

Assessment of the Effects of Post Disaster Resettlement Patterns on the Quality of Life in Rural Areas (Case Study: Resettlement in Flooded Villages in Golestan Province)

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Introduction

Post-disaster Quality of Life (QoL) assessment can be considered appropriately for monitoring and evaluation recovery plans and interventions. Particular reference has been considered to both understanding various aspects of the disaster's impacts, and establishing people's perceptions on their living circumstances and life chances after the event. Planned and involuntary resettlement after natural disasters has been considered as a major policy in post-disaster reconstruction in developing countries over the last few decades. Studies show that resettlement can result in adverse impacts on the resettled population. Conversely, a well-planned and managed resettlement process can lead to positive long-term development outcomes. Studies on post-disaster resettlement in rural areas of Iran revealed that these actions do not respond to all the needs of residents. Occurring extreme rainfalls, in August 2005 in Eastern part of the Golestan province in North of Iran, caused two devastating flood disasters and damaged several villages. After considerably long discussions, planners and policy makers decided to relocate a significant number of villages incorporating them in larger area. Finally in this area 11 villages replaced and integrated in one place but 3 villages were replaced without integration.

Study Area

The study area is located in the north east of Iran in Golestan province; between (37°, 42') to (37°, 22') E longitude and (55°, 54') to (55°, 20') N latitude. It has mild temperature with annual rainfall of approximately 450 mm. After the flood, eleven villages (Ghezelotagh, Aghtoghe, chatal, Khojelar, Koorok, Pashaei, Ghapaneolia, Ghapanesofla, Seidlar, Sheikhlar and Davaji) were replaced and integrated in one place called Pishkamar town. Three villages (Gholaghkasan, Boghghojebala and Boghghojepaein) were replaced in safer area (with 1-2 Km).

Material and Methods

In this research, in order to evaluate the role of post disaster resettlement on the QoL, we used subjective indicators and satisfaction levels in ten domains. The evaluated indications included environment quality, housing, education, health, personal well-being, participation, safety, information and communication, employment and income. Research method was descriptive and analytic. 279 samples were randomly chosen from the residents of Pishkamar and three other villages. Data

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collection tool was a researcher-designed questionnaire that was conducted according to research objectives. The questionnaire was made of closed questions with answers in five-point Likert scale (1: grown much worse to 5: grown much better). In order to evaluate internal validity, at first content validity method was used to increase the validity of the questionnaire. In this method, the first step was testing the scales in the studies of QoL and poll of professors and professionals. Then, the developed questionnaire was filled out in two preliminary and final stages. Examining the answers to 30 questionnaires and doing statistical calculations was the final step. Chronbach alpha was used to evaluate the reliability and t-test was applied for data analysing.

Results and Discussion

Results indicated that the integrated villages (Pishkamar) improved the QoL in the aspects of environment, housing, education, individual welfare, information and communication, safety, health, but in the aspect of employment, participation and income were not improved. Besides, results showed that the relocating of three villages improved the QoL in aspects of environment, housing, education, participation, information and communication, safety, health, but in the aspects of employment, individual welfare and income were not improved. In Pishkamar town, 63.35% of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of their lives after the integration and only less than 15.18% of them were dissatisfied for the quality of their lives. For the respondents in Pishkamar, the mean of the scores for QoL is 3.67 with the standard deviation of 1.068. In case of three villages, it was 54.55% for the people satisfaction for the quality of life and while 24% of them were dissatisfied. For the respondents in three villages, the mean of the scores for QoL was 3.36 with the standard deviation of 1.147.

Conclusion

In general, the results of the study indicate that the resettlement of villages after disaster led to significant improvement in the QoL in study area. The resettlement policy was successful in reducing the flood disaster risk and also improved QoL (by relocating villagers), but it was not successful in permanent job creation. To reduce the negative economic impacts of resettlement, several measurements must be implemented, including: strengthening production capacity and skills (through training and technology transfer); diversification of economic activities (through the establishment of new economic activities) and increasing financial support for the most vulnerable communities.

Keywords: Quality of life, Post disaster resettlement, rural integration, Pishkamar