

Concept Note

Regional Workshop on Planned Relocations

Studio Hotel, San José, Costa Rica

Dates: 2-3 May 2018

Background

Disasters and environmental change have always affected the habitats in which people live. In extreme cases, such as riverbank erosion, the physical space where people live simply disappears and people have no option but to move elsewhere. In other cases, livelihoods, properties, or public services are damaged or destroyed to the extent that inhabitants perceive that they must move to find an adequate place to live. And there are also cases where people continue to live in places where their lives, property, and wellbeing are at risk—whether because of sudden-onset disasters (such as flooding or earthquakes) or the slow degradation of living conditions (such as drought or sea level rise)—and governments require them to leave. Climate change is likely to accelerate the pressures on habitats and governments are likely to consider Planned Relocations as a means to reduce disaster risk or to adapt to climate change. And yet, Planned Relocation also carries risks for those it is intended to benefit, including the disruption of livelihoods and loss of income, socioeconomic networks and cultural heritage.

Recognizing the gap in knowledge on Planned Relocations despite their widespread use in some contexts, through a series of international meetings held between 2011 and 2015, a group of States, international organizations and experts developed *Guidance on Planned Relocations*.¹ This *Guidance*, published in 2015, provides overarching principles for States and other actors to plan and implement Planned Relocations to protect people from disasters and environmental change. The *Guidance* underlines that Planned Relocations are complex, multidimensional processes and should normally be a last resort and adopted only when other alternatives are not possible. When it is needed, it should be carefully planned and involve the participation of affected people. While there are certain general principles that carry across all Planned Relocations, the way in which decisions are made and implemented will depend on the particular national and local contexts, the available timeframe, and the underlying triggers.

The background research, which analyzed and highlighted lessons from past experience, and informed the development of the *Guidance*, suggests there are many things that can go wrong.² A *Toolbox: Planning Relocations to Protect People from Disasters and Environmental Change*³ begins to address the need for better planning, implementation and monitoring of relocation programs. It identifies five *cross-cutting* elements that repeatedly surfaced in lessons from prior experience. These include:

1. Establishing and complying with an appropriate legal framework
2. Understanding and addressing the needs and impacts of Planned Relocations on affected populations

¹ Brookings Institution, Georgetown University and UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocations*, 2015. <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/qwx6dcvl9762fv9itnqn98ogx1h3sjzz>

² Petz, Daniel. Planned Relocations in the Context of Natural Disasters and Climate Change: A Review of the Literature. Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement. June 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings-Planned-Relocations-Annotated-Bibliography-June-2015.pdf>

³ <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/xzn8xdwvwp1yh4ogfce7sbd8fxa4vn258/file/198632081869>

3. Providing information to, undertaking consultation with, and ensuring the participation of, affected populations
4. Understanding and addressing complexities related to land issues
5. Undertaking monitoring and evaluation and ensuring accountability

The Toolbox incorporates a series of checklists of issues to consider at key stages in the planning of relocations.

1. **Decision:** Making the decision to undertake Planned Relocation of groups or communities
2. **Plan:** Developing a plan for Planned Relocation; and
3. **Implementation:** Implementing the plan, including measures: (a) pending physical relocation; (b) during physical relocation; and (3) in the longer-term following physical relocation.

The Toolbox also includes case studies and examples of how governments in different regions have dealt with these issues.

Workshop on Planned Relocations

The objectives of the workshop are three-fold:

- To learn from the experiences of Central America, Colombia and Mexico with relocations undertaken in order to protect people from disasters and environmental change
- To present and receive feedback on the *Toolkit* as to its relevance in the Central American context
- To encourage governments and other actors to begin thinking about how planned relocations fit into their national strategies on risk reduction and climate change adaptation

The workshop is organized by the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Environmental Change and Migration of the Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) of the World Bank. In collaboration with the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University, the International Organization for Migration, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Platform for Disaster Displacement. The workshop will include representatives from relevant ministries of Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama as well as from international and regional organizations and civil society organizations. The workshop will be facilitated by Elena Correa (former World Bank), Elizabeth Ferris (Vice Chair of the TWG) and others. Governmental representatives will be asked to prepare a presentation on relocations carried out in their countries and to reflect on lessons learned.