the labour force and its evolution. Hence it is of paramount importance to document the domestic worker sector and investigate the welfare of domestic workers within households within a given country (e.g. school attainment). Our study covers paid and unpaid domestic workers regardless of their gender. This paper is aimed at studying the welfare of domestic workers in Ethiopia using data collected via the Ethiopian Urban Household Survey covering the years from 1994 to 2004. Hence, we depart from the rights based perspective and foreign migrant domestic worker and rather focus on understanding the drivers of participation in the provision of domestic services and the welfare of those who provide them.

By looking into the neglected aspect of informal employment in service provision, our research contributes to the women economic empowerment literature as most domestic workers are females. We document the characteristics and the factors significantly associated with domestic work in one of the important employing sectors in the informal segment of the

Ethiopia economy. The research is also a contribution to current policy in the backdrop of increasing youth unemployment and youth demographic explosion (often referred as youth bulge). Many Ethiopian youth are without employment even after finishing their university degree programmes. There are too few vacancies relative to the labour supply in the economy. The sector that is absorbing the large groups youth coming out the school system is the urban informal sector. Domestic workers are often without decent education and most did not attend school at all and they predominantly originate from rural areas of Ethiopia and land in urban areas in search of better life. They provide their services to private households and form a growing group of ‘invisible’ informal workers in contrast to the ‘visible’ informal traders and service providers that one witnesses in corridors and streets of African cities.

For females, international reports and some empirical studies state that working either in the formal or the informal sector is an economic empowerment. But studies that focus on special groups of services providers in the informal labour market such as private households challenge such a simplistic view of economic empowerment. If migrating females end up working as domestic workers without any employment rights and long-term benefits, does any form of employment for them lead to economic empowerment? Is working in private households all empowering or does it lead to a compromise in long-term welfare? In this study, we would like to encourage debate on issues of women economic empowerment in the context of informal sector employment.

In addition, we attempt to provide evidence on the following key questions using a quantitative household survey; (i.) What is the characteristics of those working as domestic workers? and (ii.) What are the factors that significantly affects the probability of working in private household as maids/servants, guards? Another complex layer we examine in our analysis is look into the issue by splitting the sample into those who are working for pay and those who work without pay. In the latter case, we focus on the age structure of those participating in it to infer whether there are potential detrimental effects on education prospects of those doing it because most often Ethiopian children do help families in undertaking household chores. Even if there is nothing wrong with children helping in households, an increased intensity of household work (e.g. fetching water, collecting firewood...etc) can rob young children of their energy and vital time that could have been spent in school. If a disproportionate share of young children take up household chores, we will like to shed light how this might affect their schooling prospects and hence their future welfare.

The paper is organised as follows. Section II gives a policy and contextual background about domestic in Ethiopia. In Section III, we review the relevant literature followed by details of the description of the data used in our analysis in Section IV. Section V discusses the descriptive statistics to provide evidence on the profile and characteristics of domestic workers. Section VI presents the discussion of multivariate (econometric) results before discussion the implications of our findings in the final section.

## **II. Domestic work in Ethiopia: context**

Youth unemployment in Ethiopia leads individuals to seek any type of employment such as working as street vendors and working in private households as domestic workers (e.g. cooks, guards). Most domestic workers are stay-in employees, but some provide their services for a certain number of hours to households on visiting basis. Our study covers all types of domestic workers as the data gives us information on individuals that report working as paid domestic workers without distinguishing whether they are stay-in or visiting service providers. However, domestic workers in Ethiopia typically live within the households of their employers with visiting domestic workers being a minority in the domestic service labour market. Visiting domestic workers are often those who cannot be taken as live-in workers such as those with children (e.g. single mothers). Labour services in well to do families are solely provided by domestic workers. Ethiopia households that can pay salaries for live-in maids and security guards often leave cleaning, cooking, shopping and gardening responsibilities to their domestic workers. Even if the services of domestic workers do not come cheap in recent times, most households with regular monthly income either from employment or from their family run business can nowadays cover the expenses associated with employing domestic workers.

Domestic workers in Ethiopia are predominantly women but there are also a lot of men who are often employed as guards, gardeners and drivers. Domestic workers are employed either through employment agencies and informal contacts. However, the proportion of domestic workers employed through agencies is very small. Paid domestic workers often receive their salary on monthly basis and there are no written contractual arrangements between domestic workers and their employing households. Domestic workers provide their services to households either on resident or non-resident basis with the former being the norm. They are primarily responsible for cooking, cleaning, child care and shopping. Another important category of service providers within Ethiopian households are children

and young people who are often tasked with household chores. These group constitute unpaid family members or relatives that provide vital services to households. Like live-in domestic workers on wage employment, unpaid family workers deserve special attention because participating in household work might compromise school attendance, attainment and future employment potential particularly for those in school age category. The damage to their welfare depends on the intensity of domestic work they are involved in and the number of hours they work.

*Circumstances of domestic workers: the good and the bad*

Domestic workers get poor wages in general but this is changing over the last decade. Due to lack of legal arrangement, both paid and unpaid domestic workers are vulnerable to exploitation and possibly to inhumane treatment in extreme cases. But the beneficial aspect of domestic work should not be disregarded. For instance, from a monetary remuneration perspective, some domestic workers employed in rich households are paid a salary which is not very different from what graduates of university get in the public sector. This is one of the dramatic development in the domestic work scene over the last 10 years. As live-in workers, all their bills are covered by the employing household. For instance, they do not incur any expenses for meals and accommodation. All these are covered by the employing households in addition to getting a monthly salary which can be considered as pure saving. If they are treated well without excessive work burden and are paid on top of what they get for free by way of food and accommodation, they certainly benefit from providing their services to households instead of being unemployed and live in poverty. In some households, they are also sent to school to attend evening classes. It is good to see some households invest in the future of their domestic workers and cover their educational fees and associated expenditures themselves. It is not unusual but rare to hear some university graduates who initially started out as domestic workers. In addition, some domestic workers managed to establish their own business and became self-employed. However, all these attractive aspects of domestic work are not experienced by all service providers and are becoming rare for various reasons;

- i. Domestic workers use households as a staging post to make employment transition to other better paying households. This often takes place after working for a year or two. The move should not in principle stop them to continue going to evening schools to improve their prospects of better employment in the formal sector or even be entrepreneurial for an autonomous better future. However, their prospect of continuing their education (if any) is

guaranteed only if the new employing household is willing to send them to school. Changing employing households will lead to challenges of locating a new school and securing a permission to go to school. Since there is no contractual obligation to be enforced, their likely fate is to quit education. Their decision to move for a better pay is not wrong but compromises their long-term welfare which can potentially be guaranteed only if they stay to finish their schooling.

ii. Domestic workers might meet traffickers as they interact and integrate with others during their school days and at other times (e.g. during off days to visit friends and family). Most are easily lured by the next ‘big opportunity’ that can help them to improve their current circumstances. Their interactions with friends and/or traffickers leads them to contemplate greener pastures to explore not only beyond their employing household but beyond the boundaries of their country of birth. Their interaction with others (e.g. potential traffickers) might lead them to leaving their employment. This might impeded not only their schooling but it might expose them to exploitation. Most often, they go to the Middle east and their plight is well documented. There is no regulation of the migration of domestic workers out of Ethiopia. Bogus ‘employment’ agencies and traffickers are the only beneficiaries from this regulatory failure by the state as well as international organisations (Fernandez, 2013, De Regt 2010).

iii. As the salary demands of domestic workers is increasing in recent years, employing households demand more household work and commitment than usual. This often displaces school attendance. Not all households are keen to provide their gesture towards their employees when it comes to schooling.

iv. Domestic workers are often young women and face risk of early sexual initiation, early pregnancy and extreme violence in the hand of employers (Erulkar and Ferede, 2009). They are sometimes at the centre of marital tensions. At the discovery of affairs which often takes place between male family members of employer households or husbands and female domestic workers, domestic workers lose their employment or risk different forms of abuse. It is also possible to find male security guards starting an affair with female domestic workers when both work for the same household. In the worst of circumstances, they might give birth as a result of the affairs they enter into either willingly or against their wish. Female domestic workers could become single mother. Consequently, they find it difficult to find another employment in another private household with a very slim prospect of getting back to school.

As a coping mechanism, individuals who find themselves in such a difficult situation try to eke out a living by working part-time as visiting domestic workers because households are reluctant to take employees with children as live-in domestic workers and give them a chance for schooling.

### *Complex layer of legal, social and employment issues*

Since 2011, there is a mandatory social insurance scheme (e.g. pension entitlements) for private sector employees in the formal sector (Shiferaw et al 2017). But there is no minimum wage or any other payment provision for private sector employees (such as domestic workers) in the informal sector (i.e. in private households). There is a clear segmentation of the private sector employment between the formal and informal sector and there is no mechanism devised to regulate the informal labour market specifically focusing on the protection of the rights and freedom of domestic workers. Domestic workers face a weak legal framework over the years and their rights and freedoms as employees are routinely ignored. Their employment is not based on any written contractual agreement. Almost all employment terms are based on verbal agreement between them and their employer. They can be dismissed at any time, they cannot ask for a pay rise and can be denied getting a day off to visit family and friends. In cases where domestic workers are employed through a recruiting agency, the legal employment arrangements are not guaranteed because most of the agencies are themselves informal or not registered. Often, brokers who work in small kiosks which are labelled as ‘employment agencies for domestic workers’ are the architects of the meeting between employer (private households) and employees (domestic workers). In such a case, we are not aware of any legally binding contractual arrangements between the two parties. A weak legal framework that fails to regulate the domestic work service market coupled with poor employment relations arrangements make domestic workers vulnerable to abusive and exploitative employers. However, despite the harsh legal and employment situations, some domestic workers have a rewarding relationship with their employers and this is often true of those who stay with the employing household for a long period of time.

Due to their vulnerable position and due to the general cultural and social norms prevailing in Ethiopia (e.g. promotion of early marriage in some cultures and ethnic groups), discrimination against women in the work place either in the formal and in the informal sector is common. As mentioned earlier, female domestic workers are sometimes abused by their employers, family members of employers or other employees of the household (e.g.

guards). Their well-documented story for being a subject of brutality in the hands of their employees abroad in the middle east is common (Jureidini, 2010). Migration within Ethiopia from rural to urban areas is the most important source of domestic workers in private households in the capital city and other major cities. The double tragedy experienced by some is to flee their rural communities to avoid early marriage but to be met by abusive employers in their place of employment in the urban areas.

Overall, there are layers of complexity in relation to the issue of domestic workers in the context of developing countries such as Ethiopia and their welfare is not given enough research and policy attention. There are legal issues (e.g. absence of any contractual employment agreement), complications associated with labour relations (e.g. employee rights, limits on hours of work per day...etc), gender discrimination, exploitation, compromised individual safety, impaired and precarious long-term future welfare. Hence, there is an urgent research and policy attention to understand the profile of domestic workers who are providing essential services to millions of households in Ethiopia.

### **III. Literature**

#### ***Domestic Work***

We start with a brief exploration of the definition of domestic workers. Domestic workers perform a diverse set of activities such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children and the elderly, guarding the house, driving children to and from school and gardening, among others. Regardless of the tasks performed, all domestic workers in a private household. ILO (2013) defines domestic work as “any type of work performed in or for a household, and a domestic worker is any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship”. This is a narrow definition and leads to an underestimation of the actual number of domestic workers. Hence, domestic workers in our case are broadly and include;

- i. Those who are engaged in providing services to private households in an employment relationship;
- ii. These who live with the private household and provide services without an employment relationship (e.g. services provided by relatives and children).

Domestic service work is an important but often under-researched. Scholarly attention in this nascent area to date has predominantly focused on the vulnerabilities and precarious



nature of such work (Anderson, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001), with attention being placed on poor protection of employment rights given to domestic workers and on the specific gendered and racialized vulnerabilities of migrant workers (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Frantz, 2008). One particular strand of the literature indeed has focused on how the migration of women from the global south to the global north has led to a woman holding unequal and highly interdependent relationships within global care chains (Constable, 1997; Anderson, 2000; Parrenas, 2001; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, and Kemp, 2003).

After reviewing existing theories, we find it difficult to have a single conceptual and theoretical framework given the broader definition of domestic work we adopted (paid and unpaid including children working in private households). Most theories of domestic work are developed with transnational migration in mind. However, the domestic workers in question come from local communities within a given geographical area. Those who can be classified migrant domestic workers also did migrate from other part of Ethiopia. Hence, theory of transnational migration is not appropriate for analyzing the phenomenon of domestic work in Ethiopia. There are other theories such as feminist legal theory and employment relations theories focusing on the protection of rights of domestic workers. Our paper covers both waged and unwaged domestic workers and the emotive issue of child labour which makes it less amenable for theorising. For instance, if it is only on waged employees, one might be tempted to draw on theories of class (e.g. a certain group of society serving the middle class). In Ethiopia, private households from all classes use diverse set of domestic workers.

Several studies have focused on the role of the state as an actor facilitating the precarious nature of migrant domestic workers (i.e. those moving from rural to urban areas within national borders and those who migrate abroad). In particular, research has focused on how the Philippines has developed policies as a sending state and also how countries across Europe and North America engage in migration policies which encourage the receiving of migrant domestic workers (Anderson, 2010; Lutz, 2008). Within the Middle Eastern region, studies on migrant domestic workers have tended to focus on the exploitative relationships between the domestic work and the employer (Frantz, 2008; Moukarbel, 2009). Other studies have highlighted how states, such as the Gulf states use ‘sponsorship’ programmes, or the ‘Kafala’ system in Lebanon to encourage the migration of domestic workers (Lan, 2007; Gardner, 2011). Importantly, such migrant workers are only allowed to work in ‘unskilled work’ on temporary contracts and are actively discouraged from seeking naturalization (Lan, 2007). Within this literature, there has been some focus on the migration of workers from

Africa, and in particular from Ethiopia to work in the Middle East (Fernandez, 2013), for example in UAE (Mahdawi, 2013) and in Qatar (Pessoa et al., 2014). Research has focused on the unequal power relations and labour exploitation particularly of women as domestic workers. In the UK, studies have highlighted how migrant domestic workers, living under intolerable environments of control and coercion often experience different forms of physical, psychological and sexual abuse and disregard to any universal forms of employment rights (Anderson, 2007; Gordolan and Lalani, 2009; Lalani, 2011). Similarly, in a study of domestic workers in Sweden, Calleman (2011) note how the situation of workers employed in 'home-services' which includes cleaning, gardening and care work, can be equally or even more precarious than it is for migrant workers, working in construction or the restaurant sector.

Whilst for workers employed as domestic workers in private households there are no collective agreements, the consequence of which means that these workers are liable to be exploited according to wage levels and have also no right to industrial action or automatic access to unemployment benefits (Calleman, 2011). They do not benefit from any social insurance schemes which are provided to private sector employees in the formal sector (e.g. pensions since 2011 in Ethiopia) (Shiferaw et al 2017). Allied to the exploitation of women within the domestic service work sphere, research has also highlighted the exploitation of children as domestic workers (Jacquemin 2004 and 2006, Blagbrough 2008), defined as 'children under the age of 18 who work in other people's households doing domestic chores, caring for children, and running errands' (UNICEF 1999). Adults who are not their parents often employ such children, children normally live in the employer's home and they are either paid in cash or in kind (Kifle 2002). Of major concern, a study in 2004 by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) revealed that engagement in domestic work represents the most common occupation for teenage girls in the developing world (ILO-IPEC 2004). Another group of children or youth that deserve attention are those who live with their parents and provide unpaid services to their family. This is often at the expense of attending school and compromising the quality and quantity of time they can devote to schooling (Tafere and Pankhurst, 2015).

### ***Cross-national comparison of Domestic work in Africa***

In this sub-section, we will briefly look into the common characteristics of domestic work in Africa and reasons behind the underestimation of the number of domestic workers. In many African countries domestic work is female-led, attracts poor pay, has a child labour

component and its growth is mainly driven by rising population pressures that trigger rural-urban migration. With regard to gender, according to ILO about three quarters of domestic workers in South Africa are women. Ethiopia has one of the highest percentage of women among domestic workers with 91%. Our household survey data shows a lower percentage of women as domestic workers but still a large proportion of them are female. The figures from the household survey analysed here indicate that 74% and 77.5% of domestic workers as women for 1994 and 2004 respectively. With regards to pay, domestic workers receive 23.9% of average wages in Tanzania while the comparable figure is 14% in Botswana for the year 2006. In South Africa, after controlling for age, sex and educational attainment, domestic workers are paid 15% less than other workers (ILO, 2013). In terms of hours, domestic workers in Africa work much longer than former wage employees within a given week. For instance, in Namibia and Tanzania, they work for 62 and 63 hours per week respectively.

The data on domestic workers is patchy which makes cross-national comparison of this important and neglected segment of the labour market in Africa difficult. It is beneficial to have a harmonised database on pay, hours worked and the number of domestic workers by country. Concerning the number of domestic workers, official statistics from Africa gives an underestimate of the phenomenon. It rarely captures both paid and unpaid domestic workers often in labour force surveys. Household surveys capture both components but do not usually report the wage and hours worked. Many households have unpaid domestic workers (e.g. help by relatives) and this is rarely reported in official statistics. There are also many households that use part-time domestic workers (i.e. those who are employed to help for a limited number of days within a week). On the other extreme, there are households that employ more than one domestic worker (e.g. a cook, a cleaner, a gardener, a driver and a security guard) and this is often the case for rich households. It is rarely that such categories of domestic workers are included in survey responses. There is a high turnover of domestic workers in private households and this exacerbates the volatile nature of the reported size of domestic work sector. The underestimation of the actual number of domestic workers (paid and unpaid) while filling in the demographic roster in surveys will remain to be an outstanding challenge. This can be circumvented by having a dedicated section within the survey instrument for domestic work while collected either a household or a labour force survey.

***Domestic work as a site of negotiated employer-employee relations?***

In a similar strand of the extant literature, scholars have sought to explore the domestic work as a site of negotiated work practices and associated everyday resistance, which manifests itself in a myriad of ways including the slowing down of work and mocking the employer (Adams, 2000; Gamburd, 2000; Parrenas, 2001). The phenomenon of workplace-negotiated order (Burawoy, 1979; Hodson, 2001) refers to an implicit structure of social relations that govern everyday dynamics of employment relations. Within their studies of migrant communities engaging in informal work practices, including in the domestic services sphere, within the UK, Jones et al., (2006) and Ram et al., (2007) attempted to evaluate the mechanisms, processes, structures, or whatever implicit 'real' underlying forces, which account for this continued reproduction of the immigrant informal economy. This research has relevance to our study in that it demonstrates the possibility to look beyond the explicit market-based profit-motivated models of informal work practices and develop a much deeper and insightful understanding grounded in a tacit workplace negotiated order when studying informal work practices (Ram et al., 2007).

#### **IV. Data and methodology**

##### *Data*

The Ethiopian Urban Household Survey (EUHS) provides information on the employment status of individuals. Our analysis is based on data from 1994 to 2004 socio-economic survey of urban households in Ethiopia (EUHS, 1994). The survey questionnaire includes modules on household demographics including education, rural-urban migration, employment and income, consumption, ownership of durables, housing, health, welfare and welfare change indicators. A sample of 1500 households was selected from seven major urban centres of the country (Addis Ababa, Awassa, Dessie, Bahar Dar, Mekele, Dire Dawa and Jimma). The total sample size was distributed over the selected urban centres proportional to their populations, based on the Central Statistical Authority's population figure projections. Accordingly, the sample included 900 households from Addis Ababa, 125 from Dire Dawa, 75 from Awassa, and 100 from each of the other four towns.

In this section, we summarise information on paid and unpaid domestic service providers. The summary will provide the number and percentage (out of the total labour force of those who reported their main activity) of domestic workers for the period covering the

years 1994 to 2004. Who is a domestic worker in Ethiopia? Some households bring relatives from rural areas and they make them work at home on unpaid basis. In many cases, relatives who help with domestic work are sent to school in the evenings and occasionally to attend regular schools in the daytime. All living expenses (food, shelter and other costs) are covered by the host household in return for the domestic services provided by a relative. We defined domestic worker by looking at the different form it takes. Therefore, one is identified as a domestic worker if she/he declares herself/himself, as paid full-time/part-time domestic worker (i.e. maids, guards, drivers) and unpaid domestic worker (i.e. child or relative helping with household chores). The extant literature misses a specific group of domestic workers (i.e. those who serve without payment) due to its preoccupation with paid domestic workers which we include in our broad definition of domestic work. By virtue of our data we contribute to a better and comprehensive understanding of domestic work in the informal labour market of a developing economy. Hence, the term domestic worker encompasses two distinct groups of individuals in Ethiopia. The first group consists of waged domestic workers. The second group includes unpaid domestic workers who are often ‘relatives’ (including own and children of relatives and young relatives).

It is worth noting how the information on the main activity of individuals is recorded in the survey across time. The identification of main activity of individual in 1994 is straightforward. However, for other rounds information is collected by tracing movements of household members between any two given survey dates. For instance, for round 2 (i.e. year 1995), the survey asks changes in the form of ‘*new comers*’; ‘*main activity of new comer*’; ‘*reason for moving out/ entry*’...etc. All these variables are relevant to identify the exact number of domestic workers in a given round of the household survey. For instance, under the table of “*reason for moving out of the household*”, those who replied, ‘*contract ended*’ are most likely domestic workers who used to be in the sample in 1994 (round 1) but who were no longer employed by the household in 1995. In round 2, more women than men were registered as new comers and most of them might constitute domestic workers. The data on the variable “*reason for entry*” gives an alternative count of the number of domestic workers in addition to the variable “*main activity of new comer*”. The former seems to give an upper bound while the latter can give a lower bound number of domestic workers as it misses the unpaid domestic workers (e.g. children and relatives helping the household). This indirect way of arriving at the number of domestic workers applies for rounds 2 and 3 (1997) while for rounds 4 (2000) and 5 (2004), we identify their numbers directly as we did for round 1

due to a straightforward reporting of responses by interviews for the later rounds of the survey.

We use the following illustrative formulation to arrive at the domestic workers (paid and unpaid) in rounds 2 and 3.

*Total Domestic Workers in 1995 (1997) = Domestic Workers in 1994 (1995) – Domestic Worker who left the household since 1994 due to their contract ending – unpaid domestic workers who left the household since last interview (1994) + New entrants to the household as paid domestic workers + unpaid family workers & children helping with domestic and other family work.*

For instance, in Round 2, paid domestic workers who left the household due to their contract ending were 44, new entrants as paid domestic workers, unpaid family workers and children helping with household chores were 211, 25 and 24 respectively. Hence, the number of paid domestic workers is computed as 270-44+132. For unpaid family workers and children helping in households we add 25 and 24 respectively to the 1994 figure to arrive at the 1995 figure. The same procedure is followed to arrive at the number of domestic workers for 1997 (round 3) relative to 1995 (round 2).

### *Methodology*

Since the incidence of domestic work is a discrete/binary outcome, we specify a multivariate probit regression model that predicts the probability of participation in domestic work. The likelihood of being a domestic worker (y) depends on a number of individuals and household characteristics (x). Individuals can participate in paid domestic work, unpaid domestic work and total domestic work (which combines paid and unpaid domestic work). We used the probit model which is an appropriate discrete outcome model due to the fact that we have domestic work status variable that can only be defined in a binary fashion. The outcome variable takes a value of 1 if the respondent is a domestic worker and 0 otherwise. We can specify probit models for those in paid employment, those who work unpaid and those who are domestic workers regardless of the employment arrangement. Due to the three binary outcome variables, we have estimated three probit models which help us to identify the key variables associated with the likelihood of being in each domestic work categories in urban Ethiopia.

The probit model is based on an underlying latent (unobserved) variable model which is conventionally represented as follows:

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1, & y_i^* > 0 \\ 0, & y_i^* \leq 0 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Equation (1) is often called the index function. The latent variable ( $y^*$ ) can be defined as a difference between the intrinsic value/utility generated for working as a domestic worker and the utility of not being a domestic worker. We assume that the individual has propensity of either being a domestic worker or a non-domestic worker as represented by  $y^*$ . The estimating probit equation which follows the standard normal distribution can be specified as follows;

$$\Pr(y_i = 1) = \alpha + \beta x_i + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

where the likelihood of being a domestic worker depends on a range of right hand side explanatory variables ( $x$ ). The vector  $x$  represents all the relevant explanatory variables included in the probit model estimated. The final term  $\varepsilon$  represents the error term of the equation which is normally distribution with zero mean and constant variance.

## **V. Profile of domestic workers**

In this section, we present the characteristics of domestic workers. Looking at total domestic work status in table 1 (which is the sum of paid and unpaid domestic work), we see an upward trend until 1997 and a slight decline in 2000 which continued to 2004. The numbers reported in percentages in the parentheses are proportions of those in the labour force. Even if the *percentage* decline in domestic work is mirrored by the decline in the *number* of domestic workers for the period between 1997 and 2000, there was an increase in the actual number of domestic workers between 2000 and 2004. In general, domestic workers are a growing groups of labour force in Ethiopia. Particularly, paid domestic work showed a consistent increase over the years both in terms of percentages and number of domestic workers except for a slight dip in numbers between 1997 and 2000. This is also true of unpaid family work for some years (i.e. until 1997). But in the later years, the number of children helping with household chores declined dramatically. This is an encouraging trend. It is perceived that children learn vital skills when they participate in domestic work. However, to benefit from the participation in household chores, the intensity of children's involvement

should be minimal without affecting their school attendance. If they spend a disproportionate number of hours per day, the detrimental effect on their school attendance and attainment will have long-term damaging welfare consequences. For instance, using data from the Welfare Monitoring Survey of 2011, Kedir (2014) shows school absenteeism is positively and significantly associated with children's participation in household chores (Kifle, 2002). Hence, the declining trend in the number of children that can be classified as unpaid family workers enhances the probability of going to school for Ethiopian children.

**Table 1: Number (%) of Individuals by Domestic Work status, 1994-2004**

<b>Domestic work (DW) status</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>
Total DW	547 (5.9)	682 (7.4)	934 (10.1)	787 (9.2)	858 (8.8)
Paid DW	272 (3.0)	437 (4.7)	571 (6.1)	548 (6.4)	637 (6.3)
Unpaid family worker	187 (2.0)	212 (2.3)	235 (2.6)	182(2.1)	189 (2.1)
Children helping with household chores	88(1.0)	112 (1.3)	128 (1.5)	57 (0.7)	32 (0.4)

Using data of 1994, tables 2 to 6 give the profile of domestic workers using key personal characteristics such as gender, age, school attendance, school attainment, ethnic origin and marital status. According to table 2, for all categories of domestic workers (i.e. paid and unpaid), a large proportion and number of them are females. This is consistent with findings in other developing countries. A non-negligible number and percentage of the workers are at least 30 years old (i.e. about one-fifth of the total) but most of them are younger and belong to the age range 10 to 29. To highlight the problem of child labour (paid or unpaid), one can see the number and proportion of domestic workers in the age range 10 to 15. Note that most children work as unpaid domestic workers.

**Table 2: Domestic work status by age and gender, 1994**

<b>Domestic work status</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Age 10 to 15</b>	<b>Age 16 to 29</b>	<b>Age 30+</b>
Total DW	142 (26)	405 (74)	93 (17.9)	319 (61.4)	108 (20.8)
Paid DW	41 (15.1)	231 (84.9)	37 (13.6)	181 (66.5)	54 (19.9)



Unpaid DW	101 (36.7)	174 (63.3)	56 (22.6)	138 (55.7)	54 (21.8)
2004					
Total DW	118 (22.5)	407 (77.5)	43 (8.3)	335 (64.8)	139 (26.9)
Paid DW	49 (16.1)	255 (83.9)	25 (8.2)	209 (69)	69 (22.8)
Unpaid DW	69 (31.2)	152 (68.8)	18 (8.4)	126 (58.9)	70 (32.7)

The gender and age pattern witnessed from the 1994 sample is replicated in the summary statistics of the data collected 10 years later in 2004. But as seen in table 2, there are fewer number and percentage of young children (i.e. in the age range 10 to 15) in paid and unpaid domestic work in 2004. Relative to 1994, there are large number and percentage of individuals aged 30 and above in 2004.

. In our data, we have the schooling reported for 539 out of the 547 domestic workers for 1994. Some opt out to be employed in private households to escape the challenging rural life and the pressures of early marriage. However, as tables 3 and 4 show some domestic workers are still attending school and some have completed decent level of education such as secondary schooling. In few of the cases, some domestic workers have tertiary education. This is surprising. Anecdotal evidence shows that some university graduate either with a diploma or degree work as guards for expatriates working in international organisations and this is mainly in the capital city, Addis Ababa. In addition, the returns to schooling is declining over time with quality shading of education at all levels in recent years. We suspect the data in relation to tertiary education and domestic work picks such phenomenon. However, most who are observed to be working in the household with tertiary education are often the children of the household and are unpaid (see table 4). There are domestic workers who often to go evening school once they have completed the daily chores and this is reflected in the first column of table 3 which gives the number and percentage of individuals still attending school. Overall, the majority of paid domestic workers have achieved lower levels of schooling and about 80% of them have either primary or no schooling.

**Table 3: Domestic work status by school attendance, 1994**

Domestic work status	Attending school	Has attended in the past	Never attended

Total DW	73 (13.5)	270 (50.1)	196 (36.4)
Paid DW	43 (15.9)	112 (41.3)	116 (42.8)
Unpaid DW	30 (11.2)	158 (59.0)	80 (29.8)

**Table 4: Domestic work status by school cycle completed, 1994**

<b>Domestic work status</b>	<b>No schooling</b>	<b>Primary schooling</b>	<b>Secondary incomplete</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Tertiary</b>
Total DW	152 (30.6)	195 (39.2)	64 (12.9)	68 (13.4)	18 (3.6)
Paid DW	88 (35.9)	107 (43.7)	29 (11.8)	17 (6.9)	4 (1.6)
Unpaid DW	64 (25.4)	88 (34.9)	35 (13.9)	51 (20.2)	14 (5.6)

In Ethiopia the Amhara, Oromo, Tigre and Gurage are major ethnic groups with the Oromo being the most populous followed by the Amhara, Tigre and the Gurages. The national demographic proportion is not maintained in the distribution of the domestic workers across these ethnic groups as shown in table 5 below. Most domestic workers are from the Amhara ethnic group followed by the Oromo, Gurage and Tigre. This can be explained by the fact that early marriage incidence is the worst in the Amhara region and hence there is a large number of migrants from rural Amhara regions to bigger cities of Ethiopia. In addition, in major cities Amharic (official language of Ethiopia) is the major means of communication and all Amharas are speakers of the language which makes it easier for them to move to various cities for paid domestic work. The Gurages are from provinces with most dense population. Hence, land scarcity is a push factor for them to migrate to cities. In addition, they are believed to be entrepreneurial and independent at an early age. Therefore, they usually work before moving to self-employment and various small scale commercial ventures with the aim to expand their businesses at scale. The pattern of distribution of domestic workers by ethnic group has been similar both for 1994 and 2004 with most coming from the Amhara ethnic group followed by Oromo, Gurage and Tigre.

**Table 5: Ethnic Origin of Domestic workers, 1994**

<b>Domestic work status</b>	<b>Amhara</b>	<b>Oromo</b>	<b>Tigre</b>	<b>Gurage</b>	<b>Other</b>

Total DW	265 (48.5)	95 (17.4)	26 (4.8)	86 (15.7)	75 (13.7)
Paid DW	150 (55.2)	49 (18.0)	12 (4.4)	33 (12.1)	28 (10.3)
Unpaid Dw	115 (41.8)	46 (16.7)	14 (5.1)	53 (19.3)	47 (17.1)
<b>2004</b>					
Total DW	275 (52.8)	110 (21.1)	33 (6.3)	72 (13.8)	31 (6.0)
Paid DW	178 (59.3)	61 (20.3)	19 (6.3)	23 (7.7)	19 (6.3)
Unpaid DW	97 (43.9)	49 (22.2)	14 (6.3)	49 (22.2)	12 (5.4)

Most domestic workers are not married (about 80%) with only 3 percent of them being married. However, it is evident that marital misfortune can lead some to work for private households and among those who are divorced, separated or widowed most of them work in paid domestic work relative to unpaid domestic work (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Domestic work by marital status, 1994**

<b>Domestic work status</b>	<b>Not married</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Divorced/separated /widowed</b>
Total DW	435 (79.5)	18.3 (3.3)	94 (17.2)
Paid DW	204 (75.0)	11 (4.0)	57 (21)
Unpaid DW	231 (84.0)	7 (2.6)	37 (13.5)
<b>2004</b>			
Total DW	440 (77.2)	60 (11.6)	58 (11.2)
Paid DW	237 (78.2)	32 (10.6)	34 (11.2)
Unpaid DW	163 (75.8)	28 (13.0)	24 (12.2)

The number and percentage of domestic workers who are not married stayed more or less the same between the two survey dates. However, the numbers and percentages of domestic workers who are married is markedly higher in 2004 than in 1994. This is a worrying trend for welfare. Between the two dates it seems that domestic work is used a coping mechanism to eke out a living for those in a marital union. There is also a clear shift

across time in the composition of domestic workers. For instance, the number and percentage of domestic workers who are divorced, separated or widowed is lower in 2004 than in 1994.

## **VI. Regressions results and discussion**

The probit model regression results reported in table 7 corroborate our descriptive findings. Unsurprisingly, females are more likely to be in domestic work than males as reflected by the positive and statistically significant regression coefficients of the three probit models shown in columns 2 to 4. Taking the young age grouping for our sampled individuals (i.e. age group 10 to 15) as a reference category, it is clear that propensity of participating in domestic work increases with age. The age category 16 to 29 is the dominant age group for those participating in domestic work. Across all the models estimates, its statistical significant is stronger than the age range above 30 years. Hence it is mainly a job undertaken by young at the crucial stage of their life such as attending school, completing high school and higher levels of schooling. For young people who are locked in domestic work, completing schooling and making a successful transition to better employment either in the formal and the informal sector is a huge challenge. With increasing migration from rural to urban centres in Ethiopia and the increasing youth unemployment situation in the country, there is a tendency for more and more young people to be in domestic informal work with low earnings and virtually no guarantee of continuous employment.

The negative and significant coefficients of all schooling variables suggests the beneficial effect of education. The results show that relative to those without any level of schooling, those who completed any level of schooling are less likely to be domestic workers. To see the magnitude of the effects of variables beyond coefficient estimates, we also examined the marginal effects<sup>2</sup>. The results based on marginal effects show the importance of education in reducing the probability of being a domestic worker. In particular, the magnitude of the negative coefficients increases with increases in levels of education making the prospect of working as a domestic worker decreasing as education increases.

It is difficult to interpret coefficients associated with ethnicity because it is not clearly understood why some ethnic groups are less or more likely to engage in domestic work. According to our estimates, relative to Amharas (the dominant ethnic group) individuals from the entrepreneurial ethnic group (Gurage) shows a higher probability of being employed as domestic workers (e.g. messengers) while those from the Tigre ethnic group are less likely to

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<sup>2</sup> The results based on marginal effects can be provided upon request.

be domestic workers. Note that the coefficient is not significant for paid domestic work but positive in the other two cases suggesting that the overall result in column 2 is driven by the results associated with unpaid domestic work estimates (i.e. column 4). When we looked at the bivariate analysis of the link between marital status and domestic work, we noticed that most of the domestic workers are single but with a certain number and proportion of marriage, separated, divorced, and widowed individuals also taking place. This is consistent with the regression results reported below when we take singles as a reference group.

**Table 7: Probit Regression predicting the probability of engaging in domestic work**

Variable	Total DW	Paid DW	Unpaid DW
Female	0.34*** (0.06)	0.53***(0.08)	0.14**(0.07)
Age 16 to 29	0.87*** (0.07)	1.03*** (0.09)	0.45*** (0.08)
Age 30+	0.46***	0.36***(0.14)	0.37***(0.13)
<i>Education (RC: no schooling)</i>			
Primary	-0.62*** (0.08)	-0.54***(0.09)	-0.45***(0.10)
Junior secondary	-1.04*** (0.10)	-1.12***(0.12)	-0.60***(0.12)
Secondary	-1.55***(0.09)	-1.82***(0.13)	-0.86***(0.11)
Tertiary	-1.32***(0.13)	-1.63***(0.21)	-0.70***(0.15)
<i>Ethnic group (RC: Amhara)</i>			
Oromo	-0.03(0.07)	-0.06(0.09)	0.03 (0.09)
Tigre	-0.38***(0.11)	-0.51***(0.15)	-0.16(0.13)
Gurage	0.17**(0.08)	-0.07 (0.11)	0.30***(0.09)
Other ethnic group	0.27***(0.08)	0.09 (0.11)	0.35***(0.10)
<i>Marital status (RC: single)</i>			
Married	-1.32***(0.13)	-1.06***(0.15)	-1.19***(0.16)
Separated/divorced /widowed	-0.39*** (0.10)	-0.24* (0.13)	-0.36***(0.13)
LR chi-square statistic (p-value)	667.6 (0.00)	532.2 (0.00)	199.95 (0.00)

Pseudo R-squared	0.19	0.25	0.10
N	7,319	7,319	7,319

## Conclusion

This paper looked at neglected aspect of informal employment in service provision – domestic work. Almost all domestic workers are informal in Ethiopia and they are not covered by any social security scheme and are not registered with tax authorities. The informal entrepreneurship literature mainly focuses on ‘visible’ participants in informal sector activities that encompass sales and production without registration (e.g. street vendors). Our research contributes to a variety of strands of interdisciplinary literature on informal employment by making domestic workers ‘visible’ through an analysis of quantitative household survey data. Our study has important policy implications with regards to decent work and women economic empowerment. Growing youth unemployment leads individuals to seek any type of employment such as working as street vendors and domestic workers. Understanding and protecting the rights and welfare of domestic workers in Ethiopia requires an understanding of the complex layers of legal, socio-cultural, economic and employment relations issues.

We highlighted some of the complex issues surrounding domestic work in Ethiopia to lay the foundation for future research and policy attention to improve the working conditions and welfare of domestic workers. Despite showing interest to protect the welfare of domestic workers, both government and international organisations (e.g. ILO) have so far failed to enforce the regulation of the domestic service provision informal sector employment part of the economy. Researchers so far ignored to study an important component of informal sector employment by missing domestic workers in their analysis. To avert the current neglect of an important component of informal service sector in developing countries, the domestic service provided by domestic workers should be made ‘visible’ and be given better attention both by researchers and policy makers. This improves public policy and the conduct of employment and welfare studies in the future across diverse social science disciplines such as economics, economic geography, management and gender studies.

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