



BRACE for sustainable community relocation.....

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CONCEPT PAPER

Institute for Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes (BRACE Institute)¹

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that by the year 2100, over 13 million Americans will have to permanently relocate due to rising sea levels. Globally, the number is in the hundreds of millions. Despite this well documented fact, there is no organization that is working with communities to plan and carry out permanent relocation and assist with the development of sustainable new communities for the climate refugees.

This paper outlines the strategy and objectives of The BRACE Institute, a new, global community development institute that focuses on the twin issues of permanent relocation of communities away from low lying areas susceptible to the impacts of climate induced disasters and the development of new cities or communities that are integrated, green, and foster harmonious living. Almost daily, a low-lying island or coastal community is forced to start planning for physical relocation to a place away from sea level rise. The BRACE Institute provides technical assistance and grant management for communities where relocation efforts are imminent. There is a small but growing body of knowledge about how small communities, often isolated ethnic groups, are planning for relocation. The Institute gathers information on the history of climate change and how communities have responded with forced or voluntary relocation and the lessons learned from the experience of communities that have gone through the process.

Extreme climate-related events such as floods, storms, and drought have served as triggers for more than 75 percent of the disasters that have occurred globally over the past decade. There have already been 14 million individuals and families that have fled their home towns and home countries for higher ground or new economic opportunities. Environmental disasters affect the least developed countries most intensely and are particularly devastating to low-income populations and minority groups. Recent reports are that as many as 750 million people may be forced to relocate permanently in the next 10 to 20 years.

In May of 2016, it was announced that four of the lower lying Solomon Islands have gone under water and the residents had to move to nearby islands. Bronen has described relocations in the Arctic, from Yup'ik (an Inuit community) and in the South Pacific, from Carteret Islands, atolls off the coast of Papua New Guinea.² The fact is that almost daily, another atoll or coastal region is becoming uninhabitable.

Planned relocations have already been undertaken in a number of situations. In Fiji and Alaska, affected populations have requested that authorities assist them to relocate. In Papua New Guinea, communities have been relocated due to slow onset changes to their environment, including seawater intrusion, soil salinization and climate variability, leading to food insecurity and increased vulnerability to disasters. In addition, in Sri Lanka, the government considered the relocation of some settlements due to the chronic risk of landslides in their areas. After Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the government was left with the responsibility to relocate 200,000 people from coastal areas. In many parts of North and Central Africa, people are migrating south as the Sahel expands.

Clear lessons from relocation efforts in other contexts show that careful planning is needed before people are moved, that relocations should be a last resort, and that affected people must be provided aid to rebuild their lives in the new locations.¹ Based upon existing information and notwithstanding some notable exceptions, the vast majority of people displaced by disasters are assumed to remain within their own country rather than to cross internationally recognized borders to find refuge. The current refugee crisis in Europe is a reminder of the failure to plan with both the moving and the target communities.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is no question but that climate change has already affected the magnitude and frequency of climate extremes including floods, landslides, tornados, drought, and saline intrusion from sea level rise. At least 3.3 million deaths have been attributed to natural hazards in the 40 years leading up to 2010. Ninety-five percent of those deaths have been in developing countries. Since 2000, over 400,000 deaths from climate extremes have occurred with 79 percent of those in low-income, developing countries. Mitigation of climate change is commendable as are the engineering solutions to buy time before communities have to move. But the fact is, it's too late for mitigation and resilience for millions of people.

Sea level rise will have a particularly destructive economic impact in areas with few alternatives. While some coastal people can move to higher ground, most island people have no easy place to relocate within their country. There are clearly established linkages between poverty, marginalization, over-population, and vulnerability. To a large extent, vulnerability derives from poverty. The poor are more likely to live in vulnerable areas such as slopes prone to landslides, flood plains, and marginal agricultural land. The vulnerable also have difficulty accessing education and information, have fewer assets to invest in resources to reduce vulnerability, and are more prone to become malnourished and have chronic illnesses that predispose them to injury and death. They lack the time and human resources to write proposals and respond to government reporting requirements. In those areas, "development"

² Bronen, Robin Climate-Induced Community Relocations: Creating an Adaptive Governance Framework based in Human Rights Doctrine. NYU Review of Law and Social Change, Vol: 35:356. Bronen has written extensively on the topic of planned relocations in Alaska.

may be associated with the production of new hazards accepted by a society because the perceived benefits of the development project far exceed the relative risk associated with the project.ⁱⁱ

Developing countries have less resilient economies and depend more on climate sensitive activities. As conditions deteriorate, those who have the means to move on their own will do so. The most impoverished members of a community, unable to move, stay behind. They have no money for relocation expenses, or they may have physical or other disabilities or family obligations that prevent them from migrating.ⁱⁱⁱ The BRACE Institute is focusing on the human element of this urgent challenge to humanity.

Women are disproportionately affected by climate-induced disasters. When women's rights and socio-economic status are not protected, which is the case in most developing countries, more women than men die in disasters^{iv}. For instance, women represented an estimated 61 percent of fatalities in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and 70 percent of those dying during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.^v There is evidence that where women are empowered to expand their own families' and their communities' endowments, agency and opportunities, they can serve as a powerful source for building climate resilience.^{vi}

BRACE SERVICES

The communities at most immediate risk are almost all tribal people with a strong social bond. Their economy is usually based on fishing, hunting, or small scale agriculture. They usually have a unique culture and an essential part of relocation involves keeping the traditional culture, language and folkways in tact. The Choctaw, on Ile de St. Charles, on an island off the coast of Louisiana, have been planning their move for over 14 years as they have noted the rising sea level. This caused them to begin a discussion of what their traditions are, what aspects they particularly value and how to maintain those traditions and values as they relocate.

In discussions with the communities that are in the early stages of relocation, BRACE has determined that there is a pressing need for a support organization that can manage the financial and technical aspects of relocation. The people who are trying to relocate, lack knowledge of outside funding process, do not have the capability to write and manage grant money, and need a partner that can handle the reporting and management functions to the U.S. Government and other donors. Their young people need exposure to the larger world through travel and attendance at conferences.

The BRACE Institute will use the methodology that was developed by the World Bank's Social Investment Funds. Large grants or contracts awarded to the BRACE Institute will then be given to the communities in smaller grants. The process will involve minimal reporting and paperwork responsibilities on the part of the communities so that they can focus on the difficult and complicated task of re-location. As BRACE works at both ends of the relocation process, we will also give grants to destination communities to build housing or provide other services that will make the re-settlement as smooth as possible. Where appropriate, we will call on our partner, Illinois State University, for technical assistance on engineering, cultural, economic and other issues.

The objective is to create the smoothest and most equitable transition to a permanent new location. This will include families, businesses, government functions and community organizations such as churches

and civic groups as defined by the community itself. The destination communities will be included in the process and as much as possible, the new communities will be based on a new urbanizing model that fosters community integration. As extended family relations are fading in most countries, we need to create new types of communities that welcome diversity and are environmentally positive.

BRACE will not only provide the grants to the communities, it will also provide technical assistance and information sharing among the climate refugees with lessons learned about how far ahead to start, methodology for documenting cultural values and traditions and ongoing assessments and problem solving as the process proceeds.

BRACE, through our partners and Heartlands' experience of over 30 years in 70 countries, provides:

- A virtual small business “concierge” service to aid new and existing businesses with marketing, financial planning, and business start-up. These will focus on economic development after the communities relocate.
- Support to relocating communities with housing construction that builds on a 40-year history of successfully construction and maintenance of low income housing and to conduct job training in a variety of construction related fields.
- Technical advice and resources for farming communities on the means for reducing nitrates in lakes and streams and fishing communities on fish farming.
- Work with destination communities on culturally appropriate new housing, and environmentally constructive community design such as solar and wind power, community gardens and much more.
- Job training such as sustainable aquaculture for fishing communities, green jobs, micro loans and small business training
- Young leaders training program with travel stipends for young from minority communities to attend conferences and build their leadership skills

PARTNERS

BRACE has carried out a needs assessment with communities in the most urgent need of assistance as they are precariously close to inundation. Initially we will target low lying islands and as we perfect our methodology we will also work with communities in Africa and other places affected by drought and other climate extremes.

Initially we will partner with the following communities. These are all communities of between 200 and 1000 people.

- The **Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Citimacha-Choctaw**. This community has recognized the need to relocate for the past 15 years and has done extensive planning including a design for the new, environmentally sustainable community they will build. A primary aim is to reunite the members of their tribe who have already left the island.
- The Alaskan communities of **Shishmaref, Kivalina, Newtok and Quinhagak**. These are only four of the dozens of Native Alaskan communities that need to relocate in the next 10 years.

- The **Quinault Indian Nation** in Tahdah, Oregon, has also made plans for relocation to a mainland site. They have plans for their new town which will incorporate New Urbanism planning, carbon neutral design and other sustainable features.
- The **Republic of the Marshall Islands** consists of over 1000 islands, most low-lying atolls with no higher ground. Citizens of the RMI are free to immigrate to the US but lack the resources to do so. There is a large community of climate refugees from the RMI in Springdale, AK.
- The **Solomon Islands** has lost several of its smaller and lower atolls but as with the RMI, there is no high ground for people to move to.

This is only a sample of the most urgent locations. Many other places in the Pacific and around the world face similar issues. BRACE will work with as many as funding permits.

INNOVATION

Many currently used global disaster response programs focus on emergency preparedness rather than anticipate climate hazard related migration or relocation. At present, a body of research is evolving on climate change-induced migration and displacement, much less is known about this third type of population movement: *planned community relocations*. BRACE will document the experience and make the lessons learned available to any community that is facing possible relocation.

The Institute's approach is holistic in that it not only focuses both on building capacity and livelihood skills for relocating communities but assisting relocating community to integrate in their new communities in a way that improves life for all residents as well as for the environment. With free and informed consent of all stakeholders, The Institute will focus on relocation with an emphasis on improving the lives of the people who move as well as those who reside in the communities to which refugees are displaced.

The Institute will work closely with target communities, or help in the design of new ones, that integrates climate refugees into communities slowly and focusing on the building of communities using design models that foster community, cooperation, and environmentally positive features such as solar energy, green space, family gardens, hydro-electric power and other green technologies.

There are a few historical examples of whole communities being relocated (particularly in the Pacific), however, these have not been positive experiences. The closest experiences to draw on are involuntary resettlement projects carried out in the context of large development projects, such as dams, mines, and large natural disasters where the experience with resettlement has by and large been negative. In spite of important safeguard policies, most of those who are moved because of a development project are left worse off.^{vii} While there is some documentation of involuntary relocations due to climate disasters, mining, or dams, there has been remarkably little research on the issue of planned relocations in the context of climate change (Ferris, 2015).

ABOUT THE BRACE INSTITUTE

The BRACE Institute is a new initiative of Heartlands International, Ltd. Heartlands International has over 30 years of community development experience in over 70 countries adapting classic community development strategies to help communities define their problems and work together to find solutions. As Heartlands has extensive technical expertise in community organization, economic development, gender issues, and health care, we are uniquely poised to provide the technical assistance these communities need. As Heartlands is owned by a Native American woman, our anthropological perspective is ideal for this type of assistance. Heartlands created and provided startup funding for BRACE in response to a pressing need. While there is a large emphasis on the specifics of climate change, no other group is working with the people who are urgently in need of financial and technical assistance. BRACE will draw on the corporate capability of Heartlands and have the resources of global experience to inform its work.

Heartlands focuses on community organization, working with a wide range of community leaders to gather information and make informed choices about how to resolve problems. Heartlands has used this proven methodology to build municipal and state governments (Lebanon, Viet Nam, Ethiopia), for improved access to potable water (Belize, Haiti, Indonesia, Ecuador, Columbia, India), for training community health workers in over 20 countries on issues of maternal and child health, vaccinations, HIV/AIDs prevention, malaria prevention and other health issues. An important element of our work is building local institutions management capabilities to manage funds, train staff, and keep a strong strategic focus. Heartlands has a long history of working with low-income populations on jobs creation (USA, Philippines) and small business development (Colombia, Sri Lanka, India). We work with a worldwide network of social scientists and have a long history of success. Our web site gives more information: www.heartlands.us

Partnership with Illinois State University

As community relocation is a multi-faceted challenge, Heartlands has developed a partnership with Illinois State University in Normal, IL to provide technical and research support to BRACE. As planned relocation has not been done successfully, or documented very well, it is important that the Institute carefully develops research programs that produce data driven results monitoring and program adjustments. Heartlands will partner specifically with the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development. The Stevenson Center promotes community and economic development world-wide. It has a variety of programs for students who plan careers in community service. The Center has programs for students who have returned from Peace Corps and other service assignments. Heartlands is providing stipends to students to do background research. We will also work through a task force of faculty from various departments in the College of Arts and Sciences (Geology, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology and others) as we move ahead with the project.

Support Requested

Heartlands has invested over \$100,000 of its own funds in the start-up research and planning for the Institute. We will continue to manage the Institute and maintain offices in Washington, DC. This is a unique venture and promises to be a very large undertaking as the sea levels rise and affect millions of people. Relocation of even small communities is expensive. The Isle de St. Charles Choctaw estimate it will cost \$100 million to build their new town. The Quinault Indian Nation estimates their relocation will cost \$80 million. The community members do not have the human and other resources to manage

such large grants. They have asked BRACE to manage the funds for them and allow them to focus on the actual re-location.

To this end, we are seeking:

- Intuitional Partners including construction companies, property law firms or practitioners, and research organizations that can provide technical assistance.
- Grants and financial support to establish the Institute and provide initial staffing.
- A fund to provide scholarships to students who will do research and documentation of the process.
- Funds for a grants program to give support to communities as they discuss and plan their future.
- Research funds to carry out research and documentation of previous relocation efforts and the lessons learned.

For additional information, please contact Shirley Buzzard, President of Heartlands at sbuzzard@heartlands.us or Tel: 202-554-6316 or SKYPE: shirleyanne1080.

ⁱ Elizabeth Ferris, 2015 <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/planetpolicy/posts/2015/06/12-climate-change-disaster-relocations-ferris>

ⁱⁱ Stephenson, Rob S., and Charles DuFrane. "Disasters and development: Part 2: Understanding and exploiting disaster-development linkages." *Prehospital and disaster medicine* 17.03 (2002): 170-175.

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009* (New York: UNDP, 2009), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2009>.

This is drawn from Cernea, Michael in "Risks and Reconstruction. Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees, ed. by M. Cernea and C. McDowell, Washington, DC: World Bank: 11-55.

^{iv} Neumayer, Eric, and Thomas Plümper (2007). The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981–2002. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97(3): 551–66.

^v World Bank (2011b). *Making Women's Voices Count: Integrating Gender Issues in Disaster Risk Management*. Operational Guidance Notes. Washington, DC: The World Bank, East Asia and Pacific Region.

^{vi} D. Layne Coppock, Solomon Desta, Seyoum Tezera, Getachew Gebru 2011. Capacity Building Helps Pastoral Women Transform Impoverished Communities in Ethiopia. Science. DOI: 10.1126/science.1211232

^{vii} <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/planetpolicy/posts/2014/06/18-relocations-climate-change-ferris>

^{ix} <http://www.rmiembassyus.org/Environment.htm>