

Stakeholder Participation in Resettlement Decision-making in Ethiopia¹

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Abstract

Between 2003 and 2005, the Ethiopian government resettled over 180,000 households in more than 100 villages as a development response to recurrent food insecurity in the country. Official statements claim that the resettlement is based on principles and guidelines that ensure, among others, voluntarism, community participation, and consultation with host communities. Based on studies carried out in 11 resettlement sites, this paper attempts to examine the application of the resettlement guidelines, particularly the nature of participation of the stakeholders and the partners in the decision-making process. In order to establish the validity of official claims that the resettlement was purely voluntary, the meaning attached to the concept, its operational clarity, and the manner of resettlement have been scrutinized. Given the inevitability of development-induced displacements in Ethiopia in the decades to come, the author urges the need to develop an appropriate resettlement policy framework with clear operational guidelines and procedures.

Keywords: stakeholder participation, resettlement, voluntary, settlers, hosts, partners

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Introduction

Beginning in 2003, the Ethiopian government launched a large-scale resettlement program as a development response to recurrent drought and food insecurity. The objective of the program is to enable 2.2 million chronically food insecure people attain food security through improved access to land. Authorities justify the program in terms of the prevalence of landlessness and land degradation in some parts of the country and the alleged availability of habitable areas with productive potentials in other parts. In 2003, the government and its partners (donors and NGOs) developed a joint food security document that came to be known as the New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia (NCFSE). The document incorporates lessons learnt in famine prevention and provides a strategy to combat poverty and food insecurity. The recent resettlement program is supposed to depend on four major pillars and numerous principles/approaches. The four pillars include voluntarism, availability of under-utilized land, consultation with host communities, and provision of minimum infrastructure. The document also contains various principles, such as partnership, community participation, transparency of program design, and development. However, little is known about the proper application of these guidelines and the nature of stakeholder participation.

The resettlement, like any other program intervention, needs to be viewed as involving stakeholders and decision-makers. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or institutions who have direct or indirect interest in the processes and outcomes of an initiative, and who stand to gain or lose from the success or failure of that initiative. In this particular case, the settlers, the host people, and the relevant government agencies are the primary stakeholders. Since resettlement is an expensive venture by its nature, the roles of NGOs and donor agencies as partners cannot be underestimated. This paper attempts to examine the application of resettlement guidelines, particularly the nature of participation of the stakeholders and the partners in the decision-making process. In the NCFSE document, the resettlement manner is portrayed as purely voluntary. In order to establish the validity of this claim, the meaning attached to the concept of voluntary, its operational

clarity, and the manner of settler recruitment have been critically scrutinized.

It has been widely recognized that large-scale resettlement programs are likely to disrupt the livelihoods of host communities (Salem-Murdock, 1989; Cernea, 2000; Gebre, 2003; 2004; 2005). Therefore, the host people deserve to be consulted to address their concerns, secure their consent, and prevent potential conflict with the settlers. With this in mind, attempts are made to examine the participation of the receiving host communities in various resettlement areas prior to the implementation of the program.

This paper is based on qualitative research conducted in 11 resettlement areas located in four regional states.² Six sites were selected from Oromia Region, three from Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR), one from Amhara Region, and one from Tigray Region. The six resettlements in Oromia include Chewaka and Haro Tatessa in Illubabor Zone, Qeto in West Wollega Zone, Kenaf in East Wollega Zone, Golelle Nonno in West Shewa Zone, and Shanaka in Bale Zone. In SNNPR, the study covered the Bilate and Bilbo resettlements in Wolayita Zone and the Guyodakuba (Salamago) resettlement in South Omo Zone. The two resettlements studied in Amhara and Tigray regions are Gelegu (Qwara) in North Gonder Zone and Idris (Humera) in Western Tigray Zone respectively.

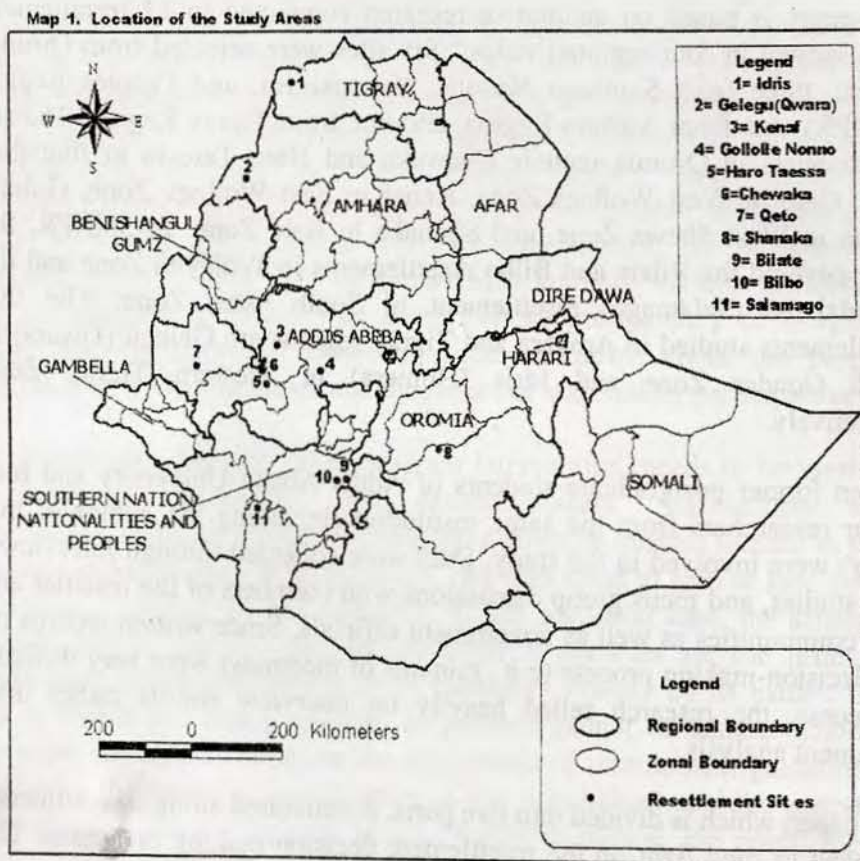
Eleven former postgraduate students of Addis Ababa University and four senior researchers from the same institution (including the author of this paper) were involved in the study. Data were collected through interviews, case studies, and focus group discussions with members of the resettler and host communities as well as government officials. Since written records on the decision-making process (e.g., minutes of meetings) were very difficult to access, the research relied heavily on interview results rather than document analysis.

The paper, which is divided into five parts, is structured along issues/themes believed to shed light on the resettlement decision-making processes. The case materials from the 11 sites are used to provide contexts and illustrations. This introduction is followed by a section that discusses two

key concepts, namely, stakeholder participation and voluntary resettlement to establish a clear understanding of their meanings and implications.

Section three focuses on the actual participation of stakeholders in resettlement decision-making. The fourth section touches on post-resettlement decisions, especially on reasons for departures from resettlement villages and decisions to stay in the villages. The last section provides concluding remarks.

Figure 1: Location of the study area



Source: Author's Own Construction, 2009

Conceptual Confusions and the Quest for Clarity

Participation of Stakeholders

The concept of participation or participatory approach appeared for the first time in the development discourse during the late 1950s as a result of the realization that most development projects failed due to the exclusion of local people from project design, formulation, and implementation (Rahnema, 1992:117). Hence, the notion of participatory method became an alternative development approach that was to replace the top-down strategy. Participation may take many different forms ranging from simple information sharing to elaborately structured mechanisms for collaboration and public engagement.

Although many definitions exist, participation has generally been understood as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over certain initiatives, decisions, and resources that affect them directly or indirectly (Rahnema, 1992; Vivian, 1992). It is important to note that participation is not about mere involvement of people in development projects; rather it is more about their empowerment to voice their interests and determine the form and content of the proposed development initiative. Genuine participation is believed to foster a sense of ownership and belongingness (Midgley, 1986), enhance transparency and accountability, and ensure effectiveness and sustainability.

There are others who raise legitimate concerns that participation often runs the risk of becoming a deceptive rhetoric or a dangerous tool for manipulation. For example, Rahnema (1992:116) wrote, "...people are asked or dragged into partaking in operations of no interest to them, in the very name of participation...[T]he participants do not feel they are being forced into doing something, but are actually led to take actions which are inspired or directed by centres outside their control." FAO's (1998 in Amri 2005) classification of participation into seven categories (manipulative, passive, functional, interactive, self-mobilization, participation by consultation, and participation for material incentives) warrants the need to establish conceptual clarity at policy and research levels.

As stated above, community participation is among the key principles and approaches outlined in the NCFSE document. As key stakeholders, communities in both sending and receiving areas are expected to take a leading role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the resettlement process. Dessalegn Rahmato (2003:62) rightly stated, "no resettlement scheme will be successful unless the people involved willingly participate in it. The voluntary participation of the peasantry is of paramount importance...*Indeed, settler candidates should be directly involved in the planning and preparation of settlement schemes*" [emphasis original]. Was there genuine and meaningful community participation? Under section three below, the participation of stakeholders of the recent resettlement program in Ethiopia is examined in light of the meanings and arguments presented above.

Voluntary Migration/Resettlement

How do we determine whether a particular form of resettlement is voluntary? In the literature, social scientists have conceptualized population movements as having two forms: voluntary and forced. Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith (1982:4) distinguished the two concepts as follows: "In sum, forced migration is distinguished from voluntary migration by the diminished power of decision in the former, sometimes reaching an extreme in which the forced migrants are totally powerless.... Another important distinguishing factor is the original absence on the part of forced migrants of a desire or motivation to leave their place of residence." Although the classification of complex migration processes into simplified categories is questionable (Gebre, 2002), the authors' definition of voluntary migration is scholarly sound and thus widely applicable. Michael Cernea and Scott Guggenheim (1993) also looked at resettlement through the same dichotomous lens. They wrote, "Involuntary resettlement stands apart from most voluntary movements... because it is nearly all "push" and no "pull" (Cernea and Guggenheim, 1993:3). The most relevant part of this definition is that voluntary settlers leave their homes and places of origin not out of desperation, but rather to take advantage of attractive opportunities in destination areas.

Based on the literature and the Ethiopian resettlement experience, it may be stated that transmigration programs qualify to be defined as genuinely voluntary *only when* the settlers exercise their power to make informed decisions; the settlers express willingness to leave their place of residence; purely pull factors in the destination area trigger the move; and/or relocation is fuelled by a combination of push factors in the sending areas and established or verified pull factors in receiving areas.

Cernea and Guggenheim (1993:3), who were aware of the 1980s resettlement program in Ethiopia and the lack of consistency in defining the program as voluntary and involuntary by different authors, described this inconsistency as 'some fuzziness along the boundary' of distinction. Guggenheim (1994) in a later publication recognized that the voluntary-involuntary distinction is more theoretical than practical. He wrote, "... the boundary between voluntary and involuntary resettlement is often blurred. There is a porousness of the distinction...involuntary resettlement is often easier to isolate from other forms of human movements in theory than in fact" (Guggenheim, 1994:3).

After appreciating the enormity of conceptual confusions and after examining the empirical contexts of the 1980s resettlement program in Metekel area (Ethiopia), I argued elsewhere that the source of definitional inconsistency emanates from the inadequacy of the conventional conceptualization of migration behaviours (Gebre, 2002). The crux of my argument is that the existing voluntary-involuntary dichotomous approach overlooks or fails to capture certain dimensions of transmigration and resettlement. Three illustrations are provided below to validate this line of reasoning.

First, the two-pronged approach fails to capture resettlements that occur when people embrace forced removal out of desperation. In late 1984 and early 1985, for instance, thousands of famine stricken people in Wollo and Tigray areas of Ethiopia welcomed the government's forced resettlement initiative as a strategy to avert the food crisis and return home when conditions improve. They would not have embraced resettlement (that uprooted them from beloved homes and separated them from loved ones) had it not been for the crippling famine that came after their lives. Most of

the recent settlers decided in favour of resettlement largely because of land scarcity, recurrent drought, and decline of soil fertility in their home villages. The argument is that people who embrace resettlement programs out of desperation hardly qualify to be considered as voluntary or forced settlers. I call them *compulsory-voluntary*³ settlers, as they are compelled by certain conditions to volunteer.

Second, the conventional dichotomous approach fails to explain resettlements attained through inducement. People who are enticed by authorities to resettle cannot be considered as purely voluntary settlers. Although they may have retained their decision-making power, the facts on which their decisions were based are often systematically orchestrated to make resettlements more attractive. During the 2003 public meetings held in sending areas to discuss the resettlement, authorities announced that each household would be given two hectares of land, two oxen, relief aid for three years, a completed house, agricultural input and tools, and a complete set of household utensils. Moreover, they were assured that the fertile and hospitable destination areas receive adequate rainfall and/or have high irrigation potential. From the spirit of those meetings with government officials, access to social services and infrastructural facilities were taken for granted. Most settlers reported to have witnessed completely different realities on arrival. Had they known the facts while at home, some would not have decided to migrate. It is appropriate to call these people *induced-voluntary*⁴ settlers rather than voluntary settlers.

Third, the voluntary-forced distinction also fails to explain the condition of people who may have accepted resettlement proposal due to intimidation and social pressures. The most commonly mentioned form of intimidation during the 2003-2004 resettlement period is the threat to withhold relief aid or make food aid available only to settlers. Pressurizing people to resettle in order to avoid their dependency on food aid is a matter of debate, as Western countries also apply similar principles against recipients of unemployment benefits unwilling to seek employment. The argument is that any resettlement attained through intimidation is neither voluntary nor strictly forced. The concept of induced-voluntary seems to capture this form of population movement better.

Participation and Decision-making in Recent Resettlement

The Policy Side

The New Coalition for Food Security explains food insecurity in the country partly in terms of low level of mobility of labour. The Forum for Social Studies (FSS, 2003:13), in its Bulletin titled 'Medrek' presented excerpts from the NCFSE document as follows: "Major constraints to mobility of labour include lack of information about other areas, high cost of moving and establishing a new farming enterprise, lack of investment in infrastructure, poor availability of services, and unclear tenure status of potentially available land. The newly initiated planned resettlement /access to land/ program seeks to overcome these constraints...."

According to informants (government officials), the resettlement program is part of the rural development policy and strategy published in November 2001 rather than an emergency response to the 2003 food crisis in the country. The government is reported to have intervened after witnessing community-driven or self-initiated population movements at the turn of the century. Between May and October 2002, some 20,000 voluntary migrants arrived at Shawie (Bale Zone) from Harerge (UNEUE, 2002 in Areba, 2005). According to authorities, this mass migration was the latest example in a series of community-driven movements that warranted government regulation of resettlement.

NCFSE was developed, officials argue, based on input and feedback from various discussions and a series of debates among stakeholders and with partners. During the debates, farmers in sending areas, the host people, experts and leaders at different administrative levels are reported to have agreed on the resettlement policy. The implementation of the program began in March 2003 after a discussion in January of that year at the federal level. During the January 2003 meeting, according to informants, policy makers felt that the implementation of the resettlement program, the water harvesting program, area specialization and diversification of extension programs, and the marketing strategies lagged behind schedule. Hence, regional governments vowed to expedite the implementation of the

resettlement program. With the objective to uphold the principle of regional autonomy and avoid potential conflict over resources, the federal government pursued intra-regional resettlement program.⁵ Committees were established at all administrative levels to execute the program. However, the detailed plan and the goal setting of all program components were prepared at the regional levels. After the approval of the plan by members of the cabinet at each region, zonal and *wereda* officials and experts were given orientation at the zonal level. Those who participated in the zonal discussions in turn held meetings with sending and receiving communities. Comments provided by local people at those meetings were allegedly incorporated into the resettlement program implementation manual.

The participation of different levels of government institutions in the resettlement decision-making was expressed in terms of a) the federal level meetings in which regional governments were represented, b) the regional level meetings and detailed planning, and c) the zonal/*wereda* level orientations for zonal/*wereda* officials/experts. It appears that the zonal and *wereda* offices, as key stakeholders, had little room to exert meaningful influence on the form and content of the resettlement decisions made at regional levels. This is because their participation was largely reduced to receiving orientation from above and relaying the government message to the people below. Pilot schemes were launched in three regions and the results were declared successful. However, there is a misgiving that the government prematurely declared the pilot schemes successful. Feleke Tadele (2004:211) noted, "During the pilot phase, about 45,000 households (180,000 people) were reported to have settled in Amhara, Oromiya and Tigray regions. Just within six months of its implementation, the government reported success of the pilot programs and scaled up its plan to resettle about 440,000 households (2.2 million people) over a period of three years."

While hailing the achievements of the recent resettlement program, the Information and Public Relations Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development acknowledged weaknesses that were observed during the early phase of the program (Mulugeta, 2005a:6; 2005b:12). These included the inability of the implementing agencies during the public meetings to discourage the sense of dependency of settlers, inadequate

assessment or lack of feasibility studies of certain resettlement areas, lack of coordination between sending and receiving areas, lack of coordination among various offices, and delays in the establishment of infrastructure and social services. The report further stated that the government continued to rectify these problems as the resettlement proceeds.

Settlers' Participation in Resettlement Decision-making

Settlers' participation in the decision-making of the recent resettlement was explained in terms of two processes: the participation of people in local meetings on the resettlement issue and the deployment of community representatives to potential destination areas before the actual resettlement. How genuine and adequate were these processes in terms of giving people the opportunity to voice their interests and make informed decisions? Data obtained from the informants indicate that the settlers learnt about the resettlement program and the potential destination areas from *kebele*, district, and/or zone officials. In most sending areas, some two months prior to the actual relocation of the people to the new sites, public meetings were organized to discuss the food security conditions of sending areas, describe the resource bases of destination areas, explain the advantages of the planned resettlement program, and warn the poor and the landless about the risks involved in staying in their home villages. *Wereda* and zonal level resettlement committees were dispatched to village meetings to persuade potential settlers. The number of meetings held with potential resettlers and the nature of discussions varied from place to place. Some informants reported to have attended one or two brief meetings during which they were informed about the resettlement plan, while others acknowledged participation in a series of meetings (as many as four) that involved intensive discussions. In some areas, government officials allegedly approached influential persons (e.g., elders and customary leaders) to encourage the public to support the program.

The meetings conducted in most sending regions focused more on information sharing and awareness-raising about the impending relocation plan. Even in areas where series of meetings and lengthy discussions were held, lower level authorities chose one-way delivery of government message to the people rather than adopting a genuinely participatory

approach. There are indications that manipulative participation characterized the recent resettlement in Ethiopia. This is evidenced by widespread complaints about deception and exaggeration regarding opportunities in the destination areas. During the public meetings, the resettlement areas were depicted as safe heavens with abundant fertile land and regular rainfall. Most settlers were promised two hectares of land per household. Those who resettled in Bilate, Chewaka, Shanaka, Humera, Bilobo, Golollee Nanno, and Salamago were told about irrigation potentials, and in a few cases the possibility of using tractors. Some Konso settlers in Salamago reported to have watched video footage showing an irrigation site and wild coffee plants, which never existed in the destination area. Almost all settlers reported that authorities promised that each household would have access to a house, a pair of oxen, three years of relief aid, infrastructural facilities, social services, and agricultural input on arrival.

The following quote from a settler from East Harerge, who resettled in Kenaf area, represents what most new settlers experienced.

Back in Bedeno *Wereda*, I had about 2.5 hectares of land, which I shared with my parents to grow *chat*, coffee, maize and sorghum. Since recent years, production declined due to decline of soil fertility and shortage of rainfall. We experienced frequent food insecurity. One day, in 2002, our *kebele* administration called us for a meeting during which we were told that the government was planning to distribute vacant and abundant land in the rainfall abundant zones of Western Oromia. We were told that interested people, particularly the landless were urged to register and move to the resettlement area. The participants were informed that each settler would be entitled to two hectares of land, partly irrigable. Besides, we were told that on arrival we would be given keys to houses. It was also promised that the supply of ration would continue for three years. We were promised agricultural input and selected seeds. We were told that the land rights of settlers in their places of origin would be kept intact for three years. I took the information to my family for discussion. We were interested in the promised opportunities and decided to be resettled.

There is another evidence to support the allegation that there was manipulation. Some settlers reported that during the public meetings they felt intimidated and/or systematically pressurized to embrace the resettlement program. The most common form of intimidation mentioned in Bilate, Midhaga Birbir, and Gelegu resettlement areas was the threat to withhold relief aid or other forms of government support. Cases of intimidation were reported from all four regions. In North Gonder Zone, people witnessed relief stores being closed down to signal the end of food aid. Despite the provision in the NCSFE document that settlers are free to return to their original homeland and receive government assistance, the early returnees in Wolayita were treated as deserters and were denied access to relief aid in the pretext that their shares had been sent to their respective resettlement areas. In the name of resource conservation, authorities in Chiro *Wereda* (West Harerge) are reported to have forced people cultivating forestland, hillsides, and swampy areas to evacuate and resettle elsewhere.

Had they refused to be resettled, according to the settlers from the *wereda*, they would have been denied access to food aid, replacement land, and employment in non-farm activities in the area. In Tigray, the landless and the poor had to choose between resettlement (an option portrayed as the best way out of poverty) and fending on their own, as authorities vowed not to provide aid to the destitute unwilling to be resettled. In some extreme cases, participants who raised tough questions or serious concerns about the resettlement proposal in Wolayita were labelled as adversaries attempting to derail important government policy (Melese, 2005).

Communities in many sending areas sent their representatives to visit the new destinations and make informed decisions. In Tigray, for example, a group of 25 people from each *wereda* were sent to assess the conditions of the resettlement sites prior to the mass relocation. Likewise, the settlers of Golollee Nanno in Oromia made the final decision to be resettled after their representatives verified the suitability of the destination area. Over 100 representatives of the Konso people in SNNPR visited Salamago *Wereda* at least twice before the actual relocation of settlers. In some cases, however, the visitation exercises appeared deceptive performances designed to deflect resistance. For instance, the first group of Qeto settlers were relocated before the delegates sent to visit the destination areas returned home to

report their observations. There exist widespread resentment on the part of many settlers in different sites that the delegates were shown a few good sites that do not represent much of the inhospitable and unproductive areas set aside for resettlement. Hence, they felt cheated and their innocence abused. In most of the sending areas, settlers were not given the right to choose where to resettle and when to move.

Hosts' Participation and Decision-making

One of the four pillars of the recent resettlement program in Ethiopia provides that regional governments should consult host communities to discuss the necessity of the program and secure their consent. The involvement of host people in the program, however, may be characterized as nominal, minimal, and in some cases non-existent. The only place where the host people enthusiastically expressed interest, at least initially, in the resettlement was Haro Tatessa. This positive reaction in Haro Tatessa is explained largely in relation to local people's hope that the resettlement may serve as a buffer zone against wild animals that destroyed their crops. In some places, meetings were organized to inform the local people about the resettlement plan rather than to understand their concerns and secure their approval. For instance, prior to the establishment of Chewaka resettlement, authorities gathered the hosts in Dabo Hanna *Wereda* to inform them about the arrival of new settlers; the obligation of the hosts to make labour and cash contributions; and the government's plan to build roads, schools, and health centres for both communities. The settlers arrived without further discussions and negotiations. In some Humera villages, the local people and authorities agreed during the public meetings to redistribute land to the local landless and land-poor before the resettlement of the newcomers. Following this agreement, 120 local households (Wolqait residents) established homes and farms at a place called Idris (suitable for sesame production). According to informants, the 120 local households were forced to evacuate Idris and resettle at Zerbabit (unsuitable for sesame) to free Idris for the new resettlers.

In three cases, resettlements were implemented despite local objections. In Qeto area, authorities proposed to resettle 500 households in a place called Gudina Mucho and requested the hosts to prepare shelter for the settlers and provide food when they arrived. The hosts rejected the entire idea of bringing new people to their locality because (1) there are many landless people in the community expecting land allocation and (2) the community uses the proposed area for grazing and hanging beehives. The resettlement plan was carried out against local resistance. The 2003-2004 resettlement was imposed on the host people in Qwara as well. When they learnt about the government plan to resettle people in their village, the local residents protested. Three to four public meetings were held in an attempt to persuade them. The first batch of settlers (15,678 people) arrived despite the hosts' continued resistance. In Salamago, the Bodi pastoralists (particularly the younger generation) rejected the plan to resettle the Konso people on their land. However, government authorities managed, through pressure, to persuade leaders/elders, who imposed the resettlement decision on their people.

In three other cases, the hosts were not formally consulted because their rights to the land were not officially recognized. In Kenaf, authorities considered the host people as illegal occupants because the land was once a state farm. According informants, the state farm was established by evicting the local people, who regained part of it when the farm was abandoned in the 1990s. Since the government does not recognize their original rights and current occupancy, the local administration was planning in 2005 to relocate them elsewhere to free more land for the newcomers. Some 284 local households in Golollee Nonno area were also treated as illegal settlers, as the land was previously occupied by the Ethio-Yemen state farm. When the project phased out in 1991, a large part of it was allocated to spontaneous settlers who arrived in the area in the 1990s and early 2000s. In 2005, some 30 to 40 of them were expected to be forced to leave. The Shanaka site was also a state farm, which the local people were prohibited from cultivating even after the termination of the farm. The transfer of this land to the settlers did not require the approval of the hosts.

Active participation and the consent of hosts were not sought in two resettlement areas in SNNPR: Bilate and Bilbo. The ethnic Sidama hosts in Bilate were summoned for a meeting to discuss the resettlement program after the arrival of the ethnic Wolayita settlers. Nor did the Sidama in Bilbo area know beforehand about the resettlement of 618 Wolayita households in the area. The hosts in Bilate and Bilbo bitterly complained about unprecedented and quite alarming pressure on farmland, pasture, water points, and forest resources.

Intra-regional resettlement was expected to avert conflict between the settlers and their hosts. However, tension and clashes characterized resettlement areas where the concerns of the host people were overlooked. For example, two serious clashes are reported to have broken out in Qeto resettlement area between the settlers and hosts, both of whom belong to the same ethnic group - the Oromo. On 8 July 2004, some settlers at Gudina

Mucho attacked the neighbouring Mucho host village (which resisted the resettlement), injured seven people, and burned down 15 houses with belongings inside. A month later, on 17 and 18 August 2004, two days of fighting erupted in Mojo *Kebele* after the host people protested against land appropriation by destroying temporary shades built by the settlers in agricultural fields. The settlers, who outnumbered the hosts, marched to host villages, injured nine people, and burnt down 116 houses together with hundreds of quintals of grain and other possessions.

In Salamago, the Konso settlers clashed with the Bodi hosts on 14 and 15 July 2005. Five settlers and a Bodi man were killed during this incident, which triggered the departure of hundreds of settlers from the resettlement area.⁶ A year earlier, a settler was murdered by a member of the host community. In July 2004, the settlers and their hosts in Golelee Nanno are reported to have clashed over land in which some settlers sustained bullet wounds and more than 40 houses belonging to the hosts were burned down. The women and children of the two communities are reported to have quarrelled when they met in schools, market places, grinding mills, and by the riversides. In Bilate and Bilbo, host-guest dispute started immediately after the 2003 resettlement when the local people attempted to stop the settlers from clearing land. Although the deployment of the federal police in

the area prevented possible outbreak of clashes, the dispute over land grew in scale to involve the Wolayita and Sidama Zones. The settlers were instructed not to cultivate the land until the Council of Federation, to which the matter was referred, passed its verdict.

The host communities in Qwara are reported to have refused to share water points and local churches with the settlers. The dispute over the use of drinking water from streams once led to a confrontation where one settler was wounded. Although no violent conflict has been reported, the hosts and the settlers in Humera experienced disputes over grazing land. Likewise, information from Chewaka resettlement reveals that the settlers and the local people often experience dispute over farmland, grazing land, and fruit trees. In Kenaf, the local people lack legal right and access to farmland, pastures, and other common resources. This caused frustration and antipathy towards the resettlement program; hence, the situation is characterized as potentially explosive.

Partners' Participation

On 11-12 June 2003, the Ministry of Rural Development and UNDP organized a high level discussion of government agencies, donors, and NGOs to reveal the enormity of the food insecurity problem in Ethiopia and solicit donor support for the planned government actions, one of which was resettlement. This meeting sensitised the participants and led to the establishment of the Technical Group of Partners and the formulation of Terms of Reference to develop a food security program. The intention was to improve the situation of five to six million food insecure people in a period of three to five years. The Technical Group consisted of delegates from the Federal Government (Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Federal Affairs, Ministry of Water Resources, and Ministry of Health), Regional Governments (Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, and Tigray), the UN (UNDP, WFP, FAO), Bilateral Programs (Ireland, CIDA, SIDA, GTZ, USAID, EU, and DFID), NGOs (CRDA and Oxfam), and the World Bank as a donor.

In order to produce a package of program document, the group split into sub-groups to diagnose the food insecurity problem and review the on-going food security programs in the country. The sub-group assigned to diagnose the food insecurity problem (1) identified the chronically food insecure people, (2) outlined the main problems affecting the people (namely, lack of access to productive assets, moisture stress, limited income generation opportunities, low agricultural production and productivity, and poor health), and (3) suggested numerous specific program activities to address each problem. It is important to note that resettlement was one of the program activities proposed to address the lack of access to productive assets.

While the Technical Group operated in a spirit of partnership in the development of the joint food security document (NCFSE), worries and differences began to surface. Since the official positions of the partners have not been articulated publicly by the respective agencies, it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into further details. Based on information obtained from informants (who want to remain anonymous), however, the following may be stated. During the discussions with partners, the government is reported to have expressed strong interest that the partners adhere to the existing policies and strategies. While recognizing the need to build on the existing policies, the partners, in turn, expressed a strong desire to incorporate innovative approaches. This led to an amendment to the Terms of Reference to accommodate the partners' views and input. However, their inputs in the form of new proposals for action were rather resisted because the government felt that there was no time for negotiation over new strategies. This seems to have led to worries that the participation of partners may have been sought only to legitimise the existing government plans and strategies and secure assistance. According to informants, the difference between the two parties became apparent during a meeting held in November 2003, when the Prime Minister expressed that it is the exclusive responsibility of the government to define implementation arrangements. Major donor agencies and countries did not commit themselves to support the resettlement program from the very beginning. The determination of the government to define implementation arrangements by itself seems to have discouraged the partners from actively

participating in the program. Informants suspect that the government decided to exclude partners, particularly the NGOs to maintain control over resources, discourage alternative food security proposals, and reduce the influence of civil society organizations.

Beginning in 2004, however, WFP, UNICEF, and USAID made some humanitarian interventions in the resettlement areas. WFP, in consultation with donors, provided pulses, oil, and blended food to cover urgent food needs to certain sites in the Oromia Region.⁷ In 2005, according to informants, WFP provided blended food in Metema and Qwara resettlements, Amhara region as well. UNICEF is also reported to have provided substantial non-food humanitarian support (particularly health-kits) in certain resettlement sites in 2004 and 2005. Since 2004, USAID participated in the resettlement through monitoring activities (which included field assessment of malnutrition and humanitarian problems) and the provision of emergency assistance distributed through WFP and UNICEF.

Departures and Decision to Stay

During the 1980s resettlement program in Ethiopia, settlers were not allowed to return to their home villages, and their lands were redistributed among community members immediately. The latest resettlement program, however, provides that the settlers could go back to their places of origin if they are dissatisfied with conditions in the new areas. The study reveals that some settlers abandoned resettlement areas at different times. Of those who returned, the majority are reported to have left during the initial weeks and months of arrival for different reasons. As summarized in the table below, the common reasons for early departures are (1) mismatches between settlers' expectations and the reality on the ground expressed in terms of resources, facilities and services, (2) high incidences of morbidity and mortality of humans and cattle, (3) harshness of the physical environments, (4) conflict and security concerns, and (5) possession of better resources in places of origin.

Information from Chewaka, Shanaka, Humera, Golollee-Nonno, Qeto, and Bilate resettlement areas reveal that settlers with some productive resources

and other better survival options in their home villages decided to return. It appears that those who volunteered to be resettled because of inducement changed their minds when the condition of the destination areas differed from what they expected. Many of those who returned from Chewaka and Haro Tatessa were individuals without families. Most of those who returned from Qwara and Bilbo represented early arrivals who experienced adjustment difficulties. In October 2004, seventy households from Bilate resettlement were sent back to their home villages against their will perhaps due to the land dispute between the Wolayita and the Sidama Zones in the area.

In Humera, zonal and *wereda* officials estimated the maximum number of returnees from the 20 resettlement villages at 1,000 households (out of the total of 17,997 HH resettled). However, this figure contradicts with data obtained from village level sources. For example, some 1,200 households from Idris and Tirkan villages alone are reported to have disappeared after receiving more than 1,000 Birr per household in loan. Moreover, 300 settlers were dismissed on account of misconduct. In March 2005, only 815 of the 1,767 registered households lived in Idris resettlement area. The problem of absenteeism is so serious that *wereda* authorities in Humera are reported to have given an ultimatum to the 2003 settlers to be physically present in the resettled villages in March and April 2005 or risk expropriation of their lands.

Table 1. Proportion of returnees and reasons for departure

Resettlement Site		Resettled HH	Returned HH	Percent Left	Main Reasons for Leaving Resettlement Areas*
1	Bilate	252	109	43.3	unmet expectations, health risks, 70 HH were forced by officials to return
2	Bilbo	618	541	87.5 ⁸	unmet expectations, health risks, harsh environment, relocated to different site
3	Chewaka	12,815	425	3.3	unmet expectations, preferred home
4	Gelegu (Qwara)	8,482	4,201	49.5 ⁹	unmet expectations, health risks, tension with hosts
5	Gollelee Nanno	1,513	50	3.3	unmet expectations, poor social services, harsh environment
6	Guyo Dakuba (Salamago)	2,897	656	22.6	unmet expectations, conflict with hosts
7	Haro Tatessa	2,186	403	18.4	harsh environment, health risks (malaria), crop failure
8	Idris (Humera)	17,997	1000	5.6 ¹⁰	harsh environment, conflict with Eritrea, dim prospect in the area
9	Kenaf	531	100	18.8	health risks (malaria), harsh environment, malnutrition
10	Midhaga Birbir (Qeto) ¹¹	139	42	30.2	health risks, cattle disease, land shortage
11	Shanaka	1,463	29	2.0 ¹²	preferred home, fear of host revenge

Source: Author's Own Construction, 2009

* Much of the comments were obtained from settlers rather than returnees themselves.

Conclusive data are lacking on the reintegration of returnees in their home villages. During the initial movement to the resettlement sites, some migrants left their productive resources with relatives and neighbours, while others sold or leased out. Some settlers did not have any productive resources to begin with. Therefore, the reintegration and readjustment of returnees would vary from one individual to another depending on their pre-settlement conditions and property arrangements at the time of relocation. The case studies show that some returnees from five sites (Chewaka, Qwara, Kenaf, Humera, and Golollee-Nonno) moved back to the resettlement areas, although the possibility of getting land is becoming increasingly difficult in such areas as Chewaka, Qwara, and Kenaf. However, those who returned from Bilate, Bilobo, Qeto, Shanaka, and Haro Tatessa appear to have left the resettlement area for good.

Data from six resettlement sites (Bilate, Chewaka, Shanaka, Qwara, Bilbo, and Golellee-Nonno) suggests that the likelihood that more settlers would return is remote. In these areas, most settlers expressed a strong willingness to stay, and the level of their determination was demonstrated through hard work on their farmlands, investment in domestic animals, construction of durable and expensive houses, and the moving of their entire families to the resettlement areas. Individuals and households who sold off or leased out their land and property in their places of origin are among those who decided to stay in the new areas. In other resettlement sites, some settlers are reported to be planning to return to their home or other places for different reasons. For example, the majority of settlers in village 18 (Qeto), who complain about land shortage and cattle disease, vowed to leave the area unless they are resettled in a suitable location, preferably to Gawo Dalle *Wereda*. Some Humera settlers are reported to have expressed their plan to save money and return to their home villages to open businesses such as small shops. Reports from Kenaf suggest that settlers with better access to land and other assets (coffee, chat) in their area of origin are likely to leave in the future.

In most resettlement sites, settlers have already decided whether or not to stay. However, there are some undecided settlers in some areas. Those who are economically poor, those with large family size and small plots of land, and those who are worried about security situations are among the

undecided settlers. In Qeto, settlers who have been given less than one hectare of land and those who resettled in the vicinity of hostile hosts exhibited mixed feelings about their future. Some 22% of the Salamago settlers are undecided because of the conflict with the hosts. A group of settlers in Kenaf, who are hoping to be relocated to a better site, and those in Chewaka, who hope to be given additional land, remain undecided about their stay in the resettlement sites. Some settlers who lost hope in the resettlement program are undecided, as returning home is not an easy option either. For example, a woman in the Gelegu resettlement area, who experienced production failure and health problems since her arrival in the new environment, found it difficult to decide to return home because she sold out all her property when she first left for Qwara.

Conclusions

Between 2003 and 2005, over 180,000 households have been resettled in more than 100 villages. The overall response of people to the resettlement stimulation was positive for two reasons: economic desperation in home villages and the attractive resettlement package promised by the government. The study also revealed that some people decided in favour of resettlement to avoid the consequences of rejecting it. As I proposed elsewhere (Gebre, 2002), resettlement decisions dictated by desperation and inducement deserve to be called *compulsory-voluntary* and *induced-voluntary* respectively. If any planned resettlement program has to be truly voluntary, then settlers should be given genuine information, adequate means for verification, and adequate time to make a decision. The pre-resettlement public meetings held in many sending and receiving areas were by far inadequate. Due to poor preparation, poor participation, and inflated characterization of the destination areas, many settlers and their hosts were subjected to avoidable sacrifices and risks. Participation of settlers and hosts in resettlement decision should go beyond information sharing or raising awareness. The stakeholders must be meaningfully and effectively engaged in interactive discourse to make decisions based on a participatory problem-solving approach.

The case studies from the 11 sites suggest that most settlers are committed to staying in the resettlement areas, while the host people in many sites complain about loss of means of subsistence due to the resettlements. Host-settler hostility and conflict could jeopardize the success and sustainability of resettlements. Therefore, instead of resettling additional people to meet the official national target (2.2 million people), the focus for the time being should shift to consolidating the existing schemes and addressing the concerns of the hosts. Partnership among government agencies, donors, and NGOs would enhance the consolidation process and maximize the chance for resettlement success.

Ethiopia is highly committed to attain fast socio-economic development. The country is witnessing massive infrastructure development, construction of dams, urban renewal, urban reinvestment, and wildlife conservation. Since these activities are expected to intensify for decades to come, resettlement will remain an on-going process. This warrants the need to develop a nation-wide safeguard mechanism against displacement disasters. Experience from Asia and Latin America reveal that in countries where appropriate resettlement policies exist, the adverse effects of displacement were averted (Agrawal, 2000; Mejía, 1999). There is a growing recognition that resettlement projects should involve communities, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. Given the inevitability of development-induced displacements in rural and urban areas, Ethiopia needs to develop a national resettlement policy framework with clear guidelines and procedures, and involve relevant stakeholders and partners in resettlement operations.

Acronyms

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
CSB	Corn-soya blend
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FSS	Forum for Social Studies
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany) International Cooperation Enterprise for Sustainable Development)
HH	Household
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
NCFSE	New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
UN	United Nation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEUE	United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

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Endnotes

- ¹ Part of this article was part of a manuscript (unpublished) co-authored by Gebre Yntiso and Assefa Tolera and presented at the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held in Trondheim, Norway, in 2007
- ² The federal government of Ethiopia is divided into nine regional states and two city governments. The regions are divided into zones and the zones are sub-divided into *weredas* (districts), which comprise *kebeles* (the lowest tier). The city governments are divided into sub-cities, which are further divided into *kebeles*
- ³ Compulsory voluntarism occurs when people embrace forced removal out of desperation, for example, when famine stricken people consider abandoning their beloved home because of crisis; when the urban poor consider resettlement on the outskirts of cities because of increased rents and taxes in the inner-city; and when riverbank cultivators consider relocation away from rivers due to flooding
- ⁴ Induced-voluntarism occurs when people leave their original place of residence to settle elsewhere due to organized acts of inducements perpetrated by outside agencies. The best example is recruitment of settlers through propaganda, intimidation, and/or promises deliberately designed to make resettlements attractive.
- ⁵ It is important to note that intra-regional does not mean intra-ethnic because some regions (e.g., SNNPR) comprise multiple ethnic groups. Although tension over resources between ethnic groups or communities of the same ethnicity could not be avoided, the principle of intra-regional resettlement may have averted the worst conflict scenarios. Moreover, inter-regional resettlement may have undermined the premise and integrity of the regionalization and decentralization policy of the government of Ethiopia
- ⁶ Although they are located in one region (SNNPR), the Konso and the Bodi are two different ethnic groups with almost nothing in common. In SNNPR, many of the resettlements were implemented across ethnic boundaries
- ⁷ See 'WFP Emergency Report No. 50 of 2004' at <http://ocha-gwapps1.unog.ch/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/SZIE-67JQTD?OpenDocument>
- ⁸ In December 2005, there were only 77 households in Bilbo. Some 294 are reported to have returned home during the early phase, while more than 240 households were relocated to a nearby site, which they soon evacuated because of strong local resistance
- ⁹ Authorities in Qwara do not keep separate statistics for returnees and the deceased; they merge the two records and call it missing. Therefore, 49.5% of the registered households may not have safely returned. Actually, many of the 2003 settlers in Qwara are believe to have died of malaria and water-borne diseases
- ¹⁰ This is officially acknowledged figure. Reports from resettlement sites, however, suggest more desertion.
- ¹¹ Midhaga Birbir (also called Gosh Amba) is one of the five new resettlement villages in Qeto resettlement area, which also hosts 16 resettled villages from the 1980s resettlement programs (Asfaw, 2006).

- ¹² The Shanaka settlers are compulsory-voluntary migrants, who left their homes in Harerge and travelled to Bale before the recent resettlement program was initiated. Many of them are said to be unwilling to return to the home villages because of the continued state of food insecurity there.