
This study examines the long-term socio-economic consequences of the relocation and regrouping of refugees that occurred after the Manjil earthquake in Iran. Reconstruction consisted of relocation of a significant number of villages, and the incorporation of small villages into larger ones. Resettled households did not lose land, as they were given plots of land equal to what they had lost, and the creation of larger villages led to improvements in education and public health resources. However, the resettlement was found to be largely unsuccessful. Relocated people, while given land, lost access to their natural resources, and social networks were weakened as a result of the increased competition for resources. The main problem faced by the replaced population is that they lacked the skills necessary to gain employment in the new community, which with time resulted in members of the host-community gaining and maintaining socio-political dominance.


Cernea suggests guidelines for how resettlement can be carried out in a way that is beneficial to both the displaced and the host communities:

- It is necessary that the displaced people be involved in the planning. Sharing of information reduces hostility, and the involvement of local leaders and organizations can help gain the respect of the people, and can help maintain social cohesion.
- The host population must be taken into account when considering the effects of resettlement, as the resettled population often puts the total population over the land’s carrying capacity, which can lead to conflicts. Services such as education, health and water should be provided for the entire population, and members of the host population should be compensated for any resources lost in the resettlement.

Resettlement projects are more successful when they are thought of as opportunities for development for local economies and for improving the standard of living for included populations. Both land-based and non land-based strategies must be utilized in resettlement. Cash compensation on its own is rarely effective, and land for land compensation is important, and it is helpful to limit restrictions placed on the settlers’ activities. With time, responsibility should be transferred to the settler population, allowing and encouraging the emergence of leaders within the population.

Impoverishment is always a risk in displacement, but this article suggests a framework for resettlement that will reduce the negative effects of displacement and resettlement, called the impoverishment risks and reconstruction model for resettling displaced populations (IRR model). The IRR model lays out the major, most widespread components of displacement risks, and works to reverse these risks.

The risk components and corresponding strategies/goals are:

- Landlessness and land-based resettlement
- Joblessness and reemployment
- Homelessness and house reconstruction
- Marginalization and social inclusion
- Increased morbidity and improved health care
- Food insecurity and adequate nutrition
- Loss of access and restoration of community assets and services, social disarticulation and networks and community building

This framework is meant for both individual resettlement projects and for building general policies. Resettlement planning will not be successful until it moves beyond focusing on simple compensation for losses. Additionally, it is necessary that project preparation include communication and consultation with those who will be displaced and otherwise affected.


As a part of a discussion on relocation due to dam building, this paper focuses on how China’s Three Gorges Dam Project has affected the population, and the successes and failures of the relocation project. The three resettlement strategies used for the project were:

1. Resettling people on nearby land to be farmed. This method often resulted in impoverishment for the resettled people because they often received smaller plots of land than they had lost, and the land was often difficult to farm because of steep slopes and poor soils.

2. Letting migrants live with relatives in urban areas. This method was often more successful than the first, but is still considered a failure because most of the migrants resettled in cities promptly lost their jobs, although they did gain access to improved social services.

3. Moving migrants far away. Resettlers moved far away often received poor-quality lands, and were denied access to common property. Migrants are often unwilling to
relocate far away because of the difficulty of rebuilding livelihoods, difficulty of integrating into the new community, the loss of social networks, and the difficulty of a new environment.


This paper recounts the process of displacement and eventual resettlement faced by the 167 residents of Bikini Atoll when they were moved in 1946 so that the United States government could use their atoll in the Marshall Islands to conduct tests on 23 nuclear weapons. The Bikinians were first sent to the uninhabited Rongerik Atoll, where they quickly reached near starvation. After two years they were transported to Kwajalein Atoll, where they lived in tents alongside the airport. In 1948, the Bikinians chose to move to Kili Island in the southern Marshall Islands, and gave the US full use right to the Bikini Atoll in exchange for full use rights to Kili, several islands in Jaluit Atoll, cash, and a trust fund. Survival on Kili was difficult because it has no lagoon, and not much food can be grown there. In 1969, the US created an 8-year plan to resettle Bikini Atoll. After several years of resettling the Bikinians, the level of radioactivity on the island was found to be higher than expected, and the island was again evacuated. Over the next several decades, the US government created several trust funds, totaling $90 million dollars, for the people of Bikini Atoll. The Bikinians lobby the US government for more funding, and insist that the US government is obligated to clean up the entire atoll.


The creation of Swaziland’s Malolotja National Park required the relocation of 63 Swazi families. The relocation was considered a success because though families were at first reluctant to move, the resettlement provided them with economic and health benefits. The relocation was successful for several reasons:

- The king found and purchased a large area of land for the displaced population to resettle to, instead of leaving this task to the individual families.
- The land area to which they moved was culturally similar to the area they left, and also made for better farmland.
- The king showed a personal interest in the people and their situation, which lessened the pain of moving away from an area to which they were historically, emotionally and culturally attached.

Scudder considers the negative social impacts of resettlement due to the construction of large dams. In a successful resettlement project, the income and standard of living for the majority of the effected population must improve by as much as possible. As far as past resettlement projects go, this goal has proven extremely difficult to reach. Scudder stresses that successful resettlement takes approximately two generations, and considers the impacts of resettlement on different groups of people involved.

- **Resettlers:** There are four stages in the resettlement process: planning, resettled people coping and adapting after being having to leave their land, developing economically and forming community, and the second generation successfully taking over from the first. Most resettlement efforts have failed to reach the third stage, causing the resettled people to become stuck in poverty.

- **Hosts:** The term “host” should be defined broadly, not just as those people who directly receive the settlers. Even when the host population willingly accepts the settlers, conflicts usually result due to increased competition for land, jobs, power, and other resources. The best preventative measure is to include the host population in any services or opportunities provided for the resettled people.

In order to help project affected people become beneficiaries of the project, increased local participation is necessary. However, governments are often unwilling to decentralize power and control of funds, and factors such as disorganization often stand in the way of the success of these efforts.


By using The Jamuna Bridge Project (a 800 million dollar, multi-donor project) as a case study, Zaman critiques the methods that have been used in Bangladesh to resettle people displaced because of development projects. The Bangladesh government does not have a clear resettlement policy, and population resettlements are handled on a case by case basis, but consistently result in the impoverishment of the displaced people. Considering the case of The Jamuna Bridge Project, Zaman stresses that it is not sufficient to simply comply with the standards and guidelines of the donor organizations as these are not always properly enforced, and that Bangladesh must have a national resettlement policy.

Because Bangladesh is so densely populated, resettlement programs should depend mainly on self-relocation, and displaced persons must be sufficiently compensated, even if they do not possess a legal title to the land lost. The displaced community must be highly involved in resettlement planning, and the government should hold workshops to ensure that the population fully understands all aspects of the resettlement program.