
3 Displacement, Return, and Relocation

Housing and Community Recovery Considerations

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Displacement related to disasters is becoming more widely recognized as an issue requiring specific attention, but it is still sometimes downplayed or dismissed as a temporary or marginal concern. This occurs in spite of the fact that displacement plays a central role in determining how many disasters evolve, the importance to long-term recovery of sustainable settlement and integration through return or relocation, and its disproportionate and repeated impact on highly vulnerable people (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC] 2014, p. 45).

Internal and transnational movement and mobility of persons affected by disasters can be characterized in myriad ways based on the severity of the event (hazard, crisis, disaster, and catastrophe), type of movement (voluntary and forced), drivers (economic, political, demographic, social, and/or environmental conditions), recovery timeframes (short- or long-term recovery), and outcomes (evacuation, displacement, return, and relocation). These drivers and outcomes overlap in multiple ways, both spatially and temporally.

Displacement from home and community as a result of fast- and slow-onset natural disasters is a global phenomenon growing in scale, frequency, and complexity (Esnard and Sapat 2014; IDMC 2014). An analysis of trends since the 1970s shows that displacement has increased more quickly with regard to weather-related and geophysical hazards (IDMC 2014, p. 9). The Philippines, Vietnam, and Bangladesh recorded the highest levels of displacement relative to population size, but it is the Philippines that suffered the two largest displacements of 2013: typhoon Trami displaced 1.7 million people in September 2013 and typhoon Haiyan displaced 4.1 million in November 2013 (IDMC 2014, p. 18). Urban development patterns and population growth in vulnerable areas have added to the exposure of homes, livelihood assets, and infrastructure, and subsequent loss and destruction. While the focus of this chapter is on natural hazards and disasters, the added threats from wars and conflicts cannot be ignored. The number of persons facing protracted and repeated displacement is also expected to increase both as a result of pre-disaster vulnerability as well as the frequency of disasters (Esnard and Sapat 2014, 2015).

With catastrophic disasters comes a range of sheltering, housing, and recovery paths, concurrent with decision-making about recovery and rebuilding in-place or recovery and relocation elsewhere. Devastating and catastrophic disasters lessen the probability that unilateral decisions can be made by individual households. As such, governments and their agencies, humanitarian and development organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international institutions, and donors also influence household and community recovery trajectories, as well as displacement timelines and outcomes. Combined, these are real dilemmas that complicate durable solutions to post-disaster recovery of households and communities.

This chapter is an attempt to place displacement, return, and relocation outcomes in the context of this complex reality. The next section discusses overlapping forms of in situ, cultural-economic, and protracted displacement, followed by background information on various types of displacement and relocation. A section of the chapter is also devoted to discussing the impacts of sheltering and housing policies, as well as community social ties on displacement timelines and outcomes. Examples from post-disaster recovery processes around the globe are used to elucidate pathways from displacement to return and relocation.

3.2 INTANGIBLE AND OVERLAPPING FORMS OF DISPLACEMENT

Displacement can be both tangible (physical/locational) and intangible/intractable, and is largely driven by the severity of the disaster and its impacts on one's home and community (see Box 3.1). People do not have to be physically displaced at the

BOX 3.1 DEFINITION: DISPLACEMENT

Displacement: forced removal of a person from his/her home or country, often due to armed conflict or natural disasters (International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2011, p. 29).

time that disaster strikes. They can shelter-in-place or community (e.g., in family or friend's residence nearby), but later be displaced because of severe damage to their home (owned or rented) or due to threats from damages to lifeline infrastructure and critical facilities (e.g., water supply contamination). This can be characterized as micro-displacement, which occurs within or between urban neighborhoods (Carrillo 2009; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC] 2012; Singh 2012). This section focuses on three overlooked forms of displacement: in situ, cultural-economic, and protracted, given their overlapping and intractable nature, ramifications for housing, and implications for second levels of vulnerability and insecurity for displaced persons.

3.2.1 IN SITU DISPLACEMENT

The concept of in situ displacement refers to displacement experienced by people while staying in place, where people find themselves in a new position in the social hierarchy, leading to exclusion and impediments to physical and social movement (Feldman et al. 2003, p. 9). After Hurricane Katrina, low-income and working-poor families faced unprecedented rent increases; some were evicted from undamaged units or faced rent hikes for failure to pay while evacuated, and others were evicted even when their apartment or residence suffered no damage (Pardee 2012). The experiences of the Honduran Garifuna* after Hurricane Katrina provide a different perspective. Although long-time residents of New Orleans, they were classified as new Latinos who had come to work in the cleanup and reconstruction. They faced the dilemma of negotiating their place in post-Katrina New Orleans (England 2009) to overcome marginalization, invisibility, and in situ displacement. Persons not directly impacted by disasters can also experience in situ displacement. For example, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2005) reported that after the 2004 tsunami, some unaffected households in Indian coastal villages were left in place and were excluded from relocation, resettlement, and compensation policies, while the surrounding affected community was relocated. This led to a lack of resources to these remaining households. Disruption to livelihood dependency chains for these remaining households essentially altered their economic and social status and roles in the coastal fishing community.

3.2.2 CULTURAL-ECONOMIC DISPLACEMENT IN HOST COMMUNITIES

In situ displacement can also apply to affected individuals and households that find themselves in host communities (communities that are not affected by the primary event, but to which displaced persons turn to as safe havens) and societies (especially in the case of refugees fleeing from conflict situations). There are also the intertwining effects of both culture and economics that surface in host communities.

* The Garifuna of New Orleans is described by Garza (2012) as a historically mobile and transnational community, whose members originally from Honduras first settled in New Orleans in the early nineteenth century when the Standard Fruit Company carried cargo and workers through the port city. More recently, movement from Honduras to New Orleans was prompted by Category 5 Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Weber and Peek (2012a,b) documented economic hardships related to housing and jobs, as well as widespread marginalization, prejudices, and stigmatization faced in their new locations by persons displaced from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (Weber and Peek 2012a,b). Reasons underlying the “Katrina fatigue” by early 2006 (Peek 2012, p. 33) included resentment by some long-time residents of host/receiving communities that the newcomers moved ahead of them in the social service queues (Miller 2012, p. 25). Over time, the social status of displaced persons was further weakened as they were not only viewed as competitors for jobs, social services, and other amenities, but also as outsiders changing the racial, cultural, and economic composition of the receiving community (Meyer 2013). One can argue that the long-time residents of host communities seeking jobs, homes, and services faced their own share of in situ displacement as well. The decrease in the affordable housing stock, as well as increase in house rental costs are examples of impacts that can affect these long-time residents.

3.2.3 PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT

For some, displacement tends to be for a very long duration, resulting in movement back and forth between insecure locations, thereby experiencing displacement many times in search of safety and livelihoods (IFRC 2012). Natural disasters represent a primary source of insecurity in countries such as the Philippines, where repeated disasters have led to protracted displacement, increased vulnerabilities, and a lack of access to adequate and affordable housing (Bradley 2015). Haiti has seen its fair share of disasters during the 10-year period between 2004 and 2014: Hurricane Jeanne in 2004, tropical storm Fay and Hurricanes Gustave, Hanna, and Ike in 2008, the 2010 magnitude 7 earthquake and the ensuing cholera epidemic (Esnard and Sapat 2014). Repeated disasters and crises, and protracted displacement have slowed the pace of recovery for displaced persons while exacerbating preexisting vulnerabilities and persistent challenges, such as poverty and homelessness.

Overall, these intangible forms of displacement are impediments to positive recovery trajectories of disaster survivors. As noted by Esnard and Sapat (2014), the prospect of finding a durable solution to displacement such as return or relocation stalls with such protracted displacement, as displacees remain marginalized and caught in further cycles of disaster and displacement.

3.3 RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT

In all too many cases, resettlement, particularly when done at the community level, ends up becoming a secondary disaster. Therefore, when disasters, conflicts, or development damage or destroy communities, uprooting people, displacing them far from homes and jobs, the process of recovery is made doubly complex (Oliver-Smith 2013, p. 187).

What typically starts out for some as temporary evacuation or micro-displacement often evolves into permanent displacement and eventual relocation. Relocation is often voluntary, particularly in the United States where one makes the decision to move to a different home or community based on home ownership status, a variety of push-pull factors such as jobs and social service support, and compensation policies

BOX 3.2 DEFINITIONS: RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT

Relocation: a way to protect people or a structure from a hazard by moving them or it away from the hazard; flooding is the most common reason that structures are relocated (Coppola 2011, p. 215).

Resettlement: relocation and integration of people (e.g., refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, etc.) into another geographical area and environment, usually in a third country (IOM 2011, pp. 84–85).

such as buyouts and insurance. The terms relocation and resettlement are sometimes used interchangeably, but resettlement is just one type of relocation; one which conveys the concept of planned, physical displacement of people to a new, permanent location (Arnall et al. 2013, 468) or a managed activity, and intervention by an agency of the state (Wilmsen and Webber 2015) (See Box 3.2). Referring to displacement as a result of climate change, Wilmsen and Webber (2015, p. 78) cautioned that while on one hand, voluntary movement is preferable to forced resettlement to avoid “a high risk of maladaptation,” the reality is that organized resettlement might be the only option for those without freedom of mobility.

Moving entire neighborhoods and communities due to lingering hazards is expensive and time consuming and generally easier for small towns and communities. A case in point is the small town of Grantham with a population of 370 people in Queensland, Australia which was relocated to a contiguous relocation site in the same school district after the January 2011 flash flood (Sipe and Vella 2014). In addition to the challenges of negotiating with home and land owners, securing funding for critical infrastructure and design of processes for deciding who would participate in land swaps were other challenges that arose. Mandatory relocation and resettlement, particularly in coastal communities tend to be more controversial with accusations and perceptions of land grabs for tourism and lucrative redevelopment projects. For example, after the 2004 tsunami in Tamil Nadu, relocation was not favored by local communities and villagers who made their living from fishing and related activities such as fish drying, and storage of fishing boats and nets (Tata Institute of Science 2005). After Hurricane Katrina, there were similar concerns in the cities of Gulfport and Biloxi in Mississippi about development initiatives negatively impacting poor African American neighborhoods that had already been squeezed by urban development strategies prior to the disaster (Derickson 2014).

Another nagging dilemma is the emergence of [un]planned illegal new communities and settlements. In Haiti, for example, there is ongoing discussion about land tenure, land rights, and land entitlement for residents who seek to resettle themselves after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake. The city of Canaan on the periphery of the capital city of Port-au-Prince was originally the site of the Corail-Cesselesse “model camp” created by the international community for Haiti’s 2010 earthquake survivors. The population in Canaan is said to have tripled between 2011 and 2015 (UN-OCHA 2011; Zidor 2012; Haiti Grassroots Watch 2013; Welsh 2015) with major investment

by residents in housing, schools, churches, and shops. This self-resettled community moved ahead despite the limited access to water, sanitation, and waste removal services, despite not being sanctioned by government (Zidor 2012), and most significantly despite being built on land that is vulnerable to landslide from heavy rains (UN-OCHA 2011). The likelihood for repeated displacement is very real for this new community.

Relocation and resettlement also needs to be addressed from the perspectives of conflict and climate change, which will continue to cause internal and transnational flight to host communities and countries. Additionally, relocation and resettlement of residents with short tenures in host countries will require adaptation to new settings, integration into new host societies, and overcoming usually higher unemployment rates, access to fewer resources, less secure housing, and linguistic issues (Marlowe 2013; Marlowe and Lou 2013). Such adaptation is further complicated in host communities and countries that may themselves face crises and disasters. For example, the Bhutanese who were relatively recent arrivals and did not have community centers, suffered more complications than their Ethiopian and Afghan counterparts in the aftermath of two major earthquakes in Christchurch* in 2010 and 2011 (Marlowe 2013).

The pathways from displacement to return or relocation while highly variable from one community to another, are also influenced by macro-level sheltering and housing policies, as well as micro-level community social ties and collaborative decision-making dynamics. Relocation is also shaped by what Iuchi (2014) referred to as the two resettlement dynamics: one between the government and the community and the second within the community itself.

3.4 HOME AND COMMUNITY RECOVERY: INFLUENCE ON DISPLACEMENT TIMELINES AND PATHWAYS

Reconstructing/reconstituting a community means attempting to replace through administrative efforts an evolutionary process in which social, cultural, economic, and environmental interactions arrived at through trial and error, and deep experiential knowledge develop, enabling a population to achieve a mutually sustaining social coherence and material sustenance over time.... One of the best outcomes that might be imagined for resettlement projects is to work out a system in which people can materially sustain themselves while they themselves begin the process of social reconstruction (Oliver-Smith 2013, p. 206).

Emergency sheltering and temporary housing phases are critically important in the pathway from displacement to return or relocation. In the United States, formulation of national-level temporary housing strategies and guidance policies materialized after the housing problems that followed Hurricane Katrina, and included provisions for affordable temporary housing options for displaced persons and appropriate zoning and other land use regulations (Levine et al. 2007; Mitchell et al. 2012; Sapat et al. 2011; Boyd 2014). In a comparative assessment of post-disaster sheltering and housing timelines after Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, and Ike, Mitchell et al. (2012)

* New Zealand is the third largest refugee resettlement area containing relatively large Afghan, Ethiopian, and Bhutanese communities.

highlighted the importance of recognizing the differential needs of displaced persons, as well as the importance of federal and local agencies integrating and coordinating programs and disseminating resources. In the case of Japan, pre-established temporary housing programs for displaced persons have made it possible to start the process for planning temporary housing almost immediately after the disaster. There has also been an evolution of housing policies in Japan from the “one track” government built pre-fabricated temporary housing option after the 1995 Kobe earthquake, to more options (e.g., payment of rent for the disaster survivors to live in privately owned rental apartments) after the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake (Iuchi et al. 2015). Evaluation of the success of these different approaches will require a longitudinal assessment but concerns revolve around reducing unintended effects of temporary housing locations, splintering communities and, in the case of Japan, depopulating rural communities.

Keeping communities and social networks together continues to be a goal of many community rebuilding advocates in NGOs and government entities, who coordinate and facilitate initiatives to return and rebuild. After the Chilean earthquake of 2010, the recovery effort was led by Chile’s Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINVU), which had a track record of improving housing conditions of low-income families. According to Comerio (2014), the Ministry focused on both temporary housing and rebuilding on-site. Specifically, subsidies were provided for housing construction on owner sites in order to keep communities intact, to allow access to their jobs and family networks, to facilitate monitoring of construction, and to support local builders and the local economy. Families without land were put up in temporary housing camps while “social condominiums”^{*} were designed on sites selected for pre-organized groups of families by community leaders (Comerio 2014, p. 343).

Storr and Haeffele-Balch (2012, p. 295) characterize post-disaster community rebound as “a collective action problem” where every individual’s decision to rebuild is impacted by the likelihood that others in the community will rebuild,” also noting that “the longer return is delayed while displaced residents wait to see what other displaced residents will return and rebuild, the greater the chance that individuals will settle down in new locations, abandoning all hopes of returning to their previous communities” (Storr and Haeffele-Balch 2012, p. 296). Community leaders play similarly important roles in community cohesion. They keep their neighbors informed about recovery, rebuilding, and reconstruction timelines and, in some instances, organize and rally them when communities are in jeopardy of elimination.

However, displacement of community members to the same temporary housing sites is no guarantee of decisions to return or relocate jointly, as documented by Iuchi (2014) for two neighboring districts that faced decisions to either relocate or return after the 2004 Chuetsu earthquake. That same study by Iuchi (2014) also highlighted the importance of context in understanding decisions of households and communities—socioeconomic conditions, geographic location (urban/rural), demographics, population growth and decline trends, and culture of community

^{*} Social condominiums are similar to public housing in the United States, except that residents own the units in Chile (Comerio 2014, p. 345).

gatherings and decision making. On the flip side, dispersed host communities and decentralized community-based efforts have led to successful return and community redevelopment. The case of the Vietnamese-American community in the Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic parish in New Orleans East is one example. The tight-knit community facilitated the return of their fellow residents and parishioners. The displacement to far-flung cities across the United States with other poorer populations, and eventual return to New Orleans is well documented (Leong et al. 2007; Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009; Storr and Haeffele-Balch 2012). Similar ethnic diaspora social ties are instrumental even in instances where community cohesion might be less apparent in highly dispersed ethnic households throughout cities. For example, the Honduran Garifuna, while very dispersed in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, all lived in the same host community of Houston after the hurricane (Garza 2012). The group, according to Garza (2012), became a more cohesive community linked by their migration to and evacuation from New Orleans. Pastor Erik, a Houston resident also of Garifuna descent facilitated acquisition of temporary housing, assisted with FEMA and insurance paperwork, and conducted therapy sessions and Garifuna-language church services thus enabling and fostering this Garifuna community cohesion in the host community of Houston (Garza 2012). Overall, the strength of ethnic diaspora networks in host communities was important for community cohesion and joint return decisions.

What rings true in the examples and communities featured in this section is that reconstructing and reconstituting cohesive communities are fundamental to household and community recovery and vice versa, and that population displacement pathways, processes, players, and outcomes are key determinants of return, relocation, and resettlement dynamics.

3.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As a society, we have made progress in acknowledging the long-term recovery implications of devastating disasters. That it takes years if not decades to recover, particularly for vulnerable households and communities, is increasingly evident in both developed and developing countries. Displacement adds to the multifaceted and complex nature of post-disaster housing recovery, but drivers of displacement and decision-making processes underlying how return and relocation decisions are made remain highly nuanced and variable between places and societies. The domino effects of conflicts, as well migration and displacement from slow-onset hazards such as climate change on top of increasing weather disasters will present a whole host of other challenges as well, including socio-legal and additional human rights issues. A broad range of community practitioners who interface with displaced persons—social workers, school administrators, social service providers, health care providers, planners, policy makers, lawyers, human rights advocates, and government entities—must acknowledge and address the complexities of displacement to facilitate and enable appropriate outcomes for both internal and transnational displacees. Housing and community considerations need to remain front and center in such research and practice initiatives.

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