

DOES OUT-MIGRATION STAND AS A PREFERRED ADAPTIVE STRATEGY AGAINST CLIMATE VARIABILITY? EVIDENCE FROM RURAL ETHIOPIAN HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

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Background:

As per the recent estimates from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the African continent has warmed about half a degree over the last century and the average annual temperature is likely to increase an average of 1.5-4°C by 2099. African nations especially those falling under Sub-Saharan Africa are gradually becoming the most exposed region in the world to the impacts of climate change.

Ethiopia too had faced a multiple surge of droughts and floods across different agro-climatic zones, over the last four decades. Ecologically arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid parts of the country are the most vulnerable to drought, while, agriculture falls at the highest risk of climate variability and change. In terms of livelihoods; small scale rain-fed subsistence farmers and pastoralists are the most vulnerable to this variability. Overall, the country is in critical need of suitable adaptation strategies, which has to be incorporated in the development planning process. However, in presence or absence of state-aids to adapt such changes, households behave rationally towards mitigation of losses incurred by them. Among many such coping strategies that the rural households may opt to reduce their risks, outmigration of household members might seem to be an option. As pointed out by the literature, out-migration increases households' chances of livelihood diversification as remittances send by migrated member may prove of valuable help and mitigating after-effects of such crises. From a household survey in a primarily agrarian society of Nile river basin of rural Ethiopia, the paper attempts to find out how far out-migration has been preferred as adaptive strategy against climate variability.

The paper attempts also to understand, how feasible the households consider setting off for new locations forced by issues related to changing climate? The paper finds out how the livelihood strategy of outmigration is preferred over other adaptive strategies.

Data and Methods:

The paper employs data from a unique household shock survey conducted by the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), to understand household perception of climate variability, ways of adaptation and seeking recourse to migration as one of the adaptive strategy. Funding for the survey was provided by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany). The project forms part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)'s Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). The data source of the *Food and Water Security under Global Change: Developing Adaptive Capacity with a Focus on Rural Africa-- Ethiopia Nile Basin Climate Change Adaptation* is duly acknowledged.

Bi-variate and multivariate methods have been used for the analysis of data.

Preliminary Results:

About 1000 households surveyed in Nile river basin of rural Ethiopia; 69 percent reported having experienced any climate shock over five year preceding the survey, which includes; drought, flood, hailstorm, fire-outbreak or landslides. These natural or climate shocks had serious impacts on the household assets, income or consumption. However, as a response to adjust against such impacts, only a meagre proportion of the households reported outmigration of members elsewhere. However, although households agreed that pattern of rainfall and temperature has been changing of-late, they were found to fall short of either demonstrating change in the crop varieties cultivated or engage in conservation of soil or making water-harvesting schemes; These shortfalls are mostly explained by households' lack of knowledge to make such adaptive choice or lack of money to execute newer ideas.

Nevertheless, only a small proportion felt the need for out-migrating to urban locations as a possible coping measure against climatic contingencies.

We delve deep into the issues of less preferred choice of out-migration by the households that primarily depends on agriculture in the Nile valley and further discuss the implications of such findings, as a case-study to contest claims in literature citing viability and preference for outmigration and consequent remittances as coping measures triggered by climatic shocks, drawing parallel from similar agro-climatically vulnerable geo-climatic settings in other developing countries that also faces similar challenges from climate variability. Drawing, the paper argues for the necessity of building positive resilience among such societies, where households are less prone to out-migrating to safer locations to secure their lives and livelihoods.