B | BROOKINGS-LSE
Project on Internal Displacement

RESETTLEMENT IN THE WAKE OF TYPHOON HAIYAN IN THE PHILIPPINES: A STRATEGY TO MITIGATE RISK OR A RISKY STRATEGY?

AUTHORED BY:
Alice R. Thomas

BROOKINGS

1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
www.brookings.edu

Front Cover Photograph: Corazon dela Cruz (40) with her four children putting their lives back together after there home was destroyed after Typhoon Haiyan. (European Commission DG Echo, Pio Arce/Genesis Photos - World Vision, November 10, 2013).

THE AUTHOR

Alice Thomas joined Refugees International in May 2010 as the Climate Displacement Program Manager. Alice previously worked as a staff attorney in the international program at Earthjustice (formerly the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund) where she implemented programs designed to defend and seek redress for communities from the impacts of pollution and climate change. Prior to working for Earthjustice, Alice served as Deputy Director of the American Bar Association's Asia Law Initiative where she was responsible for overall management and implementation of ABA's technical legal assistance programs in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. She has also worked in Uzbekistan and Bosnia on issues related to environmental good governance and public participation in environmental decision-making. She began her career in the litigation practice groups at Dewey Ballantine and Arnold & Porter. Alice has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and a Bachelor's degree in History from Princeton University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

CCCM	Camp Coordination Camp Management
CHR	Philippines Commission on Human Rights
CRRP	Comprehensive Recovery and Reconstruction Plan
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government
DPWH	Department of Public Works and Highways
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
HCT	UN Humanitarian Country Team
HLP	Housing, Land and Property sub-cluster
HUDCC	Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGU	Local Government Unit
NBZ	No Build Zone
NHA	National Housing Authority
NOAH	Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards
OPARR	Office of the Presidential Advisor for Reconstruction and Recovery
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

I NTRODUCTION

Between 2008 and 2013, rapid-onset natural hazards such as floods and storms displaced an average of 27 million people per year.[1] In the face of more frequent and intense weather events due to climate change, combined with rapid population growth in many urban and coastal areas, many governments are contemplating measures for moving at-risk populations out of harm's way.

As noted in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, however, adaptation strategies that seek to reduce exposure to climate change through the resettlement of communities carry risks, including the disruption of livelihoods, displacement, and loss of cultural practices.[2]

The current and anticipated effects of climate change vary in scale, frequency, intensity, and rates of acceleration. Thus, determining when to relocate at-risk populations in order to protect public safety and mitigate displacement will vary from context to context. In some instances, governments may undertake relocation and resettlement programs as an anticipatory measure. However, the large-scale devastation and displacement that disasters leave in their wake, accompanied by large inflows of response and rehabilitation funds, create both an incentive and an opportunity for governments to impose *ex ante* land use restrictions, prohibit people from returning, and take measures to relocate and resettle people in an effort to "build back safer." [3]

This case study examines population relocation and resettlement as a strategy for mitigating disaster-induced displacement, drawing on experience from the resettlement program currently being implemented in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Although the program is ongoing, observations to date suggest that without sufficient planning and safeguards, post-disaster relocation and resettlement programs

---

[1] Michelle Yonetani, *Global Estimates 2014 People Displaced by Disasters* (Norwegian Refugees Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2014), 23, accessed January 26, 2014, http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2014/global-estimates-2014-people-displaced-by-disasters/.

[2] C.B. Field, V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.), *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 771, accessed January 14, 2015, https://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/report/full-report/.

[3] For the purposes of this case study, the terms "relocation" and "resettlement" are defined as follows: "The term relocation generally refers to the physical process of moving people and can be either temporary or permanent and either voluntary or forced. In contrast, the concept of resettlement . . . refers to a process of assisting displaced persons to replace their housing, assets, livelihoods, land, and access to resources and services and to enhance, or at least restore, their living standards." Elizabeth Ferris, *Protection and Planned Relocations in the Context of Climate Change* (UNHCR Legal and Protection Policy Research Series, 2012), 4, accessed January 28, 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/8/protection%20climate%20change%20ferris/protection%20climate%20change%20ferris.pdf.

can prolong displacement and leave affected populations more, not less, vulnerable. In post-disaster contexts, far more comprehensive and innovative approaches are needed in order to avoid the negative outcomes associated with government-led relocation and resettlement.[4]

---

[4] In addition to desk research, the information contained in this report is based on visits by the author to Manila and Region VIII (Leyte and Samar) in February and November 2014. During these visits, the author conducted extensive interviews with national and local government officials, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations, donor governments, members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as numerous individuals displaced by the typhoon. *See* Alice Thomas, *Philippines: Typhoon Survivors Face Obstacles to Recovery* (Washington: Refugees International, 2014), accessed January 29, 2015, http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/philippines-typhoon-survivors-face-obstacles-recovery.

BACKGROUND

Super Typhoon Haiyan

On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan tore a path of destruction across the central Philippines. With sustained winds of 195 miles per hour, the storm was the strongest on record and affected 14 million people across nine regions. The Eastern Visayas islands of Samar and Leyte, where the typhoon first made landfall, bringing with it a 15-foot to 19-foot storm surge, were the most heavily affected.

The impact of Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) was massive. Over six thousand people were killed, over one million homes were damaged or destroyed, and over four million people were displaced.[5] The storm wiped out major economic sectors and sources of livelihoods in the affected regions. The livelihoods of 5.6 million workers were affected, 2.5 million of who were classified as vulnerable to begin with.[6] More than 42 million coconut trees were damaged or destroyed, putting at risk the livelihoods of over a million farming households. Nearly two-thirds of fishing communities, also extremely poor, were severely affected. Nearly three million farmers were affected as well, 70 percent of whom were vulnerable temporary workers.[7]

In the Philippines, responsibility for supervising disaster management and response lies with the(NDRRMC) which is comprised of various government, non-government, and private sector organizations. In addition, under the Philippines' decentralized form of government, certain powers, responsibilities and resources have devolved to provinces, municipalities, and cities – collectively known as local government units, or "LGUs" – who are expected to be at the frontline of emergency measures in the aftermath of disasters to ensure the general welfare of their constituents.

In the case of Typhoon Haiyan, despite national and local governments' strong disaster preparedness and response capability, given the magnitude of the crisis, the Philippine government accepted the international community's offer of assistance. It welcomed the deployment, in the initial phase of disaster response, of significant military assets by the U.S. and other countries. The international humanitarian community responded in full force as well. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance by the UN and its partners, formally declared a system-wide Level three emergency, a status reserved for major sudden-onset crises caused by natural disasters or conflict which require system-wide mobilization. This triggered a substantial influx of humanitarian staff, resources, and mechanisms designed to ensure a timely and effective response. All of the major UN

---

[5] DSWD, IDMC, IOM, SAS, *The Evolving Picture of Displacement in the Wake of Typhoon Haiyan* (2014), 19-20, accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/The-Evolving-Picture-of-Displacement-in-the-Wake-of-Typhoon-Haiyan.pdf.

[6] Philippine Humanitarian Country Team, *Typhoon Haiyan Early Recovery, Livelihoods, and Agriculture Response Plan, March 2014 to November 2014* (2014), 10, accessed _____ , http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Early%20Recovery%20and%20Livelihood%20Plan%20FINAL_0.pdf

[7] Ibid., 13-15.

emergency response "clusters" (e.g., camp coordination camp management (CCCM), emergency shelter, water and sanitation (WASH), protection, etc.) were activated and co-led by international and national agencies.[8] Numerous private foundations and entities from around the world also provided substantial assistance.

In addition to co-leading the humanitarian response in many sectors, the Philippines government put in place its own mechanisms to guide the longer-term process of recovery. Shortly after the disaster, President Benigno Aquino set up the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Reconstruction and Recovery (OPARR) under the leadership of Senator Panfilo Lacson (referred to as the "Yolanda czar") to unify the efforts of national and local government agencies and others involved in the post-typhoon rehabilitation and recovery. The OPARR's mandate is to put together an over-all strategic vision and integrate short-, medium-, and long-term plans and programs. This includes: coordinating with the NDRRMC and its member agencies; consulting with LGUs in the formulation of plans and programs for the rehabilitation, recovery, and development of affected areas; proposing funding for the implementation of the plans and programs; and exercising oversight over the relevant government agencies with respect to the implementation of the plans and programs.[9] The OPARR was also tasked with drafting and implementing the national government's Comprehensive Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (CRRP), which was formally approved in late October 2014 on the eve of the one year anniversary of Haiyan.[10]

The post-typhoon "no build zone" policy

Not long after the typhoon struck, President Aquino announced that given the Philippines' high susceptibility to typhoons and other hazards,[11] the national government

---

[8] The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) employs the "cluster approach" when responding to emergencies, wherein groups of humanitarian organizations (UN and non-UN) working in the main sectors of humanitarian action such as shelter or health are organized into "clusters." Clusters are "activated" when clear humanitarian needs exist within a sector, when there are numerous actors within sectors, and when national authorities need coordination support. Clusters provide a clear point of contact, are accountable for adequate humanitarian assistance and create partnerships between international humanitarian actors, national and local authorities, and civil society. OCHA website, *accessed* March 23, 2015 http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/cluster-coordination In the Philippines, the clusters are co-lead by government agencies. See http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/PHL_humanitarian_coord_architecture.pdf

[9] Philippine Office of the Presidential Assistant for Response and Recovery (OPARR), *Yolanda Rehabilitation and Recovery Efforts: July 28, 2014* (2014), accessed February 1, 2015, http://president.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Revised-DraftYolanda-Rehab-Briefer-as-of-1-Aug-2014-w-status-report.pdf.

[10] Ibid.

[11] According to the World Bank, the Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/gfdrr/files/region/PH.pdf ; Between 1997 and 2007, 84 tropic storms impacted the country affecting more than 51 million families, leaving over 13,000 people dead, and resulting in approximately $US3.6 billion in damages. Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Plan 2011 – 2028, 1, last accessed on March 31, 2015 http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/41/NDRRM_Plan_2011-2028.pdf

was recommending that LGUs enforce "no-build zones" (NBZs) within 40 meters of the high water mark in all coastal areas of Leyte and Samar affected by the typhoon.

Tacloban City, Leyte Credit: *Refugees International*

According to the policy, rebuilding would be allowed within NBZs for livelihood and commercial purposes such as hotels but not for residential dwellings.[12] Those previously living in these areas, many of whom were informal settlers, would be relocated by the government. Within a month or two of the storm, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and LGUs began posting signs marking areas as NBZs.

In some coastal urban centers, like Tacloban City, which was 90 percent destroyed by the storm, planning was underway prior to the typhoon to relocate several densely populated, informal settlements along the shoreline. Residents of these neighborhoods (*barangays*) were primarily poor fisher-folk and preferred living next to the water and close to their fishing boats and nearby the city's markets. Given their proximity to the water and the informal nature of the housing, these *barangays* were almost entirely wiped out by the typhoon's ferocious winds and 15-foot storm surge. While most residents evacuated prior to the storm, those who stayed behind to safeguard possessions were either killed or nearly lost their lives.[13] The typhoon created an opportunity for the local government to act on its plan by ensuring that those previously living in these *barangays* who were displaced by the storm did not re-inhabit or rebuild in these areas with the intention of relocating them elsewhere in the city.

---

[12] "No dwelling zones," meaning areas not safe for human habitation, were used as an alternative in some municipalities in order to allow for rebuilding in these areas for non-residential purposes.
[13] "The men of Barangay 88," accessed January 17, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB__n7sGB5A.

NBZs trigger confusion and delays

While perhaps well-intended as a measure to protect people from future storms, the NBZ policy proved highly problematic from the start. Despite the enormous number of people affected by the policy, no official document, public notice, or ordinance was issued by the national government spelling out the legal or regulatory basis for the imposition of NBZs or how they were to be implemented. The DENR claimed that the policy was based on Article 51 of the 1976 Water Code. However, this assertion proved controversial as the Water Code and its implementing regulations impose restrictions on building in and around watersheds as a measure to protect water resources; they do not restrict building near coastal areas as a measure to protect people from water-related hazards.[14]

On a practical level, the NBZ policy was illogical and potentially ineffective. The rationale for drawing a hard line at 40 meters seemed arbitrary, especially in the absence of hazard risk mapping. In some low-lying areas, Haiyan's storm surge traveled as far as a kilometer or more inland, rendering the uniform 40-meter delineation meaningless. This led to a further concern that compliance with the 40-meter NBZ might lead people living at lower elevations, but further inland, to believe that they are safe when they are not.[15]

The OPARR, realizing the 40-meter policy was flawed, recommended in March 2014 that the national government revise the policy to require LGUs in affected areas to delineate "safe" and "unsafe" areas for residential and commercial, or economic, use based on hazard risk mapping and to include restrictions on the types of structures that could be used for such purposes.[16] With 171 municipalities affected by Typhoon Haiyan, however, implementing the revised safe/unsafe zone policy took time and encountered new obstacles.

Determining which areas were "safe" required conducting mapping for multiple hazards, not just for floods and typhoons, but also for landslides, earthquakes, and other hazards as well. Not all affected areas had been surveyed for one or more of these hazards.[17] Moreover, most LGUs, especially municipalities which were small and under-resourced to begin with, lacked the financial and technical capacity to map out safe and unsafe areas. Complicating matters, in some municipalities like Guiuan in Eastern Samar (which is surrounded by the ocean on almost all sides and where the typhoon first made landfall) multi-hazard mapping, eventually undertaken with the assistance of

---

[14] Alice Thomas, *Philippines: Typhoon Survivors Face Obstacles to Recovery*, supra note 4.

[15] IRIN Asia. "'No-build zones' confusion delays resettlement of Haiyan survivors," last modified July 18, 2014, accessed January 26, 2015, http://www.irinnews.org/report/100368/no-build-zones-confusion-delays-resettlement-of-haiyan-survivors.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Author interview with international humanitarian agency representative, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 14, 2014.

international agencies, revealed that there were very few areas that were actually "safe."[18]

It was not until a year after the typhoon hit in November 2014, that the national government eventually settled on a policy for classifying hazard zones. Pursuant to the multi-agency "Joint Memorandum Circular on Adopting Hazard Zone Classification in Typhoon Affected Areas," national government agencies including DENR and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) are responsible for making available to LGUs geo-hazard and hydro-meteorological hazard maps for all typhoon-affected areas which are to be used by LGUs to designate "low," "moderate," and "high" hazard zones and incorporated into land use plans.[19] In addition, DOST launched "Project NOAH" (Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards), a multi-disciplinary, two-year initiative aimed at developing systems, tools, and other technologies to help prevent and mitigate disasters, a component of which includes conducting multi-hazard mapping.[20]

A slow relocation and resettlement process

Figuring out *who* needed to be resettled based on a proper assessment of risk was only part of the problem. A far larger challenge lay in determining *where* to resettle people. Based on information provided by LGUs on the number of households located in NBZs, the CRRP envisions the construction of 205,000 permanent homes and the relocation of approximately one million people across 116 municipalities.[21] In light of the enormous scale of the program, and in the absence of sufficient advance planning at the national and local levels, identifying sufficient sites for resettlement has proven enormously difficult.

Because resettlement was primarily envisioned as moving at-risk communities to a plot of vacant land,[22] initially LGUs were asked to identify government-owned land within their jurisdictions that might be suitable for resettlement. In Tacloban City, for example, the city identified 87 hectares of land that could be used for resettlement. However, only 25 hectares ended up being suitable for residential use; other plots were rejected due to factors such as their location (e.g., next to a local dump) or physical characteristics (e.g., tendency to flood).[23] As it became clear that there was insufficient government-owned land available for resettlement, LGUs were asked to identify private land for this purpose. Many LGUs lacked sufficient funds to purchase privately-held land, however,

---

[18] Ibid.

[19] Joint DENR-DILG-DND-DPWH-DOST Memorandum Circular No. 2014-01, *Adoption of Hazard Zone Classification in Areas Affected by Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) and Providing Guidelines for Activities Therein* (2014), accessed January 29, 2015, http://pcij.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Joint-DENR-DILG-DND-DPWH-DOST-Adoption-of-Hazard-Zone-Classification.pdf.

[20] "About Project NOAH," Philippine Department of Science and Technology blog, accessed January 29, 2014, http://blog.noah.dost.gov.ph/about/.

[21] Author interview with Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) representative, Manila, November 2014.

[22] An exception to this is the use of urban "in-fill" approaches as described in Section V.

[23] Author interview with Tacloban City Housing & Community Development Office representative, Tacloban City, November 2014.

and remained dependent on national recovery funds which were slow to arrive. The fact that much of the land in affected areas is protected for specific uses (e.g., timber) and therefore cannot be sold for residential development further hindered the site selection process.

Moreover, lack of clarity from the outset regarding the roles and responsibilities of the national versus the local governments (in addition to a lack of capacity at all levels to implement a resettlement program on this scale) further slowed the process. As with UN agencies, the Philippine government and the NDRRMC use the "cluster" (or sectoral) approach to disaster response and recovery. In the case of Yolanda, OPARR set up five clusters to coordinate the recovery and rehabilitation process among myriad agencies and departments.[24] While four of the clusters are led by a single department or ministry, the Resettlement Cluster is led by the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) which is comprised of 15 government departments and authorities.[25] The goal of the Resettlement Cluster is "[t]o relocate affected families living in hazard prone areas to safe areas and to develop sustainable and disaster resilient settlements."[26] According to the Resettlement Cluster Plan, expected deliverables are: (1) the construction of 205,128 housing units; (2) safe and suitable resettlement sites identified and acquired; (3) construction of community facilities such as 537 school buildings, 202 multi-purpose covered courts in new settlement sites; and (4) provision for sustainable livelihood opportunities in new settlement sites. To the extent that OPARR and the CRRP embrace a "bottom-up" approach, resettlement is to be carried out "in cooperation" with LGUs.[27]

---

[24] OPARR, "Yolanda Rehabilitation and Recovery Efforts," supra note 8.

[25] HUDCC members include the National Housing Authority (NHA), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB), the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the Office of Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP), the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

GOVERNMENT CLUSTER FRAMEWORK
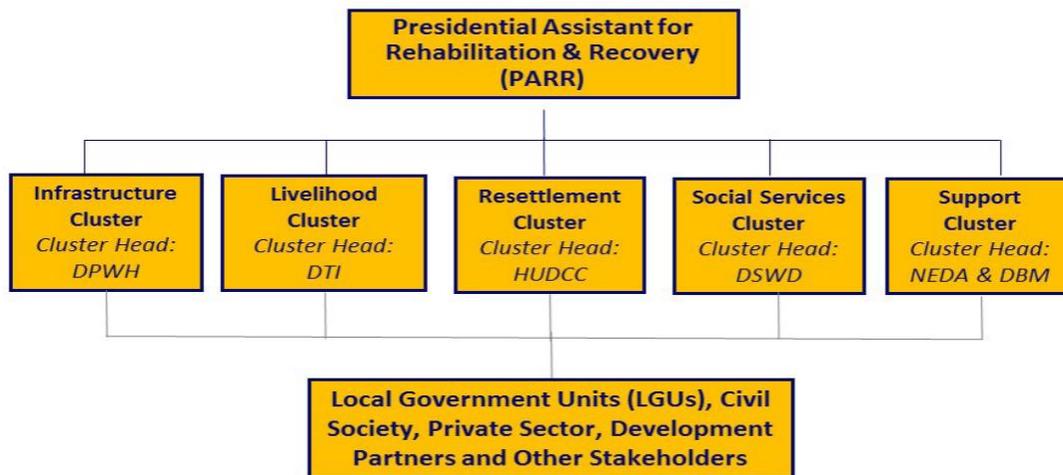
As a first step, LGUs were responsible for submitting their own rehabilitation plans to OPARR, which were then approved by the clusters and compiled in the CRRP. However, given the time it took for OPARR to finalize the CRRP and for the resettlement plan to get formally approved (which was not until late October 2014), triggering the release of funds, it largely fell upon LGUs to implement relocation and resettlement in the interim. Bureaucratic delays further slowed the process leading the President to issue an Administrative Order in October 2014 aimed at streamlining, coordinating, and fast-tracking the permitting process associated with housing construction and resettlement.[28] Moreover, when it came to implementing the more expensive and technical aspects such as hazard mapping, purchasing land, and building permanent shelters, because of the slow response by the Resettlement Cluster, the only resettlement that was able to move forward was dependent upon the support of international agencies or donors.

Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that OPARR itself is understaffed,[29] has an extremely limited field presence and, according to many agencies involved in the humanitarian response, "came in very late." The first meeting of the Resettlement Cluster did not take place in Tacloban City until November 25, 2014, more than one year after the typhoon hit. As one UN agency staff explained it, "It's an open secret that while the national government has authority, it isn't present on the ground."[30]

---

[28] Administrative Order 44, s. 2014, *Streamlining the Process of Issuance of Permits, Certifications, Clearances and Licenses for Housing and Resettlement Projects in Yolanda-Affected Areas, Directing all Government Agencies Concerned to Observe the Same and Imposing Sanctions for Non-Compliance*, President of the Philippines, Oct. 28, 2014, available at http://www.gov.ph/2014/10/28/administrative-order-no-44-s-2014/; *See also* Kristine Sabilo, *President orders creation of 'one-stop-shop' for Yolanda resettlement projects,* (Inquirer.net, 2014), http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/648819/aquino-orders-creation-of-one-stop-shop-for-yolanda-resettlement-projects.

[29] OPARR has a staff of approximately 30 people including 10 field staff who are overseeing recovery in the 171 municipalities that were affected (116 of which will need resettlement). Author interview with HUDCC representative, November 24, 2014.

[30] Author interview with UN agency representative, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.

In some municipalities, mayors lacked the political will to enforce the NBZ policy and prohibit displaced people from returning, especially where there are few if any resettlement sites available.[31] Political rivalries between the President and LGUs further complicated matters, with some LGUs, including Tacloban City, claiming that funding and assistance for implementing recovery were being intentionally withheld by the central government.[32]

Ultimately, the National Housing Authority (NHA) stepped in with a "full package" to identify, purchase, and develop land. Given its own staff constraints, the NHA hired private contractors to purchase and develop land at a fixed price of 290,000 pesos (approximately USD 6,580) per unit.[33] Thus, in practice, a number of different actors have been implementing relocation and resettlement. In some places, permanent shelters are being built by private foundations, while relocation and resettlement efforts are being undertaken by the LGU. In Tacloban City, the NHA is managing resettlement, while in Tanuan in Leyte, a private agency is doing the resettlement. Whether these myriad actors are being held responsible to adhere to national and international law and human rights principles regarding resettlement is not clear.

---

[31] Ibid. Moreover, in some low-lying, coastal municipalities like Hernani in Eastern Samar, which were 90 percent destroyed by the typhoon and storm surge, it was unclear whether any land within the municipality was sufficiently "safe" for residential purposes.

[32] Rose-An Jessica Dioquino, "'You should resign,' Mayor Romualdez tells Yolanda rehab czar Lacson," *GMA News Online*, accessed February 2, 2015, http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/387516/news/nation/you-should-resign-mayor-romualdez-tells-yolanda-rehab-czar-lacson.

[33] Author interview with Tacloban City Mayor, Alfred Romualdez, November 2014.

IDPS wait in limbo

By early November 2014, a year since Haiyan hit, no more than several hundred families had been relocated to permanent houses.[34] In Tacloban City, where the Mayor hopes to relocate 14,400 families by the end of 2015, only 52 permanent homes had been completed on a site that, as of the end of November 2014, had yet to be hooked up to utilities and services.[35] In Guiuan, where the city plans to resettle 12,000 families from three coastal *barangays* devastated by the storm (*Barangays* 6, 7, and Hollywood), the NHA had not completed construction of any permanent shelters (although 130 families had been relocated to single-family temporary shelters built by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in *Barangay* Cogon intended eventually to be converted to permanent homes).[36]

Tacloban City, Leyte Credit: *Refugees International*

The overall result of the numerous delays and challenges in implementing resettlement over the past year has been to prolong the displacement of primarily poor, landless families who, having lost homes, possessions, and sources of livelihoods, are more vulnerable than before Haiyan struck. Even before the storm, poverty rates in the worst affected areas were far above the national average (45.2 percent versus national average of 25.2 percent), with more than a third of the population falling into the category of "landless."[37] Nearly a year later, over 1,000 households (5,000 people) were still living in tent cities, while close to 5,500 families (27,500 people) were residing in transitional shelters (bunkhouses) intended to be used only on a temporary basis leaving them at risk of eviction.

Thousands more who returned to their home areas to await relocation and resettlement also remain extremely vulnerable. This is partly due to the fact that in many municipalities in which the NBZ policy was enforced, humanitarian actors were prohibited from providing assistance to displaced families who returned to these areas. Given the poor conditions in evacuation centers and the lack of transitional shelter sites (bunkhouses), it is understandable that many internally displaced persons (IDPs) chose

---

[34] Jerry Esplanada, "UN laments slow relocation of Yolanda survivors," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Nov. 12, 2014, http://philippine-futuristics.tumblr.com/post/102393144577/un-exec-laments-slow-relocation-of-yolanda.

[35] Author interview with representative of Tacloban City Housing & Community Development Office, Tacloban City, November 2014.

[36] Author interview with international agency representative, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.

[37] Oxfam, et al., Joint Briefing Paper, "Beyond Safe Land: Why security of land tenure is crucial for the Philippines' post-Haiyan recovery, August 2014, 6-7, accessed March 31, 2015 https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-beyond-safe-land-security-tenure-philippines-110814-en.pdf

to return to their former communities and reconstruct their homes using whatever storm debris they could salvage, despite the prohibition on rebuilding.

The restrictions on more permanent forms of shelter assistance have left many people vulnerable to the next storm. As of mid-September 2014, almost a year after the typhoon hit, 42,000 households (more than 200,000 people) were still living in emergency or makeshift shelters in "unsafe zones," many of whom had received little or no support since Haiyan struck due to the restrictions on humanitarian assistance in these areas.[38] As one elderly woman living in a makeshift shelter by the water in Tacloban City explained, "NGOs keep telling us that this is a no build zone. But I have no other choice. I'm just waiting to be relocated, but I don't know when."[39] The slow designation of relocation and resettlement sites also impinged on the delivery of much-needed livelihood assistance since most livelihood interventions are tied to geographic location, thus prolonging the need for humanitarian assistance.

Despite these challenges and delays, the national government asserts that substantial progress has been made and resettlement is moving forward as planned. At a November 10, 2014 press conference, OPARR announced that resettlement sites had been identified for 160,000 housing units[40] (although according to some government employees, it was not yet clear whether the selected sites would ultimately prove suitable for residential construction). Moreover, it remains to be seen whether the government will be able to find durable solutions for some 40,000 households for whom no resettlement site has yet been identified (at least, not as of November 2014). For example, in Salcedo municipality in East Samar where 1,500 families need to be resettled, the NHA recently found a site to accommodate the resettlement of 887 households. This leaves a gap of more than 500 households for whom no site has yet been identified.[41] In one of Salcedo's *barangays* that was 80 percent destroyed by the typhoon, the *barangay* chief stated: "Why hasn't the government relocated us? They are supposed to relocate 190 households in total. We are still waiting. It is unfair."[42]

With OPARR's mandate expiring at the end of 2015 and President Aquino's presidential term ending in 2016, OPARR and the Resettlement Cluster are under a great deal of pressure to complete relocation within a one year time frame. Some remain skeptical whether this can be successfully achieved. As one humanitarian aid worker put it, "OPARR hasn't been empowered. The only thing they have is accountability. Lacson will only be in power another year; he was set up to fail."[43]

---

[38] The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, "Background Paper for the Philippines HCT: Analysis of Unmet Humanitarian Needs from Typhoon Haiyan" September 15, 2014.
[39] Author interview with resident of *Barangay* 88, Tacloban City, November 2014.
[40] Q&A of the Press Briefing on the Yolanda recovery and rehabilitation efforts, accessed January 29, 2015, http://www.gov.ph/2014/11/10/transcript-q-and-a-of-the-press-briefing-on-yolanda-rehab-and-recovery-efforts-november-10-2014/.
[41] Author interview with representative of Salcedo Mayor's Office, Salcedo, Eastern Samar, November 2014.
[42] Author interview with *Barangay* Chief, Palanas, Salcedo, November 2014.
[43] Author interview with representative of international humanitarian organization in Manila, November 2014.

Legal and human rights concerns

Not surprisingly, the NBZ policy and relocation and resettlement plans have raised numerous legal and human rights concerns. In February 2014, the Philippines Commission on Human Rights (CHR) issued an advisory cautioning that the government's NBZ policy and relocation and resettlement plans were potentially at odds with provisions of the Philippines Constitution and the Urban Development and Housing Act regarding forced evictions and demolitions.[44] In addition, there has been at least one legal challenge to the no-build zone policy by a group of fisher-folk who assert they are being unlawfully denied the right to earn a living.[45]

Another key human rights issue raised by the CHR was the need to ensure that those targeted for relocation and resettlement were genuinely consulted and provided with comprehensible information on the resettlement options available to them.[46] By moving forward with enforcement of the policy in the absence of the requisite safeguards, the government risks non-compliance with its obligations under international law to protect the rights to adequate and decent housing and of displaced people to return, as well as the prohibition against involuntary resettlement, forced eviction, and arbitrary displacement.[47]

According to interviews of IDPs in Tacloban City and Guiuan in Eastern Samar, many people want to be relocated to safe areas. Having barely survived the typhoon themselves, having lost loved ones and/or neighbors, as well as their homes and assets, they remain traumatized and live in constant fear of the next storm. This is supported by the results of an Oxfam survey of 453 individuals targeted for relocation in which more than 30 percent of people interviewed considered safety from hazards to be *the* most important consideration for authorities when selecting a permanent relocation site. (This percentage was higher in areas hit hardest by the storm surge and where identified relocation sites are closer.) [48]

Yet, whether the national and local governments will be successful in implementing relocation and resettlement consistent with their obligations under national and

---

[44] Article VIII, Section 10, 1987 Constitution of the Philippines; Section 28, Republic Act 7279, Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992. *See* Human Rights Advisory CHR-A2014-001, *Human Rights Standards on Housing, Land and Property Rights of Populations Affected by Typhoon Yolanda*, Feb. 27, 2014.

[45] Tetch Torres-Tupas, *DOJ asked to issue legal opinion vs no build zone policy* (*Inquirer.net*, 2014), accessed February 1, 2015, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/579667/doj-asked-to-issue-legal-opinion-vs-no-build-zone-policy

[46] CHR Advisory, ¶¶ 19-27, supra note 39.

[47] UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing*, Para. 18; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Principle 28.1; UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons*, Principle 10.

[48] Oxfam Briefing Paper, "The Right Move? Ensuring durable relocation after typhoon Haiyan," April 30, 2014, 10, accessed January 30, 2015, https://oxfam.qc.ca/sites/oxfam.qc.ca/files/The%20right%20move.pdf.

international law and human rights principles remains to be seen. As of November 2014, it appeared that sufficient safeguards were not in place. For example, it did not appear that IDPs targeted for resettlement had received any sort of compensation package. Moreover, the rights to full and informed consent and to participation were not being observed in many instances. While "go and see" visits have been arranged by the NHA, affected communities do not have a say in the shelter design and have not been informed when they will be resettled. In Guiuan, one mother living in a bunkhouse near the bus station expressed frustration, "The *barangay* captain told me I can't stay here, that I will be relocated. But when, I don't know."[49]

The role of the international humanitarian community in post-disaster resettlement programs

UN agencies and other international and local humanitarian organizations engaged in the typhoon response also ran into difficulties navigating the government's NBZ policy and relocation and resettlement plans. Undoubtedly, the main cause of confusion was the lack of clarity regarding how the NBZ policy would be implemented in the face of insufficient temporary and permanent relocation sites. Moreover, in the first several months following the disaster, humanitarian responders had more immediate concerns, including the substandard conditions in many of the transitional shelters (bunkhouses), built by DPWH, into which IDPs were being relocated on a temporary basis. Much of the energy of shelter, protection, and CCCM actors on the ground was devoted to improving the conditions for those living in bunkhouses, not to mention the millions of other people living outside NBZs and in need of immediate humanitarian assistance.

Yet, as the weeks passed and more IDPs returned to their home areas, humanitarian agencies were confronted with the question of whether they could provide humanitarian assistance (including emergency shelter) to displaced persons who had returned to their former communities within NBZs. These were the communities that had not only lost the most in the typhoon and storm surge, but also had the least to begin with. Humanitarian agencies were given mixed messages by local authorities, with some not enforcing NBZs and allowing humanitarian assistance in all areas, others taking the position that only emergency assistance would be allowed in these areas, and still others reportedly threatening to shut down humanitarian agencies that provided any assistance in NBZs.

In the first several months following the disaster, the UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) did not have a unified approach or advocacy strategy on NBZs. This left many humanitarian actors in the field frustrated. According to one humanitarian aid worker engaged in responding to shelter needs, "The discussion of land issues should have started immediately. This comes up in every single emergency. [The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] should have been taking the lead in negotiating with the government."[50] Others saw donors as being weak on the issue. A representative of one aid agency felt that "Donors have the best leverage to push the

---

[49] Author interview with IDP, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.
[50] Author interview with representative of international humanitarian organization, Guiuan, February 2014.

[NBZ] issue, but so far, they won't touch it." [51] A UN peer review of the emergency response conducted in mid-January by a team of UN and non-government officials noted the need to "step up efforts to put in place a shelter strategy linking emergency shelter to transition and providing adequate expert resources in the areas of land, housing and property rights." [52]

Regardless of the slow start, the HCT ultimately took up the issue and in mid-February endorsed a unified approach. [53] In a written advisory, the HCT argued for the provision of emergency support including emergency shelter, WASH, health, education, livelihoods, protection, and CCCM support to people residing in NBZs. It further asserted that relocation should be a measure of last resort, and comprehensive hazard and vulnerability mapping should be carried out at the LGU level. Where relocation is justified, durable relocation plans should be developed in consultation with affected communities. Additionally, the HCT advocated for the development of detailed and effective risk reduction plans. Given the long-term implications of the NBZ policy and government relocation plans, the advisory recommended that: (a) the government conduct detailed hazard risk mapping in all hazard prone areas as an alternative to the 40-meter blanket NBZ; (b) the government communicate a comprehensive compensation package along with relocation plans especially in light of the fact that the relocation caseload exceeded suitable relocation sites; and (c) that vulnerability and beneficiary selection criteria be agreed on together with the community, and that the affected communities be fully consulted. [54]

To the extent that NBZs and the government's resettlement plans raised protection concerns, it can be argued that a better approach would have been to activate a housing, land and property (HLP) sub-cluster within the protection cluster, or to deploy long-term HLP advisors to the protection cluster. This is especially true in light of the fact that NBZs are not new to the Philippines, and had been enforced in numerous natural disasters including Typhoon Bopha in 2012. The UN Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) is the globally designated focal point agency for HLP issues in post-disaster settings yet did not appear to take a leading role in addressing NBZs or related protection issues. Rather, it largely fell upon the single HLP advisor to the shelter cluster (who much of the time was also required to stand in as interim national shelter cluster coordinator in Manila) to lead HLP advocacy efforts with the government on behalf of populations targeted for resettlement. [55]

Thereafter, in order to help those working on shelter issues decide whether or not to become involved in the relocation and resettlement process, the shelter cluster took the

---

[51] Author interview with representative of international humanitarian organization, Manila, February 2014.
[52] *Operational Peer Review Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines*, *Summary of the January 2014 Findings*, February 14, 2014, accessed February 3, 2015, http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Summary%20Operational%20Peer%20Review_Philippines%203%20February%202014.pdf.
[53] "Inter-Cluster Advisory to the HCT on the provision of assistance in proposed 'no dwelling zones'," February 13, 2014.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Alice Thomas, *Philippines: Typhoon Survivors Face Obstacles to Recovery*, supra note 4.

lead in developing a guidance document "to ensure that relocation is undertaken with a holistic perspective and in a manner that respects the rights of all affected persons."[56] The guidance also included considerations for site selection, including "accessibility to critical infrastructure such as water supply and transport, social services including education and health care facilities, and its proximity to livelihoods or the availability of alternative livelihoods in the vicinity."[57]

In early July 2014, the government declared the official "end" of the humanitarian response phase. This triggered the deactivation of most of the humanitarian clusters co-led by the UN and other international agencies (although several clusters including shelter and protection were extended until the end of November on the request of the government). With the transition to recovery, OPARR and the Resettlement Cluster were expected to take up the reins on the resettlement and recovery efforts.

While humanitarian actors deserve credit for taking up the issue, with the emergency phase "over," it remains to be seen whether the Resettlement Cluster will adhere to the legal, human rights, and due process principles recommended by the HCT and shelter cluster in implementing the resettlement program. Yet, what is clear is that resettlement is a long process that in most post-disaster scenarios will outlast the presence of humanitarian actors. Where people are being prevented from returning pending resettlement, displaced populations will not only be displaced for longer periods, but also face increased protection risks. In the case of Typhoon Haiyan, the "residual humanitarian caseload" of close to one million people either still displaced or living in makeshift shelters in "unsafe areas" (and thus, not permitted to rebuild or receive more permanent shelter structures) is testimony to this.

This suggests that in order to adequately protect displaced persons during the relocation and resettlement process, humanitarian actors engaged in the emergency response will need to ensure that HLP issues are addressed from the outset by deploying sufficient HLP experts and advocating with the government for respect of HLP rights. They must also develop transitional shelter strategies that protect IDPs during the relocation process as soon as possible, and work closely with government counterparts and development actors engaged in recovery and resettlement to implement them. International rehabilitation and development actors, for their part, must be better prepared to integrate protection and human rights safeguards into any resettlement support programs.

---

[56] Relocation, HLP Guidance Note for Shelter Partners, March 31, 2014, accessed January 29, 2015, https://www.sheltercluster.org/Asia/Philippines/Typhoon%20Haiyan%202013/Pages/HLP-Advisories.aspx.
[57] Ibid.

As mentioned above, according to OPARR, as of mid-November 2014 resettlement sites had been identified to accommodate 160,000 out of 205,000 households requiring resettlement. However, as of that date, no more than a few hundred families throughout typhoon-affected areas had been relocated and construction of only several thousand units were underway. With such a small portion of the relocation and resettlement caseload of one million people completed, it is difficult to draw too many firm conclusions as to the project's overall success. Nonetheless, visits to municipalities in Leyte and Eastern Samar along with interviews of those involved in the resettlement process, as well as those in targeted populations, revealed a number of emergent issues which, if not addressed, threaten to increase, not decrease, the vulnerability of affected populations.

Where resettlement projects are moving forward, the sites are often remote from town centers and IDPs' former livelihoods, schools, and social networks. In Tacloban City, the main relocation site (in *Barangay* 108, also known as "Tagapuro") is in the northern part of the municipality, approximately 15 kilometers from the center of town. It is intended to be the main resettlement site for some 14,000 households. According to one OPARR official working in Tacloban City, "the main complaint of people is the location of the resettlement site. They keep asking me, 'What will we do in the mountains?'"[58] On the positive side, the local government, with the support of the UN Development Programme and others, plans to implement a comprehensive livelihoods program for resettled families and establish a new "economic center" in the area. However, it appears that physical relocation is taking place in the absence of sufficient livelihood assistance or before livelihood opportunities like new markets are in place.

In other locations, there is little evidence that sufficient and sustainable long-term livelihood strategies are being implemented despite the importance of livelihoods for those targeted for resettlement.[59] In the absence of timely and sufficient livelihood support, it is questionable whether targeted communities will be successfully resettled. As one local *barangay* chief in Eastern Samar explained, "What I'm most concerned about is the livelihoods of the people. Before, they harvested coconuts, but all the coconut trees were destroyed by Yolanda. Now they have a new house, but no money. People in the bunkhouses still get assistance from [the Department of Social Welfare and Development]. That may be why some still stay in the bunkhouses."[60]

---

[58] Author interview with provincial OPARR representative, Tacloban City, Leyte, November 2014.
[59] According to an Oxfam survey of 453 people targeted for resettlement, 49 percent of people interviewed said that livelihood is the most important criterion that authorities should consider when selecting a permanent relocation site. Oxfam Briefing Paper, "The Right Move," supra at note 43.
[60] Author interview with local government official, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.

Guiuan, Eastern Samar Credit: *Refugees International*

Physical relocation is also taking place in the absence of public transportation systems or subsidies for private transport that would allow resettled families to access jobs, schools, hospitals, or other social services in their former *barangays*. In Guiuan, approximately 130 families who previously resided along the water in a *barangay* that was totally wiped out by the typhoon have been relocated to a plot of land located a few kilometers inland (in Cogon *Barangay*). However, because no given the site's distance from the coastline, some families who have been relocated to Cogon continue to reside in wooden shacks next to the sea during the week in order to fish and send their children to school, returning to their "new" homes only on the weekends. With a monthly salary of approximately 2,000 pesos (USD 44), these families cannot afford the 800 pesos (USD 18) it would cost each month to commute back and forth on a daily basis. According to one woman living in a wooden shack over the water in *Barangay* 6, "We lived for one year in a tent city. Then they moved us to Cogon. But we come back and forth because we didn't want to take our kids out of school. And since my husband is a fisherman, he wants to keep this shelter."[61]

Women in particular are concerned that if relocated too far, they will be removed from their long-term social networks or extended family. As the Oxfam survey points out, "These networks often support them with childcare enabling them to have other income-generating work. Therefore, for relocation to be successful, the new site should provide equivalent livelihood opportunities, including physical access to essential markets (i.e. customers, trading opportunities and inputs), and be as close as possible to the original location of the community."[62]

In addition, rather than embracing a "settlements" approach,[63] the primary tack has been to construct shelters on vacant plots of land regardless of the lack of access to even the most basic services like electricity, water, and sanitation. As one NGO representative explained, "land is being chosen because it's available; not because it's suitable."[64] For example, at the Tagoporo site in northern Tacloban City, the NHA has started construction of permanent shelters even though there is no electricity at the site, and the local water utility's lines do not extend far enough north to service the area

---

[61] Author interview with family in *Barangay* 6, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.
[62] Oxfam Briefing Paper, "The Right Move," p.8, supra at note 43.
[63] "Responsible settlements are about more than the construction of shelter, they are about creating a safe environment for the entire community where they not only have access to an adequate standard of housing but also to utilities, critical infrastructure and livelihood opportunities. Adopting a settlements perspective involves the consideration of other aspects of community life beyond shelter and how they all fit together physically and functionally." IFRC, *Post-disaster Settlement Planning and Guidelines* (2012), 7.
[64] Author interview with international non-government organization, Tacloban City, November 2014.

which, at present, is totally undeveloped. According to an official from the regional NHA, the plan is to partner with a private company to build a desalinization plant. However, it was not clear when, or if, that would take place as the water company was not yet convinced that there would be enough customers to support its investment.[65] As one local government official explained, "A better approach would have been to put in infrastructure first, then build houses. But frankly, we had to get people out of tents."[66] Even in those municipalities where the resettlement site is nearby, the sectoral approach to resettlement, in which different actors are responsible for different aspects of site development and resettlement (i.e., housing, WASH, livelihoods, social services), is undermining the process. For example, in Jagnaya *Barangay* in Salcedo municipality in Eastern Samar, 50 permanent houses have been built (in this instance, by a private foundation) immediately adjacent to former residential areas but slightly uphill. There, displaced families are eager to move into their new homes. However, since there is no water, sanitation, or electricity hooked up to the homes, IDPs are still residing in bunkhouses waiting to move in.

On the positive side, several resettlement projects have promised security of land tenure. At the Cogon site in Guiuan, IOM has constructed transitional shelters on a permanent resettlement site with the expectation that the transitional shelters will be upgraded over time. After five years, the people who have been relocated there will be required to pay a small amount (50 pesos a month) for a period of 18 years, after which they will get certificates of ownership for the house and the land.[67] In other areas, however, municipalities have adopted the practice of "usufruct" which allows people to stay as long as they want, but prevents them from renting or selling their homes.[68] According to a representative of the Resettlement Cluster, as of late November 2014, the land ownership arrangements had not yet been determined, "We're in the process of figuring this out. Our experience from the past has been that informal settlers sold the land and became informal settlers again."[69]

---

[65] Author interview with Tacloban City Mayor, Alfred Romualdez, Tacloban City, Leyte, November 2014.
[66] Author interview with Tacloban City Mayor's Office, November 2014.
[67] Author interview with international humanitarian agency in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, November 2014.
[68] Author interview with representative of Tacloban City Housing & Community Development Office, Tacloban City, Leyte, November 2014. *See also* Oxfam Briefing Paper, "The Right Move,"10-11, supra note 43.
[69] Author interview with HUDCC representative, Manila, November 2014.

While the resettlement process in typhoon-affected areas is far from complete, challenges and obstacles confronted by the Philippine government in the first year following Typhoon Haiyan provide important lessons.

In the wake of acute hazards like storms, floods, or tsunamis that result in large-scale displacement, governments may be incentivized to resettle people away from disaster-prone areas. Evacuation of communities living in these areas prior to the disaster, or their displacement thereby, eliminates the highly problematic task of physically relocating or evicting communities from these areas, while the resulting physical destruction – accompanied by the influx of substantial financial resources in the form of disaster aid – creates the opportunity to "build back safer." However, resettlement is a highly complicated undertaking that requires significant advance planning and resources on both the national and local level, and one which governments are unlikely to be fully equipped to take on following acute disasters when they are facing enormous competing humanitarian challenges. In the case of the Philippines, more than a year into the resettlement process and with the clock quickly ticking down on OPARR's mandate, the government is still working out not only who needs to be resettled based on accurate hazard risk mapping, but also where to put an estimated one million people who require resettlement.

Where resettlement is not well planned, policies that prohibit displaced populations from returning pending resettlement, or that prohibit organizations from providing humanitarian assistance to those who have returned, are likely to lead to protracted displacement of vulnerable populations and to contravene numerous legal, human rights, and humanitarian principles. In addition to prolonging the suffering of disaster survivors, increasing their vulnerability, and undermining their ability to recover, *ex post facto* "no return/no build" policies place undue pressure on local governments to find hasty solutions in order to "get people out of tents" regardless of the likelihood that they may not be successful in resettling people sustainably.

On a positive note, the Philippine government's decision to launch the NOAH Project and collect accurate, state-of-the-art hazard risk profiling data provides an excellent example of disaster risk management tools that can help governments assess risk as well as improve early warning systems and increase public awareness. Having such systems, information, and data in place is key to land-use planning, especially in urban centers and hazard-prone areas facing increasing climate change-related risks. It should also be a prerequisite for any government that contemplates resettlement as a strategy for mitigating disaster-induced displacement.

It is also important to articulate the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the resettlement process. In addition, whether at the national or local level, it is important to ensure that government agencies involved in the resettlement process have sufficient

technical, financial, and human capacity to do so, as well as political backing at all levels.

As the CHR and others have pointed out, resettlement must be implemented in a manner that fully respects the human rights of those affected, and must be in compliance with national and international law. For example, implementing resettlement projects requires development of communications strategies to ensure that all parties involved are provided with accurate information regarding the process and that affected populations, in particular, are provided meaningful input into the resettlement process and any decisions affecting them. The *Peninsula Principles for Climate Displacement within States*, which lay out a normative framework and best practices regarding planned relocations in the context of natural disasters and climate change, provide an excellent resource for governments.[70]

In post-disaster contexts, both national governments and humanitarian and development actors must invest far more thought, time, and resources into shelter/resettlement responses that go beyond physically relocating people to empty plots of land. In the case of the Philippines, uprooting people to relatively nearby areas within the same municipality has proven incredibly disruptive, especially since those targeted for resettlement, poor and vulnerable to begin with, were rendered even more vulnerable by the disaster and thus less able to confront the social, financial, and emotional challenges inherent to the resettlement process.

A good example of a more innovative approach is in Tacloban City where several organizations are implementing small-scale shelter and settlement projects using the concept of "in-filling." This involves looking at the urban landscape and identifying plots or structures that can accommodate displaced families through the construction of multi-story housing, instituting landlord/tenant arrangements, and the like. As a result, beneficiaries will be provided with shelter that is safer, and either within or near their current neighborhoods, thus allowing them to maintain social cohesion and networks, as well as access to livelihoods.

In a few places, the adoption of the "settlements" approach that looks at post-disaster recovery in a holistic manner appears promising. Under a "settlements approach" the goal of disaster recovery interventions is a sustainable, well-planned human settlement, not just the provision of shelter or services to individual beneficiaries. For the most part, however, the government and other actors engaged in the resettlement process in the Philippines have fallen back upon a sectoral approach wherein different actors are responsible for different aspects of the resettlement process (e.g., construction of housing; access to utilities and social services; construction of schools and transportation systems; access to livelihoods and sources of income). To the extent that

---

[70] In August 2013, a group of representatives from 10 countries came together to adopt the *Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States*, the first formal statement of principles providing a comprehensive normative framework for addressing internal displacement and relocation in the context of climate change, accessed February 2, 2015, http://displacementsolutions.org/peninsula-principles/.

these different aspects of resettlement are not being coordinated, or are not being implemented at all, this approach presents the biggest stumbling block.

Whether the post-Haiyan resettlement program ultimately proves successful remains to be seen, and will require long-term monitoring. At present, and with humanitarian actors long gone, it is unclear who will take up this monitoring function, especially where poor, landless, and disenfranchised communities are concerned. But with millions of people around the globe currently residing in areas exposed to the effects of climate change, resettlement as an adaptation strategy is likely to entail significant challenges, costs, and risks unless more innovative, inclusive, and cost-effective approaches are developed. In the interim, it is imperative that in post-disaster scenarios, resettlement programs do not compete with, or obscure the need for, improved early warning, evacuation, and disaster risk reduction measures as more effective strategies for protecting vulnerable populations.

BROOKINGS-LSE
Project on Internal Displacement

B

1775 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20036
USA
Web: idp@brookings.edu
Twitter: @BrookingsIDP