

Choosing the resettlement site

The choice of resettlement site is the single most important criterion in supporting the restoration of the livelihood of the impacted household. The project team must ensure that the preferences of the different community stakeholders are clearly understood and balanced with the pressure to cut costs by being close to existing infrastructure.

Challenges

- Underestimating the time and cost of constructing resettlement sites—this has an impact on the project budget and schedule.
- Lack of co-ordination between technical and social teams during site selection leading to choice of inappropriate resettlement sites.
- Lack of detailed technical evaluations of resettlement sites leading to choice of inappropriate sites and high development costs.
- Lack of consideration of social and environmental conditions when selecting sites.
- Failure to recognise the security risks of a new area.
- Moving people to resettlement sites later required for project activities, thereby requiring people to be relocated again.
- Reliance on one-size-fits-all larger resettlement sites to cut costs, where multiple sites would be appropriate, resulting in conflict in the longer term.
- Overemphasis on cutting construction costs leading to selection of sites with inadequate replacement land for agriculture.

Lessons and recommendations

- Resettlement of individual households to self-selected sites where they already have land or housing can be effective.
- A detailed land-use mapping exercise should be used to identify an initial list of suitable sites, which can then be filtered based on project, community and government criteria, through consultations and negotiations.
- Involve communities in the evaluation and selection of resettlement sites.
- The company should consider a range of criteria for site selection that goes beyond mere technical considerations, particularly livelihood restoration and improvement criteria.
- The selected site should include room for future expansion.
- Security of tenure to resettlement sites should be provided.
- Development of smaller residential resettlement sites where households are supported to source replacement agricultural land locally can be an effective alternative to one large resettlement site.
- Households impacted at host resettlement sites should be given appropriate consideration for resettlement benefits.

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