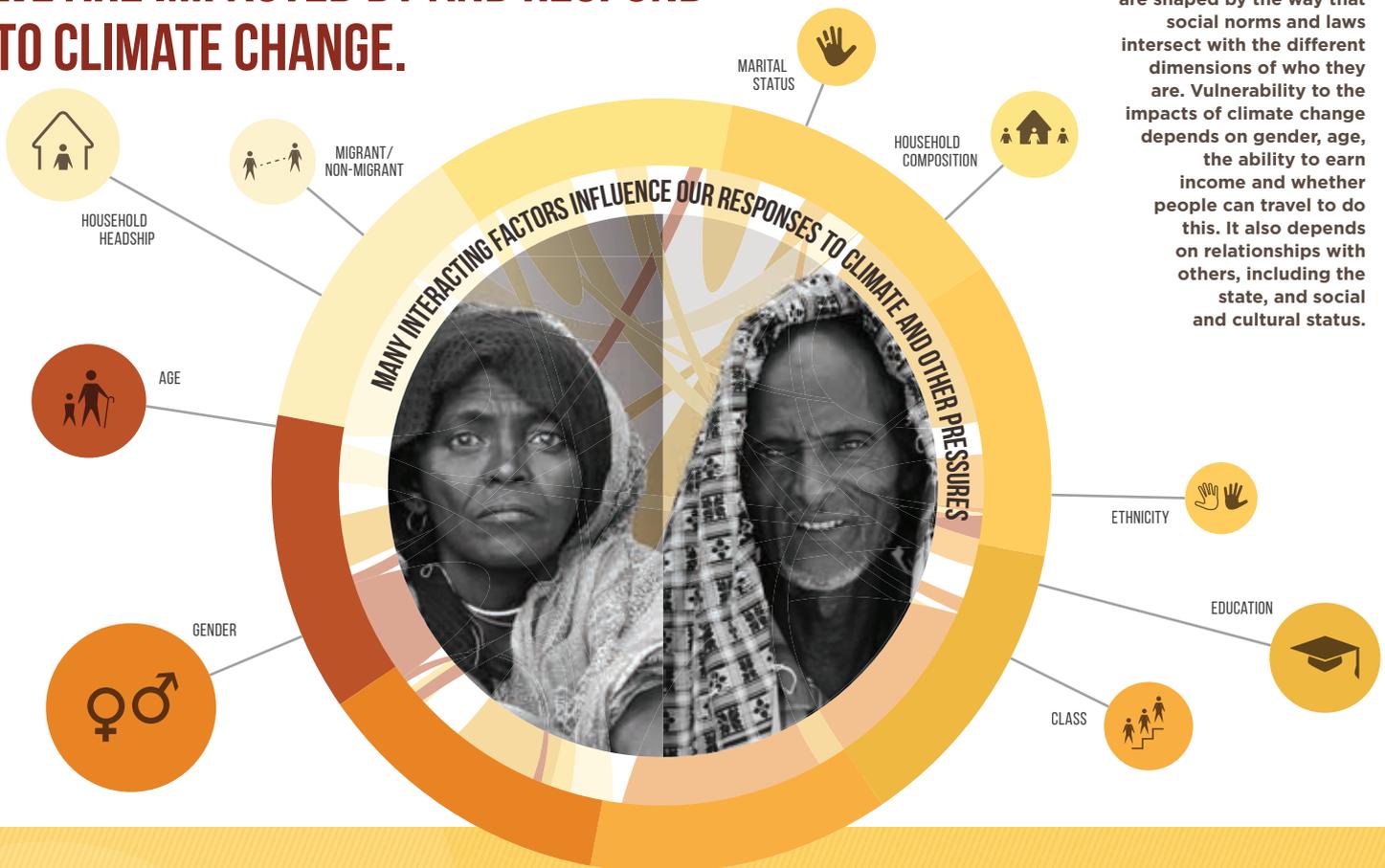


IN SEMI-ARID REGIONS, GENDER AND HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS SHAPE HOW WE ARE IMPACTED BY AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT HOMOGENEOUS CATEGORIES.

Rather, people's experiences are shaped by the way that social norms and laws intersect with the different dimensions of who they are. Vulnerability to the impacts of climate change depends on gender, age, the ability to earn income and whether people can travel to do this. It also depends on relationships with others, including the state, and social and cultural status.



INVASIVE PLANTS AND PERSISTENT DROUGHT ARE PUTTING PRESSURE ON PASTORALISTS AND AGRO-PASTORALISTS IN ETHIOPIA'S AFAR REGION.

With massive livestock deaths, pastoralists are moving into agriculture and salaried or informal employment. Some are migrating to cities, splitting their households across rural and urban areas. Households are becoming more complex. New household structures, where female household heads take in elderly parents and divorced siblings, offer new opportunities for mutual support. Women are playing greater roles in decision-making but also have more responsibilities. Traditional social organisations remain important, particularly during illness or death. This creates a dense support network in a context where the state is often absent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

01



Gender and other socio-cultural factors influence people's vulnerability and their ability to respond to climate change and other pressures. Policies need to be more sensitive to the gendered nature of everyday realities and experiences.

02

Households are not homogenous units. Researchers, practitioners and decision-makers need to recognise the diversity of ways in which power and responsibilities are shared within households. There is a need to strengthen cooperation between men and women and in turn adaptive capacities.



03



Women are not necessarily victims or powerless. Livelihood diversification can enhance women's agency but does not always lead to greater resilience or wellbeing. State provided support mechanisms and safety nets need to accompany women's efforts to diversify livelihoods.

04

We need to recognise and support women's aspirations by working with them - and at the same time with men - to challenge social norms and patriarchal traditions that hold them back.



05



People who continue in natural resource-based livelihoods need support. This can be done through: increasing access to drought resistant livestock and seed, clearing invasive plants, and improving access to agricultural insurance and low-cost water saving technologies.



CASE STUDY 01



GENDER DISAGGREGATION IS NOT ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND FEMALE VULNERABILITY

Abahina is a widow with six children. When they were old enough, she sent her daughter to Djibouti to live with relatives and left her other children with family near Awash Arba so she could move to Awash and send back the money she earned. At first, she worked in a cotton factory and earned a good salary. When this finished, she began selling coffee on the main road into town. She notes that with rising sugar prices “my net earning is not more than 20 ETB per day after deducting my cost.” Rather than remitting money as she had done in the past, she relies on small, ad hoc amounts from her elder son when he sells one of the male goats she left with him. She says she is “struggling to make a living. My income is not enough to feed me,” and describes how she is “eating food in the houses of my relatives.”



CASE STUDY 03



LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION DOES NOT ALWAYS LEAD TO ENHANCED RESILIENCE OR WELLBEING

Ahmed is a young agro-pastoralist who lives in the market town of Melka Sedi with his wife and infant son. He is a farmer with three hectares planted with cotton and his family hold livestock for him in Dileyu. These are his “security” if he has a problem or needs capital for farming; just to clear the *Prosopis*, a local invasive species, costs 8,000 ETB. To offset these costs he runs a motorcycle taxi and his wife sells tea, coffee and breakfast in a rented “hotel.” Even so, he is vulnerable to drought. The second year after he started farming his harvest failed and he lost most of his produce due to shortage of water. “Even though I was providing chemicals, the planting will not be successful unless it gets water,” he says. Despite having irrigation, the Awash River was too low to fill the irrigation channels so all the farmers lost their cotton. He told us that while he could have grown sugarcane, which is resistant to drought, the government won’t buy sugarcane from individuals and there are no private factories to process it.

CASE STUDY 02



HOUSEHOLDS ARE COMPLEX AND EXTENDED

Fatuma is the first wife of Musa. She has four children aged from three to 10, plus another four from her first marriage, aged 11 to 17. Six of her children live with her. One has gone with his uncle to take his livestock to pasture a day’s walk away and the other is training for the military. She also cares for the only child of her husband’s second wife while her husband’s second wife and his mother look after cattle in the pasturelands. Five of the children go to school, including the youngest who sits with her siblings while her mother works. Two have stayed behind to herd their goats. Fatuma also herds livestock, manages the house, and cuts sugarcane to pay for medical treatment, shoes and clothes. She gets support from the government (20-30 kg of wheat per month) and has in the past received support from traditional social networks: “[they] are here to help at times of sadness and happiness. We go to their house and we collect firewood and buy sugar and coffee for them.”

CASE STUDY 04



WE NEED TO RECOGNISE AND VALUE PEOPLE’S CHANGING ASPIRATIONS

Amer is a young pastoralist who describes himself as “dreaming to live in town.” In addition to herding his family’s own livestock, he works during the day in the sugarcane plantation as a labourer and at night as a guard. He plans to earn enough money to buy a bajaj (small motorised vehicle), which would enable him to work as a taxi and delivery driver. His wife, Meryam, says separately, “I want to move to town if I have a better income. I dream to have a shop in the town.” She admits that “despite this dream, it is difficult for me to detach myself from our pastoral way of life” but says that “I want my children to get better education [than I did]. In the future, they have to live in towns and cities.”



*Names used in case studies are pseudonyms.

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The five-year ASSAR project (Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions, 2014-2018) uses insights from multi-scale, interdisciplinary work to inform and transform climate adaptation policy and practice in ways that promote the long-term wellbeing of the most vulnerable and those with the least agency.