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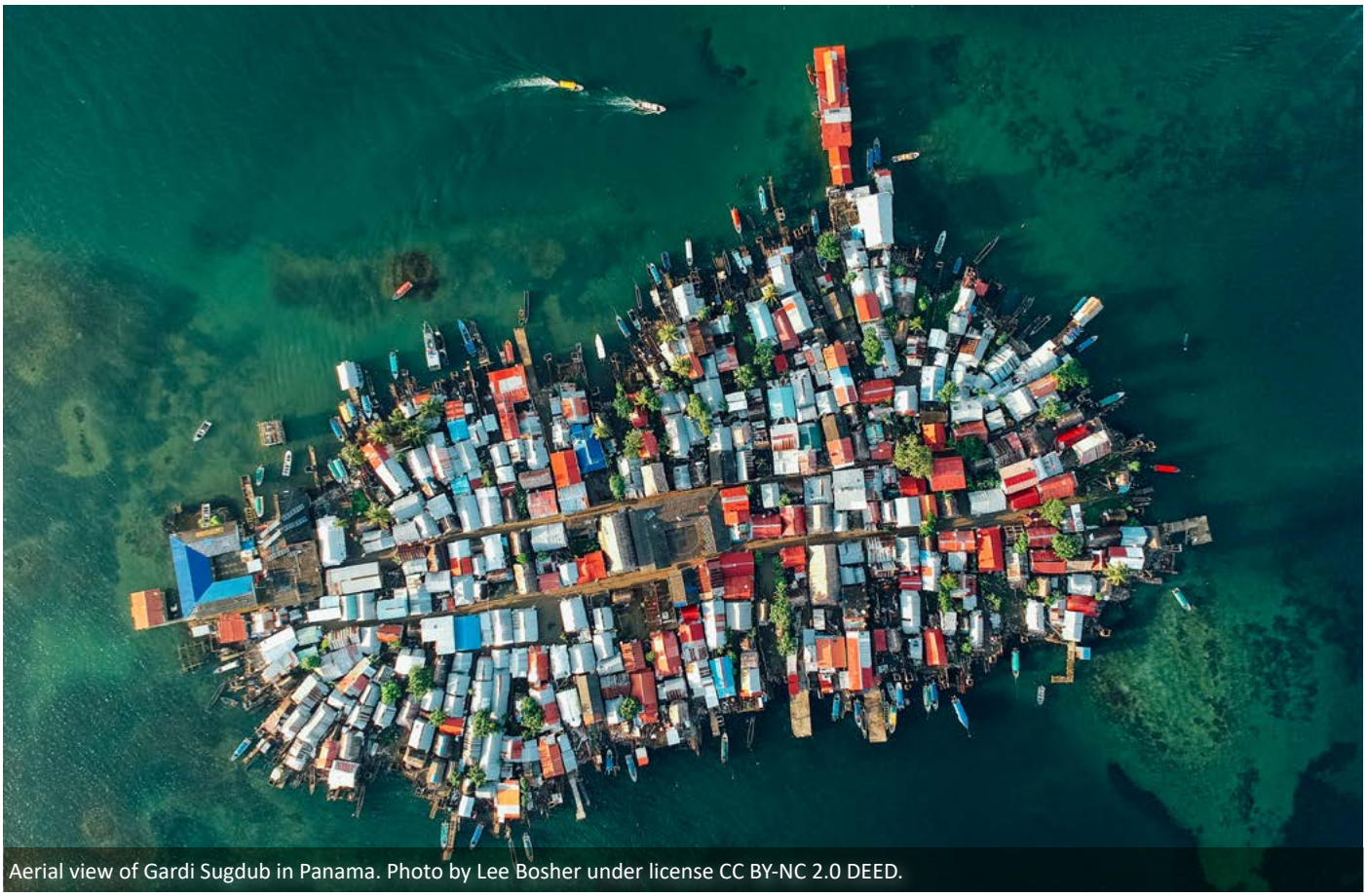

Aerial view of Gardi Sugdub in Panama. Photo by Lee Bosher under license CC BY-NC 2.0 DEED.

Understanding the needs of indigenous communities and assessing risks when developing planned relocation in the Caribbean

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Identifying Indigenous Communities and their Unique Vulnerability To Climate Change

In the context of understanding the challenges associated with the planned relocation of indigenous communities in the face of climate change; we will be focusing our analysis on the Caribbean basin including the countries member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) – *Antigua and Barbuda; the Bahamas; Barbado; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; and Trinidad and Tobago*. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will not exclude Indigenous communities located in other countries, including groups in Central America (*i.e. Panama*) and North America (*i.e. Louisiana and Alaska*) as well as in some Small Islands Developing Nations of the Pacific region (*i.e. Fiji*).

IOM
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Identifying Indigenous Communities and their Unique Vulnerability To Climate Change

> "In terms of international law, Indigenous Peoples should be understood as all the people who are consciously part of a common identity or culture. On the other hand, indigenous communities can refer to these groups of people, or the geographic areas where they are concentrated. Finally, indigenous territory is the extension of land that these people have in their countries of residence" (IOM, n.d.)

While the international community has yet to adopt a definition of Indigenous Peoples, the prevailing view today is that no formal universal definition is necessary for the recognition and protection of their rights. Still, the term Indigenous Peoples is defined by the United Nations as "inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live" (DESA, n.d.). The unique characteristics of these communities have made it necessary to observe and treat them in regards to their set of needs and priorities, which differs greatly from other communities in the Caribbean. It must also be acknowledged that, based on the international definition of the Indigenous Peoples, questions regarding climate issues and the degradation of the environment – both slow onset and extreme weather events – have a stronger impact on affected communities. Furthermore, the UN specifies that "despite their cultural differences, Indigenous Peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples" (DESA, n.d.). Indeed, these communities, native to the land they inhabit, struggle with political representation due to their sovereign or autonomous nature. Even without a set definition, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples "affirms that Indigenous Peoples are equal to all other peoples", "recognizes the urgent need to respect and promote the[ir] inherent rights", and "welcomes the fact that Indigenous Peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social, and cultural enhancement" – amongst other acknowledgements (UN General Assembly, 2007).

Indigenous Peoples represent over 6 per cent of the world's population, estimated at 476 million across 90 countries (OHCHR, n.d.). The latest available census of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reported 826 indigenous communities in the region, with an estimated population of 58 million people (ECLAC, 2014). Studies have shown that indigenous ancestry in the Caribbean can be traced back to more than 4000 years of inhabiting the region (IOM, 2023). Today, Caribbean Indigenous Peoples are descendants of the Carib, Arawak and Ciboney tribes, which faced large exodus during the colonial period and arrival of European settlers during the 15th century, and descendants of the Maya, Garifuna, Surinen and Tainos People can also be found across the Greater and Lesser Antilles islands (BHM, 2021). A long history of colonization of the Caribbean has impacted the livelihoods of communities native to the region, and their survival as autonomous and self-determined groups has become intrinsic to their tie to their ancestral land, which is now threatened by climate change (IOM, 2023). Today, Indigenous Peoples represent around 7 to 9 per cent of the population of the Americas, for which about 25 percent - or 200 out of 826 distinct communities - voluntarily live isolated from society (Del Popolo, 2017), "residing in diverse environmental settings, including the coasts, the Andes and other mountainous areas, and the Amazon forest; [although] today the majority lives in urban settings'' (Del Popolo et al., 2010).

Caribbean Indigenous Peoples and their Vulnerability to Climate Change

The Indigenous populations found in the Caribbean – as well as those found in at-risk geographical zones – are extremely vulnerable to climate change and the damages caused to their communities. These diverse communities face a similar concern regarding the protection of their livelihood as well as their identity being entrenched in the land they occupy. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Indigenous Peoples are more vulnerable to climate change than non-indigenous people. The panel identified a series of categories that make a community vulnerable to climate change, including proximity to rivers and coastal flood plains, areas prone to extreme weather conditions, and economies that are heavily dependent on climate" (IPCC, 2022).

Some aspects of Indigenous livelihoods and identity put at risk by environmental hazards:

- **Economy:** The International Labour Organization identifies Indigenous communities as being amongst the poorest groups around the world, with an economy dependent on natural resources (ILO, 2017). In the Caribbean, most Indigenous Peoples work within the coastal zone, and heavily rely on tourism. The degradation of biodiversity, following extreme weather events and/or the slow-onset damages caused by ocean acidification, sea-level rise and coral bleaching is hurting their income (Corrie-Edghill, 2021).
- **Agriculture:** Indigenous practice traditional agricultural methods of farming, which include

a unique technique of land preparation and cultivation of food. These practices require very little soil disturbance. The change in weather patterns has altered their systems, and a more unpredictable climate has limited their ability to adapt to new seasonal periods. Additionally, water contamination and forest degradation have worsened the arable land (Corrie-Edghill, 2021). Additionally, the "continuous reduction of soil fertility as well as increasing incidences of pests, diseases and invasive species contributed to the growing vulnerability of the agricultural systems on small islands" (IPCC, 2022).

- **Food Security:** The consequence of agricultural deregulation has caused a loss of food production and food accessibility which impacts diet diversity amongst communities. This is paired with an increased risk of food-borne or water-borne diseases resulting from higher temperatures (IPCC, 2022). Furthermore, Indigenous communities strongly depend on food imports, which are impacted by damages to infrastructure during extreme weather events (Corrie-Edghill, 2021). Food transportation and distribution systems in remote areas are restricted by the changes in weather patterns, making Indigenous Peoples one of the most vulnerable groups to the impact of climate change on food systems and its negative contribution on malnutrition and heightened risk of diseases (IPCC, 2022).
- **Health:** The World Bank reports negative impacts of the increase of food insecurity and poor diets on the health of Indigenous Peoples in the Caribbean, as well as the increase of born-diseases and higher mortality rate associated with the rise of air temperature (Kronik and Verner, 2010). The mental health of Indigenous Peoples has also been severely neglected, although climate change effects and subsequent displacement have a significant impact on the mental wellbeing of these communities that already face trauma from colonization (Incayawar and Maldonado-Bouchard, 2009). However, the ability for indigenous groups to access healthcare services is limited due to institutional barriers and lack of reliable infrastructure (EPA, 2022).
- **Gender Equality:** As climate change increases poverty of Indigenous communities, one of its consequences is the exacerbation of discrimination against women. In Indigenous communities, "women play an essential role in both traditional and non-traditional means of livelihood" (ILO, 2017). The worsening of the living conditions in Indigenous territories due to environmental hazards often forces "women and girls to travel longer and further to collect fuel, food and water" (Climate Diplomacy, 2022).
- **Cultural Diversity:** The IPCC reports "very high confidence" levels of Indigenous ways of life, and "medium confidence" that "cultural and linguistic diversity" is directly impacted by climate change (IPCC, 2022). Their identity also revolves around a cultural cohesion intrinsically linked to their connection to the environment, for which the damages caused by climate change is impacting their cultural practices (Kronik and Verner, 2010).

Most Indigenous Peoples live in areas highly vulnerable to and impacted by climate change. ECLAC reported that while only 2 per cent of Costa Rica's population was indigenous in their 2011 census, nearly 60 per cent of them lived in rural areas. In Panama, the 2010 census revealed that 12 per cent of the population belonged to Indigenous communities, for which 76 per cent lived in rural areas (ECLAC, 2014), and are facing climate-related events such as forest degradation and floods. Meanwhile, Indigenous Peoples residing near the coast suffer from hazards such as hurricanes or sea-level rise. As the effects of climate change are impacting their livelihood, migration from their land appears to be a necessary solution to protect these communities' survival. The identity of Indigenous Peoples is closely connected to their sustainable way of life and connection to the land they habit through all aspects of life. A 2022 study by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported a "high confidence" level that "the loss of ecosystems and their services has cascading and long-term impacts on people globally, especially for Indigenous Peoples" (IPCC, 2022).

"Despite the many challenges faced by indigenous communities, it is crucial to emphasize that indigenous peoples are key actors in the fight against climate change and provide positive contributions. Indigenous communities worldwide protect nearly **22 per cent of the earth's surface** and **80 per cent of biodiversity on the planet,** making them powerful stakeholders when responding to climate change challenges. Their traditional knowledge needs to be recognized and valued in order to develop meaningful policies and programmes seeking to tackle the adverse impacts of climate change. This in turn can help to mitigate instances of distress migration when indigenous people feel that they have no other choices than to leave their ancestral land" (IOM, 2018)..

Resilience and Adaptive Capacities of Indigenous Peoples to Climate Change

While the close relationship of Indigenous Peoples with nature increases their vulnerability to climate change effects, Indigenous Peoples also have the knowledge and practices to tackle climate change. Despite the environmental challenges faced by indigenous

communities, they display inherent climate resilience, which is essential to adapting to climate change (Bushman, n.d.). The recognition of Indigenous Peoples' ability to adapt to climate change is directly associated with their "self-determination in adaptation strategies, governance and ecosystem based policies" (Bushman, n.d.). IPCC emphasizes the importance of including indigenous and local knowledge to ensure successful climate change adaptation. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) refers to "the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings" (Hurlbert et al., 2019). Local Knowledge (LK) refers to "the understandings and skills developed by individuals and populations, specific to the place where they live" (Hurlbert et al., 2019). Jointly referred to as ILK, both forms of knowledge are highly context specific and deeply integrated in local institutions, offering biological and ecosystem knowledge with landscape information. For instance, ILK can lead to effective land management, estimation of disasters, and identification of long-term climate change impacts. ILK has laid the foundations for "water management, soil fertility practices, grazing systems, restoration and sustainable harvesting of forests, and ecosystem-based adaptation" (Hurlbert et al., 2019). Moreover, this knowledge enables Indigenous Peoples to balance past experiences of dealing with the adverse effects of climate change with new ways to cope. In order to strengthen their adaptive capacities, it is crucial to ensure their access to information, as seen in the case of remote Indigenous farming communities in St. Vincent (Mycoo et al., 2022). While they have been affected by decreased precipitation and increased temperatures, they face exclusion from agricultural training that is intended to enhance agricultural strategies to overcome and adapt to environmental changes due to climate change. When knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is combined with adequate information, they can be more aware and resilient to the adverse effects of climate change.

Considerations Regarding Climate Mobility for Indigenous Populations

Climate Mobility of Indigenous Communities

Given that Indigenous Populations are among those who are more exposed to the adverse effects of climate change and that they belong to the impoverished sectors of society, they are particularly vulnerable to climate change-induced human mobility (Miranda et al., 2020). Climate change-induced relocation - whether it is planned or not - is therefore expected to be an adaptive response especially for those with high existing vulnerability, that is Indigenous Peoples. Generally speaking, relocation should be regarded as a last resort due to the potential negative outcomes, such as loss of self-determination, identity, cultural ties, land and natural resources. (Pérez and Tomaselli, 2021). However, when relocation is planned and executed in a way that minimizes the risks and losses faced by the relocated Indigenous Populations, it can serve as an adaptive measure. For example, Indigenous Peoples in Guyana in the Caribbean moved from their savannah homes to forest regions during droughts and began planting cassava on wet floodplains (McLean, 2009).

Conceptualizing Planned Relocation

Planned relocation is "a planned process in which persons or groups of people move or are assisted to move away from their homes or places of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives. Planned Relocation is carried out under the authority of the State, takes place within national borders, and is undertaken to protect people from risks and impacts related to disasters and environmental change, including the effects of climate change. Such Planned Relocation may be carried out at the individual, household, and/or community levels" (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017). It can be "voluntary or involuntary" and "in exceptional cases, may also occur across State borders" (Nansen Initiative, 2015).

Who might need to be relocated due to climate change?

- People experiencing intensified **sudden-onset disasters** – both in terms of size and frequency – as a result of climate change, including cyclones, extreme rainfall, floods and heatwaves.
- People whose livelihoods are threatened by the adverse effects of **slow-onset environmental degradation**, such as droughts, salinization, erosion, sea level rise.
- People who need to be relocated as their lands are needed for **mitigation and/or adaptation measures** of climate change. Examples include: expansion of forests to lesson carbon emissions, and implementation of water reservoirs.
- People whose places of residence become **uninhabitable** due to irreversible effects of climate change, such as sea level rise.

(Ferris, 2013; IDMC, 2023)

Challenges Specific to Indigenous Peoples Regarding Relocation

"The experience of Indigenous People has been systematically excluded from international migration frameworks" (IOM, n.d.). As migration is becoming an inevitable consequence of climate change, more

Indigenous Communities are facing heightened challenges regarding relocation, both in terms of ability to migrate as well as the unique adaptation needs they face.

- Indigenous identity strongly relies on their tie to the motherland. "Climate change threatens places and practices that are central to Indigenous Peoples' identities and well-being." (United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.) In the example of Monkey River Village in Belize "coastal erosion is threatening the community's cemetery. Residents place significant spiritual and emotional value on the cemetery, which serves important community functions, and, thus, threats to it are perceived to be serious and necessary to be taken into account in any planned response." (Mycoo, et al., 2022).
- More research is needed to understand the non-economic and cultural losses Indigenous Populations face from climate change. "The unquantifiable and highly localized cultural losses resulting from climate drivers are less researched and less acknowledged in policy than physical and economic losses. In the Bahamas, prolonged displacement of the entire population of Ragged Island following Hurricane Irma (2017) highlighted the cultural losses that can result from climate induced displacement from ancestral homelands" (Mycoo, et al., 2022).
- Research on past Planned Relocations has found that relocation has had a negative impact on their cultural ties which poses a threat to maintaining their indigenous knowledge, practices, religion, and community ties and it is important to emphasize that efforts to strengthen climate resilience (Bower et al, 2023).
- As most Indigenous communities live in poverty, their population lacks reliable infrastructure that may limit their ability to plan and respond to climate-related threats. They financially might not be able to orchestrate planned relocation for their communities (Pérez and Tomaselli, 2021).
- The communities living in rural areas have to some extent lived remotely from other cultures and are partially unaware of customs of non-indigenous communities. The institutional barriers can affect their ability to adapt. Their set of skills might be difficult to adapt into new environment. (EPA, n.d.).

Planned Relocation as Last Resort

While Planned Relocation might provide opportunities for people to rebuild their lives when mitigation and adaptation measures are not enough to ensure their safety and livelihoods in the face of climate change, it should be considered a last resort. For Planned Relocation to be successful, it is vital to take sufficient lead time to carry out carefully-designed, participatory planning processes, alongside appropriate land acquisition and long-term financing to maximize - rather than to deteriorate - the living standards of relocated populations (Ferris, 2013). However, even with cautious and thorough planning, Planned Relocation can lead to loss of livelihood, land and food, disruption in healthcare and sanitation systems, decreased personal safety, and loss of political representation and access to education, which can pose further threats to the community's overall security and wellbeing (Ferris, 2020). The negative consequences can be more detrimental to Indigenous Populations, as their identity and livelihoods are fundamentally tied with their own lands. Moreover, it can pose severe outcomes on their self-determination, as well as cultural and social ties. Although the efforts to preserve the Indigenous lands and enable them to remain in their places of origin should come first, many governments and local communities are starting to consider Planned Relocation, as worsening disasters are causing coastal erosion, and permanent land submersion from sea level rise (UNCTAD, 2022). As many of the Indigenous communities are predicted to become uninhabitable, when Planned Relocation is deemed unavoidable, it is indispensable for the States and international community to develop a comprehensive strategy that puts the concerns and needs of Indigenous Populations at its core.

Legal Framework: Understanding the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Responsibility of States

Determining the Legal Framework

- "A clear, coherent, and comprehensive legal framework, incorporating human rights principles" ensures that "the decision to undertake Planned Relocation and its planning and implementation are carried out in accordance with national laws and policies" (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).
- It also enables "the execution of these stages of Planned Relocation to remain true to the original reasons, objectives, and vision" (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).
- All stages of planned relocation must be conducted in a way that respects and complies with the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)
FPIC is recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, serving as the **core element** framing the discussion of planned relocation of indigenous communities. This notion lays the foundation for both the rights of Indigenous Peoples and responsibilities of the states.

- **Free**: Consent is given "voluntarily and without coercion, intimidation or manipulation"
- **Prior**: Consent is sought "sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities, at the early stages of a development or investment plan, and not only when the need arises to obtain approval from the community"
- **Informed**: Any engagement and information associated with the consent should be "accessible, clear, consistent, accurate, and transparent"
- **Consent**: "A collective decision made by the rights-holders and reached through the customary decision-making processes of the affected Indigenous Peoples or communities"

(FAO, 2016).

The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Regards to Planned Relocation

Planned Relocation "should be carried out within a **rights-based framework** that safeguards both individual and collective civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of Relocated Persons and Other Affected Persons throughout all phases. The **rights to self-determination, preservation of identity and culture, and control of land and resources** are important, particularly for **indigenous communities**" (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017). While IOM recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to remain in their ancestral lands, as many indigenous lands are reaching the limits of adaptation, efforts to help people migrate to new destination areas have to be taken into account (IOM, 2020).

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007

Article 3 - **right to self-determination:** "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." (UN General Assembly, 2007)

Article 10 - **free, prior and informed consent on relocation:** "Indigenous Peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No **relocation** shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return" (UN General Assembly, 2007).

Protecting Indigenous Peoples' Communities While Protecting their Livelihoods

The intervention of the government on the relocation of Indigenous Communities may raise challenges regarding the question of autonomy and the protection of their right to self-determination, and the unique vulnerability of these communities when displaced must be taken into consideration in a sensitive manner that does not damage their livelihoods in the process. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations established various aspects of concerns for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, including:

- Political: right to autonomy and self-government
- Territorial: territorial rights and natural resources
- Economical: right to own development model
- Cultural: right to own cultural identity
- Legal: right to own legal system
- Participatory: right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and right to consultation
  (Source: FAO, n.d.)

The Responsibility of the State Regarding Planned Relocation of Indigenous Peoples

- The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
  - Principle 9 - **States responsibility to protect**: "**States** are under a particular obligation to protect against the displacement of **Indigenous Peoples**, minorities, peasants, pastoralists, and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands" (UNHCR, 1998).

- The Pinheiro Principles (Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons)
  - Principle 14.2 - **ensuring participation of Indigenous People in decision-making:** "States and other involved international and national actors should, in particular, ensure that women, **Indigenous Peoples**, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, the disabled and children are adequately represented and included in **restitution decision-making processes**, and have the appropriate means and information to participate effectively."
  - Principle 15.3 - **records/documentation of housing, land and property:** "States should ensure, where appropriate, that **registration systems record** and/or recognize the rights of possession of traditional and **indigenous** communities to collective lands"
    (UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 2005).

Analyzing the Needs and Concerns of Indigenous Peoples in the face of Planned Relocation

There has been an increase in Planned Relocation as a climate resilience measure and the global database identified 409 cases of Planned Relocation occurring in 82 countries and territories (IOM, 2021b). However, this does not account for all instances of Planned Relocation because many relocations are undocumented or under researched. As the number of planned relocations increases, it is important for continued research and global collaboration to ensure strategies that do not hurt the security of communities it is looking to support. The Platform on Disaster Displacement collected data on 34 planned relocations and found that 18 occurred after a hazard event already displaced the community (PDD, 2021). Displacement is a threat to the human security of these communities and a comprehensive Planned Relocation strategy can mitigate these threats, but when done incorrectly can continue their harm. It is crucial to consider planned relocation as a preventative measure to minimize the negative outcomes on community wellbeing and to sustain people's livelihoods in the long-term. Therefore, understanding the multi-step process of carrying out a Planned Relocation and the potential harms in each step will allow for a more comprehensive strategy to support Indigenous communities.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stage 1: Decision
Making the decision to undertake Planned Relocation of groups or communities.</th></tr>
<tr><td>A) What is this stage?

In the face of increasingly worsening conditions, sometimes building climate resilience is no longer an option and the community must make the decision to relocate to safer ground (UNHCR et al., 2014).

Factors that base the decision to relocate include: existing and anticipated levels of risk, vulnerability and resilience of persons and communities, the availability of risk reduction and adaptation measures, the availability of feasible options for Planned Relocation, and the direct and indirect socio-economic and environmental costs of staying or relocating (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017). However, increased vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change are not the only reason communities choose to relocate. There are also political, economic, social, and demographic drivers of relocation. For example, in Panama, the Gardi Sugdub underwent a Planned Relocation to not only protect their community from sea level rise but also to address overcrowding on the island (PDD, 2021).</td><td>B) Needs and risks of Indigenous People at Stage 1

While governments should identify communities in need of relocation and help facilitate that process, it is incredibly important that the communities themselves make the decision to move on their own. Informed consent is crucial to upholding Indigenous People's right to self determination and preservation of their identity and culture. This includes taking into consideration the different or conflicting views of different members of the community during the decision making process (UNHCR et al., 2014).

Planned Relocation should be a last resort and alternatives using indigenous knowledge of climate adaptation and resilience should be considered first (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).</td></tr>
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Stage 2: Plan
Designing and Developing a plan for Planned Relocation.

A) What is this stage?

Governments and communities should understand the underlying reasons that led to the decision to relocate and develop a plan tailored to the unique circumstances and needs of the indigenous community. They should provide people with the time to make their decision and allow their opinions to be heard. Indigenous Peoples should lead this process as they understand their needs the best and in a study analyzing 14 Planned Relocations it found that Planned Relocations initiated and led by community members had more success than government-led processes (Bower et al., 2023). Government organizations can still be very crucial to support this process especially in providing long-term funding for the Planned Relocation.

During this stage they should identify:

- Which people wish to take part in the Planned Relocation as well as accommodate those who wish to not take part
- Alternative settlement locations and ensure the necessary funding to carry out the plan (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).

B) Needs and risks of Indigenous Peoples at Stage 2

The plan should also incorporate the needs of women, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly in order to be inclusive (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).

- Past Planned Relocations have only acknowledged people with legal documentation of property and ignored the different socio-economic conditions and needs of people, especially women who are less likely to own property in their name.

A risk faced by Indigenous Peoples during the planning process is insufficient plans to ensure that the community is able to have sustainable livelihoods in the new location. The concern over a decrease in the standard of living is a reason some chose to stay even if it puts them at risk (IOM, 2021a).

Stage 3: Implementation
A) Pending physical relocation
B) During physical relocation
C) In the long-term following physical relocation

After making the decision to relocate and developing an inclusive plan, the next stage is the process of putting the plan into action.

A) The first phase is pending physical location. This is the waiting period before the plan is put into action.

House assessment in the Bahamas Marsh Harbour, 2020
(© Pushpi Weerakoon / IOM 2020)

A)

- Lack of funding to carry out the relocation is a major concern and governments and communities must ensure that they have the necessary funding as well as ensure the economic stability of the community being relocated.
- It is also crucial to ensure that the new location has the necessary infrastructure to support the community.
- If the Indigenous community is currently dispersed, a lengthy waiting period may degrade community ties and it is important to maintain their ancestral and cultural ties (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).

B) The second phase is during physical location. This is the period where the people would finally move to the new location.

C) The third and final phase is the long-term following the physical relocation. Once relocated, the government and the community should work to ensure that the people are thriving long term
(GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).

Houses repaired in Dominica © Sheldon Casimir / IOM 2018)

B)

- The physical relocation of communities can be very difficult for people as they are uprooting their lives and leaving a place they had economic and cultural ties to.
- Relocation can negatively impact people in a variety of ways, including: landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources, and social disarticulation (UNHCR et al., 2014).
    - Planned Relocations that fail to meet these needs perpetuate the injustice indigenous communities have consistently faced (Pérez and Tomaselli, 2021).
- Proper implementation has the ability to positively impact health, literacy, education, employment, and housing, as well as enabling the building of new relationships (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).

C)

- Long term economic resilience is a major concern of a Planned Relocation. Governments should provide additional funds if needed especially in order to finance small business and other industries to build economic mobility and resilience. (IOM, 2021a).
- A Planned Relocation can also be a mentally taxing process and the mental health of indigenous people has been historically neglected. Access to mental health support should be available to people who need it (Incayawar and Maldonado-Bouchard S., 2009).
- If people are unhappy in their new location they should also have the right to return to their previous homes if possible (GU, UNHCR, and IOM, 2017).
- Data collected on the outcomes of 14 Planned Relocations found that cultural dimensions often had a negative outcome. This means that more attention on maintaining community, religious, and cultural ties is necessary (Bower et al., 2023).

Case Studies for the Consideration of Planned Relocation for Indigenous Peoples facing Climate Change

A) Case study: Gardí Sugdub Indigenous Community in Gunayala, Panama

The indigenous Gardí Sugdub island community in Gunayala, Panama, will be the first case to experience Planned Relocation in Latin America. Over 500 years ago, the Guna Indigenous Peoples escaped Spanish colonization and resettled along Panama's Caribbean Coast known as "Gunayala" - the land of the Guna people (Medlock, 2022). Throughout the 19th century, the Guna people lived independently according to their own traditions and customs (Newsome, 2023). Currently, roughly 1,200 Guna people in Gardí Sugdub are being forced to consider relocation to the mainland of Panama due to rising sea levels, erosion, extreme rainfall, as well as lack of space caused by population increase (Displacement Solutions, 2016). The decision to relocate was made in 2010, and about 300 families from Gardí Sugdub island are expected to begin the physical relocation process this year (Newsome, 2023).

Supported by the Panamanian Government and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as of November 2022, the Gardí Sugdub planned relocation is at **Stage 3A: Implementation - pending planned relocation** (Medlock, 2022). Before people physically relocate to a new neighborhood, basic infrastructure and means of livelihood have to be established so that the relocated individuals can maintain their lives. Moreover, ensuring close and open communications with the community to facilitate the discussion and avoid misunderstandings about planned relocation is also essential to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

- Finalizing **infrastructure development** in the new community is essential in ensuring a smooth transition of the relocated Indigenous Peoples. As of November 2022, of the 300 homes to be built, approximately 160 homes have been completed. Electricity for the new neighborhood has been installed (Medlock, 2022). Next priorities are identified as water and waste management.
- **Economic well being** of those who choose to relocate has to be protected to minimize economic losses experienced by them. Tourism, which is the primary source of income among Gardí Sugdub community, should be able to continue thriving, since the new neighborhood still lies along the same highway (Pressly, 2017). Moreover, it is expected that relocation to a new community might lead agriculture to be a new source of income due to increased land access (Medlock, 2022).
- Holding **workshops** is vital to foster transparent and mutual communications with the affected populations to deepen their understanding of risks and benefits of planned relocation, as well as to integrate their voices in the later implementation stages. Various IDB and community-led workshops hope to support the long-term challenges that come with relocating an entire community. Some topics covered by these workshops include: transitioning from open air defecation to using and maintaining porcelain toilets; learning about risks children may face playing in the grass, such as snake bites (due to overcrowding on the island, Gardí Sugdub children primarily play in the water); how the Gardí Sugdub diaspora will be integrated into the new neighborhood; how the indigenous governance will change (if at all); and other themes that will help with the transition (Medlock, 2022).

Takeaways

- Success of initial phases - **1. Decision & 2. Plan** - can be a reference for other Caribbean Indigenous communities in need of relocation, especially with regards to inclusive decision making, participation and consultation with the people. Despite the clear need of relocation due to the immediate threat of sinking underwater, it took the community over decades to make a final decision to relocate in 2010. The severe concerns that made the decision making process difficult included; uncertainty about the public services and support for community planning in the new areas; potential adverse effects on economic conditions; impacts on their socio-cultural traditions and cultural ties; and other uncertainties about health and security risks (Medlock, 2022). After the decision was formed in 2010, an internal neighborhood commission was created to plan and organize the relocation process, in which any member of the community was able to join. Following months of requests from the commission, Panama's Ministry of Housing and Territorial Legislation Planning (MIVIOT) agreed to construct the new houses for the Gardí Sugdub relocation (Medlock, 2022).
- Current challenges faced in **3A. Implementation: pending relocation** can provide recommendations for future Planned Relocation planning to enable more smooth and better structured physical relocation of the affected populations. As the Guna community is preparing to begin the relocation process, some unexpected challenges have emerged. For instance, tensions between the members of surrounding areas of the new

neighborhood have been reported during the construction phase (Medlock, 2022). This can provide a reference for how to better avoid conflicts between the host communities and surrounding areas. In addition, access to the new community has proved more difficult than expected, due to a renovation on the highway connecting Gardí Sugdub and the new neighborhood and a heavy rainy season in 2022 (Medlock, 2022). Although the renovation on the highway will benefit the community in the long term upon completion, it has delayed the construction process by making it difficult to transport necessary resources (Medlock, 2022). These unexpected challenges in the 3A stage might be helpful for other communities in need of relocation to anticipate potential challenges and prepare backup plans to effectively overcome unexpected events.

- Anticipated risks for **3B. During physical relocation & 3C. In the long-term** (although these stages have not happened yet) can be useful to identify potential risks for planned relocation of other indigenous communities in the Caribbean. Given that not everyone wants to relocate, it is critical to address the needs of those who chose not to relocate and those who are the mediators to help convince those who are reluctant. As the indigenous Gardí Sugdub island community is currently in the process of relocation, their case can be a reference to other future relocation cases both in positive and negative ways.

B) Case study: Indigenous Carib peoples in Saint Vincent

For the Indigenous Carib Peoples of Saint Vincent the increased vulnerability and danger they face from slow onset climate change impacts and worsening disasters cannot be separated from the centuries of political and economic marginalization they have faced, but they haven't been adequately supported by their government to build their climate resilience. The Carib communities of Sandy Bay, Fancy, and Owia in St. Vincent are located on the wind-ward side in the north east coast of the island and they rely largely on agriculture for their livelihoods and their communities are often remote and inaccessible (Smith and Rhiney, 2016). These communities have been threatened by extreme weather like increased rainfall, hurricanes like Hurricane Thomas is 2010, as well as extreme droughts, "but they have been largely excluded from agricultural training that includes information in how to improve agricultural strategies in times of climatic shocks and how to prepare for changing climatic conditions," (IPCC, 2022). The Carib people suffer from systemic inequalities and they have a considerably low socio-economic status, high unemployment rate, as well as low quality of education, and access to resources (Smith and Rhiney, 2016). Due to the Carib people's increased vulnerabilities to the negative effects of climate change than the rest of the population of St. Vincent, more work should be done to improve their ability to adapt and increase climate resilience. The government and other private organizations should work with the Carib peoples to create a climate resilience strategy that includes their indigenous knowledge. In the past Indigenous Peoples were often inadequately represented in the planning process which resulted in less effective strategies and interventions (IPCC, 2022).

Once no other alternatives are available a comprehensive Planned Relocation serves a potential strategy to give them access to more land in St. Vincent and more autonomy over their land that is not only safer but has better access to necessary services like education and healthcare. It could also provide more economic opportunities (GU, UNHCR and IOM, 2017). Even though there has been no agreement for a Planned Relocation, discussions with the community over whether a Planned Relocation would benefit them should be considered in order to support the continued resilience of their indigenous community and culture, making this case a valuable reference to other Caribbean indigenous communities.

C) Case study: Lokono-Arawak Tribal Community across the Caribbean

Sabantho Aderi Corrie-Edghill, a member of the Pakuri Tribal Indigenous community in Guyana, has written a plea regarding the lack of consideration for Indigenous Peoples across the Caribbean in the face of climate adversity. In her call for action, she highlights some of the following issues faced by climate change in their communities: food systems are being destroyed by change in rain patterns; food sources and related cultural practices are at risk as well, with lower harvesting number each year; deforestation is hurting traditional farming practices and land preparation; changes in flooding patterns etc… (Corrie-Edghill, 2021). The livelihood of indigenous communities depends on their cultural practices rooted in the environment and their ties to their motherland. Their economy depends more strongly on a stable environment and the sudden changes in weather patterns in the Caribbean makes it difficult for them to adapt and adjust their practices, which will increase poverty.

Sabantho Aderi points out some local actions that have taken place to combat climate change, such as the creation of a Caribbean Fish Sanctuary Partnership Initiative, the protection of the right to fish for Indigenous communities and priority areas in St. Lucia,

as well as insurance for fisheries called the Caribbean Oceans and Aquaculture Sustainability Facility to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and limit the loss and damages they face. While many plans are thought at the local level to protect the livelihoods and economies of Indigenous communities across the Caribbeans, there is little done regarding Planned Relocation in the face of slow-onset events. However, some of the needs specific to Indigenous communities such as food security is not discussed, nor is the long-term natural resources struggle. While Planned Relocation might benefit Indigenous Peoples as a last resort, there is a need for their groups to be represented in conversations as to how to respond to climate change (Corrie-Edghill, 2021).

D) Case study: Fiji's relocation challenge and Voluntary Immobility for iTaukei and the Vanua

Located in the Pacific, Fiji is part of the Small Islands Developing Nations extremely impacted by climate change. It has been facing severe weather hazards as well as witnessing the slow degradation of its coasts and forests due to changes in atmospheric conditions. There are 1,171 registered Indigenous Fijian villages, within Indigenous Fijians' livelihood depending on the land they originate from. "iTaukei [people] does not see land as a commodity that can be bought in the sense of the market economy, but rather the 'land' of which I belong, of which I am an integral party: the land that is part of me and sustains me" (Yee et al., 2022). Each Indigenous Fijian member is part of the Vanua, a hierarchical social group which includes the Tokatoka, the Mataquali, and the Yavusa tribes, which creates a very diversified population spread across many smaller islands at the frontline of environmental hazards.

The Fiji government has become one of the first countries to emphasize the urgency of dealing with climate change and to implement national policies to protect its Indigenous groups, becoming the first country to ratify the 2015 Paris Agreement and has since released official relocation guidelines in 2018 (Fijian Ministry of Economy, 2018), as well as the establishment of the Climate Relocation and Displaced Peoples Trust Fund for Communities and Infrastructure in 2020 (Coca, 2021). Indeed, Fiji is facing a rise in temperature and higher rates of extreme weather including cyclones, sea levels are rising at much higher levels, forcing the village of Vunidogoloa to relocate in 2014 to escape coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion and flooding (Lyons, 2022). The government of Fiji has prohibited the development of new infrastructures such as the construction of houses near water and has identified the island population as needing to relocate for the island of Serua.
However, relocation has been met with hesitation from indigenous groups. iTaukei have expressed concerns about the fragmentation of the village of Serua into three settlements – Takenaua, Dogowale and those that remained on Serua Island – and the impact on community life. The risk of losses of cultural practices, sense of place and identity when they relocate to mainland Viti Levu is preventing relocation (Yee et. al., 2022). Fiji's guidelines do acknowledge the need to make relocation a community-led process and consider the local cultural factors. (Coca, 2021). The diverse attempts of the Fiji government to implement Planned Relocation has highlighted some of the challenges specific to Indigenous communities, such as the notion of livelihood and cultural attachment/ dependency on their motherland, and how to adapt in a changing environment in order to protect their survival.

Takeaways:

- The case of Fiji exemplifies the challenges that relocating Indigenous Peoples can include, particularly considering the cultural and identitarian ties with their territory.
- Work must be done at the local and national level to understand the different needs of Indigenous Peoples in the face of climate change, and to ensure that relocation is correctly planned and executed.

E) Case study: The Allocation of Federal Funds for the Relocation of Native Alaska Tribes

Alaska is home to 229 Indigenous tribes - out of the 547 federally recognized US groups. Its remote geographical location as well as its harsh weather conditions has limited infrastructure development and migration of Americans, with a population of approximately 730,000 people, out of which more than 145,000 identify as Alaskan Native - or 19 per cent of its population (US Census Bureau, 2020). Located on the Arctic Circle, global warming is highly impacting Alaska, including "shrinking glaciers, receding sea ice, thawing permafrost, as well as large fires due to the drying out of wetlands'' (EPA, 2016), for which its Indigenous Peoples are on the forefront of. Alaskan Indigenous communities are highly reliant on Alaska's unique environment, for which climate change is threatening their health, economy and culture, such as:

- Various reported cases of food poisoning from new algal blooms caused by ocean temperature rising.
- Travel roads become dangerous as the ice melts, changing the geography of Alaska and making it complicated for groups living in rural areas to reach cities and have access to infrastructure and food supplies.
- Indigenous Peoples have a unique bond with the fauna and flora of their land, and Alaskan Natives

> strongly rely on animals to survive in the hostile environment, but climate change is causing species migration and impacting the presence of animals.
> (EPA, 2016)

The communities most affected by climate change have pleaded for assistance from the federal government, which has allocated USD 25 million to two different Alaskan tribes to relocate. The Newtok and the Napakiak villages of Alaska, populated by Yupik Indigenous Peoples will access the funds of the Interior Department to relocate to land resistant to erosion (Beaumont, 2022). The Bureau of Indian Affairs also held a contest for Indigenous communities to receive "up to USD 3 million in relocation money [...] Out of the 11 tribes that applied, only five received funding" The criteria considered included "the amount of risk communities currently faced, the degree of planning for relocation already done, whether they had selected new sites to move to and their readiness to move" (Flavelle, 2022). There are many more communities seeing their livelihood threatened by climate change in Alaska which are not receiving funding for relocation. The Government Accountability Office reported that "12 out of the 31 communities identified as imminently threatened were at varying stages in the process", including 1) choosing a relocation site, 2) paying for the process, and 3) partnering with government organizations (GAO, 2009). The funds aim to cover some of the larger costs of relocation, including building of new infrastructures - as well as the destruction of some others - but while restricted to relocating purposes, some aspects of relocation projects have not been determined.

Takeaways:

- While the 25 million is estimated to cover one-quarter of the total cost of the relocation project, it is still a major step forward by many communities to protect the survival of Indigenous Peoples in the US and the recognition of their unique vulnerability to climate change.
- The inaccessibility of some Alaskan regions create additional challenges to relocate Indigenous communities, which increases the cost of relocation (GAO, 2009).
- The 2020 Bureau of Indian Affairs projects that "USD 5 billion will be needed over the next 50 years for tribal relocation efforts" (Rogerson, 2022).

F) Case Study: The Indigenous community of Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana, USA

Climate Change has devastated low-lying coastal communities in Louisiana as many homes are falling into the ocean due to hurricanes, sea level rise, and coastal erosion in the Gulf of Mexico. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forcibly removed the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe from mainland Louisiana to the more vulnerable, Isle de Jean Charles (Boyd, 2019), but since 1955, 98% of their land has disappeared due to coastal erosion (Lowlander Center, n.d.). At the community's peak, there were 300 families living on the island, but now only 26 families remain (Boyd, 2019). In the next 50 years, Louisiana is expected to lose more coastal wetlands than it can rebuild (Louisiana's Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments, 2019) and the state and federal governments are developing planned relocation strategies to safer ground as they can no longer sustain the coastland communities, "In 2016, Louisiana was awarded USD 48.3 million in Community Development Block Grant funds to work with residents of Isle de Jean Charles to develop and implement a structured and voluntary retreat from the island into safer communities". This includes the development of a new community, called The New Isle, 40 miles north of Isle de Jean Charles with more than 500 homes (Government of Louisiana, 2021).

However, relocating this community to safer ground does not solve the root problem of the environmental injustice that they face. The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe has been removed from their land due to colonization and economic expansion before and they are continuing to face the consequences of colonialism. Another factor contributing to the erosion of Louisiana's lowlands is the oil industry and currently, there is a USD 50 billion plan to rebuild the coastline using penalties from BP due to the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster that devastated the Gulf of Mexico (Schwartz, 2021). However, the oil industry's harmful practices will continue to devastate Louisiana and in order to bring climate justice to these communities there needs to be more sustainable industries in Louisiana and the rest of the United States. Many families have already left Isle de Jean Charles and while it is yet to be seen whether The New Isle is able to preserve the sense of community and cultural ties they have, it may lead to the community disappearing (Pérez and Tomaselli, 2021).

Case study summary

The on-going case of Gardí Sugdub indigenous community in Panama illustrates three crucial lessons for the potential Planned Relocation of other Caribbean Indigenous Peoples: 1) Tips to carry out decision making based on Free, Prior and Informed consent (FPIC) , 2) Considerations for developing a plan that addresses and responds to the needs and risks of Indigenous Peoples, and 3) References for expected risks once physical relocations begins.

The marginalization and climate vulnerability the Carib people of St. Vincent's face is a continuation of the exploitation and injustices they have experienced for centuries. More effort should be made to address the needs of these communities including climate adaptation strategies. The option of Planned Relocation should be discussed as a potential solution to community resilience as well as providing them access to more resources.

The needs of Indigenous communities differ from other groups in the Caribbean. They are at the first line of climate change related impacts and will most likely be hit harder, both in terms of economic and non-economic losses. Furthermore, the environmental damages are directly impacting their livelihood and cultural ties to their land, which requires special consideration when finding solutions to protect communities. Relocation must come with careful understanding of their needs, but so far community leaders have not been able to participate in the decision-making process. There is an urgent need for action for Indigenous communities across the Caribbean that is left unanswered.

Relocation has proven to be challenging with Indigenous communities due to their cultural ties to their motherland, but can be successful if well-orchestrated. Planned Relocation is an ad hoc and last resort solution to climate change, but now governments around the world are considering it more, as extreme weather conditions make many places uninhabitable. There is an emphasis to advocate for Planned Relocation before it becomes urgent and force people to move as seen in Fiji over the last decade. Relocation must take into consideration the special needs of Indigenous communities to maintain their cultural identity even when moved elsewhere, and to protect their livelihood.

Planned Relocation can benefit or harm communities depending on the way it is implemented. On one hand, it can act as an adaptive measure by enabling people and communities to enhance their resilience to the adverse effects of climate change. On the other hand, if it fails to take into consideration the needs and risks of the particular population in the specific context, it might exacerbate loss and damage experienced by people who are relocating (Pill, 2020). While it is important to acknowledge – and to communicate – the urgency for some Indigenous Peoples to consider relocating in order to survive, Planned Relocation requires the approval of each community and must be implemented on a voluntary basis, all while supported by national policies and fundings to ensure that the process is done with respect to the special needs of Indigenous Peoples.

The financial aspect of relocation must be taken into consideration and should fall within the responsibility of the national government, particularly when looking at nations that have limited the opportunities for economic development of Indigenous Peoples. The cost of relocation should aim to include the wider range of consequences of migration for Indigenous Peoples, including the creation of new infrastructures, adaptation and acclimatization of new communities.

For developed countries with histories of colonialism and a significant indigenous population it is vital that they not only work with Indigenous groups to develop safe communities that uphold their cultural heritage alongside their economic well being, but also identify their actions that caused their Indigenous groups to be at risk and make steps to fix it.

Recommendations for Successful Planned Relocation of Indigenous Peoples Facing Climate Change in the Caribbean

To meet the generation of expectations and needs of those taking part in Planned Relocation, policy makers and agents of change must:

- Incorporate the traditional knowledge and ways of living of Indigenous Peoples into the design of the Planned Relocation strategy.
  - Their customary rights often refer to the management of communal areas and resources, placing collective rights at the center of their social interaction (IFAD, 2018).
- Design a fundraising strategy that ensures the ability to carry out the plan as well as funds to support the community long term. one of the bullet points here has to address how to secure funding.
- Ensure that even those with no legal documentation of land ownership are protected and benefit from Planned Relocation.
- Consider unique Planned Relocation funding systems for Indigenous communities which acknowledge that their economies might suffer from relocating to a new environment.

- Creation of insurance plans for their businesses and agriculture systems as well.
- As economies such as tourism might not be possible in new locations, the development of sustainable income sources should be encouraged by governments.

To minimize and prevent potential conflict with the host communities:

- Protect the communal aspect of Indigenous groups by relocating them as a whole rather than splitting them into different resettlements, taking into consideration their specific ways of living and skills that might not translate into other communities.
- Include customary landowners and chiefs from both the host populations and relocated community in negotiations to minimize/avoid land-based tensions.
- Ensure that the conditions of employment (access to jobs and resources) among the host populations are not harmed due to the influx of relocated people.

To provide necessary protection for Indigenous Peoples who did not choose to take part in Planned Relocation:

- Education of communities about the risks of staying in dangerous zones should take place, as well as discussions with tribal leaders and national governments as to what best-fits the needs of their communities.
- Continuous efforts to limit the impact of climate change through prevention methods and protection of the environment.
  - Initiatives for the protection of the oceans and forests.
  - Protection of their land ownership if relocation back to the motherland is possible.

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