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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FORCED EVICTIONS ON PERI-URBAN FARMING HOUSEHOLDS IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study's findings on the socio-economic impacts of forced evictions on peri-urban farming households in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, amidst rapid urbanization are significant. The mixed-methods approach, including a survey of 223 evicted households and 12 focus group discussions, revealed severe livelihood disruptions, income instability, and food insecurity following displacement. The inadequacy of compensation, ranging from 15,000 to 150,000 Birr, with 70% of households expressing dissatisfaction, underscores the urgency for improved resettlement approaches. The preference for in-kind compensation in the form of land or building malls, and housing, emphasizing its importance for livelihood security and long-term recovery, further highlights the need for tailored solutions. This research underscores the need for more equitable resettlement approaches prioritizing in-kind benefit sharing such as land-for-land, a meaningful share from the developed real estates participatory planning, and a combination of in-kind and cash compensation tailored to affected communities' needs.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid urbanization in developing countries, including Addis Ababa, has led to an urgent demand for land, resulting in the forced eviction of peri-urban farming households (UN-Habitat, 2016). These evictions have severe socio-economic impacts on affected communities, including loss of livelihoods, income instability, and food insecurity (De Sherbinin, 2008). Urban farming or agriculture, a crucial source of income and food security for these households, is under threat. It may help to reduce food-related expenditures in one way, and it is a tool to be an income source for those who practice it (Mougeot, 2005; Pauleit et al., 2019; Zezza & Tasciotti, 2010). The practice of urban agriculture to produce food domestically minimizes food import. In such urban agriculture, practices have a significant impact on food availability. Urban agriculture enhances access to food security as it deals with consumers' purchasing capacity. Urban agriculture is one of the pillars of food security as it creates political stability in reducing food prices for urban consumers. Harvesting from the backyard, lower transportation costs to nearby markets, availability of fresh food, and lower perishability of food are other features of urban agriculture (Paulcontribute, 2019). This research investigates the experiences of peri-urban households forcibly evicted due to urban expansion in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on the impacts of displacement, compensation adequacy, and resettlement preferences.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Urban expansion:** Urban expansion is a means of land grabbing in developing countries (Peluso & Lund, 2011). The urban land area of Addis Ababa city has increased by displacing farming communities threefold, from 99 km<sup>2</sup> in 1987 to 283.9 km<sup>2</sup> in 2017 (Tadele et al., 2020). The expansion of Addis Ababa city into arable land is at the expense of the livelihoods of the farming communities. It has greatly affected the livelihoods and quality of life of rural communities that depend on agriculture as their main economic activity (United Nations, 2018). The issue of displacement of peri-urban dwellers due to urban expansion become a severe socio-economic and political problem for the farming communities living in surrounding cities in Ethiopia. Peri-urban farmers' evictions from their indigenous land for land re-development is a continuous process that negatively affects the livelihood of farming communities (Idris et al., 2020).

**Urbanization and agricultural land issue in Ethiopia:** In Ethiopia, due to rapid urbanization, agricultural land in peri-urban areas has been transformed into built-up regions through horizontal urban expansion that affects land use value. There is a high demand for informal and illegal peri-urban land, which peri-urban farmers have held, and this plays a vital role in the unauthorized and sub-standard house construction on agricultural land (Mohammed et al., 2020). This urbanization has yet to be extensively reviewed and documented. In this review, an attempt has been made to assess the impacts of

rapid urbanization on agricultural activities. Urban expansion has reduced the areas available for agriculture, which has seriously impacted peri-urban farmers, who often need more land to cultivate, increasing their vulnerability (Mohammed *et al.*, 2020). Housing encroachments have been observed to be uncontrolled due to a weak government response to the trend of unplanned city expansion. This has exposed peri-urban farmers to the adverse shocks of urbanization because significant urbanization-related agricultural land loss positively correlates with grain production decrease. Appropriate governing bodies should control urban development to control the illegal and informal spread of urbanization on agricultural land that threatens food production (Assefa A *et al.*, 2020).

**Socio-economic impact of forced evictions:** Peri-urban farmers' evictions from their ancestral land for land re-development are a continuous process that negatively affects the livelihood of farming communities. The factors that contribute to urban expansion in Amhara regional state are economic policy reform, the creation of enabling the environment for private investors, the unsatisfied demand of urban dwellers for residential, and the expansion of public sector projects (Yalew, 2020). A collaborative effect of policy limitations, potential conflicts, unplanned livelihood, and poor saving habits of peri-urban farmers, lack of municipality intervention and lack of good governance negatively affect the livelihood of peri-urban farmers and jeopardize the image of government (Foishal *et al.*, 2023). The forwarded solutions are that municipalities should have fully implemented urban policies, work on mutual benefits of concerned stakeholders, and continuously follow up on evicted farmers' livelihoods should be practised (Mohammed *et al.*, 2020). Urbanization has forcefully displaced farmers from their farm landholding system in Bahir Dar. The study investigated determinants of households' livelihood strategy choices and impact analysis of urbanization of Bahir Dar city on peri-urban households' livelihood strategies. Households' livelihood choice was significantly influenced by age, education level, and dependency ratio at a 10% significance level and family size at a 1% significance level. However, household sex ( $P < 0.01$ ), land size, and access to credit ( $P < 0.001$ ) negatively influence their livelihood choice. Police intervention is required to address the negative impacts of farmland loss in peri-urban areas (Tassie Wegedie, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, combining a survey of 223 evicted households with 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) in Woreda 2, 6, and 14 of Lemmi Kura Sub-city of Addis Ababa. The survey collected quantitative data on socio-economic characteristics, livelihood impacts, and compensation received. The inclusion of FGDs provided qualitative insights into the experiences of displacement, perceptions of the compensation process, and preferences for resettlement, enhancing the depth and reliability of the findings.

## FINDINGS

**Theme: Forced evictions and livelihood disruption:** The forced eviction of farming households resulted in the immediate loss of agricultural land, livelihoods, and homes. Participants described the trauma and distress caused by the sudden and involuntary displacement from their ancestral lands and homes. One participant stated, "In 2011, they forcibly took it away from us without our interest" (P1). Another participant noted, "We were born, raised, and lived our entire lives here. It is difficult to accept the loss of our land" (P3). The land was predominantly used for agriculture, grazing, and forestry, highlighting the integral role it played in the participants' livelihoods and cultural heritage. The evictions were primarily for urban development and real estate purposes, with participants feeling powerless in the face of government-led development agendas. A participant noted, "We have no influence over the compensation price policy; they made all the decisions and completed all the tasks" (P8).

The lack of consultation and compensation commensurate with land value exacerbated feelings of injustice and mistrust towards government authorities. One participant stated, "The government does not care about the farmers. They only care about the investors and the real estate developers" (P2). Research has consistently shown that forced evictions have devastating impacts on the livelihoods of peri-urban farming communities. A study conducted in Ethiopia found that evictions significantly affect the economic livelihoods of peri-urban farmers, disrupting their primary sources of income and forcing them to adapt to non-agricultural occupations. Similarly, research in North Ethiopia highlighted the need for solid strategies to mitigate the impact of urban expansion on peri-urban farmers, underscoring the vulnerability of these communities to displacement.

**Theme: Experience of displacement:** The forced eviction of peri-urban households resulted in the instantaneous loss of agricultural land, livelihoods, and property. An FGD participant poignantly described the experience: "They took our land without our consent... We were left with nothing. Our livelihoods were destroyed overnight." The trauma of displacement persists, with another participant emphasizing: "Even years after, we have not recovered. The trauma remains with us, always remembering what we lost."

**An FGD participant emphasized:** "Land is life for us. If they gave us new land, we could rebuild our lives. But money is short-term; it does not replace the security of land." **Another participant added:** "Housing is also better than money. At least then we have a place to stay, a new home to build on." A third participant noted: "With land or housing, we can create our livelihoods. Money will finish, but land and housing are long-term."

### Theme: Economic impacts and compensation

The loss of agricultural land and livelihoods led to a significant decline in household incomes. Participants struggled to adapt to urban livelihoods, lacking the skills and capital to engage in alternative income-generating activities. One participant stated, "We used to make money from farming, but that has ended, and we have no experience, skills, or energy outside of it" (P5). Another participant noted, "We are now dependent on our children who work as daily laborers. We are unable to support ourselves" (P9). The compensation received was inadequate, with participants expressing dissatisfaction with the amount and allocation of compensation. A participant noted, "We used it for our own consumption, therefore as of right now, we are broke" (P4). The compensation mechanism favored household heads and their adult children, excluding other household members and exacerbating intra-household inequalities. One participant stated, "The compensation was not enough to replace what we lost. We were not able to buy new land or start a new business" (P6). Participants preferred in-kind compensation, such as land-for-land, and meaningful shares from the developed real estates over cash payments. One participant noted, "Land is better than money. Money will be spent, but land will remain" (P2). The inadequacy of compensation pushed households into poverty, increasing dependence on external aid and undermining their resilience and ability to recover from the eviction. A participant stated, "We are now living in poverty. We have to beg for food and other necessities" (P10). International human rights law emphasizes the importance of fair and just compensation for losses incurred due to forced evictions. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stressed that compensation should reflect the total value of lost properties and livelihoods and that affected persons should have access to effective remedies and legal aid. However, the participants' experiences in this study highlight the widespread failure to meet these standards in practice.

**Theme: Compensation process:** The compensation households receive from 15,000 to 150,000 Birr per hectare, or 1.50 to 15.00 birr per square meter of our farmland, is far below the expropriated lands' market value. In contrast, resellers such as real estate developers sell at exorbitantly higher prices than the compensation paid to the displaced households. The majority expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation process, citing a lack of transparency, fairness, and

consultation. An FGD participant noted: "The compensation was a joke. It did not even cover the costs of relocating, let alone replace what we lost in land and livelihoods." Consultation, if it exists at all, is also made merely to endorse the mission of urban expansion rather than address the needs of the evicted communities.

### **Theme: Preferences for compensation**

Households strongly preferred in-kind compensation in the form of farmland or housing. An FGD participant emphasized, "Land is life for us. If they gave us new farmland, we could rebuild our lives. But money is short-term; it does not replace the security of farmland." Another participant added, "Business housing is also better than money. At least then we have a place to stay, a new home to build on."

**Theme: Resettlement and livelihood restoration:** A lack of consultation and joint planning characterized the resettlement process. This resulted in poor living conditions, inadequate access to essential social services such as quality education, inability to get construction permits for maintaining their houses, and low livelihood opportunities in relocation sites. Participants reported increased food insecurity, mental health issues, and social conflicts in resettlement areas. One participant noted, "We are unsatisfied and not pleased with anything; after eviction, our life has slipped into the hands of strangers or the streets, and we sit and wait for more assistance" (P7). Research has highlighted the importance of participatory resettlement planning and livelihood restoration programs to support the recovery of displaced communities. A study on resettlement in Bangladesh emphasized the need for housing transformation and livelihood restoration initiatives in resettlement sites, highlighting the role of secure housing and income-generating activities in rebuilding resilience. Similarly, research in Kenya found that post-eviction livelihood choices significantly influenced the well-being of households, underscoring the need for support for diversified livelihood strategies.

**Socio-economic impacts of forced evictions:** The socio-economic impact of forced evictions on peri-urban farming households in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was quantitatively measured using descriptive statistical analysis. The narrative below outlines the results obtained. Sixty-one and 39 per cent of the respondents were among the households fully or partially evicted from their farmland, respectively. Ninety-eight per cent lost their agricultural land, and 79 per cent lost their grazing land. Only 24 per cent of them are engaged in farming after eviction, whereas all were farmers during the peri-eviction period. Ninety-seven per cent of them reported that their agricultural production had decreased. Eighty-three per cent of their young children become jobless after eviction. The income of 97 per cent of the respondents has decreased. Over 70% of the respondents' income level has deteriorated poorly or severely. As a result, 81 % of the respondents' livelihoods deteriorated after eviction. More than 93 per cent of them are food insecure and are either depending on external support or live miserable lives. Seventy-nine per cent reported that their social network weakened. Community traditions and values deteriorated as newcomers infiltrated, and 74 per cent reported that their children lost their ancestral land and reported not having the hope of maintaining it.

## **DISCUSSION**

The interviews highlighted a strong preference among households for in-kind compensation in the form of land or housing rather than monetary compensation. The preference for in-kind compensation reflects the importance of land as a source of livelihood security and well-being for peri-urban farming households. Research has shown that in-kind compensation can help mitigate the impoverishment risks associated with displacement, including loss of assets, income, and livelihoods. In-kind benefits, such as land or housing, provide a foundation for displaced households to sustainably rebuild their lives and livelihoods. In contrast, cash compensation is often inadequate and short-term, failing to replace the value of lost assets and

livelihoods. A study on resettlement in Rwanda found that cash compensation alone can induce further displacement effects, as households may struggle to utilize the money to secure new housing and livelihoods effectively. In-kind compensation, on the other hand, can promote spatial justice and help achieve more equitable resettlement outcomes. The preference for in-kind compensation also underscores the need for more nuanced and equitable approaches to resettlement planning. Resettlement policies and practices must be reformed to prioritize in-kind benefit sharing and ensure that displaced households receive adequate compensation for their long-term livelihood recovery. It requires a shift away from cash-centric approaches and towards more inclusive and sustainable resettlement models that prioritize the needs and preferences of affected communities. However, in-kind compensation approaches also present potential challenges. A study on resettlement in Rwanda found that in-kind compensation can be complex to implement, as it requires careful planning and coordination with multi-stakeholders to ensure that the compensation meets the needs and preferences of displaced households. For example, providing new land or housing requires ensuring access to basic services, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities. Failure to adequately plan and implement in-kind compensation can result in further displacement and impoverishment risks, underscoring the need for participatory and inclusive resettlement planning processes. Additionally, research has highlighted that in-kind compensation may not always be feasible or appropriate, depending on the context and circumstances of displacement. In some cases, cash compensation may be necessary to provide displaced households the flexibility to meet their immediate needs and priorities. Therefore, in-kind and cash compensation approaches may be required, tailored to affected communities' specific needs and preferences. The findings underscore the severe socio-economic impacts of forced evictions on peri-urban farming households. The loss of land assets and displacement result in significant disruptions to livelihoods, income stability, and food security, with long-lasting effects on well-being (Cernea, 2000). The inadequacy and unfairness of the compensation process exacerbate the vulnerability of displaced households, limiting their ability to recover (De Wet, 2006). The emphasis on land as a source of livelihood security and the preference for in-kind compensation underscores the need for more nuanced and equitable approaches to resettlement and compensation (Mathur, 2008).

## **CONCLUSION**

The research highlights the need for more equitable and inclusive urban development practices that balance urbanization's demands with protecting peri-urban farmers' rights and interests. This requires greater transparency and consultation in land governance, ensuring affected communities are involved in decision-making and receive fair and adequate compensation (World Bank, 2004). Urban planning policies must prioritize the socio-economic well-being of displaced households, providing access to alternative building shopping malls for their livelihood, and housing, livelihood support, and social services (Cernea, 2000). The forced eviction of peri-urban farming households has devastating and long-lasting impacts on livelihoods, incomes, and well-being. The findings highlight the need for more equitable and just compensation mechanisms that recognize the total value of lost lands and livelihoods. The government and other stakeholders must ensure that evictions are carried out strictly with international human rights standards, prioritizing the rights and interests of affected communities. Further research is needed to explore practical strategies for supporting the resilience and recovery of evicted households and promoting their rights in the face of urbanization pressures.

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