would wish to move but cannot leave. So far, there is no support (e.g. subsidies or tax breaks) in the Czech Republic for policies that would support these households. In the future, an increasing need will be seen for more comprehensive and integrated adaptation solutions along with communication and consultation with those affected.

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‘One Safe Future’ in the Philippines

Lloyd Ranque and Melissa Quetulio-Navarra

The Philippine government’s ‘One Safe Future’ programme relocated disaster-affected poor families in areas where structures enabling opportunities are lacking.

In 2013 Typhoon Yolanda (internationally named ‘Haiyan’) put the Philippines on the television screens of the entire world when it drove the country to its knees, with a toll in lives in the thousands and damage to property in the tens of billions of dollars. Typhoon Yolanda had found its place in human history as the strongest typhoon ever formed and had notoriously become the evil face of climate change.

The world is dealing with the reality that it had never been as vulnerable to calamity as it is now, due to climate change. As for the Philippines, whether one calls it an act of nature or climate change, experiences of disasters have imposed the need on the government and its policymakers to prepare in terms of laws and policies (either enforcing those that exist or creating new ones) to prepare the country. Changes can now be seen in the strengthening of disaster risk reduction programmes, the formulation of preventive action plans from the upper to lower tier of the leadership, and the establishment of coordinating councils to facilitate the fast dissemination of information.

Left and right, national and local, there have been initiatives and efforts to fix the defect in the country’s shield against disaster by re-thinking its urban and rural land use. This renewal entails the uprooting of families from one place and transplanting them to government-prepared relocation sites. In the national capital region of Metro Manila, for instance, where the population has grown in part due to economic migrations of families from distant rural parts of the country, the administration launched a five-year housing programme (2011-16) to relocate families living in danger, from high-risk areas that are not suitable for housing to safer ground.

The programme, called ‘One Safe Future’, is commendable as it aims to rescue families living alongside or on stilts in waterways. In fact, the families did not take much convincing, partly because there is an allotted budget but mainly because the families themselves had had enough. They were quite willing to move out for their own safety, especially after the experience of Typhoon Ondoy in 2009 which flooded Metro Manila to a depth of 20-30 feet. This willingness of the families who historically have been adamant about continuing to live in their dangerous dwellings is a development that the government...
has to take advantage of, especially in this
country that has a lot to improve in practising
just and humane demolition and eviction.

There are some 104,000 affected families with
an average household size of slightly more
than five persons and an average family
income below the official poverty line. In
their view, if there was ever a reason to give
up their present living conditions – apart
from leaving the danger areas – it was to
start their life anew and escape chronic
poverty by getting some fresh opportunities
that relocation could offer them. They also
mentioned getting back their pride by moving
on from being squatters to home-owners.

But nothing could be more dramatic than
leaving the place that for a long time you
consider your home regardless of how
dismal the situation is, and establishing a
new life in an environment that has been
chosen for you. Thus, as every resettlement
practitioner knows, involuntary relocation
of families incurs many accompanying risks
to life and livelihood whose impact can
only be mitigated if the government carries
this out under a social development lens.

Evaluating the programme
Therefore the Presidential Commission
for the Urban Poor through its Informal
Settler Families Unit conducted research on
the short-term impact of the programme
on the well-being of families that had
been relocated to ten resettlement sites
between 2013 and August 2014.

Going to the sites, it is noticeable how far
they are from the commercial centre and
with poor accessibility to the road network.
The sites are tracts of land in far-flung
locations with thousands of houses in rows.
Being detached from the hub of the formal
economy and livelihood, there has to be
something that can compensate for this
problem in distance and opportunities in
order for these communities to thrive.

At first sight the families did what we
Filipinos do – they smiled as if all is fine.
But when we asked them how they are
and they realised what we had come to
discover, people in the community readily
aired their anxieties. They lamented that
although they escaped the dangers in their
previous dwellings, they did not escape
the disaster brought about by hunger.
Sixty per cent of the surveyed families
reported a decrease in family income, with
some remaining unemployed since being
resettled. This is further exacerbated by
the inadequate and irregular provision
of basic services, like drinking water and
power, access to health, and education for
school-age children. They assert that life
in the resettlement site is doubly hard.

From a danger zone, they say, they seemed to
have been relocated to a death zone. They had
never experienced such difficulty, in which
they have to beg for basic services. Some of
their neighbours had gone back to the city,
feeling betrayed by the government. This is
very disturbing to hear, and alarming. Why,
despite all its efforts, did the government
fall short of meeting its promises of
improved well-being for every family they
relocate? It is not clear whether the fault is
a policy lapse and an ambiguous working
framework or the poor implementation of the
programme by the agency tasked to carry
it out under the operational framework.

Destruction wrought by Typhoon Haiyan in the town of
Tanauan in the Philippines, November 2013.
Disasters and displacement in a changing climate

Worsening poverty in every resettlement site is the result of a collapse in the very structure of opportunities. These opportunities should have been created prior to the relocation of families or, at the very least, there should have been a subsidy programme to help families gradually restore their quality of life.

Back in their former communities they used to have a source of income and reliable networks in the neighbourhood. Almost everything they needed was within reach in the city. Displacement has taken away this life and replaced it with distance, unmet provision of basic services and unknown neighbours. If this practice continues, the government can never achieve its goal of One Safe Future for the resettlers.

The One Safe Future resettlement programme is laudable in terms of its multi-sectoral approach and a wider participation space for the affected families. Nonetheless, the short-sighted view of a ‘safe future’ for the resettled families that involves no more than keeping them safe from flooding gets in the way of seeing the greater demands of actually securing a safe future for the resettlers in the new context. Taking them away from the waterways is only the first and easiest of many challenging subsequent steps. Current post-resettlement efforts of the programme should capitalise on its multi-sectoral and participatory approach, and redirect resources towards meeting the basic needs of the families and rebuilding social trust by re-establishing our society’s structure of opportunities. A nation can never overspend on the basic needs of its people.

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The views expressed in this article are those of the authors alone and do not represent the views of the institution they are connected to.

Post-disaster resettlement in the Philippines: a risky strategy

Alice R Thomas

Experience in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan suggests that resettlement as a strategy for mitigating disaster-induced displacement can create significant protection risks.

In 2013, super Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, displacing four million people. In the disaster’s wake, the government announced that, given the country’s exposure to typhoons, it would enforce ‘no build zones’ (NBZs) within 40 metres of the high water mark in all typhoon-affected areas. Those previously living in these areas would be prohibited from returning and rebuilding, and the government would implement a relocation and resettlement programme for them. The policy was in part targeted at overcrowded, informal settlements that had sprung up along the shoreline in urban areas like Tacloban City.

Due to insufficient advance planning and slow implementation, however, the NBZ policy and relocation programme has only served to prolong displacement and potentially increase the vulnerability of hundreds of thousands of primarily poor, landless households.

The majority of those displaced by the storm previously lived in huts and other forms of non-permanent housing adjacent to the sea (or in some cases, on stilts over it) that were obliterated by the typhoon’s winds and storm surge. Having lost family members or neighbours in the storm, many want to be