

Mihret Bahry. Resettlement, household vulnerability, livelihood adaptation and opportunities in Ethiopia: A case study of the Metema Resettlement Area. (MSC in Disaster Risk Science, 2009)

In Ethiopia planned resettlement programmes have been viewed as a key government strategy for addressing food insecurity, population pressure, landlessness, and environmental degradation since the early 1960s. Intensified resettlement efforts have also been implemented since 2002/2003.

This thesis examines the recent experience of resettlement through a case-study of the Metema Woreda resettlement site, located in the Amhara Regional State from a disaster risk lens through the application of the sustainable livelihoods framework. Specifically, the study sought to examine the vulnerability and risk context of resettled households. It also aimed to investigate the ways in which household livelihoods are configured and differentiated in the new environment. In addition, the study gave particular attention to identify structural and institutional determinants that mediate household vulnerability in relation to key environmental shocks and stresses in three selected resettlement sites in Metema.

The methodology comprised both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire survey that involved a sample of 93 resettled households in three purposively selected resettlement sites within Metema. In addition, focus group interviews, key informant interviews and field observations were also used. The analysis was undertaken through the application of a livelihood fragility index developed in the course of the study. Simple descriptive statistical techniques and direct quotes were also applied.

Study findings indicate a complex vulnerability context characterised by a diverse combination of naturally occurring threats including waterlogging, striga weed infestation and malaria, with poor household adaptation across the sites. Households were also exposed to export-related price volatility due to their dependence on cash cropping. Moreover, livelihood sources and strategies were poorly diversified across the three sites and largely limited to crop production which accounted for 83.4 percent of annual household income on average.

Across the three sites, research findings indicate complexities in the livelihood outcomes of the resettled households. The majority of households reported improved food security status and wellbeing compared to their original areas. However, these benefits do not seem sustainable due to numerous factors that are constraining effective adaptation. However, the application of the livelihood fragility index revealed unexpected differences in the livelihood portfolios of households located in the different sites. This was illustrated by the seemingly anomalous index results for households residing in Wodi-Gemzu, characterised by highly fragile levels of financial and physical capital. Despite these constraints, livelihood fragility index values indicate a more favourable resettlement outcome for families in this site compared to the other areas. This was attributed to more robust access to natural capital in Wodi-Gemzu, due to its lower levels of land degradation.

The application of the livelihood fragility index also flagged issues of significant concern. It profiled the consistently high fragility of the social capital across the three sites. In addition, it also indicated differences in the livelihood portfolios between male-headed and female-headed households; female headed household having highly fragile livelihood portfolios. The results underline the potential value of the livelihoods fragility index in resettlement contexts, and propose its application in similar studies.