

Challenges and opportunities for sustainable post- disaster resettlement in the Philippines

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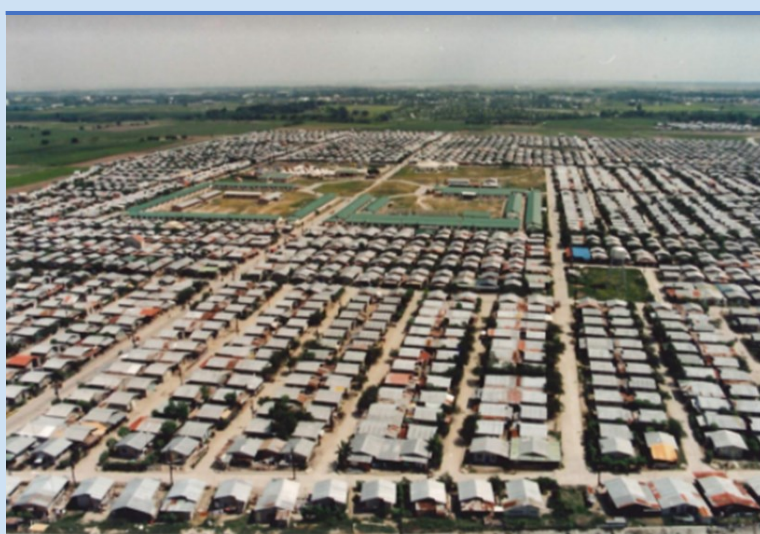


Figure 1: Aerial view of a resettlement site in Pampanga after Mt. Pinatubo eruption (MPC, 1994)

Introduction

The catastrophic effects of natural hazards cause temporary or permanent displacement of people. In the aftermath of a disaster, resettlement is often implemented to reduce future risks. Resettlement is also carried out when people cannot go back to their original dwellings anymore because of the destructive change in environmental conditions brought about by the natural hazards.

Resettlement, according to Quarantelli (1985) is “moving a way of life, not only of where people live, but where they work, where they play, where they worship, and where they carry out the multiple integrated functions that constitute social life” (p.90). It is an intricate and complex process that goes beyond rebuilding houses.

The Philippines recorded over four million people displaced by disaster in 2019 only, one of the highest figures worldwide. The country has high vulnerability to natural hazards due to its geographical location and its physical, socio-economic, and political environment. In the aftermath of a disaster, the Philippine government and other implementing agencies usually resettle people away from hazard prone areas. However, post-disaster resettlement often poses a lot of challenges and hardships for the resettlers.

Key Messages

- Resettlement involves different stages which entail stakeholder’s varying levels of participation.
- Access to government services and employment, distance from social ties, places of origin and work, resettlers’ participation in the resettlement process, and resettlement governance influence how quickly people settle in their new home and move through the different resettlement stages.
- If the social, cultural, and economic needs of the resettlers are neglected, it is then hard to reach the long process of development and incorporation.
- Ensuring resettlers’ participation in decision-making throughout the resettlement process enables a more organic and sustainable resettlement.

Major actors in resettlement

There are different individuals, authorities, and organisations involved in post-disaster resettlement

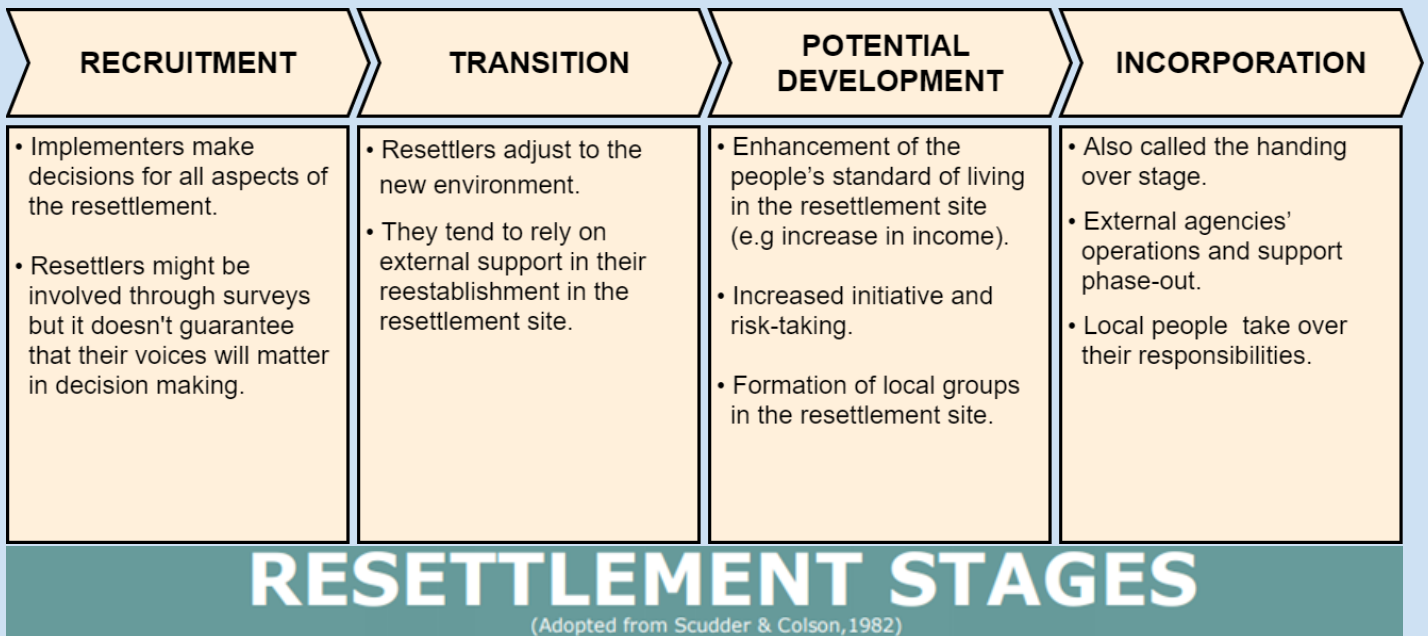
Resettlers: People who need to leave their place of origin due to the damages brought by natural hazards.



Resettlement implementers: e.g. government, non-governmental organisation and private groups, which guide and support the resettlement process through providing resources not locally available.

Different resettlement stages

Resettlement is a long-term process that involves different stages. These start with a stage of recruitment of the resettlers who then transition into their new life in the resettlement site and eventually moved into stages of potential development and incorporation within their host social, cultural and political environment (Scudder and Colson, 1982).



Resettlement case studies

The 1991 Mount Pinatubo eruption and subsequent lahars

The Mount Pinatubo eruption in 1991 and subsequent lahars resulted in damage to houses that required to resettle most of the survivors. The government's Mount Pinatubo Commission or MPC led and implemented the resettlement projects for people living in lowland and upland areas near the volcano. One of the MPC-managed lowland sites is the Pio resettlement site located in Porac, Pampanga.

The 2003 Mayon eruption

In 2003, the eruption of Mayon volcano and lingering lahars caused damage to residential properties. The Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) implemented permanent resettlement for people living in the high-risk areas in Albay. Affected families were then transferred to the Tagaytay resettlement site in the town of Camalig.

Factors affecting Pinatubo and Mayon resettlement outcomes

Factors affecting resettlement sustainability	Factors hindering resettlement sustainability
<p>Access to government services</p> <p>-Provision of resources not locally available to the resettlers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing agencies provided land and houses which the resettlers lost from the Mayon and Pinatubo eruptions and lahars. Provision of occupancy rights which improved the resettlers' security of tenure in the Mayon case study. Implementation of site hazard assessment in the Tagaytay resettlement site which then ensured the resettlers' ability to live in safe areas. 	<p>Lack of access to basic needs and services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around Mayon volcano, the resettlers did not have access to water and electricity in the resettlement sites. Around Mt Pinatubo, the implementing agencies provided water and electricity but resettlers faced challenges in using these facilities . Securing financial resources became a common challenge for the resettlers in both cases because the location of their jobs prior to resettlement was far away from the site. They had to therefore spend additional money on transportation which made it more challenging
<p>Proximity to social networks and place of origin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around Mt Pinatubo, resettlers in Pio adapted to their new lives with relative ease because they had been relocated nearer to their families and their original dwellings. It also helped that they were already familiar with the local language and government officers in the area. 	<p>Disruption of social links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around Mayon volcano, the disruption of social links amongst resettlers made their adjustment in Tagaytay more difficult.
<p>Resettlers' participation in the resettlement process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resettlers' voices were considered in decision regarding the location of their houses in the Pio resettlement site, the size and layout of the houses, and all the construction-related decisions according to their needs. As a result, the resettlers felt highly satisfied with the size, design, layout, and quality of their houses. 	<p>Resettlement governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around Mayon volcano, implementing agencies adopted a top-down approach to resettlement. Implementers made decisions for all aspects of the resettlement, that are who is eligible for resettlement assistance, where the resettlers should transfer, and what on-site services they needed. The implementers overlooked beneficiaries' needs and the local conditions Consequently, the resettlers around Mayon volcano were not satisfied with the size, layout and quality of the houses.

Policy implications

1/ Giving opportunities for resettlers to participate in the local and even national policy formation process helps to create resettlement projects that are suitable for them.

2/ Since there are varying situations in resettlement sites, different measures should be customised to meet the resettler's unique concerns.

3/ Since resettlement involves different stakeholders, effective coordination should be ensured. Stakeholders should find a way to collectively cover the identified resources that the resettlers need, to avoid duplication and maximise their use.

4/ Genuine resettler's participation, especially during the early stages of resettlement, should be encouraged to allow for a faster, more sustainable, more appropriate, and organic resettlement process.

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