

Chapter 19

Resettlement, Sustainable Livelihoods, and Development in Africa: Experiences From Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Resettlement has become a worldwide phenomenon in the development discourse. This phenomenon is mainly caused by population pressure, war or prolonged hostilities, irreversible environmental degradation, and development projects. The main objective of this chapter is to analyze the effects of a planned government intra-regional resettlement program on the sustainable livelihoods of resettled households in Ethiopia. To this end, the combination of SLF and IRR models were used as the pillars of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This study, based on mixed method design, concludes that the effects of planned resettlement on the sustainable livelihoods of resettlers were mixed and challenged the generic representation of the scheme as a success or a failure. The adverse effects were mainly due to policy gaps, the mismatch between policy and practice, poor inter-sectoral and inter-regional integration, and inadequate capacity building efforts. Recommendations are provided in line with these gaps.

INTRODUCTION

With over 90 million inhabitants (UN, 2013), Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, and one of the poorest in the world. Ethiopia faced poverty, which is broad, deep and structural. Its economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and affected by recurrent drought, high population pressure and poor productivity (Devereux, Teshome & Wheeler, 2005). Due to high population pressure, households' plot size has decreased and this has made them dependent on subsistence and traditional

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3247-7.ch019

farming practices (FAO/WFP, 2007). Hence, food insecurity and high population pressure are the most important development challenges in Ethiopia.

Thus poverty reduction is the central development agenda of the government of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2002; Pankhurst, 2009). Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation (ADLI) is designed as one of the building blocks/pillars in the fight against poverty, as well as ensuring sustainable development. Central to ADLI, the Ethiopian government has maintained the land as state property and peasants continue to have only use-rights over the agricultural land they cultivate. In line with the direction of ADLI, one way of using the abundant land is through internal displacement or resettlement program. Resettlement in Ethiopia or elsewhere in the world is still continuing in a precarious way. The predicament of resettlement in the past shows it is mostly politicised, criticised and hastily implemented.

Although resettlement is increasingly seen in development theory as an important livelihood strategy for poor people (Tan, 2008), implementing state-sponsored resettlement schemes and bringing about livelihood change is a complex process. Experience in Ethiopia, elsewhere in Africa, and the world over, show the fact that things can often go very wrong in resettlement operations unless managed with meticulous care (Abbute, 2003; De Wet, 2004). Any resettlement programme involving the movement of hundreds of thousands of people over large distances has many risks and dangers attached to it. Even if in principle it is a good idea to move people from a less fertile area to new productive areas, the question of how far in practice is a planned resettlement programme actually a good policy needs to be answered.

According to Abbute (2003, p.6-7), “hasty execution of the resettlement might have humanitarian and ecological consequences. Unless carefully planned, the scheme will extinguish the flora and the fauna and will accelerate soil erosion and hence deplete the ecology.” This environmental depletion reduces the environment’s ability to produce biomass for food and household energy. This also undermines prospects to fight poverty and achieve sustainable development (FDRE, 2010).

In the literature, there are many research works about the planning and implementation processes of the resettlement program in Ethiopia. However, there is the gap of analysing livelihoods of resettled households in the context of planned intra-regional resettlement program. This research project, therefore, tries to explain to what extent the planned intra-regional resettlement program provides sustainable livelihoods for settler households by taking the case from Ethiopia in order to come up with theoretical and practical explanations based on scientific evidences.

BACKGROUND: RESETTLEMENT IN ETHIOPIA

The whole history of Ethiopia is characterised by population movement, planned or spontaneous (Woldie, Degefa & Gete, 2010). The Oromo expansion before 18th century and the Amhara and Tigrayan movement to the south in the late 19th century were known as mass movements in Ethiopia (Cliffe, 2004; Rahmato, Pankhurst & Uffelen, 2013). However, the organised state-sponsored resettlement programme in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. The first government sponsored resettlement took place during the imperial period (1940–1974). The second massive resettlement, condemned by many authors, took place during the Derg regime (1974 – 1991). The third resettlement programme has been undertaken by the current EPRDF regime (2003–present). Resettlement programmes undertaken by different Ethiopian regimes have a declared objective of improving the life of the rural people affected by drought-induced famines, demographic pressures on land, ethnic and tribal disputes and political developments, among

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