

Women's Roles in the Wake of Disaster

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Abstract

This is a study of women's formal and informal roles in a post-disaster resettlement. Devastating eruptions of Mt. Tungurahua in the Ecuadorian highlands in 1999 and 2006 left many communities struggling to rebuild for years and others permanently displaced to resettlements built by state and non-governmental organizations. For years, households diversified economic strategies, communities organized local development, and the state and nongovernmental organizations sponsored recovery programs in the resettlements and affected communities. Our analysis focuses on women's changing roles in post-disaster resettlements in Penipe, Ecuador, based on surveys conducted in 2009 and 2014.

Research Activities

- Thematic analysis of narrative data to identify basic themes in women's narratives of their work (formal, informal, household) in resettlement
- Qualitative analysis of self-reported economic activities from two surveys (2009 and 2014) to batch economic activities by type
- Descriptive quantitative analysis of variation in women's and men's economic activities between 2009 and 2014



Research Questions

- How did women's work—both formal and informal—change following disaster, displacement, and resettlement?
- How do women express and interpret changes in their roles following disaster, displacement, and resettlement?

Findings Thus Far:

- As of 2009, the main jobs for men included agricultural work, while women's primary occupations were household work
- By 2014, men's increasingly worked as taxi drivers, and women continued primarily in household work, with an addition of agricultural work as their second occupation
- Over time, men's work transitions from primarily agriculture to licensed taxi drivers, while women took on more agricultural responsibilities in addition to their domestic work
- By 2014, most small businesses (convenience stores, food stands, domestic work) were owned and operated by women