

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS HELP DETERMINE WHETHER AND HOW WE CAN - OR CAN'T - RESPOND TO PRESSURES

IN THE SEMI-ARID REGIONS OF AFRICA AND ASIA, SEVERE PRESSURE FROM CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER NON-CLIMATIC STRESSORS AFFECTS HOUSEHOLDS - AND THE MEMBERS WITHIN THEM - DIFFERENTLY.

TO COPE WITH THESE PRESSURES, THE COMPOSITION AND HEADSHIP OF HOUSEHOLDS MIGHT CHANGE.

SOMETIMES THESE CHANGES IMPACT DYNAMICS OF COOPERATION AND CONFLICT; HOUSEHOLDS ARE WHERE RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT, RESPONSIBILITIES SHARED AND DECISIONS NEGOTIATED.

HOUSEHOLDS MIGHT BE IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, LED BY A MARRIED COUPLE, POLYGAMOUS, SINGLE-HEADED, MULTIGENERATIONAL OR CHILD HEADED.



HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS MIGHT MIGRATE FOR WORK OR TO LIVE WITH FAMILY.



WOMEN MIGHT TAKE ON ROLES THAT WERE TRADITIONALLY HELD BY MEN, OR VICE VERSA.



HOW AND WHAT CHANGES TAKE PLACE IN HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS, AND HOW RESOURCES AND DECISION MAKING ARE SHARED WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD, CAN IMPACT THE WELLBEING OF DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.



BUT OFTEN, TO HELP EACH OTHER COPE AND ADAPT, HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS FORGE NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND FIND NEW WAYS OF SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES.



WOMEN MIGHT WANT MEN TO DO MORE AND WHEN THEY DON'T, THIS MAY LEAD TO TENSION AND VIOLENCE WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

01

Households should not be treated as homogeneous units. Instead, researchers, practitioners and decision makers should recognise the diversity of each household, the ways in which power and responsibilities are shared, the relationships that exist within them, and how these factors lead to particular risk management outcomes and levels of wellbeing for different household members.



02

Rather than focusing on individuals as autonomous and gender-neutral entities, we should recognise gendered roles, contributions and needs as complementing each other in strengthening the adaptive capacity of the household.

03



To achieve gender equality, efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation between different members of the household. Boys and men should be engaged as much as girls and women.

04

Broken households (e.g. separated couples, or women abandoned by their partners) need additional support, as often they will be working for an income while simultaneously managing their homes and caring for their families. Strategies that build women's resilience and provide them with assistance (e.g. with household work, childcare) are needed.

05

Open dialogue between women and men should be encouraged in order to attain stable and supportive household partnerships.



ULTIMATELY, ADAPTATION STRATEGIES SHOULD ENHANCE COOPERATION RATHER THAN CONFLICT WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS.



CASE STUDY 01

SOMETIMES, TRADITIONS AND NORMS ARE ABANDONED IN FAVOUR OF COOPERATION.

Living in Marudur in Tamil Nadu, India, Revathy says that it is no longer only a woman's responsibility to collect water - despite this being the traditional norm. As often as possible, her husband now helps with water collection to ensure that there is enough water available for cooking and drinking. "During the dry years when there is less water in the borewell my husband goes to the standpipe to collect water. I used to do it but he has a bike, and it is easier for him to do it, especially later in the day when it is not very safe for women to go out. When we have scarcity of water, usually during the summer months, we have to buy water from tankers for household needs like cooking and washing. My husband knows I need water to cook for the family, so he will make sure we get water from the tanker even though it is very expensive. We both contribute to this."

A similar example of the switch that can happen in typical gendered roles comes from peri-urban Bangalore. Here the proximity to the city and urban infrastructure like airports have increased job options for both men and women. In some instances, while women now contribute to household incomes by taking up service jobs - working as security guards at the airport, or in restaurants where they are expected to work long hours (and sometimes night shifts) - men contribute to household chores and look after the children.

CASE STUDY 03

WOMEN WANT MEN TO DO MORE AND WHEN THEY DON'T, COUPLES MIGHT SEPARATE.

Musa, a divorced man from Nairobi, Kenya, has returned to his home village. He separated from his wife because he could not support her with his miraa business. He says, "She was so demanding" but that "My heart was broken because I did not have anywhere to lean on." Today he lives with his 77-year-old widowed mother, an orphaned child that his mother adopted and his sister's three children. He is jobless but has to provide for the entire household. He cannot farm as there is no rain, and the little water that was coming from upstream has been diverted to areas around the Isiolo International Airport. They have little support so they look to God for divine intervention. In times of extreme hardship, they call upon neighbours or distant relatives for help but this is not done regularly. Musa thinks life was better when he was young and his parents were farming, as water was flowing nicely from upstream.

CASE STUDY 02

MIGRATION CAN BRING MULTIPLE CHANGES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO HOUSEHOLDS.

In response to a decade of persistent drought, sudden flooding and alien plant invasion, many households in the semi-arid Awash region of North-Eastern Ethiopia have become multi-locational. This strategy allows household members to diversify their income-generating activities through migration to cities, and by spreading households across pasture land and rural and urban centres. Jobs in urban areas can often provide remittances to those left behind, while also reducing pressure on resources like food and water in the 'sending' household. In some instances, it also allows women to have more agency. But multi-locational households can bring challenges too, as they can increase the pressure on women to support their children - especially if they are divorced, widowed or in a polygamous household. They can also add strain to rural households when children are sent to their grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins, to enable their parents' migration to other areas. Taking in children can be positive, however: a pastoralist widower looked after his grandchildren from the age of three so they could support him in herding.

CASE STUDY 04

THE COMPLEMENTARITY THAT EXISTS WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS CAN IMPROVE THEIR ADAPTIVE CAPACITY.

In Namibia, the gendered and cultural roles of men and women can improve the adaptive capacity of households. In some areas, while men use mobility as a seasonal or long-term strategy to sustain their families, women manage the household resources and take care of the children. These gendered strategies work particularly well during times of drought, especially when women have the agency to make decisions. For example, a Dhemba woman contributes to household wellbeing by caring for and advising her husband, cultivating the crop field and pounding the millet, and caring for the children and husband's nieces and nephews. A Dhemba man tends to livestock, provides milk and fat for the household, constructs the house and fencing, and works in urban areas to earn income and buy more cattle. However, despite this complementarity seen in many households, the overall burden of responsibilities often still falls on women, and their contributions are rarely valued as highly as those of men.

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS HELP DETERMINE WHETHER AND HOW WE CAN - OR CAN'T - RESPOND TO PRESSURES



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.