Policy**Brief**

REDUCING RELOCATION RISK
IN URBAN AREAS

Introduction

In India, people are relocated both after a disaster and in anticipation of one. The outcomes are often detrimental. Land is often acquired for 'resettlement and rehabilitation' to move people out of dangerous places, but there are no legal frameworks or safety net policies for those moved post-disaster. Specific policies are needed to support these people and ensure resettlement and relocation is good for cities at large. India has a weak national policy and legal institutional framework to deal with internally displaced populations. The current institutional mechanisms and authorities view the entire process

Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

- **Relocation should be a last resort for risk reduction**. Resettlement and relocation should

  all alternative options for risk reduction and development have been conducted and no other measure would be as effective or less socially and economically costly. Relocation and resettlement should always be accompanied by **safety nets for those being resettled**.

- **For some settlements, relocation must be avoided at all costs**: (1) If the settlement in an 'untenable' location is older than 10 years. (2) Once relocated, households must be protected

former, and often, **alternate uses of the vacated land drive the decisions** for relocation. If the vacated land is put to an alternate use, other than environmental, the costs of relocation and

vis-à-vis in situ upgradation.

4. In most cases, **alternatives to relocation are not assessed fully**. Once resettled, it is assumed that the communities' needs are met even for the future – whereas people's experiences suggest that their regular costs seem to increase post-relocation, while their ability to deal with future shocks decreases. So there needs to be an understanding of **long-term implications on people's lives and livelihoods** at the time of relocation decisions.

B. Institutional design

1. There is a **lack of multi-scalar institutional design** of these interventions, where community participation is enabled within the project design phases.

2. **Participation is being left for the last stages** of the project—if at all—instead of including people from the early design and planning stage. Participation and sense of ownership,

Implementation Challenges

A. Operational challenges

1. On the one hand, housing undertaken in a purely developmental context often ignores hazard risk reduction as part of the mandate. On the other hand, while post-disaster housing developments may address hazard exposure, they are often seen as creating other socio-economic risks. These two kinds of housing interventions are conducted by **multiple agencies with no cross-learning opportunities**.

2. **Beneficiary identification** based on select, objective criteria could be misleading. Reasons for the lack of identity cards could further lead alternative conditions of selection.

3. Provision of **temporary transit housing** needs to be made part of housing schemes, including those that involve in situ housing, for greater success of the intervention.

4. **Emergency shelters**, particularly in urban areas, are **not sufficiently equipped** for the needs during disaster evacuations.

1. There is still a lack of **sensitivity to caste and disability**
   Mixing of castes occurs at the time of relocation, and this is leading to high risks for particularly vulnerable groups. Community mobilisers must have **sufficient autonomy** for working closely with the target settlements to be able to identify and address these as they come up on a case-by-case basis.

2. A **multi-stage grievance redress system** that is accessible to one and all needs to be in place in urban areas, to correct for any excluded households that have been disadvantaged because of their lack of political powers.

3. Transferring money to **existing beneficiary bank accounts** may not be possible as they have lower transfer limits.

C. Innovations

1. Innovative interventions such as the **mason-training programme** could reduce the challenges of skills scarcity during large-scale interventions, but their **impacts on long-term economic diversification and other social outcomes for women are still unknown**.

Policies and Programme Design

Research shows that relocation almost always disturbs the balance of the existing neighbourhood, yet there are situations where relocation is the only means to reduce exposure. While it is not recommended to have a blanket policy of relocation for reducing risk, as this could be used as a pretext for evictions and development, it is still advisable to have some safety recommendations in terms of what these relocation interventions must consider, and what are the 'No-Go' conditions for relocation.

A. For in situ reconstruction and upgrading

1. This should be the status-quo decision, unless it is documented in detail that despite structural interventions, relocation is the only means of reducing risk exposure, as well as providing improved overall development outcomes for the people.

B. For relocation

1. Relocation is recommended only as long as in situ upgradation or early-warning-based risk reduction options are not viable.

2. The distance between old and new sites must be minimal (less than 2 km in rural and 5 km in urban areas) such that continuity of life and services that people are accustomed to can be maintained, even if provision of new services is not planned.

3. Rather than the size of the settlement, it is seen that the levels of homogeneity must direct the design of the R&R.

C. For all interventions aimed at risk reduction

1. It is recommended to conduct detailed assessments for the most vulnerable settlements prior to actual extreme events, and investing in early warning systems (particularly for climatic and hydro-meteorological hazards) to avoid disruptions.

2. Making people aware on a regular basis and keeping them involved in the various decision-making processes, not just during implementation, is pertinent.

3. Suitable models and simulations of climate change must be devised to inform design and policy actions for long-term risk reduction. For instance, moving people so that they continue to stay on the coast could be re-evaluated with future scenarios of sea-level rise, etc. along with time frames.

4.

game', thereby encouraging participation and involvement. However, it is also seen that these

burdens, and can exclude those who cannot afford such investments. In such cases, participation can also be enabled by involving people in other ways, such as construction, thereby ensuring quality and ownership.

5. The project design should include appropriate methods to rehabilitate or restore livelihoods and economic patterns. If the same livelihoods cannot be restored, alternative livelihood options need to

D. Characteristics of settlements where relocation must be avoided at all costs

1. If the age of the original settlement living in 'untenable' locations is older than 10 years, relocation is not recommended as a means for risk reduction. Tenability assessments can be no older than 5 years, since adaptation strategies come into play after that and people learn to cope with their risks.

2. Once relocated, households must be protected