Policy Formulation On Planned Relocation

Compared to “evacuation”, there has been insufficient discussion on “planned relocation” as a DRR strategy. Evacuation is not preventive and may not be sufficient in cases where people need to be relocated out of high risks areas or cannot return to the place of original residence, when such areas are repeatedly stricken by disasters. Thus, governments will increasingly need to consider relocating communities to safer areas from a long-term perspective.

UNHCR has extensive experience with finding durable solutions for refugees through resettlement to new countries, local integration in countries of asylum and reintegration after voluntary repatriation to the country of origin. Drawing upon this experience, UNHCR is working with the Brookings Institution and Georgetown University to develop guidance for States and supporting actors to undertake relocation in a manner that respects the humanity, dignity and the human rights of affected populations.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Refugees, asylum-seekers, and other persons of concern should be included in national DRR planning and response mechanisms
- Governments and other relevant organizations should cooperate with UNHCR to minimize the risks posed by natural hazards by selecting the least disaster-prone site for refugee settlement.
- UNHCR will work with Governments and relevant organizations to collect data on disasters associated with natural hazards affecting refugees and other people it cares for.
- UNHCR will support Government and relevant organizations by developing guidance to inform national policies and legislation on planned relocation as a DRR strategy.
- UNHCR will develop an institutional policy and build staff capacity on DRR.

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For more information:
UNHCR has extensive knowledge and experience with responding to large movements of refugees and internally displaced persons. UNHCR has used this expertise to support governments and other UN agencies on protection of persons displaced by disasters, as well as by conducting research aimed at informing policies to better protect displaced populations.

Disaster and Conflict
Natural hazards such as droughts can intensify competition among various populations over firewood, water and grazing land. Disasters can cause displacement directly but also indirectly by exacerbating underlying social tensions and conflicts.

UNHCR DRR ACTIVITIES
Resilience
UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) 2014-2018, contributes to building the resilience of refugee communities by strengthening their capacity to manage natural resources. For 2015, UNHCR supports a range of environment resilience projects, including reforestation, promotion of fuel-efficient cook stoves and environmental awareness campaigns.

Building environmental resilience enhances the protection of refugees and improves relations with host communities. According to a UNHCR survey, the vast majority of refugees in the camps in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, rely on wood for cooking. They spend an average of 31 hours a week collecting firewood. Thirty percent of these refugees reported coming into a conflict with the host community.

Through the Global Strategy for Settlement & Shelter 2014-2018, UNHCR is introducing environmental resilience through site planning approaches. Technical assessments, supported by satellite imagery and other advanced technology, aid in identifying sites that are less prone to flooding, erosion and other natural hazards. UNHCR provides technical support to partners and refugee communities for site planning and shelter construction and maintenance. Additionally, UNHCR is conducting extensive research on alternative shelter solutions to provide safe and dignified homes for persons of concern.

Emergency Response
In large-scale natural disaster situations leading to significant displacement, UNHCR may, within the UN interagency framework, and with the consent of the affected country, provide expertise in protection, shelter, and camp management and coordination. UNHCR has played a role in protection and shelter coordination during the response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the droughts in Somalia from 2011 to 2012, floods in Pakistan in 2010 and 2012, storms and flooding in Myanmar in 2013, typhoons in the Philippines in 2011 and 2013, the floods and landslides in Afghanistan in 2014 and floods in Malawi and Mozambique in 2015.

UNHCR supports emergency response capacity of government officials in countries like Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia.