Introduction

Because of rapid economic growth, population pressure and the degradation of natural resources, the resettlement of people to new locations has become a dominant development discourse in many parts of the world. Research evidence suggests, however, that many such initiatives have not brought positive results. Broadly, there are two arguments as to why resettlement often fails to improve the situation of the people concerned. Some argue that it is an inherently complex process which is difficult to predict, thus making it impossible to avoid at least some negative consequences. Others, on the contrary, say that the failure of resettlement results simply from failure to adhere to effective and efficient frameworks for planning and implementation. The aim of the research I conducted in 2006 in a government-sponsored resettlement scheme in southern Ethiopia was to assess, with the help of empirical evidence provided largely by the affected people themselves, how the resettlers adapted to the new place. This evidence suggests that the resettlement scheme had both positive and negative aspects and that both the above arguments need to be taken into account when assessing the success of resettlement.

Over the last few decades, resettlement in Ethiopia has been adopted as a strategy to alleviate various socio-economic problems. The resettlement programme that was in progress during 2003-2005 was intended to provide food security for those suffering from a lack of food due to land shortage and the ecological deterioration of their home areas. My research focussed on the Boreda resettlement scheme in Ethiopia’s Southern Regional State. The scheme comprises two villages, called Gumgumta and Dugana-Gamero, and the total population resettled by February 2004 was about 3000 persons. The aims of the research were to:

Understand how the resettlers were adapting to their new situation (were they adapting positively or negatively and what new institutional arrangements had been put in place);

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Explore qualitative differences in the livelihoods of resettlers, in order to understand the impact of new strategies, particularly in relation to food security.

Examine whether resettlement is an effective response to food insecurity in the light of the current debates.

I first explore the concepts and definitions found in the resettlement literature and then outline the two approaches to understanding the resettlement process mentioned above. I then describe the resettlement experience of Ethiopia, under the last three governments. In the next section of the paper I describe and analyse the Boreda case and, finally, present conclusions and recommendations.

**Concepts and definitions**

Resettlement, land settlement, colonisation, or transmigration all refer to the phenomenon of population redistribution, either planned or “spontaneous”. The first term seems to be the more appropriate to the Ethiopian context, as it suggests the deliberate moving of people to areas other than their own (Rahmato 2003). According to Chambers, “resettlement is characterised by two main features: A movement of population; and an element of planning and control” (1969 p.11). In its broader definition, people may be involved in resettlement either on their own initiative or under external circumstances which force them to do so. When people resettle to a new place under their own initiative, this may be called ‘spontaneous resettlement’. If the resettlement is imposed on people by an external agent in a planned and controlled manner, it may be called ‘planned resettlement’ (ibid). The case discussed in this paper may be described as ‘planned and controlled population movement under state control’.

Displacement is often broadly categorised as either voluntary or involuntary (Hansen and Oliver-Smith 1982 and Cernea and Guggenheim 1993 cited in Yntiso 2004). It is a feature of many parts of the third world, especially in the more remote and ecologically marginal areas, that human activity is to a large extent controlled by nature. In order to cope with the prevailing natural constraints while undertaking their livelihood strategies, people move periodically between different areas and ecological zones. Some of the common forms of movement include: hunting
and gathering, shifting cultivation, nomadism, and transhumance. These types of movements can be categorised as ‘impelled movement’ since people can make an alternative periodic decision to move in order to sustain their livelihood (Parnwell 1993). Involuntary displacement, on the other hand, is commonly planned and executed by external agencies without peoples’ genuine consent. On the basis of these distinctions, Yntiso (2002) defines involuntary migrants as people who are intimidated or forced to leave their habitual environment or place of origin. Such forms of movement may be enforced by the prevailing political, environmental or developmental circumstance.

Terms used in association with such forms of involuntary movement include refugee, evacuee and resettlement (Parnwell 1993). Parnwell further defines resettlement as the process whereby people are displaced from their home by such phenomena as natural disasters, including drought, and by various infrastructural projects. They move to a new location and, generally, are given assistance by government in order to establish themselves therein. In most cases such planned and controlled resettlement is a form of involuntary population movement because, given the choice, the movers would generally have preferred to stay (Parnwell 1993).

Nevertheless, some argue that the two conventionally distinct forms of displacement – voluntary and involuntary - fail to highlight the specific conditions of resettlement. Indeed it is widely recognised that this distinction is more theoretical than empirical (Guggenheim 1994 in Yntiso 2004). In an attempt to tackle this limitation Yntiso (2004) has proposed a modified conceptual scheme which identifies four major types of relocation: voluntary, induced-voluntary, involuntary or forced, and compulsory-voluntary.

*Voluntary resettlement* occurs when the migrants have the power to make informed and free relocation decisions and the willingness to leave their original place.

*Induced-voluntary* movement takes place when people leave their home place to resettle elsewhere due to deliberate acts of inducements coming from outside agencies. Although the migrants may maintain decision-making power, the facts on the basis of which their decisions are made are provided and analysed by other agencies.
Involuntary migration refers to the forcible uprooting of people from their original place of residence. The agents of force could be natural disasters and/or humans.

Compulsory-voluntary migration occurs when people embrace forced removal out of desperation, and when voluntarily resettled people are denied the right to leave the resettlement area.

Theoretical approaches
In order to minimise, if not avoid, the risks associated with the displacement of people, one requires theories which are capable of explaining how displacement may lead to social and economic impoverishment. There are at least two views as to why things often go wrong in displacement and resettlement. According to DeWet (1996) these may be called the ‘inadequate inputs’ approach and the ‘inherent complexity’ approach. A good example of the former approach is Michael Cernea’s ‘Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model’.

The Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model (IRR)
When people move to a new place in a planned and controlled manner, they are faced with various challenges in adapting to the altered circumstances. The specific ecological, social, economic and cultural situations in which they have to resettle require diverse adaptive strategies. Often this adjustment is difficult and carries multiple risks. Cernea (1996) argues that, in order to mitigate these risks, the identification and application of a viable conceptual framework is of paramount importance. He has consequently proposed an ‘Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model’ (IRR) to help in the analysis and prediction of risks in relation to forced displacement.

According to the IRR model, development-induced displacement may lead to eight forms of socio-economic risks: unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, loss of access to common property, erosion of health status, and social disarticulation. This model captures not only economic but also social and cultural impoverishment, reflecting the fact that displaced people lose natural capital, man-made capital, human capital and social capital (Cernea 1996).
With reference to DeWet’s distinction between the ‘inadequate inputs’ and ‘inherently complex’ approaches in explaining the failure of most planned resettlement schemes, Cernea’s IRR model emphasises ‘inadequate inputs’. Cernea (undated) argues that impoverishment processes are potential risks in displacement, not necessarily inevitabilities, but most often these risks materialize into actual, real processes of impoverishment because they are not pre-empted or reduced through up-front counter-risk strategies and reconstruction plans. This clearly suggests that viably conceived, planned and implemented displacement will not have adverse effect on the people concerned. Therefore this approach tends to conclude that resettlement goes wrong, principally because of a lack of the proper input: national legal frameworks and policies, political will, funding, pre-resettlement surveys, planning, consultation, careful implementation, and monitoring (DeWet 2004).

According to the IRR model, therefore, the direct and indirect consequences of development – in this case development-induced population displacement – which harm the lives and livelihoods of people are avoidable, and the harmful effects can be mitigated through more enlightened national and international policies. On the other hand the implementation of poorly designed resettlement projects may exacerbate the stresses occasioned by uprooting people from ‘environments of trust’ (Mc Dowell 1996).

By and large, the ‘inadequate inputs’ approach embodies a fundamentally optimistic view of planned resettlement. Proper policy, political will and provision (particularly funding) can overcome the problem of inadequate inputs, and the impoverishment risks can then be turned into opportunities for reconstruction, such that resettlement becomes resettlement with development, leaving the resettled people better-off than before (Cernea 2000 in DeWet 2004). However some criticise this approach for being focused exclusively on economic and technical factors (Koenig 2001 in DeWet 2004).

The ‘inherently complex’ approach

According to De Wet, the ‘inherently complex’ approach views resettlement as a complex and problematic undertaking by its very nature. The frequent failure of planned resettlement essentially originates from the unique characteristics of involuntary resettlement as a development policy.
Involuntary resettlement has five characteristics. First, it involves imposed social change which has cultural, social, political and economic implications. Second, it usually involves a change in the pattern of peoples’ access to resources. Third, resettled people find themselves in larger and more heterogeneous settlements than before. Fourth, it involves people in wider social and economic structures. And fifth, it involves accelerated socio-economic change which may be beyond the capacity of people to cope with (2004). De Wet further argues that, due to the combination of these factors, resettlement tends to lessen people’s material well being, limit their choices, reduce their control over their circumstances and increases the levels of social tension and conflict within new settlements.

Resettlement often imposes forces and conditions on people that may completely transform their lives, evoking profound changes in environment, productive activities, social organisation and interaction, in leadership and political structure, and in world-view and ideology (Oliver-Smith 1996). The various actors involved in the schemes with their different interests and motives, the varied circumstances under which resettlement takes place, the relation between various stakeholders - these and other factors contribute to the complex nature of resettlement. According to DeWet, therefore, the ‘technical fix’ nature of the ‘inadequate inputs’ approach is incapable of preventing all the threats associated with resettlement.

However necessary ‘adequate inputs’ are, there are complexities in resettlement that cannot be dealt with in this manner. It is not simply a matter of getting better legal frameworks, policies, planning, etc. Complexity (not just complicatedness) requires us to start from open-endedness, and flexibility, rather than from the boundedness of frameworks and procedure that are dictated by policy (DeWet, 2004, p. 66).

In general, it is apparent that both approaches have their validity and are not mutually exclusive. Therefore one should take both into account when planning and assessing the success of any resettlement project.
**The Ethiopian experience of resettlement**

The last three governments of Ethiopia have all carried out resettlement projects with different objectives and with varying intensity but, broadly speaking, the premises on which each justified the need for resettlement were similar, at least in theory. In the 1960s and 1970s, under the Imperial regime, there were a few settlement schemes run by various government departments and non-governmental organisations. Nevertheless, these were invariably small in size, *ad hoc* in nature, and were mainly designed to achieve specific and limited objectives (RRC 1985: 157, Tegegne 1988:82 and Pankhurst 1997:540 cited in Berhane 2003).

At that time state-sponsored-resettlement was largely undertaken to promote two objectives. The first of these was to rationalise land use on government “owned” land and thus raise state revenue. The second was to provide additional resources for the hard pressed northern peasantry by relocating them to the southern regions (where most government land was located) and which was mainly inhabited by ‘subordinate populations’² (Rahmato 2003). It was seen as a viable program because it was believed that it would expand the farmed area of the country and thereby increase gross agricultural production. It was also recommended as a means of creating employment and solving the problem of the growing excess labour force. The settlers comprised landless peasants, evicted tenants, pastoralists and shifting cultivators, urban unemployed and ex-servicemen (Pankhurst 1992).

Yet it is hard to claim it was successful, since it often failed to meet the intended objectives. In brief, settlement costs were high, the rate of success was low, and the viability of a number of schemes was under question. Some assessments noted specifically that the difficulties stemmed from the inadequate planning of programmes, inappropriate settler selection, inadequate budgetary support, and inexperienced staff (IEG: 10-20 cited in Rahmato 2003).

Planned resettlement gained currency and gathered momentum vastly after the commencement of the revolutionary process in 1974 (Brehane 2003). The government believed that resettlement would provide a “lasting solution” for the ‘hard-pressed’ peasantry, and particularly for the population living in the drought prone areas. It was conceived as a primary measure to rehabilitate

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² People belonging to the minority cultural groups who are commonly referred to as Nilotic or Nilo-Saharan, and many of whom live in western and southwestern Ethiopia (Rahmato 2003).
victims of famine. For instance, planned relocation, involving hundreds of thousands of afflicted people, took shape in the immediate aftermath of the 1984/85 famine and there were great hopes that it would provide a permanent solution for the victims of famine (Pankhurst 1992).

Resettlement under the Derge, however, encountered a series of setbacks and a host of problems. Rahmato (2004, p. 24) sums up this experience as follows:

In the period 1984-86, the Derge resettled some 600,000 people mostly in the lowlands of western Ethiopia. In this same period, some 33,000 settlers lost their live due to disease, hunger, and exhaustion, and thousands of the families were broken up. It is estimated that close to half a Billion Birr was spent on emergency resettlement, but the cost of damage caused to the environment, of the loss of livestock and other property, or of the distress and suffering caused to numerous people and communities will never be known.

Following the ousting of the Marxist military regime, with the exception of a few isolated attempts to relocate people, it seemed that planned resettlement was indefinitely suspended for some years. Recently, however, the EPRDF government has shown itself to be in favour of launching planned resettlement schemes, primarily to tackle the chronic food insecurity problem in some parts of the country. According to official statements, voluntary resettlement is viewed as a major and essential component of endeavours aimed at addressing the paramount problem of food insecurity in Ethiopia (GFDRE 2001).

As under previous regimes, it is believed that the voluntary planned relocation of vulnerable individuals and households will be instrumental in ensuring food security, while at the same time easing overwhelming pressure on the fragile resource base in the highlands (ibid). The government considered resettlement the cheapest and most viable solution to the problem of food insecurity on the basis of (a) the availability of land in receiving areas, (b) the labour force of resettlers, and (c) easing pressure of space for those remaining behind (Abbute 2004).

It is only a short time since the recent resettlement program was embarked upon under the present government but some critics have started to claim that it is being hastily executed without thorough preparation. They urge all concerned to take the necessary precautions to avoid the negative
humanitarian and ecological consequences so frequently associated with it (OCHA-IRIN 2005 and Rahmato 2003).

**The Boreda case**

Resettlement has frequently been undertaken to rehabilitate populations that have been adversely affected by natural disaster, unfavourable climatic conditions and/or political conflict. The current intra-regional resettlement program (including the case discussed here) comes into this category. The official objective of the current resettlement schemes, as stated in various documents, is to prevent famine (or attain food security) by moving people from drought-prone and over-crowded areas to sparsely populated regions and unoccupied virgin lands (Yntiso 2002).

As De Wet points out, when a community is relocated, it is not simply lifted up and set down whole in a new site. In most cases the community is reconfigured in specific ways. Most development projects, especially those that occasion the large-scale resettlement of populations particularly in rural areas, directly or indirectly further two fundamental processes: the expansion of the state and integration into regional and national market systems. Neither of these processes of inclusion is particularly simple or straight forward. In most instances, they provoke a fundamental restructuring and reorientation of social, economic, and political relationships toward the priorities of the larger society (Oliver-Smith 1996).

The emerging political institutions in the Boreda resettlement schemes support this assumption. For example, the kebele administration is the unit which governs all social, economic and political affairs in the villages. It is the one to allocate land, to distribute provisions, to enforce law etc. Compared to the situation in their home areas, the resettlers are under much closer government scrutiny with regard to their day to day undertakings.

When we look at the manner of the Boreda resettlement, no use of force or intimidation during the recruitment process was reported by the respondents. However the attractive promises of the government were considered as a ‘pull factor’, particularly for those who deserted at an early stage because of their unmet expectations. Those who did not regret their decision, despite unmet
expectations, were influenced more by ‘push factors’, such as a lack or shortage of land and unemployment in their home areas.

Given the length of time they have been in the new area (since February 2004), the resettlers seem to have made up their minds to stay. Almost all the respondents reported that they would not leave. This may be true, however, for the residents of one of the resettlement villages only, Gumgumta, who have already stayed for a long time without government support. The Dugana-Gamero village resettlers, on the other hand, have been getting government support in various forms, and no one can be sure how withdrawal of this support would affect resettlers’ decision to stay or leave. My conclusion, therefore, is that although the initial decision of the resettlers was partly affected by government promises, this is no longer relevant as a ‘pull factor’, at least for Gumgumta resettlers. Currently, for the great majority of resettlers, access to fertile land and sufficient grazing appear to be the most significant ‘pull factor’.

In the light of the above discussion of concepts and definitions, the conditions under which people moved to the Boreda resettlement sites could be characterised as ‘compulsory voluntary’ for the majority of settlers, who decided to resettle mainly as a result of ‘push factors’ such as land shortage and unemployment; ‘induced voluntary’ for those who opted for resettlement mainly as a result of government promises; and ‘voluntary’ for the remaining very few resettlers who decided in favour of resettlement as a means of enhancing their household asset base.

The preparation, recruitment and implementation process of the Boreda resettlement was similar to the previous government’s resettlement programs. It also suffered from inadequate inputs, unsound planning, poorly observed criteria, rushed out feasibility studies and inefficient village administration. There were serious limitations of financial, material, and logistical resources at all levels, which inevitably constrained the proper implementation of the program. Most basic services, such as veterinary services, school and health services, were poor in quality and entirely missing, in some villages. Desertion of the resettlers at the initial stage was also aggravated by the inadequacy of support. Dugana-Gamero resettlers in particular found themselves in a worse situation than before they moved, in some respects. All these consequences seem attributable to improper planning and inadequate funding on the part of the government. It is therefore apparent
that the necessary inputs needed for successful resettlement, according to Cernea’s IRR model, were largely absent.

According to a key informant from the local government side, of the 565 household heads who arrived initially, 172 left in just a few weeks. Reasons given by the participants included unmet expectations, the hostility of the environment, lack of medical care and shortage of water. The physical environment of their home area is very different from that of the new settlement. The former, at an altitude of 2200m, is characterised by a cold climate, while the latter, at an altitude of 1100-1250m, is hot. According to informants, the resettlers’ earlier cultural practices, socio-economic activities and physiological needs were very much influenced by the highland ecology with which they were familiar before resettlement. The sudden change to what they saw as an inhospitable environment made the resettlers’ first experiences very difficult. As one of the respondents put it:

Initially, many of us were shocked and uncomfortable by what we were experiencing and observing immediately in the aftermath of the resettlement. The shelters we were provided to live in were poorly constructed. The climate is hot which is very different to our home area. Mosquitoes and other insects were a problem at night.

Respondents reported that some resettlers became sick due to the sudden shift from a highland environment to a lowland one; many of them were exposed for the first time to health hazards caused by endemic diseases such as malaria, which is rampant in and around the resettlement area. These fundamental changes posed challenges which many of the resettlers found it difficult or impossible to adapt to, at least during the first period of resettlement. This illustrates De Wet’s point that such varied natural and man made circumstances make resettlement an inherently complex process, the negative consequences of which are often difficult to predict and avoid.

In terms of household food self sufficiency, the Gumgumta resettlers were more successful than the Dugano-Gamero resettlers. The suitability of the site, the proximity of resettlers to their home areas (intra-Wereda3), the opportunity to maintain regular contact with home area, and earlier livelihood experience were the major factors accounting for this differential success. From my

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3 The lower level administrative structure of the Government
observations and respondents’ accounts, the major factors contributing to the relative difference in the performance of the two villages in agricultural production were both human and natural. For instance, the soil in Gumgumta is fertile and has adequate drainage and the area received relatively good rainfall during the last few farm seasons. Rainfall in Dugana-Gamero over the past three seasons, however, has not been reliable. In the first season it was too little and in the next two seasons it was too much.

The major human factor that affected the success of the resettlers was their knowledge of the area and their past livelihood experience. All the resettlers of Gumgumta village came from within Boreda Wereda. Therefore, because of the proximity of the village to their earlier homes, all had a good knowledge of the new place. Gumgumta village, furthermore, shares a similar agro-ecology with their former home villages. This gave them a big advantage in adapting to a new place. Another advantage they had was that they were able to maintain regular contact with their previous home areas. As pointed out by those interviewed, they were still considered members in their home villages and were able to maintain their existing social networks and thus continue to benefit from their existing social capital.

The resettlers of Dugana-Gamero, on the other hand, were drawn from different Weredas and the climatic conditions and agro-ecology of their new village was very different from that of their original homes. As they pointed out, the agricultural practices they were accustomed to were very different from those which had to be adopted in the new area. Whereas they formerly cultivated using hand tools, they now had to learn how to use ox-ploughs. For some, even farming was a new experience, since they had depended for their livelihoods on off-farm activities, such as weaving. Those from the highlands were accustomed to eat enset, barley and wheat products, none of which were easily available in the new village.

For these reasons, Gumgumta resettlers were better able to cope with the immediate resettlement experience and were able to make rapid progress towards achieving food self-sufficiency, at least in the short run. The Dugana-Gamero resettlers, in contrast, faced multiple stresses, with the result that they still receive government food support in various forms and are still far away from producing sufficient food to feed themselves.
Conclusion and recommendations

In a market led economic world, it seems inevitable that there will be more and more infrastructural development and more and more environmental degradation, all of which is bound to force people to relocate. Similarly, with Ethiopia’s rapid annual population growth of 2.31 per cent and considerable economic growth (8.9 percent GDP estimated for 2005), it is likely that resettlement will also continue in Ethiopia, both spontaneously and through state initiated programs (CIA 2006). The general conclusion of this study, is that, while forced resettlement should be considered only after all other alternatives are exhausted, for those who move voluntarily, resettlement may provide improved livelihoods, but only on certain conditions. It should be done on a modest scale; it should be implemented within a relatively small geographical area and within a relatively homogeneous ecological zone; and it should be planned and executed with proper care and support for the resettlers.

There is no doubt that the Boreda resettlement program would have had a better chance of success if it had been supported by a proper feasibility study, by sound planning, and by adequate inputs. The findings of this research also illustrate the need to take into account the possibility of unexpected negative consequences, arising from the inherently complex human and environmental impacts of resettlement. To guard against these consequences, the following recommendations suggest themselves.

1. Resettlement should be planned and implemented as an open-ended process, enabling flexible adaptation to new and unexpected situations as they arise.
2. All necessary funds should be allocated to improve and upgrade the existing infrastructures – such as roads, health centres and schools.
3. Resettlement should be designed with a specific category of peasant cultivators in mind, and should be restricted to the same or similar agro-ecology, as far as possible.
4. To guarantee effective food security in the long run, other strategies should be adopted in addition to crop farming. These could include the promotion of livestock production and off-farm employment; natural resource conservation and rehabilitation; and, last but not least, reproductive health measures to help reduce the rapid growth of population.
Bibliography


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