PREFACE

Campo Cielo (a pseudonym) was initially imagined by an international nongovernmental organization as a resettlement to serve the most vulnerable Honduran survivors of Hurricane Mitch (in 1998)—impoverished single mothers with children. This organization, whose aim is the development of infrastructure for those in need, was the first to build houses and move families out of temporary shelters and into new homes. For many women, the resettlement was a dream come true, offering a safe place to raise their children and create a life far from Tegucigalpa, which continually ranks as the second-most-violent city in one of the most violent nations in the world (World Bank 2016a; SJP 2014). Soon after construction was finished, the organization moved on to construct more houses in another part of the country.

It was not long until the resettlement, beautiful on the outside, began to encounter serious internal social problems. With rampant crime and an ineffective Honduran police force, Campo Cielo soon found itself under the control of a gang, targeting the impoverished mothers to pay an *impuesto de guerra* (war tax) in order to stay in their homes, or face dreadful consequences. Only with the help of a United Nations special military operation years later was the resettlement finally freed of gang influence. The still-struggling Campo Cielo reveals that resettlement efforts must include more than empty houses for survivors. In addition to infrastructure, what mechanisms and characteristics are necessary to support the development of a resettlement into a healthy community?

Resettlement is an increasingly important component of what scholars are calling the *new normal*. The new normal (in which climate change produces a greater number of increasingly more extreme natural disasters) will compound vulnerability to rising poverty and inequality and the increasing growth of marginal periurban areas (slums), and exacerbate the consequences of ineffective government disaster responses. As I write these words, changing conditions—sea-level rise impacting Pacific Island nations, permafrost melt in Alaska, salinity intrusion in Bangladesh, and refugees fleeing from the Middle East to Europe—are forcing families and nation-states to discuss resettlement options. Yet little is known about successful resettlement and, as the World Bank (2015b) has admitted, it is a continual struggle to do it well.

While volunteering at an orphanage in Honduras (2001–2002), I had the opportunity to visit different resettlements built for survivors of Hurricane Mitch near the capital city, Tegucigalpa. Most of the new residents arrived

from the same affected areas of the city and had similar demographics. The social environments within each of the resettlements, however, were markedly different. In some, people greeted each other by name, worked together on projects, and took care of each other when in need. In others, residents did not trust each other, homicide and theft were ongoing problems, and there was no functioning leadership. If the social aspects of community can be portrayed as a spectrum of strangers to neighbors, the resettlements presented both extremes and everything in between. This experience left a lasting impression. Eight years later, as I was investigating dissertation research topics, the contrasting resettlement development trajectories came to mind. If residents were similar initially, what were the mechanisms that promoted positive long-term social outcomes in certain resettlements and not in others? In other words, what are the conditions that support strangers working together collectively to create a sense of community?

This book is written for a general audience interested in relocation, resettlement, and community development. Besides rich description of the cases, the book offers four insights that may be useful to scholars, policymakers, and nongovernmental organizations involved in long-term resettlement.

DISASTER SURVIVORS ARE OFTEN OVERWHELMED BY THE CHALLENGES OF RESETTLEMENT AND NEED LONG-TERM EXTERNAL GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Before undertaking this project, I did not realize the level of survivor and resettlement-community vulnerability, which hampered survivors' agency to develop functioning institutions and a common community culture in their new home. Many residents are traumatized, impoverished, and isolated from their social networks in the new environment. In the weak state of Honduras, there are threatening external forces—gangs, corrupt government officials, dysfunctional organizations, power-hungry and greedy residents—that may quickly derail the development process. Under ideal conditions, community development is difficult. Nevertheless, survivors are often immediately tasked with, and expected to succeed in, running the resettlement—governing, creating economic opportunities, addressing crime, building and fixing infrastructure, negotiating conflict among individuals and groups, forming a community identity, establishing a community culture, and so forth. This responsibility is often overwhelming, impeding the social development of resettlement toward community.

From the perspective of governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), successful resettlement is often based on infrastructure or economic

measures. What continues to be underexamined is the long-term failure of resettlements from the perspective of residents. Despite billions of dollars poured into resettlement projects globally, they can be worse places to live than temporary shelters due to the social environment. Many policymakers and development workers also believe that if the project is built and paid for, residents will have the agency to create the social environment on their own or with little assistance. This is often not the case, however, and vulnerable survivors likely need significant external support to build a sustainable health community.

IN HETEROGENEOUS RESETTLEMENTS, A HYBRID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SELF-HELP COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH IS MOST EFFECTIVE

This is not the conclusion I expected to find. My knowledge of the community development literature combined with twenty years of working in international development arenas led me to believe that promoting a deliberate and self-directed process that empowered residents would lead to the most successful outcomes. Yet, due to survivor vulnerability and initially weak community political, economic, and social institutions, expecting survivors to build community on their own was unrealistic. My research suggests that external actors, such as sponsoring NGOs, play a critical role in providing technical assistance to survivors in the beginning stages of resettlements. Of the seven resettlements studied, the most successful were those in which organizations intervened heavily in resettlement affairs and supported neophyte institutions early on, decreasing their influence over the course of a decade. The least successful were those in which sponsoring organizations provided little more than infrastructure.

It is not just the amount of support, but the type of approach implemented. Of the many strategy variations I found in Honduras, two stand out in opposition. The first, a hybrid of technical assistance and self-help, what I call *sustain, accompany, guide, and empower* (SAGE) resettlement development, enabled the organization to intervene when social problems arose while also empowering residents and community institutions to work toward a common self-defined vision over an extended period. More concretely, this meant that the organization could utilize its resources to keep gang members or corrupt residents from obtaining a foothold in the resettlement while also providing technical assistance for the creation of a new culture and strong institutions. Once a new culture had gained traction and institutions had a secure foundation, a self-help empowerment model was implemented to decouple the resettlement

from the sponsoring organization. The second strategy is a partnership approach, which is a type of self-help strategy wherein organizations encourage residents to drive the development process and intercede only when requested. The partnership strategy did not offer enough supportive structures to protect residents and neophyte community institutions. On their own, groups of residents had little power to deal with large structural issues (economic development, political disintegration, crime, etc.) and external negative forces, such as gangs and drug dealers. In addition, social problems overwhelmed the weak governing institution, inhibiting leadership efforts to maintain social norms and a common vision, leading to poorer social health outcomes.

SOCIAL HEALTH IS AN IMPORTANT SUPPLEMENTAL MEASURE IN DETERMINING THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF A RESETTLEMENT

Historical recovery and resettlement strategies have often measured success by infrastructure built or economic growth. Recent scholarship and major NGOs have recognized the need for a more robust metric that takes into account the social aspects of relocating disaster survivors and refugees, especially over the long term.

Bridging the disaster and community development literatures to resettlement resident needs, I define resettlement social health as a combination of crime, social capital, collective efficacy, a common vision, and civic participation. Each characteristic provides a different component of community life that is recognized as important to creating a cohesive group with a common identity whose members are willing to work together toward communal goals. These characteristics have also been found to support community resilience when confronted by future natural hazards or social problems. By examining each as a single feature and in combination as potentially self-reinforcing interactions, we can examine the social development of a resettlement in greater depth and secure a clearer picture of the success of resettlement as experienced by residents, complementing previous metrics.

THE INITIAL CULTURE CRAFTED IN A RESETTLEMENT SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPES THE PROCESS AND LONG-TERM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Community culture is a critically important though often overlooked component of resettlement development. Unlike established neighborhoods or communities, a new, heterogeneous resettlement initially lacks a collective culture,

including an absence of agreed-upon social norms and a common vision. It becomes the responsibility of the first residents, often in dialogue with the sponsoring organization, to define, obtain buy-in, and enforce a set of values and norms among many stakeholders—or risk the resettlement fracturing into competing groups. This task is difficult to do well, as various households or small alliances compete for personal or short-term gain rather than the long-term collective good.

This research suggests that the development of a community culture can benefit from significant technical assistance from an external entity, such as a sponsoring NGO. Since it would prove challenging for an individual or small group of residents (let alone a group of vulnerable, unfamiliar disaster survivors) to ensure that a set of norms and common vision are adhered to, an external organization may have the independence, resources, and technical expertise to reconcile disputing groups and safeguard the agreed-upon culture, despite internal conflicts. Path dependence theory describes how the initial culture builds upon itself, gaining momentum and making future changes more difficult to implement. The initial resettlement culture, then, guides the resettlement development and its future social health outcomes for better or worse.

Resettlement is part of the new normal. Similarly, we must move beyond previous definitions and paradigms so that resettled survivors find their circumstances not worse, or even the same, but better. The resettlement process can be transformative, drawing people out of problematic situations and creating an opportune environment to develop into socially healthy, resilient communities. By understanding context and focusing on the quality of the resettlement development process rather than the quantity of houses built, organizations and governments can help create the atmosphere in which strangers can become neighbors.

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