Acceptance to be the Host of a Resettlement Programme: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The rate of internal displacements and consequent resettlements are increasing rapidly and drawing the attention of the world. More often than not, the consequences of resettlement will have an impact on two different communities; the community which is being relocated (displaced community) and the community receiving the newly relocated community (host community). For example, social disintegration and severe impoverishment are some of the immediate consequences of resettlements, which affect not only the displaced community but also the host community. As these negative consequences are more than likely to demand resource sharing, it is not unusual that the host community often blames the displaced communities for creating economic losses and social unease. Therefore, receiving community's acceptance to host the new community is essential to ensure integration and to sustain the resettlement, if the repatriation is not possible for the new community. Accordingly, this paper aims to identify the influences of acceptance between the displaced and the host communities.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify acceptance factors and to draw conclusions. Results show that segregation and labelling, differences in land use pattern, inadequate resources to share, the growth of an informal economy, lack of improvement in public services to the population increase, and cultural barriers are some of the factors influencing the acceptance of the host community. However, the significance of these factors is highly depended on several background factors such as the wealth of the host community, nature of government policies, livelihood of the host community, and alike. Understandably, the difficulty in establishing an empirically verifiable list of factors affecting the acceptance / rejection between the host and the displaced communities may be attributed to the fact that these factors may stem from latent variables. Therefore, an empirical study based on the identified factors is recommended for future research to determine the latent variables.

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1. Introduction

 'Internal displacement and resettlement' studies have been an active research field of anthropologists and sociologists since the early 1960s [1]. The field has since matured and retains a wealth of knowledge cutting across disciplinary boundaries. Millions of internal displacements and consequent resettlements around the world each year explains the surge of interest in this field of study [2]. Internal displacements have extraordinarily diverse causes in qualitatively different situations. Some of the major causes are conflicts, consequence of change in the land usage, and natural disasters [3]. However, Betts [3] argues that, solely these external shocks do not trigger displacements, but are extended to political decisions that revoke the population's choice to remain. This makes the repatriation not feasible for the displaced people and becomes one of the key reasons why governments assume the responsibility for resettlements. This is particularly common in financially less stable developing countries.

 Resettlement is a planned relocation of population with varying degrees of assistance [4], which is one of key stages of any post-disaster recovery process. Typically, resettlement schemes are implemented in large-scale, to accommodate more houses, to achieve economies of scale, and for the ease of management. These large-scale resettlement schemes have often been developed among a host environment. Host community is defined herein as the community in whose neighbourhood the new community is resettled [5]. Compared to new developments, problems and predicaments are more in a condition where the new resettled community and their host community co-exist and share resources of the location [6].

 Lately, a growing trend of reluctance in hosting refugees and displaced communities has shown by the international communities [6]. As an endorsement, the new refugees welcome index, based on a global survey conducted in 27 countries says that globally, 1 in 10 will let refugees stays in their house and 3 in 10 in their neighbourhood [7]. This hesitation is influenced by several factors. Among them, one of the key reasons is the ignorance of the governments, humanitarian agencies and researchers in including host community as a stakeholder in the process of resettlement [8]. However, in cases where repatriation is not feasible for the displaced community, local integration is the only choice. Therefore, the acceptance of the host community is an essential element in shaping the community and for the success of any post-disaster resettlements, which is seldom addressed in a systematic way [8]. Accordingly, this research is an attempt to determine the influences of acceptance between the displaced and the host communities.

2. Research method

 This paper aims at exploring the factors influencing acceptance of a resettlement programme by the host community. Accordingly, this paper has been written based on a literature review, from the data gathered across different sources such as; peer reviewed journals, conference proceedings, books, official reports and official websites. Among these 15 articles are selected to identify factors influencing the acceptance between host and displaced communities. Table 1 shows the journal types from which the articles are selected. Collected information were organised and synthesised to draw conclusions.

Table 1. Journals publishing selected articles

Journals	No of articles
Journal of refugee studies	4
Disasters	2
The international migration review	2
Norwegian journal of geography	1

Social science and medicine	1
Community development journal	1
Social change	1
International journal of disaster resilience in the built environment	1
Demography	1
Society and natural resources	1

3. Acceptance and rejection to be the host

Scholars classify hospitality towards refugees and displaced persons into two major categories. They are unconditional and conditional hospitality. Unconditional hospitality does not demand any conditions for indicating who should have the right to support and right to stay [9]. On the other hand, conditional hospitality influenced by the decisions of the government in the entitlement to welcome and to be welcomed [9]. Derrida [10] explains the conditional hospitality as a political dimension of hospitality. When there is an influence of jurisdictions, government policies, and institutional arrangements, host community loses its autonomy in the responsibility of shaping the community and social mixing. Post-disaster resettlements are more institutionalised and always impose conditions on both displaced and host communities. This is one of the reasons for the growing trend of reluctance in hosting displaced community. On the other hand, studies say that the displaced communities usually prefer to live with a host community as they feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually safer [11]. The conditions imposed on both displaced and host communities limit the available choices of coping mechanisms for recovery.

Brun [8] explains four negative effects of conditional hospitality. First being the homogenising effect, this is categorising the host and displaced as two different segments and treat them accordingly. However, in the forced migration process some people gain and some lose though they belong to one particular segment. Homogenising them will lead to social injustice and ethical issues. Second effect is privileging effect, which is closer to homogenising effect. This is an effect of including some in these categories while excluding others. Third effect is the localising effect. This effect imposes some rights of being host and displaced. The rights of displaced community on the host environment are often restricted. The fourth effect is politicisation and de-politicisation. This is an effect which is created by utilising the displaced and host categories as a way of controlling people. As a consequence, communities see the resettlement experience as a social injustice and develop reluctance in social mixing.

Further, displaced persons impose a burden on local infrastructure, environment and resources, if they are inadequately managed. Confirming that, Cernea [1] conceptualised eight sub-processes of impoverishments that occurs after migration. They are landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, increased morbidity, food insecurity, loss of access to common property, and social disarticulation. Among these eight, food insecurity, and social disarticulation are some of the factors that affect the host communities as well. For example, a sudden increase on population placed a burden on food security, forest reserve, and vital natural resources in the case of western Tanzania after the plight of refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo between 1993-1998 [12]. Similarly, the prolonged presence of more than a million displaced persons imposed a serious financial and social burden on host communities throughout Indonesia in 1999 [13]. It also reflects a fact that the challenges experienced by the host is depending on their resources and status [9]. At the same time, host communities also receive benefits from the displaced communities such as, receiving cheap labour to local producers, expanding customer markets for local goods, and justifying increased foreign aid [12]. Brun [6] emphasises the importance of research in local integration and dynamics of relationships between host and displaced communities as they social actors rather than categories of need.

However, no studies express any patterns reflecting the reasons for acceptance/rejection between the host and the displaced communities within a resettlement setting. In order to address that gap, following factors were identified, based on previous case studies.

3.1. Segregation and labelling

Principle 22 of the guiding principles of internal displacements [14] states that internally displaced persons should not be discriminated, as a result of their displacement, against the enjoyment of their rights. However, resettlements after a displacement often create segregation between displaced and host communities and lead to difference in treatments. This labelling process is initially created to reify targets for aids. However, the labels stay over time and usually ends up in various tensions and affect the relationships between the groups [13]. These differentiations are created among communities to facilitate the government's and humanitarian institutions' interferences. This effect could be related to the conditions imposed on the hospitality as discussed in the previous section, which act as one of the key reasons for the hesitation to accept a new community. However, Brun [6] argues that total segregation is more likely to occur in temporary settlements compared to permanent settlements.

3.2. Financial and social burden

Initially, after a resettlement, the resettled community calls attention to the special needs and vulnerabilities. However, in long term, the local community sees this as a social injustice and complains against the privileges receive by the resettled community, which are denied or unavailable to the host community. This condition imposes a social and financial burden on the society. Duncan [13] observed this condition in Indonesia after the prolonged presence of more than one million displaced people, owing to a communal violence. As a result, the host community often blame the new community for their financial and social burden. Ultimately, the host community refuses the new community as a part of their society. This is an outcome of inappropriate management and integration of the communities.

3.3. Differences in land use pattern

Brun [6] explains that, the same place can be valued and used differently by different people. As a result, the new community attempts to give new meaning to the old place which give rise to various problems within the communities over the use of space. Large-scale resettlement schemes are crowded in nature [15]. Therefore, they are generally provided with all the facilities within their boundaries. Consequently, in time, new settlements become a crowded town. According to a study in post-earthquake Manjil, Iran, people found it impossible to engage animal husbandry as the settlement became a town [16]. These changes make an adverse effect on the livelihood of the host community. As a consequence, the host community blames the new community for their economic losses. Further, Brun [9] explains that if landless hosts living on a crown land closer to the resettlement will be under threat as their right to stay is questionable. Consequently, they tend to refuse the new community.

3.4. Inadequate resources to share

Host community experience various challenges depending on their resources and status [9]. Reduction in availability of resources following resettlement has been reported in many case studies. As a consequence, the competition for resources could weaken social networks and reduce cooperation between the displaced and host communities [16]. Further, Cao, et al. [17] based on a study in China, demonstrated that food insecurity, owing to the inadequate food supply, increased the displaced community's proneness to poor nourishment and related diseases. Badri, et al. [16] state that this reduction in community resources may result in a decline in the capacity of both resettled and host communities' disaster resilience and adaptability. Further, rapid depletion of scared resources could lead to impoverishment and crowded neighbourhood could lead to deterioration in hygiene and consequent communal diseases [11]. Some counties even displayed political struggles arise because of underlying economic structures which provoke unequal distribution of resources following displacements [18]. This condition influences the host community to reject the new settlements.

3.5. Fight over common property resources

Competition for resources is another reason which initiates conflicts between host and resettled communities.

Chambers [19] explains that competition for resources give rise to more conflicts compared to competition for work, because, the exploitation of resources is visible and tangible. Further, the competition for wages does not affect the rich hosts, whereas the competition for resources affects all classes of hosts and serves to unite them. Chambers [19] further notes that, refugee women in Somalia were reported to have to walk 6-8km for fuel because of progressive desertification. This shows the shortage of fuel for the local community. As a result, host communities tend to accept displaced people if they are scattered and tend to refuse if they all together in one place.

3.6. Growth of informal economy

Recognising the new community officially as part of the economic cycle is a way to eliminate informal economy. Else, the new community will work illegally, thus competing against the local labour force [18]. This will replace the local labour force and create downward wage pressures. Chambers [19] states that, whether new community depress or stimulate, the economy depends on the institutional policies. Employment is a reflection of community integration. However, creation of employment according to the population increase is often neglected in the resettlement plans. Basok [18] states that the most third world countries face unemployment problems and, therefore, they cannot create new employment opportunities to the new community in short term. This issue creates a hesitation among local community to accept the new community.

3.7. Cheap labour in short term

As explained above, an informal economy might be created if the resettled community is not recognised to the economic cycle. This informal economy can be attributed to some benefits to the hosts. However, this may vary depending on the host community's wealth. The presence of resettled community does not harm the local economy, if there is a shortage for labour in the host community [18]. Host community will be able to recruit the new community to fill the shortage and produce more. However, if the host community is poor, they might undergo negative consequences by loss of work and lower wages [19].

3.8. Displaced people are perceived as security threat

Resettled communities, particularly after a conflict-induced displacement, often perceived as a security threat even if they do not engage in any endangering activities because of ideological differences [18]. Cultural, regional, and ethnic differences between host and displaced communities also could act as triggers for discrimination and racism [20]. Gunawardena and Wickramasinghe [21] evidenced conflicts owing to mismatch of culture in resettlement schemes between farming community and fishing community in a Sri Lankan resettlement scheme. Similarly, in Indonesia, locals observed that displaced people are accustomed to receiving aids and perceived as they were in the bottom of the social ladder. Consequently, officials and authorities worried about future possible clashes [13]. These potentials of clashes between communities are one of the reasons for the refusal of new community.

3.9. Lack of improvement in public services in relation to the population increase

Access to adequate physical resources is a common problem faced by the communities after resettlements. Moreover, it places the host community in a position where it has to share its resources such as roads, common buildings, schools, water bodies, forest lands, grazing lands, food supply, healthcare centres, and means of livelihood such as fishery infrastructure [21]. Brun [9] evidenced that, competing for local resources in health services by host and displaced communities, which were not improved in relation to the population increase has put government health services under pressure in Sri Lanka after a prolonged conflict-induced displacement. It was the same for university quotas in that district as well. Basok [18] explains that if displaced people are not officially recognised by improving employment, they will work illegally and create a downward wage pressure. Therefore, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [22] have proposed the provision of alternative resources, access to resources outside the area, and/or enabling public/private partnerships to provide alternate resources as some of the ways to manage this problem.

3.10. Language barriers and cultural differences

Discriminations owing to language and culture have been highlighted in many refugee studies. Lee [23]'s theory of migration points out similar culture and language as a pulling factor for migration. On the other hand, difference in language and culture act as a barrier for social integration. International Committee of the Red Cross [20] observed clashes and confrontations between the hosts and internally displaced persons in Colombia. Internally displaced persons in Colombia being discriminated against for being black, being loud, from coast, or from large families. Host presumed people who have large family members increase the pressure on public services. Similar cases were identified in Sri Lanka by Gunawardena and Wickramasinghe [21] in tsunami resettlements.

3.11. Non-recognition of host community as a stakeholder of the resettlement process

Considerations about the compatibility between host and displaced community is often overlooked by the relevant authorities owing to time limitations, drawbacks in the policies, and financial unpreparedness [24]. Oliver-Smith [25] suggests that, success of a resettlement will be enhanced if the resettlement is approached as socio-cultural as well as material problem in which the host and affected communities participate in planning and implementation. Similarly, Belgian Red Cross [26] states that, both host and affected communities should be consulted before implementation of the relocation programme. However, comparatively, host as a category has received limited attention in the process of resettlements. This discrimination somewhat restricts the right of the host community to welcome the new community [9]. As institutions assume more responsibilities of the resettled communities, host community changes its attitude towards the new community. Further, this also creates reluctance in accepting the new community.

4. Conclusion

The factors identified in the previous section are common in any similar resettlement programme. The identified factors affecting the acceptance/rejection of a new community can be categorised into social, economic, cultural, and other factors. Based on this classification a conceptual framework is developed (Refer Figure 1). However, their significance is highly depended on several background factors such as the wealth of the host community, nature of government policies, livelihood of the host community, and alike. While local integration remains as the significant outcome of any assisted resettlement, identifying constitutes that enable integration is essential by reducing the effects of rejection factors.

Ager and Strang [27] explains that the employment, housing, education, and health are the indicators of successful integration. These four markers of integration explain the acceptance by the host community. If the local community is reluctant to employ the displaced people, displaced people might face difficulties in finding employment. Similarly, housing, education, and health issues can be explained by the under-resourcing of initial resettlement services [28]. If the resettled community struggled these issues, this can be explained by the lack of acceptance of the host community. Based on this wide variety of indicators displaced community has to be compared with the local population. However, the outcome of this comparison can be very subjective based on the pre-condition of communities, patterns of social connections, attitudes, and understanding among groups and individuals [29]. Ager and Strang [27] illustrate social bridges, social bonds, and social links as the social connections which mediates the social outcomes with foundational principles of integration. Daley [29] explains that the relationships are formed based on the similarity or differences in culture, gender, religion, and age. Therefore, language, cultural knowledge, and safety acts as the facilitators for the social connections. However, the foundation of the integration is the right to support and right to stay. This foundation of integration is one of the basis for the acceptance of the new community by the host community [10].

However, apart from the identified factors, current literature fails to provide a clear empirical account on the actual factors affecting the acceptance / rejection between the host and the displaced communities within an involuntary resettlement setting. Reasonably, the difficulty in establishing an empirically verifiable list of factors affecting the acceptance / rejection between the host and the displaced communities may be attributed to the fact that these factors

may stem from latent variables which can broadly be categorised as social, economic and cultural factors which are not directly observable. Whatever the case may be, all these disparities seem to contribute to the failures of resettlement programmes initiated by the local authorities and other agencies around the world. Therefore identifying the latent factors that affect the acceptance of a new community is essential in order to establish efficient integration mechanisms.
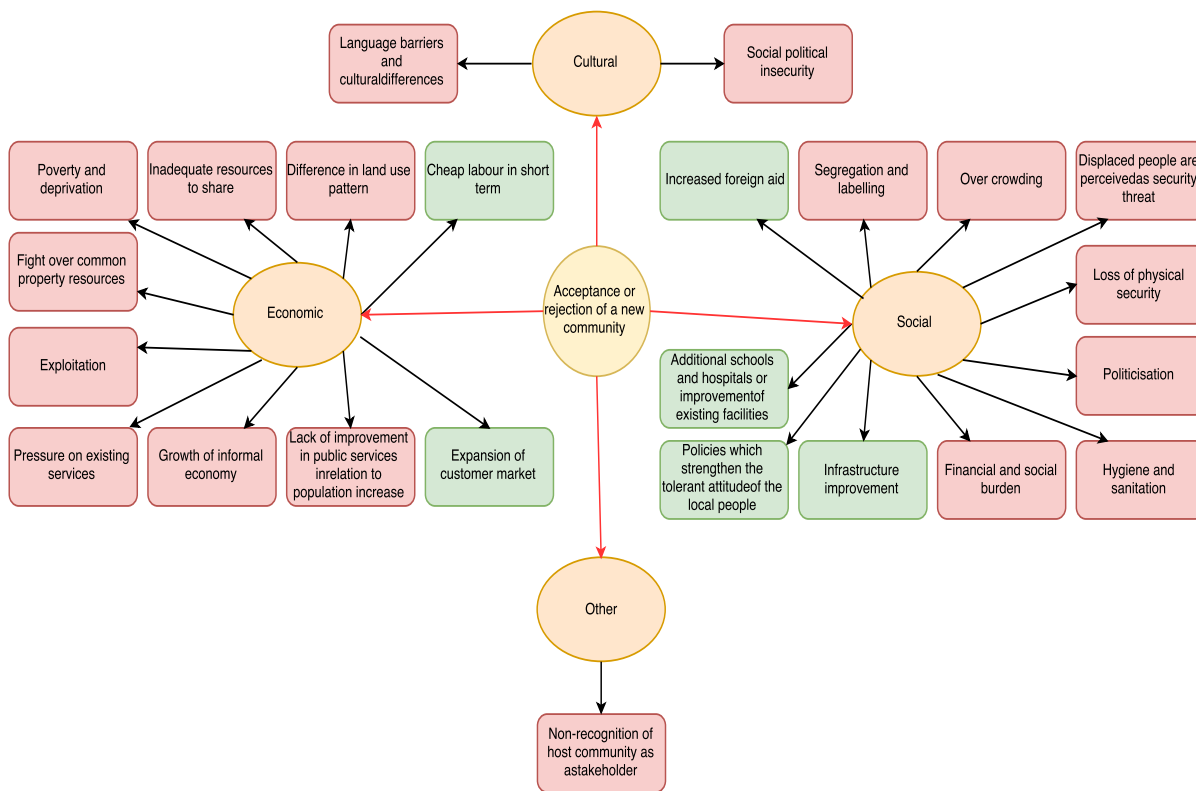

Figure 1: factors affecting the acceptance of a new community

5. Way forward

This is a part of a research project and widespread empirical study will be conducted to identify the latent variables of the factors influencing the acceptance of a new community. Based on the identified latent variables, community integration mechanisms will be recommended to ensure the longevity of resettlements.

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