

CAUSES AND IMPACT OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF AMHARA AND OIMANT ETHNIC GROUPS RELOCATED IN NORTH WEST ETHIOPIA

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the causes and impacts of internal displacement (hereafter ID) on women and children of 'Amhara' and 'Qimant' ethnic groups relocated in North-West Ethiopia. An exploratory qualitative study was carried out through Key informant interviews and FGDs triangulated with informal discussions and field observation. The sample respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The research findings show evidence from the two groups of ethnicities. The finding reveals that the cause for the ID is ethnic-based federalism, which is formulated based on ethnicity and the unanswered question of self-determination and self-administration. Regarding the impacts, ID affects the lives of displaced women, which in turn results in immediate family separation and the loss of social ties, which radically increases ID women's responsibilities. It is also disclosed that ID makes women more vulnerable to poverty and lack of health services, particularly reproductive health services. There is also evidence that children are exposed to insecurity of food and clothing. Combined with malnutrition, children are facing a lack of access to essential healthcare and education, traumatic stress and labour exploitation. The findings show that displaced women and children are suffering from discrimination that prevents access to civil, economic and political rights. Thus, it is recommended that the government give political resolutions and work closely with local NGOs to access need-based aid.

Keywords: Internally Displaced People, Women, Children, Ethnicity, Federalism

Introduction

Internally displaced people (hereafter IDPs) are groups of persons who are propelled to flee their homes or places of habitual residence and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Williams et al., 2018; IDMC, 2018). ID is one of the critical humanitarian issues of our time. The number of countries reporting ID increases each year. An estimated 30 million ID human beings, 80% of them women and children, have been forced to flee their

homes and communities because of conflict, natural disaster, ethnic tension, political violence or natural/man-made disasters. IDMC (2018) revealed 18.8 million fresh displacements related to disasters, and 11.8 pertain to conflict and violence in 2017. Almost 40 million people in over 50 countries were living in ID as a result of conflict or violence as of the end of the year (IDMC, 2018). The hugeness of the ever-growing problem of IDs exceeds the human and financial resources available to lighten suffering,

which is the case with IDs of women and children that bear the brunt.

IDPs may suffer systematic violations as they have no institutional or lawful mechanism for receiving international assistance and remain within the borders of their own country (IDMC,2018). Unlike refugees, IDPs do not have legal status because IDPs are still under the authority of their government and may not claim any rights in addition to those shared by refugees (Segura Escobar and Meertens,1997).

The IDP camps in which women and children stay present a lifestyle estranges to their cultural values, and in this unusual social context, gender roles change fundamentally. The vulnerabilities forced them into unaccustomed roles and responsibilities in which they were ill-prepared. Since well-respected elders and important icons are missing, they feel unwelcome or undesirable in the areas where they had fled and suffered discrimination at the hands of local people (Cernea, 1995). When lives radically change, as in the case of strained displacement, women often lose their negotiated positions or acceptance and revert to less just social statuses.

Women and children do have the right to necessities guaranteed by international laws and conventions: food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, education and skills training, and a chance to participate in social life (Williams et al. 2018). They are ignoring the IDPs rights, resulting in chronic physical and mental trauma. Therefore, they should benefit from all the protections afforded to other citizens and inhabitants of their country (IDMC,2018).IDPs who remain within national borders are responsible to their governments to meet their protection and needs.

National authorities, the government in power and those aspiring to retain power have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their citizens, especially women and children. IDPs who confront unique problems and face legal issues need advocacy support from the government within their jurisdiction (Williams et al., 2018). The focus of advocacy should remain on those leaders who have the authority and responsibility (Kalin and Chapuisat,2017). In the same vein, opposition groups must be critical in accessing and ensuring the protection of ID women and children. In addition, the media, in all aspects of work, advocacy, protection, and care, can be powerful partners and maintain the spotlight on conditions, needs, abuses, and program successes (Ivlevsa and Veliziotisb, 2017; Aalen, 2006). However, attempts by the government and civil society to respond to the needs of IDPs have often taken the form of emergency humanitarian assistance. This is necessary, but it does little to address the causes of displacement and stop future crises (IDMC, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia's internal security lapses have earned the unenviable record of being a global leader in ID (Yigzaw and Abitew, 2019). Displacement in Ethiopia has unexpectedly sky-rocketed due to ethnic tensions and border disputes. Thus, if the root causes are not addressed, ID could have broader implications for the country's development and stability.

The researchers ensured that the number of IDP women and children outnumbered men. ID generally step up the pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities of women. Women across the world are less empowered economically, legally, politically and socially on average than men, and ID women are

twice as underprivileged. IDP children are also one of the least visible (Quintero and Culler, 2012). The long-term impact of displacement on women may mean long-lasting loss of social and cultural ties (psycho-social problem). No matter how evidence seems to show that women and children are often the largest group in IDPs, their specific needs are not systematically addressed.

Thus, they may suffer systematic violations and have no institutional or lawful mechanism for receiving international aid (IDMC, 2018). Hence, they can only get local support, which in return lays a burden on the host community. Failing to address their needs can result in a loss of human development for them, their children, and their community at large.

There are some verifiable studies (Mehari, 2017; Yigzaw and Abitew, 2019; IDMC, 2018, 2019) which assessed the causes and figures of ID in Ethiopia. However, the studies have given less emphasis to the multiple factors of ID, how it impacts women and children and how it further increases inequalities, discrimination and loss of power. Moreover, little effort was made to assess the causes and impacts of ID in a coherent and structured way, which clearly gives a meaningful indication to understand this human tragedy in Ethiopia. Thus, this study aims to sharpen awareness of the gender dimensions of ID and to provide initial guidance to any agencies on the appropriate gender response to the urgent and growing needs of ID women and children.

Research Methodology

Study Area

The ID began when the Amhara-Qimant ethnic groups' conflict struck in April 2019 in North-West Gondar, Ethiopia. During the period, the central

Gondar Zone Disaster Risk Management and Food Security office estimated that 82,422 people were compelled to ID and resettle in Chilga, Ambagiorgis, Soroqa, Woleka, Lay Armachiho, Aymba, Gondar city (Erisha Sebil site & Arbaba) Guhala, Chandiba, and Chuahit.

Ersiha Seble and Arbaba Sites belong to the sites set up in Central Gondar where the Amhara and Qimant ethnicity IDs relocated, respectively, in the two relief camps were the participants of the study. In addition, the original places where the IDPs came from were investigated. The areas selected were representatives of the ID community of Amhara-Qimant ethnicity in North-west Ethiopia. The other is by the areas where the IDPs originally came from.

According to the estimation of the central Gondar Zone Disaster Risk Management and Food Security office, about 4939 'Qimant' IDPs fled from Metema, Quara, Tegede, Armachiho and Sanja and reside in Gondar City, Arbaba site. On the other hand, about 3537 IDPs of Amhara ethnicity fled from Arbaba, Woleka, Chilga and Sabia to resettle in Gondar City: Erisha Seble site in 2020.

Research Approach

The exploratory research method is used in pursuit of increased knowledge about the causes and challenges of internal displacement. Given that there is limited study on the effect of ID on women and children, particularly in North-West Ethiopia.

Participants of the Study

North-West Gondar was chosen because it was the zone where the researchers experienced the problem. In the North-West Gondar Zone, there are 11 sites in which the IDPs of both ethnicities relocated. Through purposive sampling, the two sites (Arbaba, Erisha

Seble) in Gondar City were chosen as samples because they represent the two ethnic groups. From the two sites, 15 key informant interviewees (only female) of each ethnic group who were willing to openly and honestly share information were chosen using purposive sampling.

FGD groups were set up from each ethnic group: two groups from the relocation areas each (selected based on their age, gender and the role they have played in the camp) and two groups from the original areas (4 selected areas where they came from Chilga, Gendewuha, Ayimba and Tikildingay) which consists of 9-12 participants (both sex) each.

The sites in which the ID originally came from were considered to be observed for the field notes. Thus, from the places the IDPs displaced, Gendewuha, Chilga, Tikildingay and Ayimba were chosen purposively as these sites have either only one of the ethnicities or the mixture.

Data Collection Tools

The study used a complementary set of data collection tools. Basically, Key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs were employed to get exploratory qualitative data, which was complemented by informal discussion and observation. The semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the female participants to find out how the ID impacts them and how it further widens inequality, discrimination and stigma. To do so, questions were framed by the researchers and evaluated by experts. Regarding the FGD, the general set of questions that trigger the causes of displacement and its multidimensional impacts were speculated by the researchers and evaluated by senior researchers and were subject to amendments. The observations for the

field notes were made simply by having the frame of the areas in mind and making the notes of what changed after the displacement happened to relate the IDPs' present life with that of the past.

Data Gathering Procedures

Senior researchers evaluated the FGD and the key informant questions to make amendments. Thus, the key informant interview took place first, followed by the FGDs. The key informant interviews were held thrice at the two selected sites, Erisha Sebil and Arbaba Site, until the data was saturated. In fact, the last one was conducted to check if the interviewees were consistent in the responses they gave and to collect assurance of their words as part of the credibility criteria of qualitative research.

The KII and FGD were tape-recorded, and at the same time, they were written by the interviewers. The study team used Amharic, the national language, to collect the data through the FGD and KII. Two data collectors were engaged in guiding and tape-recording the discussion. Then, the data collectors reviewed the recordings together and transcribed them verbatim.

The observation or the field notes were used to triangulate the information found from the FGDs and KII. In addition, it was used to see what really was in the ground: what the places looked like before and the breadth that the IDPs lost.

Data Analysis

Once the data collected through FGDs, KIIs, and field notes were transcribed and coded, the data was analysed thematically into themes and sub-themes. Then, findings are presented by analysing the distinct and shared understandings of the two sites against the research questions.

Reliability and Validity

Purposive sampling was used to ensure the study's transferability. Thick description and robust data with a wide possible range of information through detailed and accurate descriptions of the IDPs, their current settlement area and the original places they were displaced from were examined. In this study, recruitment of participants and data collection continued until the data were saturated, completed and replicated. The audiotaped data were meticulously transcribed by a professional transcriber for scrutiny. After categorizing and making sense of the transcribed data, all efforts were exerted to illuminate themes and descriptors as they emerged. During the analysis phase, every effort was made to document all aspects of the analysis.

To achieve credibility, the researchers collected data repeatedly from the participants till it got saturated, member checks of the solicited data were made, and data were triangulated using different tools. Besides, in this study, dependability was achieved by letting expert qualitative researchers review the transcribed data. Thus, themes are validated, and the descriptions are identified. Any new themes and descriptors illuminated by the expert qualitative researchers were acknowledged and considered. This was made to ensure that the analysts agreed on the findings related to the themes and meanings within the transcribed materials.

Analysis and Discussion

This study aimed at answering the causes of ID, its impact on women and children and how it is related to power inequality, exclusion or marginalization, particularly on women and children who are relocated

to Erisha Sebil and Arbaba sites situated in North-west Ethiopia.

Concerning the causes of ID in North-West Gondar with a particular reference to IDPs in the Erisha Sebil and Arbaba sites, the data gathered from the KII and FGD revealed that the ethnic-based federalism that is induced by politicians for their own sake is the reason for Amhara-Qimant conflict which leave many to ID. Yusuf (2019) revealed that the highest number of fresh internal displacements associated with conflict triggered by inter-ethnic violence in Ethiopia caused almost 2.9 million new displacements in 2018, which is four times the figure for 2017. Besides, Yigzaw and Abitew (2019) and Tepfenhart (2013) stated that inter-communal strife is the cause of IDPs. The second theme identified as a cause for the ID was the question of self-determination and administration. Awoke's (2010) finding also revealed that self-determination for ethnic groups is likely changed into claims of secession, which leads to the disintegration of federal states.

The findings ID impacts women and children specifically revealed that women suddenly find themselves as head of household, which leaves them lacking food, shelter and social services, including health services. ID also leads to the break up of family, social and cultural ties that affect psycho-social wellbeing, and it makes people leave their possessions behind and unable to find work in the new resettlement areas. It is also revealed that this situation forced women to assume unaccustomed roles previously held by men. This finding is consistent with Williams et al. (2018), Yigzaw and Abitew (2019), Mehari (2017) findings, and that of Mmahi (2016), which read as ID negatively affecting

the population; usually the situations are worse for the ID women (Mmahi, 2016). In other cases, men become involved in the conflict by sending the women to new areas. As an immediate effect, the family separation completely changed the women's gender roles and family structure (Babarinde, 2014; Yigzaw and Abitew, 2019; Alobo and Obaji, 2016; Levine et al., 2019).

Displacement is not only a unique experience for women but also for their children. The results of the thematic analysis from KII and FGD from both study sites identified three key problems that children are facing: lack of access to essential healthcare, education and traumatic stress associated with the breakup of a family and poor socioeconomic circumstances. Diarrhoea and pneumonia were found to be the main concerns of ID children at this study site. The family disruption, together with their experiences during conflict, put children in traumatic disorder. It was also found that the family break-up forced children to live with either of their parents. In line with this, Akuto's 2017 finding revealed that in ID settings, children are also the most risk-exposed segment during emergencies caused by food shortages.

Similarly, Baines and Gauvin (2014) and Amodu, Richter and Salami (2020) revealed that displaced children have unique health and sanitation needs but are left unsupported by the existing health service provisions. Poor nutrition and sanitation status of displaced children partly explained the poor state of children's health (Mmahi, 2016; Amodu et al., 2020). As to IDMC (2018), it was uncovered that isolation or overcrowding in places of resettlement camps also

aggravates their depression and anxiety, which is also identified in this study.

The finding revealed that children in ID settings have no access to education and that it was not easy for them to return to their origin or have access to education in the host community. The respondents stated that schools are essential environments for integrating the displaced children with the host community, but their right to education is denied because of various factors. ID separates children from their familiar school and interrupts their education even for some years (Mmahi, 2016; IDMC, 2018).

With regard to the relationship between identification and power inequality: impacts on exclusion, marginalization, and vulnerable populations, it is found that displaced children find it difficult to access basic services such as housing, protection and education. The problem emanates from discrimination and stigmatization, lack of documentation, financial impediments, inadequate information about available services and difficulty identifying the systems. These contrast with citizens should enjoy natural rights and legal rights such as civil, political and economic rights, where their violations lead to inequalities, discrimination, stigmatization, denial of voices, vulnerability and deprivation, which their impacts seriously affect women and children (Hollinger and Sienkevyc, 2019).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Article 19 states 'The Freedom of Opinion and Information', and Sundal (2010) states that IDPs should participate in actions to be done for them; however, with respect to the data collected, the respondents claim that they have problems related

with institutional and administrative barriers in that they do not have any participation in the decision-making process on the issues that regards them such as humanitarian responses and planning. As they reported, it makes the process of rehabilitating the IDPs worse because any help that ever happened is based on what the government and the humanitarians need. Thus, such help does not answer the acute questions required by the IDPs. The above finding is in contrast with Hollinger and Sienkevyc (2019), who affirm ensuring civil participation in public life and in decision-making at the local level, as well as ensuring that IDPs can use their political rights, is an essential component of integration. IDPs need forums in which they can express their concerns and opinions and share their experiences.

Regarding documentation, UNICEF (2009) approve that documents specific to ID are provided to those affected to access special assistance or services. If not done well, it exposes IDPs to discrimination, stigma and other risks. Hence, as per the data collected through FGD, the respondents relocated to the two sites and complained about a lack of documentation that led them to have extremely limited access to services and a threat to security. They reveal that let alone giving legal documentation, the administration does not even have the exact number of the IDPs.

Education is a fundamental human right that is requisite for the exercise of other human rights (Kalin and Entwistle, 2018; Tull, 2019). The respondents from the FGD and Key informants assured us that their children are denied their right to education since they lack legal documentation. Since they have an acute displacement type, they arrive with an empty hand. The field trip observation affirmed that many

children were seen spending time idly playing on dust. Thus, since children cannot be enrolled on school due to a lack of legal documents and as the family cannot cover the expenditure, including the food, they get exposed to child labour, which UNHCR highly condemns.

Legal documentation is also essential for accessing health services (UNICEF,2009; Goodman,2016). However, the FGD disclose how the IDPs experience a lack of vital health services because they lack legal documentation. An illustration is that they do have a lack of contraception and follow-up treatments.

The third issue related to the lack of legal documentation, as stated by UNICEF (2009), is insecurity. In line with this, the FGD reports that the IDPs are subjected to threats, harassment, and attacks from other groups. They noted that they do have fear and a sense of insecurity both in and outside the camps. It was expressed that they are uncertain about what comes next to them. The government body levies to no protection, and they worry that they may fall under attack as they are displaced because of the communal conflict. The so-called enemies who sparked the violence are the nearby of both ethnicities. Thus, due to a lack of documentation, the IDPs were deprived of their legal, human, civil and political rights, which in turn led them to marginalization, inequality and vulnerability to health problems.

The second theme pulled out from the data was the violation of the economic rights of the IDPS. According to the World Bank (2001), ID leads to separation from asset resources, a rise in impoverishment risk, and the absence of work. Based on the data gathered in this study, the ID has a

negative impact on the economy of the country as well as the IDPs. The researchers' observation of the places where the IDPs came from assured that they lived in very good conditions, assisting the economy of the country and then paying taxes to the government, but unfortunately, the ID devastated all these realities and left them in unprecedented condition. Loss of assets as one consequence of ID is investigated both in the FGD and KII and triangulated through the field notes of the observations. The FGD data from the two sites revealed that they were forced to flee their home and land; thus, they lost everything, which further increased inequalities and economic deprivation. The ID has an impact on the economy of the IDPs and the country at large. It also further increases the inequalities of the IDPs not competing with the rest of the community and leads them to be stigmatized.

The third theme that was marked from this study was access to food and basic shelter. Kalin (2008); Leckie. (2007) confirm that food is an essential precondition for the exercise of virtually all other human rights. Thus, the availability of sufficient quantity and quality of food provision must be ensured. Regarding the rights to access adequate food and water, the respondents affirm that they have been denied both. The key informants from the two sites witnessed that the vulnerable (HIV and Diabetic patients, pregnant women, babies and people with high blood pressure) could not get a diet as per the medication ordered.

Regarding basic shelter, the field note from the observation revealed that the IDPs were forced to live in substandard camps, collective shelters or informal urban settlements. It was found that the IDPs of the

Arbaba site settled in substandard camps in forests where the cold and the hot weather conditions happen to them. Whereas the IDPs in the Ersha Sebil site settled in collective shelters, where overflowing and lack of sanitation can increase the rife of communicable diseases. This collective shelter is a warehouse which is the property of the Ministry of Agriculture in which IDPs of all kinds (without age-sex discrimination) shelter.

The fifth theme reveals how the ID emanates from the ethnic-based federalism impacts family life. Henckaerts (2009) writes that the unity of families should be protected, and family members must be accommodated together. Despite that, it was found that the ID has a social impact on the lives of the IDPs. It was uncovered that a husband separated from his wife and children and vice versa.

The sixth theme depicts how the right to non-discrimination (Leckie, 2007) on the basis of race, sex, economic status, or other status is denied. Salami et al. (2011) approve that displaced families are largely deprived due to their lack of social ties, their dependence on governmental and non-governmental organization aid and their difficulty in accessing formal and informal jobs. Parallel to this, the data gathered through KII and FGDs reveal that the IDPs do face discrimination and stigmatization by the host community. The host community is not happy to see them in the area. This is in line with Salami et al. (2011) and Cernea (1995). Williams et al. (2018) found that the relationship between the host community and IDPs are multiples in that when IDPs first arrive there is often an expression of solidarity and support as friends or family members help them to get settled. Still, such goodwill is often momentary

because of the limited resources of the host community.

Discrimination to access to formal and informal jobs is among the violations of the rights to non-discrimination mentioned by Leckie (2007). Hollinger and Sienkevych (2019) added that access to job opportunities and income is essential to improving self-reliance and preventing displacement from becoming prolonged. Employment and self-employment allow IDPs to integrate socially and economically, reduce dependency on government and humanitarian aid and actively contribute to the local economy. They emphasize the importance of IDPs' socioeconomic integration based on their skills, gender, age and disabilities. It also aims to improve collaboration between national and local authorities to ensure return conditions are comparable across the territory. Whereas the data from the KII and FGDs claim that people get stigmatized for who they are from getting any jobs. The host community does not even let them participate in jobs for which they are qualified. They said that there are carpenters, but they find nobody to hire them in the host community. The women do have the skills to serve the host community, but the host community is not determined enough to hire them.

Psychological trauma is also another consequence of ID that was revealed through FGDs and KII. The respondents stated that the mental state that they are in is very poor. They expressed that they face psychological problems as they haunt the incidents that happened to them. This finding is consistent with Mhari (2017) and Yigzaw and Abitews (2019) finding that ID made IDPs more susceptible to psychological problems and led them to death. World Bank

(2014/16) also affirms the above finding that the psychological disorders experienced by IDPs bring about a sense of separation, helplessness and defenseless, irrational fear, and loss of self-confidence and identity because of a range of stressful and traumatic experiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the finding, conflict-induced displacement, which emanates from ethnic-based federalism, was found to be the cause of ID. The question of self-administration and determination remained unanswered by the regional and central governments, causing communal conflict that led many to displacement.

Regarding the impacts of displacement on women and children, it was uncovered that ID violates the human rights of women and children in that it lets them lack basic needs such as food, drinking water, water for sanitation, and shelter, which further causes health problems. ID, which is caused by communal strife, lets women and children break up from their families as spouses of different ethnicities break up, which impacts the overall family life. ID also led women to economic crises in that women found themselves changing their roles unprepared as a family and let them not participate in finance-generating activities as they used to. The social crises they face also are undeniable that women do not participate in social activities in the settlement areas as even the host community does not permit that. Trauma or psychological problems occur both in women and children as they haunt what happened to them by the time they were displaced and because they cannot resist the actual situation. Children also left behind the school in addition to the above problems

mentioned. If so, children and women could not cope with the future and get stigmatized from national activities.

In relation to how ID further impacts women and children and how it is related to power, the finding reveals that displacement leaves children and women without legal documentation, which lets them not get healthcare services and education for children: this led the children to participate in abusive labour forces. Women also, because of the absence of legal documentation, do not feel a sense of security to move freely and to get jobs that suit their abilities. This increases the inequality between women and children in a given society. Socialization is another impact of ID that lets women not participate in the community that they are relocated to as the host community does not treat them as privileged citizens, which further increases the discriminatory factor of the ID.

Women in the ID centres claim that they have problems related to institutional and administrative barriers in that they do not have any participation in the decision-making process around the issues that concern them, which further increases the inequalities of women and children.

The family break up because of the divorce versed from ethnicity and death during the conflict creates burdens on women and children as they may lose the main daily breadwinner of the family. This added to the loss of assets, led IDPs to serious psychological problems. The trauma happened in the aftermath, and the thought of the actual and future events made them desperate. This prevents children and women from participating in society and lets them become vulnerable equally.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, we recommend that government bodies listen to the questions of the two communities to avoid conflicts that trigger internal displacements. Disaster management offices of all levels (national, regional, zone and, provincial, town offices), NGOs and host communities should respond to children's and women's IDP needs once it happens.

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