

Colombia: Preventive Resettlement of Populations at Risk of Disaster: Experiences from Latin America

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Rapid and unplanned urbanization have compounded vulnerabilities to natural disasters in the Latin American and the Caribbean Region (LAC). As a preventive measure, resettlement has been carried out in some LAC countries in recent years. The analysis and dissemination of the results of this strategy to countries worldwide is relevant and timely given the millions of people exposed to natural hazards, especially in developing nations. This was the main motivation for preparing the Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Guatemala case studies presented in this publication.

Chapter I analyzes global natural disaster trends and their impacts. It also studies these trends in LAC and the principal factors that increase the vulnerability to natural disasters. Statistics on the occurrence of disasters, and especially their increasing impact in terms of loss of life and livelihoods, and overall economic losses, underscore the growing importance of disaster risk reduction frameworks at global and regional levels. The chapter concludes with a description of the strategic frameworks and institutional development that are being developed in the region.

Chapter II analyzes resettlement as a risk reduction measure and describes the objectives and methodology of the cases studied. The next four chapters present the findings of each. In those countries, either due to the impacts of major disasters such as in Colombia and Guatemala, or to recurrent events, such as floods in Argentina and Brazil, risk reduction plans include preventive resettlement. Each case presents the country context, the area where the study was conducted, the geographical distribution of the population, the principal natural hazards to which it is exposed, the major disasters faced, and the specific risk management model applied.

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