



Tropentag, September 10-12, 2025, hybrid conference

“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Using social-ecological action situations to understand resilience in the fragile contexts: Research with host, internally displaced, and refugee communities in Nampula, Mozambique

ADAM SAVELLI¹, ALESSANDRA VASELLI¹, SHAHAB KHALID¹, MICHELLE CHEVELEV-BONATTI^{2,3}, STEFAN SIEBER^{3,2}

¹*The Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT, Vietnam*

²*Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries, Germany*

³*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Thaer-Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Sci., Germany*

Abstract

The Social-Ecological Action Situations Framework (SE-AS) is designed to map how interactions (known as action situations) between actors, institutions, and ecological entities contribute to emergent phenomena within a social-ecological system (SES). Its utility for understanding SES has been demonstrated through numerous case studies in stable Global North contexts. Here, we deploy the SE-AS framework for the first time in a fragile Global South context where political fragility and overlapping climate, conflict, and displacement hazards limit the resilience of host, internally displaced, and refugee communities.

Nampula province in Northern Mozambique is home to the country's only refugee settlement, active since 2001 and home to 8,000 refugees, in Maratane, and the Corrane IDP settlement, established in 2020 to host households fleeing violence in nearby Cabo Delgado, where 5,000 IDPs reside. In both locations, displaced populations live adjacent to host communities, often sharing infrastructure, services, and food, land, and water system. Also, in both locations, each community (displaced and host) view the other as receiving more support from state and international actors than themselves. These dynamics – in addition to local environmental, economic, and political variables – are defining characteristics of the social-ecological systems shared by host and displaced communities in Corrane and Maratane, respectively.

To explore how each SES is experienced by its inhabitants, a focus group discussion methodology was deployed in parallel with four groups of residents disaggregated by gender and area of origin (host-female, host-male, displaced-female, displaced-male). Notes taken from each group were then coded by a team of researchers, and “maps” of each SES were developed, highlighting the key actors, institutions, entities, and interactions that – according to each group of residents – either support or limit resilience. Results show that the “types” of action situations affecting resilience in these contexts differ markedly from those in previous SE-AS research in stable Global North contexts. As a result, new action situation categories were developed including aid provision, ecological disservices, network dissolution, and resource sharing. These new categories enhance our conceptual understanding of how resilience emerges in Nampula, Mozambique, and are applicable to contexts with similar social-ecological systems in fragile contexts across the Global South.

Keywords: Action situations, displacement, fragility, social-ecological systems, resilience