

# Factors Influencing the Refusal of Post-Disaster Relocation: Insights from Resettled Individuals in Moratuwa, Korawalwella, Sri Lanka

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## Abstract

Relocation of people is the ultimate strategy adopted by governments to improve the well-being of victims those who faced with disasters or living in disaster-prone areas. However, there have been complaints that re-settlers reject the new place and return to original location. Sri Lanka experiences many numbers of relocation programmes yet no comprehensive updated study conducted on why people reject relocation. This research examines the factors contributing to refusal of post-disaster relocation efforts in the coastal area of Moratuwa Korawalwella. Perspectives collected from 50 re-settlers were analyzed using correlation. Results indicates the decision to reject relocation is mostly influenced by social and economic factors. The outcome of this study is useful for stakeholders and policymakers when dealing relocation projects in the future to mitigate the negative consequences.

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*Keywords:* Post-disaster; Relocation; Social and Economic Factors

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## Introduction

Re-location of the victims affected by disasters is continuously happening in many countries. Post-disaster resettlement (PDR) can be identified a way to re-organize the affected people and their livelihoods into sustainable communities and to eradicate unplanned settlements Geekiyanage et al., (2021). Integrated approaches coupled with resilience and sustainability are essential in post-disaster settlement projects. Certain occasions the policies focused on recovery, known as "resilience," may not aid in long-term sustainability because of financial and institutional restrictions Yang et al., (2022). Many developing countries frequently undergo resettlement programmes due to natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, and landslides, yet complained on the refusals followed by number of issues. Continuous damages due to different disasters are experienced by Sri Lanka thus, famous for many PDR projects. A considerable number of households are living along the hazardous areas like sloping terrains, reiver banks and coastal zones in Sri Lanka hence, often subject to vulnerability due to danger. Despite efforts like the 'Angulana Sayuru Pura' and 'Lunawa Tsunami' housing complexes, many families return to their original lands. Scholars noted that many PDR projects face social, economic, and structural challenges, leading victims to reluctance to accept new locations (Bang & Few, 2012; Manatunge & Abeyasinghe, 2017; Shrestha et al., 2023).

Thus, the results are varied and depend on the location. At the same time there is inadequate recent research on why resettlements are rejected in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the factors that influence the rejection of re-settlements from re-settlers' perspectives. Hence this research contributes to update the available literature and address the gaps.

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## **The Objective of the Study**

To analyze the reasons behind the denial of post-disaster resettlement projects in Moratuwa, Korallawella through resettled communities.

## **Literature Review**

Badri et al., (2006) noted that the post-disaster resettlements partially successful with the improvements in educational and health infrastructure because of economics of scale. However, there are many undesirable socio-economic issues such as weakened social networks and limited access to jobs which brings a burden on the households. Thus, this research presents mixed type results. Later, Bang & Few, (2012), also highlighted on socioeconomic challenges such as social unrest, less employment, and increased crime as the results of PDR. Through reviewing 30 articles an interesting finding is indicated by Kreutzer et al., (2023), that disasters lead to bring negative impacts on woman specially with economic losses, and disrupted livelihoods. This hinders women's economic empowerment.

Long-term dissatisfaction on infrastructure, limited social spaces, lowered community empowerment, were identified by Dias et al., (2016) in the local context in Sri Lanka, as contributing factors to dissatisfaction of the community. Further it is emphasized that a 'systems approach' that integrates socio-economic and environmental functions should follow rather than providing a 'house' only. Thus, indicates that PDRs are master planning exercise. Similar results identified by Lunuwila & Kulatunga, (2022) and suggest that post-disaster resettlement initiatives in Sri Lanka face socio-economic barriers, resulting in limited success.

As delineated in the "Resettling Policy Framework (RPF)", Sri Lanka's resettlement strategy aims to guarantee that resettlement endeavors are executed in a sustainable fashion, compliant with both domestic legislation and World Bank Social Security. The primary goal of the policy is to ensure equitable compensation and the restoration of livelihoods for the impacted populations in order to prevent, reduce, or alleviate the negative impacts of land acquisition and forced relocation. In-depth discussions with those impacted, the creation of Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs), and the safeguarding of vulnerable populations are further highlights of the program. Ministry of Irrigation, (2021).

## **Methods**

The context of the research is Angulana Sayura Pura and Lunawa Tsunami Resettlement Housing Program located in Moratuwa Municipality in the Western Province of Colombo District, Sri Lanka. Both are high rise buildings comprising 9 and 4 floors respectively. Perceptions were collected through a structured questionnaire from 50 respondents selected through simple random sampling method from the individuals those who are already relocated but returned to the original place. Five major components discussed in the literature that as contributors to the rejection of resettlements and categorized as Social (social networks, land ownership, neighborhood identity), Economic (job opportunity, customer base, woman employment), Environmental (health issues, high-rise living, open space), Cultural (attachments, religious beliefs, comfortability), and Safety (unfamiliarity and fear, threat of theft, loneliness with children). (Bang & Few, (2012), Dias et al., (2016), Silva, (2017), Jyothi & Sw, (2016), Sridarran et al., (2018), were used with adjustments and additions to fit to the context. Five hypotheses indicating the relationship between the above components and the decision to reject the re-settlement were developed accordingly. All variables including the decision to reject the re-settlement were evaluated on five-point Likert Scale questions. Every variable shows satisfactory results in Cronbach's alpha test and are qualified for further analysis.

## Results and Discussion

Most of the re-settlers in the survey are aged 30-50 years and a large number are qualified with ordinary level education only. The highest mean value was depicted in the economic component among the other components. The variables were unable to support the parametric tests hence the association was tested using spearman correlation and the results present in Table 1.

**Table 1: Results of correlation**

Components	Coefficient Value and Significance	Rejection of Resettlement
Social	Correlation Coefficient	.633***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Economic	Correlation Coefficient	.506***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Environmental	Correlation Coefficient	.398**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
Cultural	Correlation Coefficient	.312*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027
safety	Correlation Coefficient	.170
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.238

\*\*\*Significant @1%, \*\* significant @5%, \* significant @ 10%

Source: Survey Data, (2023)

Table 1 reveals that four out of five components are significantly and positively correlated with Rejection of Resettlements, with social and economic components having moderate correlations (p values 0.000) and environmental and cultural components having weak correlations (p values 0.004, 0.027).

## Discussion

The refusal is highly affected by social reasons, with a coefficient of (.633), emerging the break of social network, and limited access to basic facilities as the primary drivers of rejection. Secondly, economic factors (.506) show a moderate positive relationship highlighting limited job opportunities impact on the rejection significantly. Environmental factors that include the health issues, and dissatisfaction to live in high-rise is further enhance the decision to reject the new settlement. The majority discuss that they feel loss of their practiced culture when mixing in the new location. Comparing with other findings our results show a greater acceptance with the findings of Badri et al., (2006), Bang & Few, (2012), Dias et al., (2016) and Lunuwila & Kulatunga, (2022) though there are slight differences whether it is social or economic that influence as the primary diver to reject the location, depending on the context each study conducted.

## Conclusion

The rejection of resettlement in Sri Lanka along the coastal zone was analyzed through quantitative application using the perspectives of re-settlers on a five-point Likert Scale and can be concluded social, economic, environmental and cultural factors are the drivers of reusing the settlement. Results are repeating corresponding to most of the other findings. Re-settlers emphasized social barriers such as damage of social network, poor access to facilities, loss of familiarity among the neighbors are main contributors. In addition, the settlers noted the losing access to familiar job opportunities and lack of extra income are also support on the rejection decision. Thus, the findings importantly influence the future actions on re-settlements in Sri Lanka and respective policy makers can take the advantage.

## Acknowledgement

The authors wish to express their sincere appreciation to the re-settlers for supporting the data collection and grateful for the support extended by the CRES, DEMV, USJ in developing the research article.

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