Panel: The Distributional Effects of Out-Migration and Livelihood Resilience in Semi-Arid Regions of Asia and Africa

Internal migration is a prominent feature in the social and economic life of rural inhabitants because it is a way to diversify livelihoods and search for new economic opportunities, especially in many semi-arid areas of Asia and Africa (Qaisrani 2015; Saeed et al. 2016). The decision to migrate may be influenced by a number of factors, but the main driver is most often poverty (IIED 2015). Nevertheless, literature tells us that the linkages between migration and poverty reduction are far from straightforward and it is not possible to gauge an automatic link between the two (Memon 2006).

Internal migration may ease access to resources which can help develop resilience against external stressors like climate change (IIED 2015). Migration in the context of climate change benefits households via social and financial remittances that help bring about innovation in climate adaptation and create new social networks (Scheffran et al. 2011; Banerjee et al. 2013; Gioli et al. 2014) and by acting as household livelihood insurance (Yang and Choi 2007).

However, migration may not result in an overall improvement in resilience in all cases. It may prove itself to be maladaptive if the total expenses of the household increase as a result of migration and are not covered by the intended increase in income. Migrants may also increase the vulnerability of their communities of origin as a result of depletion of workforce, skills, wealth and overall decline in human capital (Zickgraf et al. 2016).

Analysing vulnerability and resilience to environmental stressors in relation to migration patterns is gaining popularity in research, yet the relationship between them is complicated owing to the indirect pathways through which climate change or other environmental phenomenon may impact decisions to migrate (Zickgraf et al. 2016).

Under these premises, this panel seeks to explore how internal migration patterns affect the resilience of communities of sending regions, focusing on the following key questions:

1. To what extent and through what mechanisms can migration play a role in increasing resilience of vulnerable communities?
2. How are men and women as well as rich and poor impacted differently through out-migration of household members?
3. Under what conditions may migration create adverse consequences in socio-economic terms?

References


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