

One Step at a Time: The Relocation Process of the Gardi Sugdub Community in Gunayala, Panama

-Mission Report-



DISPLACEMENT SOLUTIONS



August 2015

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary.....	4
II. Introduction	7
III. Background information	8
IV. Displacement Solution's involvement with the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community to the mainland	9
V. The relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community: local, regional and national perspectives.....	10
a. Reasons for relocating or staying on the island according to the people from Gardi Sugdub.....	11
b. Reasons for moving back to Gunayala of the Gardi Sugdub diaspora in Panama City	12
c. The current view of the Guna General Congress about relocating island communities from the islands to the mainland	12
VI. The current state of relocation-related activities	13
a. Local efforts and initiatives:.....	13
b. Update on the status of the new health center:.....	14
c. Update on the status of the new school complex:.....	15
d. Update on the plan to build houses for the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community:	16
VII. The current state of awareness, preparation and actual planning of relocation by government institutions	17
a. National Commission on Sustainable Development (CONADES):	18
b. Ministry of Housing:	18
c. Climate Change Unit at Ministry of Environment:	18
VIII. The Application of the Peninsula Principles in Gunayala.....	19
a. Adaptation assistance (Principle 6):.....	20
b. National implementation measures (Principle 7)	20
c. Climate displacement risk management (Principle 9)	20
d. Participation and consent (Principle 10):.....	21
e. Master relocation plan (Principle 10):.....	21
f. Institutional frameworks (Principle 13):	21
IX. Relocation Scenarios: Potentials and Pitfalls.....	22
a. Basic economic forecasting at regional and local levels	22

b. Gardi Sugdub: Relocation infrastructure, population and centrality.....	22
c. The (urgent) need for comprehensive, holistic and participatory planning	23
X. Conclusions	23
XI. Recommendations	24
Annex: Report on DS' workshops in Panama on planned relocation	26

I. Executive Summary

In April 2015, Displacement Solutions conducted a second mission to the Gunayala region of Panama to follow-up on its previous visit to the region in March 2014 to investigate how sea level rise was affecting Guna communities on islands off the Caribbean coast. The Guna people of the San Blas archipelago are perhaps the most well-known indigenous group of Latin America. As a result of lack of space, coupled with the impact of sea level rise caused by climate change, many of these island communities wish to relocate to the mainland. In the case of the island of Gardi Sugdub, the community initiated the relocation process in 2010.

The purpose of this second visit was threefold. First, to monitor progress in the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub islanders to the mainland, and the latest action that the Panamanian government is planning for the site where the community plans to relocate. Second, to continue assisting the Guna people in their advocacy with government officials and international financial institutions to encourage greater support and involvement in the relocation process. Third, to organize two workshops on planned relocations, one on the island of Gardi Sugdub for community members, and the second one in Panama City for government officials.

Current state of relocation from Gardi Subdub island to the mainland

From the very beginning, the relocation of the islanders of Gardi Sugdub has been an initiative undertaken by the community itself. Five years ago the community made the necessary internal arrangements to make available 17 hectares of land to relocate to the mainland, near a health center and school complex currently under construction by the Panamanian government, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Since DS' last visit in 2014, the Gardi Sugdub community has continued its own work toward making the relocation a reality, while at the same time trying to get the government on board. The Guna people are well-known for their strong cultural identity and for having a strong sense of agency. The Gardi Sugdub community in particular has had an attitude of active engagement in moving the relocation project forward, instead of waiting patiently for uncertain government support. In April 2015, the land on the mainland where the community plans to relocate was cleared by bulldozers that the community hired and paid with their own money. As a result, the relocation of Gardi Sugdub has reached a point of no return.

Nonetheless, the level of commitment of the government of Panama to the relocation process remains unclear. While a number of initiatives are planned or in progress which would assist in the relocation process, they are not yet part of the kind of coordinated, planned process which will be essential to the relocation being a success. During our visit in April 2015, DS met with officials at all levels of government who expressed general support for the relocation process, and a number of Ministries indicated an appreciation of the need for a properly coordinated, planned and supported process. The government, however, has yet to establish the institutional arrangements necessary to implement the coordinated planning process necessary to facilitate sustainable relocation.

As mentioned in our previous report, the Ministry of Housing promised a few years ago to build 65 houses at the relocation site, but later informed the Gardi Sugdub community that the funds allocated for their housing project were diverted to an emergency in another area of the country. As a result, the housing project has been paralyzed since that time, and by the time of our visit in April 2015 it had not been restarted.

However, in June 2015 the Deputy Minister of Housing visited Gardi Sugdub after the community sent a letter directly to President Varela, and announced that the Panamanian government would build around 300 houses at the relocation site. The Deputy Minister indicated that the housing project was needed because the island of Gardi Sugdub was “sinking” as a result of climate change and that the relocation of Gardi Sugdub would serve as a model for climate displacement in Gunayala and other parts of the country. This will be a very important project for the community and significantly increases the chances of success of the relocation effort.

The construction of the health center, however, has been paralyzed for the past six months and the project is only 54% completed. The main reason for the lack of progress has been that the company that is managing the construction had some financial problems, and the government decided to put payments on hold. However, while the government has reportedly resumed payments, at the time of our visit there was still no active work schedule for the project.

The construction of the school complex in Gardi Sugdub has continued to advance, but at a very slow pace. By the time of our visit only 29% of construction had been completed. Nonetheless, it is still expected that the school will open its doors for the beginning of the school year in 2016.

While the majority of islanders wish to relocate, the mission was also aware of community members, principally elderly, who wish to remain on Gardi Sugdub. Provision will also need to be made in any planning efforts to respect their right to remain in their homes.

Next Steps

The process of relocation is complex and will require careful planning. Based on experience elsewhere, it is well known that the process of displacement and relocation very often ends in a process of increasing impoverishment. Relocation therefore must be based on a holistic and integrated plan that will ensure that in the new location there is culturally appropriate housing, services, employment, and an economic base to enable the community to reconstitute itself. The Guna people must fully participate in this planning process, with adequate representation of groups such as women and the elderly.

In terms of the role of the Panamanian authorities, there is a need for greater coordination between the various ministries that should be informed by a legal framework that determines the organizational arrangements between agencies and defines responsibilities and functions in collaboration with local authorities and citizen groups. In addition, a governance framework must be developed which clearly delineates stakeholders and roles, the role of local authorities,

and decision-making procedures and other tasks and responsibilities involved in the relocation process.

Gardi Sugdub is rapidly approaching a crossroads. If no appropriate planning assistance is provided in the near future, and if the promises of the Ministry of Housing to build 300 houses are not fulfilled, the community may relocate in an *ad hoc*, improvised fashion, with potentially harmful social, economic, cultural and environmental consequences. However, if appropriate assistance is offered, the community can start a planned relocation process, and significantly increase the likelihood that this project will succeed.

Recommendations

At the National Level:

1. Develop a national level Planned Relocation Policy Framework to map and guide the necessary legal tasks and responsibilities in the process of relocation of communities affected by climate change in a participatory, holistic and integrated format.
2. Identify an appropriate lead agency with primary responsibilities for the relocation process for communities affected by climate change.
3. Establish or improve coordination between the various ministries, health, housing, education and environment, involved not only in the health center and school projects, but as well in the overall relocation project.
4. Carry out a basic economic forecasting process in the region to establish emerging demand and market-shed patterns to enable both national authorities and affected Guna populations to prepare for emerging employment and business opportunities.
5. Improve and/or develop local infrastructure (roads, ports, etc) to accommodate increased and altered forms of usage generated by the relocation project.

At the Project and Community Level:

6. Develop a fully participatory planning process compatible with Guna governance principles to ensure full involvement of affected people in the planning and implementation of relocation.
7. Develop methods and techniques such as focus groups and workshops to assist the affected people in their adaptations to new geographic, ecological, social, economic and political environments in culturally appropriate ways.
8. Create a capacity building program for relocated people to enable them to be responsive to new economic and employment opportunities occasioned by the new location.
9. Create a platform and mechanism through which the members of the Gardi Sugdub diaspora community in Panama City are both participant and ensured as beneficiaries of the relocation process.
10. Ensure the right to remain and continuity of basic services for people who elect to remain on the island.
11. Develop financial mechanisms to address the losses that some relocated people may experience through the relocation process.

II. Introduction

A mission from Displacement Solution (DS) first visited the Gunayala region in March 2014 to investigate how sea level rise in the region was affecting the Guna communities that live on small islands along the Caribbean coast of Panama. DS was aware of the decision of some communities to relocate from the islands to the mainland, and was interested in assisting them in that process. Additionally, DS wanted to use the *Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States* for the first time in a specific climate displacement case. The Peninsula Principles are the first international legal instrument to protect the rights of climate displaced people and set out the obligations of states toward them.

In July 2014, DS published a report entitled *The Peninsula Principles in Action: Climate Change and Displacement in the Autonomous Region of Gunayala, Panama*. The report attracted significant attention from the Panamanian media (newspapers, TV and radio news programs), NGOs, and some Panamanian state institutions. For the community of Gardi Sugdub the report motivated them to continue their four years of effort with renewed energy and new allies at the national and international level, in particular in their struggle for government support for their relocation effort.

A year after the first visit, Displacement Solutions decided to organize a second mission to Gunayala¹. The purpose of the second visit was threefold. First, to monitor advancements in the relocation process of the Gardi Sugdub community and the latest action that the Panamanian government is planning on the site where the community plans to relocate. Second, to continue advocacy efforts alongside the Guna people with government officials and international financial institutions to support the relocation process. Third, to organize two workshops on planned relocations, one on the island of Gardi Sugdub for community members, and the second in Panama City for government officials.

This mission report is divided into eleven sections. Section *one* is the Executive Summary of the document, and this introduction is part of section *two*. Section *three* provides some background information about the Gunas and their need to relocate from the islands to the mainland. Section *four* describes Displacement Solutions' efforts to support the Gardi Sugdub community as they try to relocate to the mainland. Section *five* addresses local, regional and national perspectives on the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community. Section *six* describes the current state of relocation related activities, including an update to the health center and school in the process of being built in the area where the Gardi Sugdub community will relocate. Section *seven* analyzes the current state of awareness, preparation and planning for relocation by government institutions. Section *eight* applies the Peninsula Principles in Gunayala. Section *nine* provides an analysis of the potentials and pitfalls of relocation scenarios. Section *ten* summarizes some conclusions, and section *eleven* offers some recommendations to the Panamanian government. We also include in an annex a report on DS' workshops in Panama on planned relocations.

¹ Displacement Solution team was led by human rights lawyer Carlos Arenas and anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith, main authors of this report.

III. Background information

The Guna of the San Blas archipelago are perhaps the most well-known indigenous group of Latin America for the defense of their culture within the context of the nation of Panama. They have occupied some of the 371 coral islands along the Caribbean coast since the middle of the 19th century when they moved from the mainland to nearby islands to escape the mosquito-borne diseases that were endemic to the area while continuing to access their landholdings and the rivers of the region for fresh water. Today they still maintain landholdings on the mainland that are farmed for subsistence crops to supplement their livelihoods from fishing and increasingly from tourism to their region, well known for pristine island beaches, abundant sport fishing and the beautiful fabric art produced by Guna women. The construction of a paved road into Gunayala roughly five years ago has led to a significant increase in tourist oriented economic activities.

Historically, the Guna have been very successful at defending their indigenous cultural identity. Although incursions by the Panamanian government and other interests were made in the early part of the 20th century, a rebellion in 1925, known as the Tule Revolution, eventually mediated by the United States, established a unique autonomous status for the region known as Gunayala. Although the Guna are citizens of Panama, with representation in the Panamanian congress, three Caciques (“chiefs” in Spanish), one each for the three Comarcas (counties) of the region of Gunayala, administer through the Guna General Congress the affairs of the region in their interactions with the nation of Panama. Internally, each community, whether on the islands or those few on the mainland, are internally self-governed by elected traditional authorities known as Sailas (“chief” in Guna) and Argars (“chief’s spokesmen”) within the context of meetings, known as *congresos* held daily in a special building known as the *Casa del Congreso* to discuss community affairs. This form of governance is also intertwined with both secular and religious symbols and is closely identified with Guna cultural identity². From a purely political standpoint, the unique autonomous status of Gunayala means that the Guna are full participants in terms of both advocacy and consent on any matters regarding the use and management of Gunayala territory. Therefore, all decisions pertaining to specific communities in Gunayala, particularly regarding development, will be debated and must be approved in these meetings. Beyond the level of community, initiatives or projects that the national government of Panama wishes to implement in Gunayala as a whole must also therefore be debated and approved in the Guna General Congress.

² Howe, James (2002). “The Kuna of Panama: Continuing Threats to Land and Autonomy”. *The Politics of Ethnicity: Indigenous Peoples in Latin American States*, pp. 81-105. Edited by David Maybury-Lewis. The David Rockefeller Center Series of Latin American Studies, Harvard University.

IV. Displacement Solution's involvement with the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community to the mainland

As previously mentioned, Displacement Solutions (DS) visited Gunayala for the first time at the end of March 2014³. Since our first visit to Gunayala, DS developed a collaborative working relationship with the Guna people and has maintained regular contact with the neighborhood committee, the local congress of the Gardi Sugdub community, and also with the Guna General Congress, the national political representative organization of the Guna people.

Since our first involvement and collaboration with the Gardi Sugdub community, DS has undertaken a series of activities including:

- In July 2014 DS published a report entitled: *The Peninsula Principles in Action: Climate Change and Displacement in the Autonomous Region of Gunayala, Panama*. The report is available in English and Spanish. DS's report is the first comprehensive study on the problem of the rising sea level in Gunayala and the need to relocate communities to the mainland. As a result, it has become an important reference document for academics, government officials and others interested in the topic. The Guna people have circulated the report among members and supporters, and government officials.
- On September 24th and 25th 2014, DS organized two public events in Panama City to release the Spanish translation of the report. The events were attended by journalists, government officials, indigenous people, environmental NGOs, United Nations agencies, and academics. The findings of the report generated significant media attention from TV news programs, electronic and printed newspapers, and radio stations. Links to some of the news reports can be accessed here: <http://displacementsolutions.org/the-peninsula-principles-in-action-in-panama/>. Following publication of the report, DS has been contacted by journalists, university researchers and filmmakers from Panama, Canada, USA, France, Spain and Japan, who all plan research and reporting on this issue.
- Following the release of the Gunayala report, DS also conducted an advocacy campaign on the need for proper support for the relocation of Guna communities from the islands to the mainland. DS met with Panamanian government officials and contacted experts at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in Washington, D.C. who, prior to DS' campaign, had not been aware of all the facts and magnitude of the problem in the Gunayala region. Government officials and IADB experts have been very receptive to DS's advocacy campaign.
- In April 2015, DS organized two workshops in Panama on planned relocations, led by well-known anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith. The first workshop took place on

³ Kadir Van Lohuizen, a photo-journalist who regularly collaborates with Displacement Solutions visited Gunayala in July 2011 and called attention to the problems with sea level rise in the region. Kadir was also part of DS' team that conducted the first mission to Gunayala, at the end of March 2014.

April 14 on the island of Gardi Sugdub and was attended by approximately 30 people, including several members of the Neighborhood Committee (*Comite de la Barriada*) and some of the island's traditional authorities. The second workshop, co-organized with the Panamanian Ministry of Environment and *Centro de Incidencia Ambiental* (CIAM), took place in Panama City on April 16 and was attended by approximately 40 officials, most members of the National Committee on Climate Change (see Annex).

- As part of its ongoing advocacy campaign, DS met with a wide range of Panamanian government officials, as well as a congressman⁴, and contacted experts at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) following the recent mission to Gardi Sugdub in April 2015.
- One of the main concerns set out in DS' first report was in relation to the potential health consequences of relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community, given the possibility of mosquito borne diseases in the area. As a result, in September 2014 DS met with a member of the Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies⁵ regarding the possibility of conducting a health impact assessment of the relocation site. During our recent trip to Panama in April 2015, we met again with researchers from the Gorgas Institute, and this time we were accompanied by a member of the Guna community⁶.
- Following extensive discussions with various actors within the Guna community, it was felt that DS expertise would be of significant assistance in the development of a Planned Relocation Plan, in consultation with the community and relevant government agencies. As a result, DS is currently exploring funding sources to assist the Gardi Sugdub community with a Planned Relocation Plan before a physical relocation takes place.

V. The relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community: local, regional and national perspectives

The island community of Gardi Sugdub has continued actively working on their relocation process to the main land. This process started in 2010 when the community made the decision to relocate, and made internal arrangements to allocate 17 hectares of land for this purpose and

⁴ DS met in Panama with Guna Congressman Aiban Velarde. Congressman Velarde mentioned that he has used Displacement Solutions' report on Gunayala in his work at the Panamanian congress. He was also very receptive to DS' ideas about the need that Panama has relocation policies and laws that deal with this problem. Panama City, April 20, 2015.

⁵ The Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies is a public health research entity with legal and administrative autonomy.

⁶ Meeting with doctors Lorenzo Cáceres and José Calzada at the Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies. Panama City, April 20, 2015. Doctors Cáceres and Calzada have expressed interest in getting involved, and suggested starting with an entomological study at the relocation site as soon as possible. Apparently the Gorgas Institute could do that study with their own resources, while they prepare a more ambitious study that will require a lengthy process to obtain external funding.

started the process of clearing the land manually. The land available for the relocation is comprised of two different, unconnected plots, one of 14 hectares, and the other 3 hectares.

There are two distinct groups of people from the community of Gardi Sugdub working toward relocating. The larger group is composed of those who currently live on the island of Gardi Sugdub, and the other group is comprised of some organized members of Gardi Sugdub's diaspora living in Panama City, the "Pro-housing commission –Panama chapter". These groups' connections to the island, backgrounds, reasons for relocating and rights in the relocation process are different, as will be explained later. However, since census data for a relocation does not yet exist, it is hard to know exactly how many people are currently planning to move⁷.

As noted, given the structure of authority among Guna communities, sailas (chiefs) are the main traditional authority in each community. There are seven sailas in Gardi Sugdub, with a clear hierarchy among them, and to our knowledge at least the two main sailas in Gardi Sugdub are completely supportive and engaged in the relocation process of the island community⁸.

Despite the increased national and international visibility of the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community, some of the supporters of the relocation from both groups were losing patience with the slow progress of the project and were pushing to move to the site as soon as possible⁹.

a. Reasons for relocating or staying on the island according to the people from Gardi Sugdub

First of all, it is important to emphasise that the idea of relocation was initiated and has been moved forward by the community itself. The most common explanations for the relocation are the lack of space on the island and the impacts of climate change. The lack of space is the most immediate motive to relocate and it refers to crowding in the current houses, and lack of space on the island to build new houses. The school also lacks space for many of its activities. Climate change is a long-term concern for some inhabitants, who are fully aware that the islands are eroding and sea level rise is posing risks to the community.

Other reasons also mentioned by people in Gardi Sugdub for relocating are: i) Access to education: A large modern school building that is currently in the process of being built on the

⁷ The 2010 National Census states that there are 927 people living in Gardi Sugdub. According to the neighborhood committee, the health center located in Gardi Sugdub has 1,200 people registered as living in Gardi Sugdub. There are around 80 households registered as part of the Gardi Sugdub's diaspora with the idea of relocating, but the total number of people to be relocated is not clear.

⁸ For instance, during our latest visit on April 2015 Gardi Sugdub's main saila, Luis Murphy, attended part of our first meeting with the Neighborhood Committee. The second saila, Pablo Preciado (who is apparently in the process of temporarily replacing saila Murphy), is a very active member of the neighborhood committee. Saila Pablo Preciado attended the meeting with the neighborhood committee, the one day workshop organized by Displacement Solutions, and also accompanied us to visit the relocation site.

⁹ Argar José Davis, one of the elderly leaders of the community commented, "I hope to see the resettlement before I die".

mainland, and scheduled to open in 2016 will be a major attraction to the area; ii) Lack of agricultural land: Some people mentioned that there is an agricultural crisis in Gunayala. By relocating to the mainland people will be able to dedicate more time and space to agricultural activities, since they will be closer to their fields; iii) Financial reasons: For some people without their own boat or canoe, the cost of transportation to the mainland to work their fields is significant.

According to our conversations with members of the neighborhood committee, there are approximately 10% to 20% of the current inhabitants of Gardi Sugdub who do not want to relocate, most of whom are elderly. The main reason for staying on the island is that they have lived there all their lives and want to die there. Some even have mentioned that if the island became uninhabitable, they would like to die with the island¹⁰.

b. Reasons for moving back to Gunayala of the Gardi Sugdub diaspora in Panama City

Most of the people from Gardi Sugdub currently living in Panama City do not have a place to live on the island. Some people moved to Panama City to work or to provide education for their children. Some would like to return to Gardi Sugdub but they don't have a place to live. Additionally, the recent tourist boom in Gunayala is a big incentive for some people to return and start businesses. For people who moved to Panama City for employment, the possibility of starting their own business around tourist activities is a good reason to return. The new road that connects Panama City with the relocation site is only a two-hour drive and provides easy access for tourists wishing to enjoy the region's beaches and fishing.

c. The current view of the Guna General Congress about relocating island communities from the islands to the mainland

During the April 2015 visit, DS met with the three Caciques, the main political authorities of the Guna, to discuss the relocation of communities in Gunayala¹¹.

During our meeting Cacique Belisario López mentioned that some communities have the possibility to relocate, but that it is very difficult for other communities. Also according to him, the place where a community will relocate should offer resources and options to facilitate the move, implying that it is not the case for all the island communities. He also added that as the Guna General Congress they have to help with whatever the communities want, given their role as facilitators. He made clear that the Congress does not have a relocation policy per se, as they have been preoccupied with other social and economic problems. However, they have been supportive of the communities that have expressed their desire to relocate. He even stated: "We

¹⁰ According to members of the Neighborhood Committee some people that don't want to relocate have stated: "If the island get submerged I would like to go down with the island". However, during our fieldwork we didn't have the opportunity to talk directly to community members who are not planning to relocate.

¹¹ Meeting with Guna Caciques Belisario López, Maximiliano Ferrer and Baglio Pérez, highest political authorities at the Guna General Congress. Panama City, April 18, 2015.

see with good eyes the relocation of Gardi Sugdub". He also commented that President Varela is interested in supporting the communities with his new housing program called "*Techos de esperanza*" (Roofs of Hope).



Figure 1: Gunayala women looking out at the planned relocation site on mainland Panama.

VI. The current state of relocation-related activities

a. Local efforts and initiatives:

As previously mentioned, the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community has been an initiative undertaken by the community itself, which has a very strong sense of agency. Some members mentioned to us several times, "why wait for the government?", demonstrating an attitude of active engagement in moving the relocation project forward instead of waiting patiently for uncertain government support. As a result, the community has continued working toward making the relocation a reality, while at the same time trying to develop connections to get the government on board.

On April 13, 2015, the bulldozers contracted by the community started the process of leveling the terrain, following the blueprints elaborated by the Ministry of Housing of the previous administration. Approximately US\$20,000 was collected between the Gardi Sugdub community

and the Gardi Sugdub diaspora in Panama City to pay for leveling the land. The community has also been supported by Guna architect Calixto Coleman, who has been donating his expertise to the community. During DS' recent mission to Gunayala we visited the relocation site a couple of days after they started leveling the land and witnessed the advancements in the project. DS' impression was that the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community has reached a point of no return - the relocation of Gardi Sugdub is becoming a reality. A community member also commented, "the project is not a dream anymore, it is reality"¹².

Nevertheless, during our extended conversation at the relocation site, Architect Calixto Coleman was adamant that the community could not do everything and that the Panamanian government needs to help¹³. By the time of our visit the measurements of lots were proceeding, but they were beginning with 32 instead of the original number projected by the Ministry of Housing of 65. The lots were planned to be 20X20 meters or 400 square meters. Coleman said that the people rejected the original house design of the Ministry of Housing because they want to maintain their architectural style with traditional materials, such as bamboo and palm "with everything natural, maybe changing the design a little." There is some question about obtaining the palm fronds used in traditional roofing since they are becoming very scarce. However, although not verified, commercial production of the palm has been undertaken. Nevertheless, the growth cycle for the palm to reach maturity is six years, placing in doubt the availability of the material for the Gardi Sugdub relocation.

Coleman was concerned that "when the architecture is broken (altered) with foreign materials, that's where the shock is." The community is planning to participate in the construction of their houses. In his view this is positive because if community members are invested in the process they will take greater care with it due to the economics of the process. He also thinks that there should be green areas in the town. That is, it should not be completely barren because that would reduce the attractiveness of the town, which will be important for the tourism business. The uneven topography of the site must also be dealt with. Architect Coleman is also sensitive to the need for raising awareness of the people to the challenges of the relocation process, such as in the distribution of houses and lots which has yet to be determined. He spoke of the need to have some advice from social scientists with knowledge of the resettlement process, noting that "not everyone has the same mentality, the same attitude and that's where we have to begin, little by little in order to see how the process of participation turns out."

b. Update on the status of the new health center:

This is a project funded through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank. The health center project, like the school project, was initiated without any coordination with other ministries or institutions and particularly without any planning regarding the relocation of Gardi

¹² Meeting with members of the neighborhood community. Gardi Sugdub, April 13, 2015.

¹³ According to Coleman, initially the people of Gardi Sugdub just wanted to come and occupy the site, building their own houses, but he said, "No, just a moment. It's not time to come here yet. We have to plot the dimensions of the lots." Conversation with Guna architect Calixto Coleman, Carti, April 15, 2015.

Sugdub in its immediate vicinity. The entity that oversees the construction process at the Ministry of Health is its Directory of Health Infrastructure. The construction of the health center has been basically paralyzed for the past six months and the project is only 54% completed. The main reason for the lack of progress has been that the company that is managing the construction had some financial problems, and the government decided to put payments on hold. However, apparently the government has now resumed payments, but there is still no active work schedule for the project¹⁴.

Besides the financial problems faced by the company in charge of building the health center, there are other problems that make this project a very challenging one. For instance, the transportation of building materials from Panama City to the construction site is difficult as there are limits to what trucks can carry over the road to the area. In addition, there are several problems regarding the energy and water services for the health center. There is no plan at the moment for the provision of water for the health center. The provision of electrical power is an additional concern. Apparently, one of the private companies that distributes electricity in Panama is in charge of building the infrastructure to take electricity to the Carti port. However, apparently no progress has been made¹⁵. It is possible that the health center may have to have its own energy generator.

c. Update on the status of the new school complex:

The Panamanian Ministry of Education originally planned to build two “model schools” in Gunayala, as part of a programme to build several other similar schools in indigenous territories. This project is also funded through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank and the construction process is being overseen by PRODE (Proyecto de Desarrollo Educativo), which is a special unit at the Ministry of Education created by the Inter-American Development Bank for this type of project. The school was described as a “school of private quality, but public”¹⁶. The school in Gardi Sugdub is the first one of those schools.

The construction of the school complex in Gardi Sugdub has continued to advance, but at a very slow pace. By the time of our visit only 29% of construction had been completed¹⁷. It is still expected that the school will open its doors by the beginning of the school year in 2016. During our latest meeting with PRODE functionaries in Panama City, it was explained to us that the delay had to do with the difficulties in transporting materials from Panama City to the construction site due to the width and condition of the road to the port of Carti. They also mentioned that PRODE had approved changing to lighter materials to be used in the project to facilitate transport¹⁸.

¹⁴ Interview with engineer José Sanchez, Deputy Director of Health Infrastructure, Ministry of Health. Panama City, April 20, 2015.

¹⁵ According to the newspaper *La Prensa*, the closest electrical post is still 40 kilometers from the port of Carti. Arcia Jaramillo, Ohiggins. *La Prensa*, “Poco avance en éxodo de Gunas”. April 4, 2015.

¹⁶ Meeting with architects Cecilia Amat and Erik Botello, PRODE. Panama City, April 17, 2015.

¹⁷ Conversation with Guna architect Calixto Coleman, Carti, April 15, 2015.

¹⁸ Meeting with architects Cecilia Amat and Erik Botello, PRODE. Panama City, April 17, 2015.

Several PRODE functionaries attended the release of Displacement Solution's report last September, and are aware of the desire of the Gardi Sugdub community to relocate. However, it does not seem that the Ministry of Education is doing many things differently or coordinating with other ministries or state agencies regarding a future relocation of the population of Gardi Sugdub next to the site where the school is being built. For instance, PRODE functionaries confirmed that the Ministry of Education is not planning to provide transportation between the nearby islands and the new school once it opens. This is one of the issues that the Gardi Sugdub community is very concerned about, given the logistics required as well as the cost of transporting almost one thousand children daily, if, by the time the school opens, the community has not been relocated. When asked about this topic, PRODE functionaries made clear that the community had selected the site and implied that it was their responsibility to plan for the logistics and cover any transportation expenses.

d. Update on the plan to build houses for the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community:

As mentioned in our previous report, during the administration of President Martinelli, the Gardi Sugdub community solicited assistance from the Ministry of Housing for the relocation process to the mainland. The Ministry approached the matter as a housing project, and promised to build the first 65 houses at the relocation site. The only concrete action taken, however, was the drafting of a blueprint for the construction of the houses. The Ministry of Housing later communicated to the Gardi Sugdub community that the funds allocated for their housing project had been diverted to an emergency in another area of the country. As a result, the housing project has been paralyzed since that time, and by the time of our visit on April 2015 the government of President Varela had not yet restarted the housing project¹⁹.

The community of Gardi Sugdub had been trying to meet with functionaries from the Ministry of Housing to see if the housing project could be resumed; however, by the time of our visit efforts had been unsuccessful. Functionaries at the Ministry of Housing confirmed to DS during its' April mission that the project was still on hold²⁰. However, after a letter sent by the Gardi Sugdub community directly to President Varela, the Deputy Minister of Housing and the Executive Secretary of National Commission on Sustainable Development (CONADES)²¹ were scheduled to visit Gardi Sugdub at the beginning of May to discuss the housing project²².

However, the visit was postponed further because President Varela had more ambitious plans for Gunayala, as he decided to organize a public meeting with all his cabinet and a resource fair in

¹⁹ Arcia Jaramillo, Ohiggins. *La Prensa*, "Poco avance en éxodo de Gunas". April 4, 2015.

²⁰ Meeting with Architect Itzamara de Carrasquilla, head of the architectural department at the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning. Panama City, April 17, 2015.

²¹ CONADES is an agency that is part of the executive branch.

²² Meeting with Manuel Soriano, Executive Secretary of CONADES. Panama City, April 20, 2015. Meeting with Jorge Gonzalez, Deputy Minister of Housing. Panama City April 20, 2015.

the island community of Playón Chico on June 16, 2015. In preparation for the projects that President Varela was planning to announce for the entire Gunayala region, the Deputy Minister of Housing, Jorge Gonzalez, visited Gardi Sugdub the day before and announced that the Panamanian government would build around 300 houses for the relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community. Deputy-Minister Gonzalez made clear that the project was needed because the island of Gardi Sugdub was “sinking” as a result of climate change and it was necessary to provide an adequate place where there was no risk²³. He also added that the aim of the project is to improve the quality of life of the people and for that reason it will include all basic services needed. At the same time, the project would consult with the leaders of the Comarca about the design of housing they wanted to have²⁴. Finally, he emphasized that the relocation of Gardi Sugdub would serve as a model for climate displacement in Gunayala and other parts of the country²⁵.

On his visit to island community of Playón Chico, President Varela announced several projects for the Gunayala region during the period of 2015-2019 and valued at fifty million dollars, including the 300 houses for Gardi Sugdub²⁶. His announcement coincided with his call to the Guna authorities to allow a power line connection between Colombia and Panama, which was strongly opposed by the Gunas several years ago. Varela mentioned the interest of his government in building a road between Mortí and Mulatupu in Gunayala, and to use that road as the route for the power line connection²⁷.

VII. The current state of awareness, preparation and actual planning of relocation by government institutions

During our April 2015 mission, DS met with officials from the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Environment and the National Commission on Sustainable Development (CONADES) to encourage them to take an active role in the relocation process. During all of these meetings we highlighted the importance of understanding that the Gardi Sugdub community needed not merely a housing project, but rather a relocation project. Functionaries from the Ministry of Housing and CONADES were very open to that possibility.

Experience elsewhere has indicated that a lead institution with clearly defined authority and responsibilities is very important to the success of resettlement projects. DS believes that the Ministry of Housing and CONADES are the two state institutions that are in the best position to play a leading role in the relocation process for the Gardi Sugdub community, in addition to other communities in Gunayala.

²³ Arcia Jaramillo, Ohiggins, *La Prensa*, “Miviot inspecciona sitio a donde trasladarán a gunas”. June 16, 2015.

²⁴ Ministry of Housing, *News*, “Familias de isla Gardi Sugdub serán reubicadas en tierra firme”. June 15, 2015.

²⁵ Arcia Jaramillo, Ohiggins, *La Prensa*, “Miviot inspecciona sitio a donde trasladarán a gunas”. June 16, 2015.

²⁶ Gobierno de la República de Panamá, “Gobierno aprueba plan de desarrollo para mejorar la calidad de vida de los habitantes de la comarca Guna Yala”. June 16, 2015.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

a. National Commission on Sustainable Development (CONADES):

Of all the government institutions that we talked with during our latest visit to Panama, officials from CONADES were the best informed about the process of relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community²⁸. They were very aware of the complexity of the process and the organization seemed poised in many respects to take a leadership role in the development of a relocation plan. CONADES is the government agency tasked with the responsibility for the provision of water and sanitation. In this regard, their appreciation of the need for coordination with other ministries and organizations was clear. They also were very aware of the need for a basic sanitation program, with an educational component to inform the population regarding the use of modern sanitary technology and health.

b. Ministry of Housing:

DS made two visits to the Ministry of Housing during our latest trip to Panama. During our first visit we met with the chief of the architecture department, who confirmed that the approval of the Housing Minister will be required for funding to be renewed for the project²⁹. The chief of the architecture department further confirmed that there had been no coordination with either the Ministry of Education for the school project or the Ministry of Health for the hospital project. In our meeting, DS stressed the need for a holistic perspective and close coordination among the various ministries for relocation projects.

On a second visit to the Ministry of Housing, DS met with Deputy Minister of Housing, Jorge Gonzalez. Mr. Gonzalez adamantly asserted that the ministry intended to carry out a holistic integrated housing and relocation project for the people of Gardi Sugdub. His discussion of the potential project was quite comprehensive, emphasizing the importance of planning as well as cultural factors in the design of housing. DS suggested to him that the participation of the affected people would be essential, a view with which he stated his complete agreement. The Ministry of Housing appears to be a central institution in the planning and implementation of resettlement for Gardi Sugdub, but it is clear that any plan that is designed will have to have very well-defined roles and responsibilities within the context of that leadership to avoid a heavily top-down approach.

c. Climate Change Unit at Ministry of Environment:

DS also met with functionaries of the Climate Change Unit at the Ministry of Environment³⁰. It became fairly clear in our discussions that the Climate Change Unit did not consider the situation facing Gardi Sugdub to be due to climate change, but rather exclusively to excessive population

²⁸ Meeting with Manuel Soriano, Executive Secretary of CONADES. Panama City, April 20, 2015.

²⁹ Meeting with Architect Itzamara de Carrasquilla, head of the architectural department at the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning. Panama City, April 17, 2015.

³⁰ During 2015 the Ministry of Environment replaced the previous Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente (ANAM).

growth and a lack of space on the island for expansion³¹. Despite assertions to the contrary, it was also clear that their concerns with climate change focus primarily on the biophysical aspects and less on the aspects of social vulnerability that make people susceptible to its effects.



Figure 2: Erosion of the Gunayala Islands

VIII. The Application of the Peninsula Principles in Gunayala

Panama is the first country where Displacement Solutions has used the Peninsula Principles (PPs) - the first international legal instrument to protect the rights of climate displaced people and set out the obligations of states toward them - to analyze and guide the interventions needed in the Gunayala region. The PPs were drafted by a diverse group of human rights, international law and climate change experts in a consultative process that included input from people already affected by climate displacement, other experts, and the general public.

The PPs are based on current human rights laws, including those that focus on internally displaced people as well as best practices on disaster risk prevention and reduction, and are tailored to address the specific needs of people facing climate displacement. One of the main

³¹ Meeting with Engineer Rosilena Lindo, head of the Climate Change Unit at the Ministry of the Environment. Panama City, April 17, 2015. Last year, the National Authority on the Environment apparently had a different position. See: Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente (2014). *Comarca Kuna Yala, ante la vulnerabilidad del ascenso del nivel del mar*. <http://www.thecvf.org/FTP/ANM%20-%20Panamá.pdf>

virtues of the PPs is that they creatively summarize, in a single document, a series of already existing human rights principles and best practices that are currently included in several international documents and that are not always linked. It is important for States to understand that the PPs are based on current law and best practices and do not represent the adoption of new ones.

According to the Peninsula Principles, the Panamanian government has the following specific obligations in the Gunayala case:

a. Adaptation assistance (Principle 6):

“States should provide adaptation assistance, protection and other measures”, with the purpose of allowing people to remain in their homes, lands and places of habitual residence as long as possible, “in a manner fully consistent with their rights”. Indigenous groups and others, “who are particularly dependent on and/or attached to their land (...) and those reliant on customary rules relating to the use and allocation of land”, should be particularly protected, and the state should “demonstrate sensitivity” to them.

b. National implementation measures (Principle 7)

States should incorporate prevention assistance and protection provisions in domestic laws and policies, with special attention to the prevention of displacement and ensuring durable solutions to climate displacement. At the same time, states should establish budgetary allocations and other resources to facilitate the implementation of the PPs. Equally important is that states ensure “adequate, timely and effective participation” in the development and implementation of those laws and policies. The rights of vulnerable groups should be explicitly protected (Principle 7).

c. Climate displacement risk management (Principle 9)

States should: “a) identify, design and implement risk management strategies, including risk reduction, risk transfer and risk sharing mechanisms, in relation to climate displacement; b) undertake systematic observation and monitoring of (...) current and anticipated climate displacement; c) enhance sharing, access to and the use of such data at the household, local, regional and national levels (...) and facilitate the assessment and management of climate displacement; d) model likely climate displacement scenarios (including timeframes and financial implications), locations threatened by climate change, and possible relocation sites for climate displaced persons; e) integrate relocation rights, procedures and mechanisms (...) within national laws and policies; and f) develop institutional frameworks, procedures and mechanisms with the participation of individuals, households and communities that: i) identify indicators that will, with as much precision as possible, classify where, at what point in time, and for whom, relocation will be required as a means of providing durable solutions to those affected; ii) require and facilitate government technical assistance and funding, and, iii) outline steps individuals,

households and communities can take prior to climate displacement in order to receive such technical assistance and financial support”.

d. Participation and consent (Principle 10):

Principle 10(b) clearly states that as part of the preparation and planning for climate displacement, states should “ensure that no relocation shall take place unless individuals, households and communities (both displaced and host) provide full and informed consent for such relocation”. Principle 10 (c) states the exception to the full, previous and informed consent (FPIC) framework, which call states to: “only require relocation to take place without such consent in exceptional circumstances when necessary to protect public health and safety or when individuals, households and communities face imminent loss of life and limb”.

Additionally, the PPs includes the right to participation, which calls states to make certain that “affected individuals, households and communities (both displaced and host) are fully informed and can actively participate in relevant decisions and the implementation of those decisions, including the planning and implementation of laws, policies and programs designed to ensure the respect for and protection of housing, land and property and livelihood rights (Principle 10 (e)(i))”.

e. Master relocation plan (Principle 10):

Principle 10 (f) calls states to: “prior to any relocation, prepare a master relocation plan that addresses critical matters including: i) land acquisition; ii) community preferences; iii) transitional shelter and permanent housing; iv) the preservation of existing social and cultural institutions and places of climate displaced people; v) access to public services; vi) support needed during the transition period; vii) family and community cohesion; viii) concerns of the host community; ix) monitoring mechanisms; and x) grievance procedures and effective remedies”.

f. Institutional frameworks (Principle 13):

States should establish “effective institutional frameworks” and take “all appropriate administrative, legislative and judicial measures” to: “i) enable government technical assistance and funding to prevent, prepare for and respond to climate displacement; ii) support and facilitate the provision of assistance and protection to climate displaced persons; iii) exchange information and cooperate with indigenous peoples, women, the elderly, minorities, persons with disabilities, children, those living in poverty, and marginalized groups and people; and iv) represent the needs of climate displaced persons”.

IX. Relocation Scenarios: Potentials and Pitfalls

a. Basic economic forecasting at regional and local levels

Projecting exactly how the relocation project will affect the economic life of the community is difficult. The relocation site is located on the edge of the foothills of the coastal mountains, roughly a kilometer from the port, and out of sight of the sea. Some residents of Gardi Sugdub suggest that there will be a shift in emphasis from fishing to agriculture, since it will now be much easier to access their fields. Other opinions doubt that such a shift will take place, largely because young people today are less likely to opt for the hard work agriculture requires, preferring to get jobs elsewhere or in other pursuits in the local economy, such as tourism. The growth of tourism in the area, which has been characterized as a “boom” will likely continue to be and may even grow in importance³².

b. Gardi Sugdub: Relocation infrastructure, population and centrality

In addition, the relocation project and the new school and health center, all situated along the road may alter the relative importance of Gardi Sugdub among the various communities in the region, both on the islands and the mainland. The centrality of places is determined as much by the location of institutions and functions as it is by geographic location. Furthermore, these institutions may also attract both individuals and families to migrate to the area. Currently, as Guna architect Calixto Coleman pointed out, there are also other communities that are considering relocation to the area either adjacent to or on the border of the land demarcated and cleared for Gardi Sugdub. The relocation of roughly 1,000 people from the island and a projected 300 to 500 more from the diaspora community in Panama City may create a market center for the region, which will only grow in importance, if the community grows in population through migration or other communities relocate nearby. The increased population will mean an increase in urban administrative, economic and educational services with jobs related to those institutions, thus changing the economic profile of the town.

Although relocation at least initially will be limited to the citizens of Gardi Sugdub, from both the island and the diaspora community in Panama City, there are indications that Guna from other island communities view the new town as a possible residence. It is also possible that the new settlement will attract non-Guna Panamanians to the town and lands nearby, adding both to the diversity of the area and to the potential for social tensions.

³² In addition to the guiding and boat transport that are central to the tourist economy, the Guna architect, Calixto Coleman, discussed the potential that the relocation site itself might become a tourist attraction, if the design and houses reflect traditional values and forms, particularly in housing and layout of the settlement with green areas. Coleman cites his experience working in Darien with the Emberá who stressed traditional forms in their settlement as well as traditional dress as a tourist draw. Conversation with Guna architect Calixto Coleman, Carti, April 15, 2015.

c. The (urgent) need for comprehensive, holistic and participatory planning

While a segment of the Gardi Sugdub and diaspora populations want to move as quickly as possible, the majority, according to the leadership, are in favor of careful and informed planning before occupying the site, displaying at least to some degree an awareness of the complexity of the process of relocation. There is no question that the level and degree of local participation in the process of planning, including representation by all groups, such as women and the elderly, must be foregrounded. Our conversations with ministries and agencies all too frequently omitted discussion of participation, although all recognized its importance when we brought it up. There is also a need for greater coordination between the various ministries that should be informed by a legal framework that determines the organizational arrangements between agencies and defines responsibilities and functions in collaboration with local authorities and citizen groups. In addition, a governance framework must be developed which clearly delineates stakeholders and roles, the role of local authorities, and decision-making procedures and other tasks and responsibilities involved in the relocation process.

The relocation process of Gardi Sugdub must be based on a holistic and integrated plan that takes into account environmental and resource access considerations, social organizational factors in settlement design, employment needs and potential capacity building, the political ramifications of the larger settlement with key facilities and institutions, and the cultural needs of people adjusting to life in a new environment.

X. Conclusions

From the very beginning the relocation of the island community of Gardi Sugdub has been an initiative undertaken by the community itself. Five years ago the community made the necessary internal arrangements to make available 17 hectares of land to relocate to the mainland, near a health center and school complex currently under construction by the Panamanian government, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. The Guna people are well-known for their strong cultural identity and for having a strong sense of agency. The Gardi Sugdub community in particular has had an attitude of active engagement in moving the relocation project forward, instead of waiting patiently for uncertain government support. Recently, the land where the community wants to relocate was cleared by bulldozers that the community hired and paid with their own money. As a result, the relocation of Gardi Sugdub has reached a point of no return.

Recently, the Panamanian government announced their intention to construct 300 houses to facilitate the relocation of Gardi Sugdub. This is a very important project for the community and significantly increases their chances of success. However, the Panamanian government has not yet indicated their approach to the project, if it is considered only as a housing project or if it is considered and implemented as a holistic relocation project.

Effective, development-oriented, participatory relocation is the reestablishment of displaced people in a new location with culturally appropriate relocation design, housing, services and an economic base to enable the community, calling upon a combination of their own socio-cultural resources and appropriate outside assistance, to reconstitute itself and achieve adequate levels of resilience to normal social, cultural, economic, political and environmental variation³³.

Gardi Sugdub is rapidly approaching a crossroads. If no appropriate planning assistance is provided in the near future, and if the promises of the Ministry of Housing to build 300 houses are not fulfilled, the community may relocate in an *ad hoc*, improvised fashion, with potentially harmful social, economic, cultural and environmental consequences. Experience elsewhere has shown that the process of displacement very often ends in a process of increasing impoverishment. However, if appropriate assistance is offered, the community can start a planned relocation process, and significantly increase the likelihood that this project will succeed.

XI. Recommendations

At the National Level:

1. Develop a national level Planned Relocation Policy Framework to map and guide the necessary legal tasks and responsibilities in the process of relocation of communities affected by climate change in a participatory, holistic and integrated format.
2. Identify an appropriate lead agency with primary responsibilities for the relocation process for communities affected by climate change.
3. Establish or improve coordination between the various ministries, health, housing and environment, involved not only in the health center project, but as well in the overall relocation project.
4. Carry out a basic economic forecasting process in the region to establish emerging demand and market-shed patterns to enable both national authorities and affected Guna populations to prepare for emerging employment and business opportunities.
5. Improve and/or develop local infrastructure (roads, ports, etc) to accommodate increased and altered forms of usage generated by the relocation project.

At the Project and Community Level:

6. Develop a fully participatory planning process compatible with Guna governance principles to ensure full involvement of affected people in the planning and implementation of relocation.

³³ Oliver-Smith, Anthony (2014). “Climate change, displacement and resettlement”. Leckie, Scott (editor). *Land Solutions for Climate Displacement*. London and New York: Routledge.

7. Develop methods and techniques such as focus groups and workshops to assist the affected people in their adaptations to new geographic, ecological, social, economic and political environments in culturally appropriate ways.
8. Create a capacity building program for relocated people to enable them to be responsive to new economic and employment opportunities occasioned by the new location.
9. Create a platform and mechanism through which the members of the Gardi Sugdub diaspora community in Panama City are both participant and ensured as beneficiaries of the relocation process.
10. Ensure the right to remain and continuity of basic services for people who elect to remain on the island.
11. Develop financial mechanisms to address the losses that some relocated people may experience through the relocation process.



Figure 3: 17 acre resettlement site that was cleared in April 2015 for the planned relocation of the Gardi Sugdub community to the mainland.

Annex: Report on DS' workshops in Panama on planned relocation

In many respects, the workshops in the community of Gardi Sugdub and in Panama City drew on similar materials that were detailed in the outline initially sent to the National Committee on Climate Change, including a general framing of the issues, basic concepts, the models and approaches used for analysis, options, challenges and problems faced by affected peoples, planning techniques and strategies, and resilience building. Emphasis was placed on the fact that climate change associated displacement is quite a new field that is just beginning to frame the core issues and thus tends to draw on the fields of conflict, development and disaster associated displacement and resettlement for guidance. Both workshops drew on comparative case studies from Alaska and the Pacific Islands, including an 8 minute video on the Carteret Islands produced by Oxfam New Zealand. Both workshops were designed to last roughly 6 hours, including time for discussion and debate. However, the perspective and approach differed significantly between the Gardi Sugdub workshop and the workshop developed for the government, academic and NGO communities in Panama City.

The workshop in Gardi Sugdub took place in a local church and was attended by approximately 30 people, including several members of the Neighborhood Committee (Comite de la Barriada) and some of the island's traditional authorities. Translation from Spanish to Guna was provided by Blas Lopez, who is the secretary of the Neighborhood Committee. The focus of the Gardi Sugdub workshop emphasized not only the transfer of certain basic information about the planned relocation process, but as much or more on an interactional format in which the participants shared their perspectives based on their experience of current conditions and their expectations of what their relocation project should provide. The video of the Carteret Island situation resonated considerably with the residents of Gardi Sugdub in terms of the threats and challenges and evoked expressions of sympathy and solidarity with the Carteret Islanders.

Rather than presenting relocation as a simple solution to the problem of climate change displacement, emphasis was placed on the array of challenges, problems, risks and options that affected people face in relocation. In that context, participant input was sought on how they understood the need for relocation and what they thought the process would entail. For example, there was considerable discussion of the issue of housing, focusing on materials, location and arrangement in space and distribution methods. Since there is a segment of the Gardi Sugdub population that is very impatient to relocate, some people advanced the perspective that they could simply go over to the community lands where the new settlement will be located and construct their houses, after which the government could put in the lights and water infrastructure. Others in the audience were more cautious and concerned about developing a more measured approach, emphasizing planning in collaboration with government ministries and agencies. Virtually everyone also pointed out that their reasons for relocating were at this point in time the current conditions of crowding, contamination and sanitation on the island as well as the longer term threat of sea level rise from climate change.

In contrast, the perspective of the Panama City workshop, attended by some 40 representatives from state institutions part of the National Climate Change Committee, universities and NGOs,

in addition to the challenges and problems faced by affected people, focused primarily on informing the participants about the technical procedures and formal guidelines developed by various institutions such as the World Bank, over the last thirty years. The emphasis in Panama City was on information transfer as well as on raising awareness that relocation, in addition to being a possible solution to climate change displacement, was also a complex set of problems, that if not dealt with effectively, could lead to the impoverishment of the affected people. The importance of the concept of social vulnerability in the identification of groups most likely to be displaced by climate change effects was explored as well as the potential social, economic, political and cultural losses that they would experience. In effect, the workshop demonstrated that this concept grounds the three major models or approaches -the four phase model³⁴; the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction model³⁵ and the Psycho-Socio-Cultural Recovery model³⁶, that have been developed to analyze the social impacts of displacement and relocation. In addition, the five basic factors responsible for the success or failure of relocation, including land for relocation site, community design, housing, livelihoods, and participation, were explored in depth, illustrating how adequate attention to these components increased chances of successful outcomes while failure to attend to them almost guaranteed failure.

The workshop also included a major focus on formal guidelines and technical procedures that have been developed in other fields of relocation implementation. The planning steps undertaken by the authorities carrying out the relocation of the displaced people by the Arenal Dam in Costa Rica were examined for their role in the context of other external variables that contributed to the generally successful outcome of that project. In addition, the principles that inform a World Bank Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) as well the guidelines for its concrete development for specific projects were outlined and discussed. The final topic, resilience building, was framed as fundamentally a social process that is informed and supported by cultural values that enable a community to face changes with the flexibility necessary to develop appropriate responses, in contrast to top-down initiatives that focus primarily on addressing technological responses to specific climate change effects. A discussion of the need for both adaptation and structural changes in the systems that drive climate change closed the workshop.

The reception and informal assessment of both workshops were very positive. The participants from Gardi Sugdub expressed that the workshop helped them gain a greater appreciation of the complexity of the relocation process. They also appreciated that the challenges they face are

³⁴ Scudder, Thayer and Elizabeth Colson (1982). "From Welfare to Development: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Dislocated People". In Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith (eds.), *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement*. Boulder: Westview Press; Scudder, Thayer (2009). "Resettlement Theory and the Kariba Case: An Anthropology of Resettlement". In Anthony Oliver-Smith (ed.), *Development and Dispossession: The Anthropology of Development Forced Displacement and Resettlement*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

³⁵ Cernea, Michael (2000). "Risk, Safeguards, and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement". In Michael Cernea and Christopher McDowell (eds.), *Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees*, pp. 11-55. Washington, D.C: World Bank.

³⁶ Downing, Theodore E. and Carmen Garcia-Downing (2009). "Routine and Dissonant Cultures: A Theory about the Psycho-socio-cultural Disruptions of Involuntary Displacement and Ways to Mitigate Them without Inflicting Even More Damage". In Anthony Oliver-Smith (ed.), *Defying Displacement: Grassroots Resistance and the Critique of Development*, pp. 225-54. Austin: University of Texas Press.

similar to those faced by people in the various case studies and felt that perhaps some communication could be established with the various communities in Alaska, the Pacific Islands, and elsewhere. The participants in Panama City also felt that their understanding of the relocation process and the challenges it presents to both planners and people was greatly enhanced. They expressed their satisfaction as well with the format of the workshop that allowed for considerable discussion of the complex issues and problems from economic and political perspectives.