

# ***Revisiting Socio- economic impact of Villagization, In the Case Assosa Zone, Ethiopia***

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## **Abstract**

*The overall objective of this study is to explore the practice and challenges of villagization; in the selected woredas of the Assosa zone Beninshangul Gumuz regional state. To achieve goals of the survey study mixed research method was employed. Generally, the Sample size of 168 sample households were determined by using  $S = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$ , The research employed exploratory research design on the challenges and implementation of the program, and it applied mainly qualitative methods. On the basis and types of data gathered and the instrument used, both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data analysis or binary logistic regression supported by SPSS was employed. The only good thing about this life was farming since people had fertile lands. But, when villagization was implemented the lives of the villagers improved because they started to have better access to social services. The study showed that villagization was implemented voluntarily and based on the consent of the local people. However, it is possible to conclude that villagization has significantly improved the lives of the villagers by bringing positive changes that did not exist before. people.*

**Key Words:** *villager, relocation, social services, dispersed settlement*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Villagization has been defined "the grouping of the population into centralized planned settlements" (Steingraber, 1987). It is frequently confused with 'resettlement' as the two policies often occur simultaneously and may overlap (Buzuayew et al., 2016).

Villagization programs have been implemented rather frequently in Africa for the last century, with governments promising improved socio-economic standards. The most recent villagization program in Ethiopia is not the first. There have been several programs implemented throughout the years, particularly during the Derg regime (Maria, 2015).

Villagization programs have been highly controversial due to implementation problems, state coercion, and the hidden agenda of the governments (Maria, 2015). All programs have had a significant impact on a large number of people, both directly and indirectly. There is a lot of empirical research on the villagization in various disciplines regarding the actual effects of the programs. Unfortunately, very few studies show evidence of the concept being successful (Guyu, 2016).

The phenomenon of villagization is unusual because it involves many different human rights perspectives, both legal and others. Of particular interest are, of course, all reports of the human rights abuses linked to the execution of the program but also the failure of the states to provide the fundamental rights for the people as promised. Inevitably, this raises questions regarding the validity of villagization programs (Asrat, 2009).

The villagization plan introduced in November 2010 emphasizes on rural development while incentivizing easier access to education and health facilities. Thus, it is seen as a way to facilitate the delivery of services to people living in scattered homesteads that had been harder to reach. The Government plans to villagize 1.5 million people by 2013 in four regions: Gambella, Afar, Ethiopian Somali, and Benishangule-Gumuz (Buzuayew et al., 2016).

The most common official objective for the implementation of villagization programs is the provision of, or improvement of, fundamental economic and social services, such as infrastructure, housing, health care, access to food and water, education, farming facilities, and so on (Buzuayew et al, 2016).

The aims of the villagization are to transform the living condition of pastoral and semi-pastoral communities of these regions sustainably by improving their access to socio-economic services on the principles of voluntarism (Botterli, 2015). BGR is comprised dominantly of semi-pastoral communities, whose livelihood is mainly dependent on both arable and livestock farming, among others. The majority of farm households are living on the most traditional ways of living, a prominent example being the Gumuz, the Berta, the Mao, and the Komo ethnic groups, which are still practicing hunting and gathering activities as well as shifting cultivation in the remotest area of Ethiopia (Guyu, 2012).

In Ethiopia, the need for these schemes is guaranteeing the sustainable food security through guaranteeing the sustainable supply of development vehicles (the socio-economic services and other infrastructures such as road, telephone, and electric power, (NCFSE, 2003; BGRG, 2010).

According to the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional Government's voluntary Villagization Program Plan (2010), the goal of the program is to "provide basic a socio-economic infrastructure" and "ultimately to enable them food secured and to bring socio-economic and cultural transformation of the people (Guyu, 2012).

There is a doubt that the implementation of current villagization is going in line with the principles of VVP, particularly in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region. Empirical shreds of evidences point out that there is a mismatch between the policies of the VVP and ways of implementation at grassroots levels by local authorities ( Guyu, 2012).

Of course, its implementation, particularly in BGR, has started since September 2010, and is a part of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional food security strategy (BGRFSS) designed in 2004. However, there has not been a study on the villagization schemes both at national and regional as well as local scales in Ethiopia. This is the motive for taking up the current research at least in the Assosa zone at BGR in Ethiopia.

As stated in the above paragraph, those challenges had not been assessed by the researchers, particularly in the Assosa zone, to what extent they are affecting the settlers in the study area. Therefore this study, aims to explore the challenges of villagization in BGR to understand how well it has been going on, the

awareness and attitude of villagers towards it, its development indicators, and finally it is policy implications to suggest some possible remedies for the future.

### Research Method

To achieve the general and specific objectives of the study, mixed research method was employed. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data, meaning that qualitative and quantitative data are not combined in the data analysis; instead, integration occurs when the findings are interpreted (Creswell, 2007).

### Research design

The research employed exploratory research design on the challenges and implementation of the program, applied mainly qualitative methods. The survey was used to validate the qualitative findings and to come up with additional numerical information on the necessary socio-economic conditions of the villagers (Creswell, 2007).

### Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources of data was used. The primary data-gathering instruments for the research comprised structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussion and observation. Secondary sources of data: written documents used or reviewed to enrich the study.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

To make the sample area manageable and representative, from the seven woredas in the Assosa zone ,only four woredas, were included in the sample. Based on this, Assosa, Bambasi, Kurmuk and, Sherkole woredas were selected purposively in line with the severity of the problem.

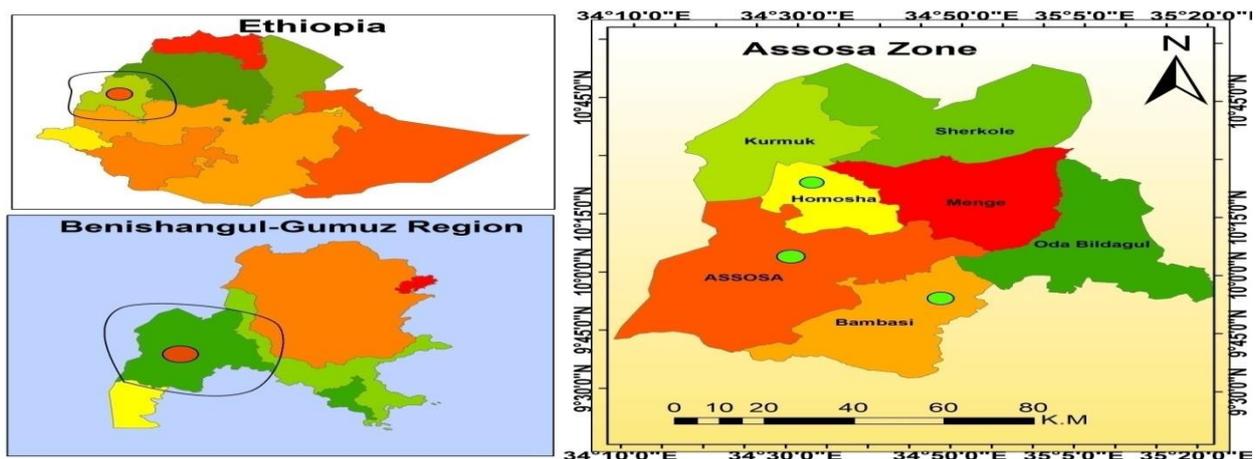


Figure 3.1 Administrative map of the study area

According to population bureau the region (2016), in the sampled Woreda there are around 3,563 male and 665 female total 4,228 settlers. From this 161 male and 64 female total 225 households were selected as a sample of the study using convenience sampling since all samples have the same characteristics. The sample size of the settler respondents for each site was determined by the proportional sampling technique,

and in each location, settler respondents were selected by a simple random sampling technique (Johnson, R. B. ; Turner, L.A.(2003).

Based on the formula suggested by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), sample size of 168 a sample households was determined. The method and the calculation were given as follows:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP}{d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P (1-P)}$$

Where; S = required sample size.

X<sup>2</sup> = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = the population size.

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05).

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

As mixed methods design for data collection, mixed methods of data analysis was employed. The quantitative data collected through a questionnaire survey and qualitative data collected through FGDs, KIIs, and field observations were analyzed in a mixed fashion. The quantitative data was analyzed and presented and then triangulated with qualitative results.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Personal Characteristics of respondents**

#### **Gender of Respondents**

Since the study's focus is on the practice and challenge of villagization, out of the total of 168 respondents, 34 were women, whereas the rest (n=134) were male respondents. Women, respondents were included to compare, and contrast the reliance resource endowment, access to support services, and other factors which influence the livelihood of rural households between the households, which are run by de facto women heads of households and male-headed households.

#### **Age of Respondents**

The average age of the household head in the study was 40.1 (SD=10.4). The youngest respondent in the study was 18 years old, whereas the oldest respondent was 74 years old. The average age for women respondents were found out to be 39.06 years (SD=9.6), whereas that of men were found to be 44.25 years (SD=12.6).

### **Household Characteristics**

#### **Family Size**

The average family size for the respondent households were found out to be 4.93 (SD=2.27), which is slightly higher than the regional average of 4.7 (CSA, 2007). The minimum family size in the sample respondents were found to be one, whereas the maximum was ten persons. The average family size for de facto women head households were 4.52 (SD=2.01), whereas the average family size for male-headed

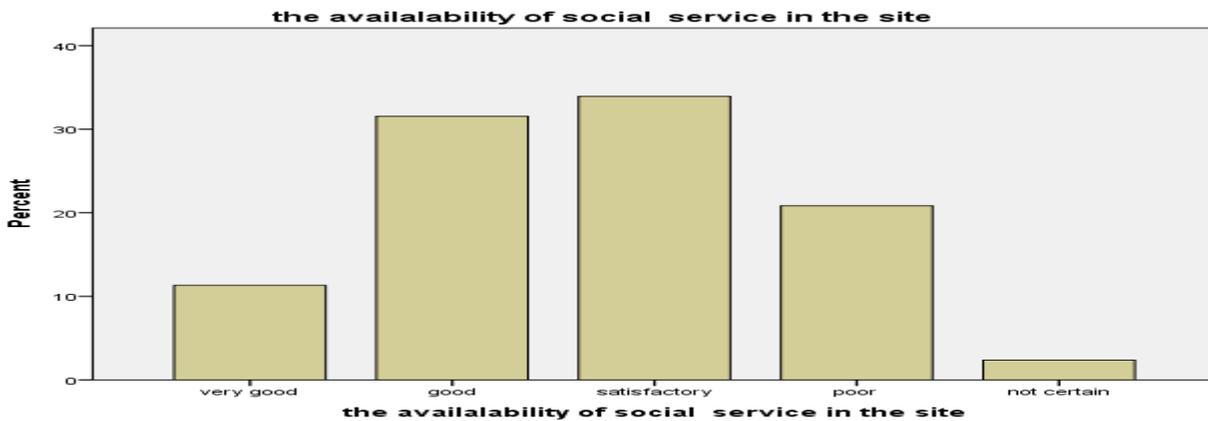
house, were 6.55 (SD=2.26). The age dependency ratio was found to be 1.04 which is higher than the regional figure of 0.95 (Regional Statistic and Population Office 2007).

**Livelihood Strategies**

Mixed subsistence farming where the crop and the animal sub-sectors are mutually interdependent is the standard kind of livelihood for all households. All families, however, mentioned that crop production is more important than livestock production to them in terms of immediate food supply and income to the family.

**Improvement in Access to Basic Social Services**

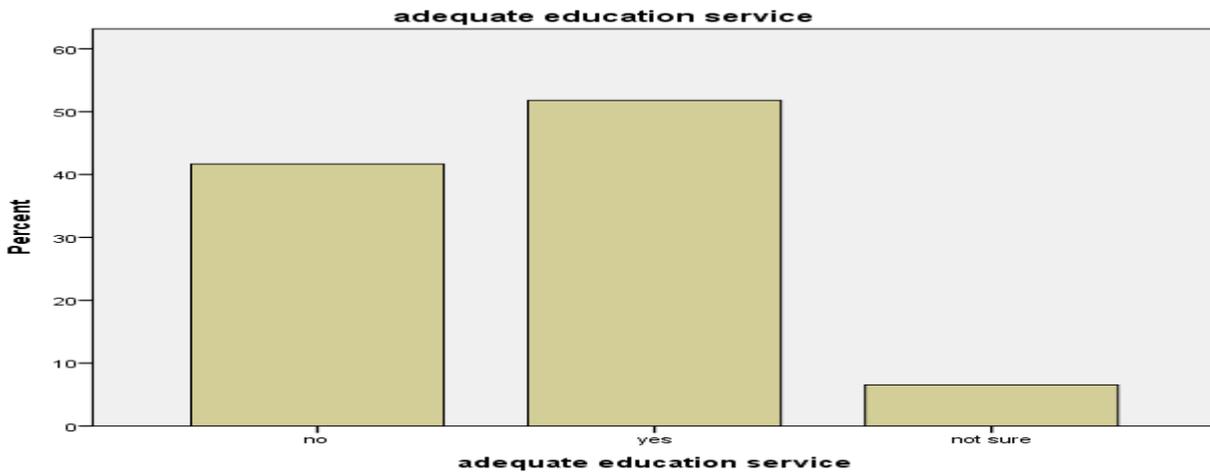
As the informants said, social services already existed prior to the villagization program, but the problem was that people lived far away from them and did not have good access to them. These services were accessible only to those who lived closer to them but difficult to access by those who lived in scattered settlements. Here the bar drawn below shows the variation in the response of participants in relation with the availability of services.



Out of 168 respondents, 19 (11.3%) said, the improvement in access to basic social service was perfect, and 53(31.5) said, the increase in access to basic social service was excellent. Out of 168 respondents, 35(20.8%) said, the growth in access to basic social service was poor.

**Educational Service**

Coming to educational service, as the survey result shows, people who previously lacked better access to it began to access the service after their settlement in the villages. Now, education is no longer a problem like before, as schools are close to people. Villagers are also pleased, especially about the fact that children do not have to wait until the age of ten to start school like before. As per the observation, discussion with focus group discussants, there is primary schools in almost all the villages with teachers employed by the government who regularly do their job.



Survey data, 2019

**Mohammed expressed** his view concerning the accessibility of education service as follows:

" I am so happy about the villagization program basically because children are now able to go to school. Going to school was something very hard for children in the past. But now, due to the villagization program and the Settlement of people in villages, schools became closer. For this reason, I am no longer worried because children can now access what was inaccessible to them in the past."

### Health Service

As the above table indicate, out of surveyed 168 sample respondent household, 84(50%) stated the health service provided for them were not adequate as promised for them by Government. Remaining, 71(42.3) of respondent out 168 said the service that provided for them were appropriate and satisfied by what happens in their respective villagization site.

As the survey result shows, the other most crucial thing that happened due to the villagization program is that access to health service has improved. Now, people can get medical treatment whenever sicknesses occur because there is a health Centre as well as health posts in almost all villages which provide services to the people. No one dies anymore because of the distance of health service like before.

### As Ali from wemba site said,

"The fact that health service is now closer to me in the village has brought a huge relief. I now have better access to the service and can access it anytime I feel the need. I believe everyone is happy about this, as well."

As the analyzed document revealed, there are model households in the villages that have received training and have now started to use toilets. In the following village, a total of sixty-six (70) families are current users of toilets. In Wemba village, there are seventy- six (76) households with their bathroom and forty-one (41) in Urra communities. Since the number of people using toilets in the villages has increased, using the surrounding area or open space for the bathroom has been reduced.

**Clean Water, Mills, Transportation and Mobile Networks**

**table 4.8 shows the availability of adequate water supply for domestic use and livestock**

Have get sufficient water supply?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	76	45.2	45.2	45.2
Yes	82	48.8	48.8	94.0
not sure	10	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	168	100.0	100.0	

Out of surveyed 168 sample respondent families, 76(45.2%) stated, the water supply provided for them were not adequate as promised for them by Government. Remaining 82(48.8) of respondent out 168 said the service that provided for them were fair and satisfied by what happens in their respective villagization site.

**Senait from Abrhamo put it like this,**

"What made villagization very good to me is the fact that mill houses are closer. I no longer grind corns with my hands as I did in the past since there is a mill house in the village where I can take my corn and have it ground whenever I want."

**The Movement of People to the Villages**

Moreover, to cross-check the participation of local people in the process of program formulation, and implementation, villagers were interviewed and the followings are the testimonies of villagers about the level of participation.

**Table 4.9 shows the participation of people in the villagization program.**

How did you participate in the program?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.voluntarily	167	99.4	99.4	99.4
2.involuntarily	1	.6	.6	100.0
Total	168	100.0	100.0	

As Informants said, after the officials had finished the discussions with the local people and succeeded in convincing them, people from scattered settlements came and settled in the villages. People moved to the towns without being forced by the authorities. Surprisingly, some people started the campaign on their account and settled in the communities without waiting for the scheduled and official date. They did this because they were motivated by the promises made by the Government. They even took the initiative by cutting trees (timbers) for building houses. They were ready to work together with the government to make the implementation of the program useful and successful.

**Significant Challenges of Villagization,**

Table 4.10: shows the challenges of villagization program

	Main challenges	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	misunderstanding of community	47	28.0	28.0	28.0
2	lack of awareness	47	28.0	28.0	56.0
3	commitment of implementers	27	16.1	16.1	72.0
4	The pressure of host communities	20	11.9	11.9	83.9
5	access to service	27	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	168	100.0	100.0	

Survey data (2019)

**Misunderstanding of community**

According to the survey results, 47 (28%) of the household reported that the main challenges implementing the villagization program is a misunderstanding of the community toward it.

Villagization is susceptible to various challenges in terms of implementation and also poses challenges to the well-being of the relocated populations.

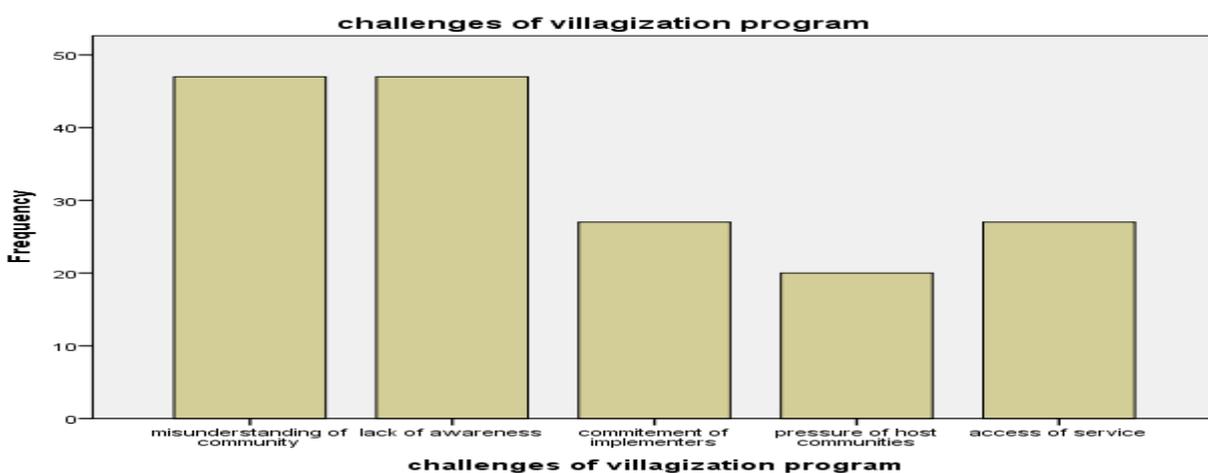
As Lorgen (1990) puts, the problems arising from villagization can be divided into those derived from the way villagization implemented and those arising from the experience of living in the new villages.

According to the survey results indicated in the above table, 47 (28%) of the household reported that there was less awareness creation program held, and even in some development centres, it was absent.

According to informants, concerning the experiences of villagers, challenges usually include the physical location of the villages, especially their distance from the fields, in terms of walking to them and protecting them from vermin and theft, and lack of water and fuelwood.

**Lack of Awareness**

According to the survey results indicated in the above table, 47 (28%) of the household reported that there was less awareness creation program held. The bar chart below depicts the main challenges of the villagization program in the study area.



Many informants argued that there was less awareness creation program held, and even in some development Centre, it was absent.

Similarly, the information generated from focus group discussion held in Bambasi and Sherkole *Woreda* states that, the implementation of the program faced challenges from the settlers. They had no sufficient information related to the intention and importance of villagization program.

### **Inadequate Implementation Performance**

Field data and researchers' observation at various village centers revealed that the construction of residences, schools, feeder roads, and veterinary clinics are on progress. However, the establishment of water points, shops, electric power supply, provision of agricultural inputs, and training centres are the left-back activities. There is gap in the planning and implementation of the social and economic institutions at different development centres. The regional Government appears to have succeeded less in providing the development centers with all the promised essential services.

### **Lack of Clean Water in the village**

Though the program prioritizes clean and sufficient water supply, it persistently encountered problems in identifying potential water points, completion of water projects construction, and purification of surface water.

The study indicates that the implementation performance of water projects was deficient, and the delay of these projects impedes the successful implementation of villagization programs. Some informants and group discussant stated that the absence of water for humans and livestock in some villages resulted in returning settlers to their previous homestead. Researchers' field observation also confirmed that there is a clean water supply problem.

### **Delay of Farmland Distribution**

The study found out that farmland preparation and distributions for farming activity lagged. Communal land ownership system was identified as significant contributing factor for achieving less in farmland preparation and distribution endeavour. Thus, we are face a very severe challenge in preparing and distributing farmland to settlers in many villagization centres.

### **Conclusion**

The study tried to identify the changes and improvements that resulted from the implementation of the villagization program. This study showed that the villagers in all villages had complicated lives and poor living conditions before the villagization program.

Furthermore, women suffered assaults in the hands of their husbands without getting protected. Villagers in the three villages acknowledged farming as the only positive thing about the previous life.

The findings of this study showed villagization implemented to make the lives of the people better by providing essential social services to them. The program aimed at bringing scattered people together to benefit from Government services while living together in villages. The local people were consulted and

informed of things they needed to know. Moreover, various social services were promised to them, although not all the guaranteed services materialized.

Now, it is possible for children can start school at school age because the distance is no longer a problem. No one has to walk a long distance to the health center, mill house, and to fetch water because these services are available at a closer range. Women have particularly benefitted from the availability of these services due to their proximity to them they no longer have to fetch water from far away, grind corns with their hands or walk a long distance to the mill house.

As this study showed, the villagization has improved communication and interaction among the villagers due to their togetherness. People have got to know one another better than before and now identify themselves as members of the same community. If anyone is in trouble and needs help, others can easily hear about it and come to help. There is a sense of harmony and unity among the villagers as a result of the villagization program. The government can also reach the people whenever it wants them because they are together in the villages. People can now work together and solve their problems. Due to their sense of belonging together and the presence of village government, security improved in the villages.

### **Recommendation**

- The findings of this study believed to serve as a basis for future policymaking in the area of population relocation.
- The findings help shape decision making in designing a policy involving population movement and help policymakers set clear standards for a successful and effective implementation of the villagization program.
- Hence, policymakers and implementers should reconsider the villagization program and see it from the target population.
- All the necessary things such as houses, health centers, water pumps, mill houses and schools have to be built first and made ready for use. Farmlands have to be cleared, and distributed to the people as well.
- The movement of people to the villages should take place only after everything essential and indispensable has been made available and ready.
- It also has to be understood that the villagization program should not be implemented unless the basic principles inherent in it are respected.

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