

# **An evaluation of disasters and community resettlement in Mexico**

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An aerial photograph showing a vast, calm body of water, likely a reservoir or a large lake, stretching across the middle ground. In the background, a range of green, forested mountains rises against a pale, overcast sky. The water's surface is mostly still, reflecting the light from above. Some small, dark patches of land or vegetation are visible protruding from the water.

**In Mexico the government intervention on people resettlements, in general terms, are related to development programs and these to some financial organization like the World Bank or the Inter American Development Bank.**

**Most of these relocations seek to move a group of people, generally on a community basis, for example in order to keep them away from the flood area of any dam**





**On the other hand, there is a different type of resettlement that has to do with the recurrence of a disastrous impact, for example a catastrophic flood or a land slide. In this case, the recovering process of the affected population needs avoid reconstruction over the same place and creating housing programs in a different location**



## **Human relocation**

***We define relocation in general terms like a collective action, with or without government intervention, where a number of people associated by community links or not, are forced to abandon their homes to move to a less dangerous place, and the simple action of swapping location its supposed to bring better living conditions or at least to lessen the threats to their wellbeing.***

**Human Relocation has at least three key issues:**

**\* The external intervention roll (government mainly):**

**1) The Intervention Model**

**2) The Resettlement Program**

**\* The meaning for the affected group**

**\* The relationship between the agents that intervene and the affected group:  
inclusive relationship, participating relationship**





**In a field work in the year 2000, we saw some incongruous cases of resettlement related to the floods of 1999 like the one in Tecolutla, Veracruz that the new houses were being build on the area that was flooded on that year**





**We decided to study this matter further and we chose seven study cases: 1, related to the 1998 floods in Chiapas (Milenio III); 3, related to floods on 1999 in Veracruz and Puebla (Arroyo del Maíz, Tecolutla y la Nueva Junta de Arroyo Zarco); 2, related to Isidore Hurricane flood on 2002 in Yucatán (Tigre Grande and El Escondido) and the last one, related to the heavy rain and floods of Stan Hurricane in Chiapas (Vida Mejor III)**



LNJAZ



Arroyo del Maíz



El Escondido



Tigre Grande



Tecolotitlan



Milenio III

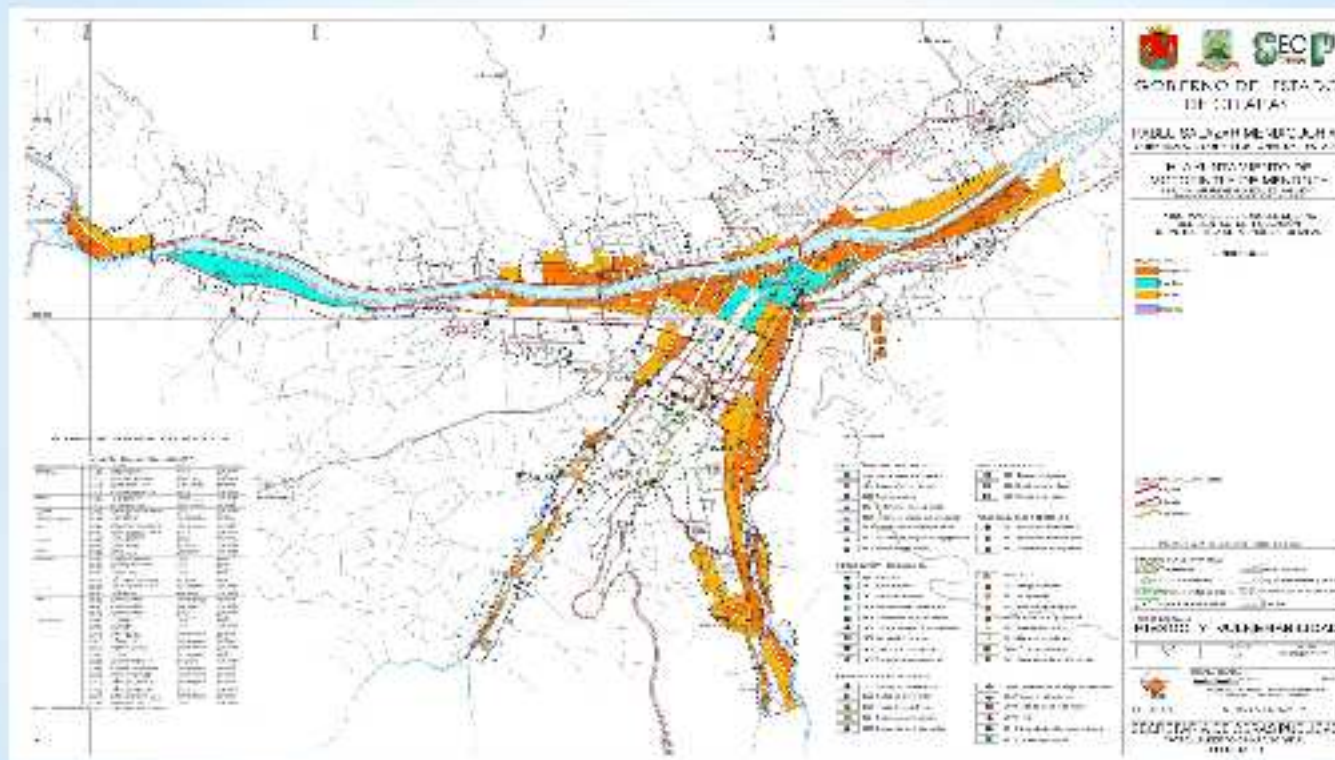


Vida Mejor III





One of the main problems of disasters related relocation that we've examined is that this were done in order to move the people that had suffer destructive effects to a place where they would be safe and not suffer them again. But this decision was taken without the sufficient risk knowledge, nor other evaluation of the environmental dangers.



**Risk means a potential negative change that is represented by a damage condition or the qualities loss that may result towards the inexistence of what has changed.**

**Existentialist philosophers defined risk as the “possibility of not being” . The present operational uses of this concept can be synthesized in two fields: the first one is related to the damage probability and occurrence calculations of a disastrous phenomenon, and the other one is related to a damage measures**



**We can summarize the general problems that were found on the studied resettlement cases as:**

- 1-The public officials related to the relocation process imposed the Relocation Program.**
- 2-They also decided on the new settlement and lifestyle associated to a determined housing design. The conditions of the rural environment differ a lot from the urban ones. The architectural structure of the housing is basically urban. Only four of the seven cases we've studied were associated to urban areas. Others three cases were rural communities.**

*The Intervention Model has the next assumptions:*

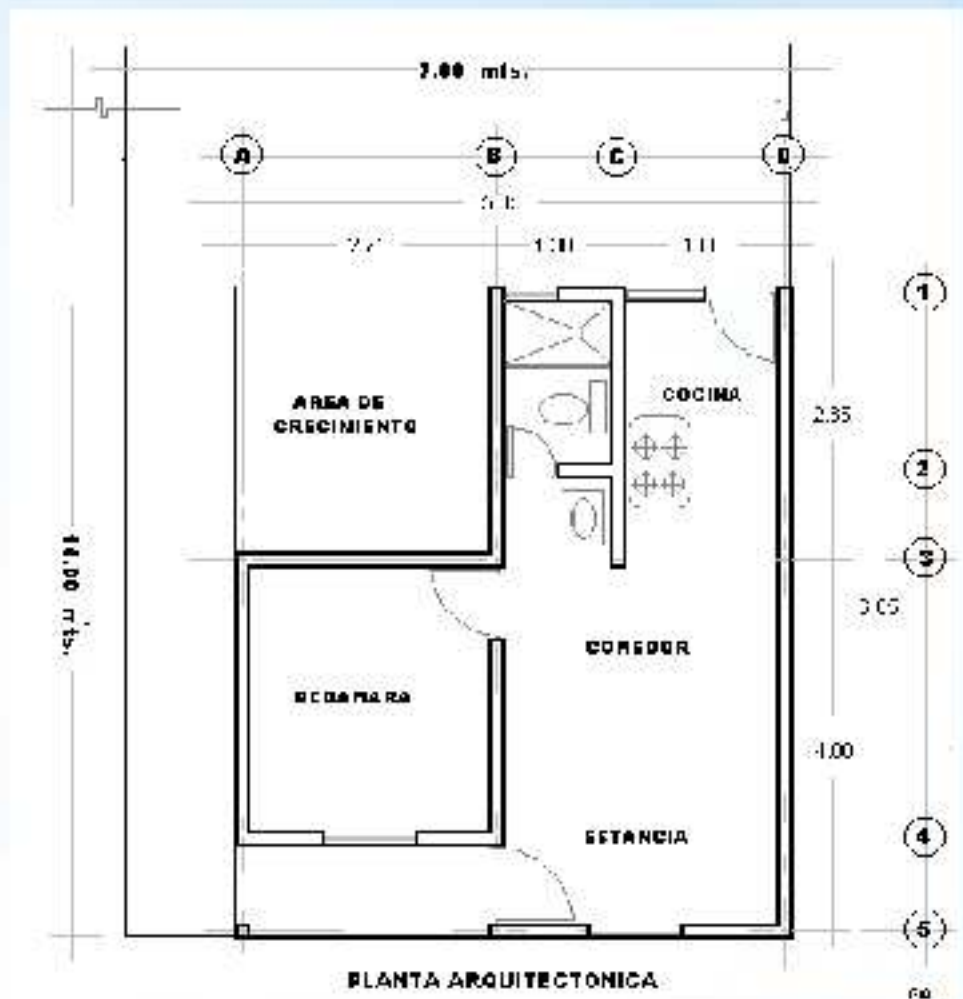
- The disasters recovering phase is assimilated by the Social Development sector of the Federal and State government, and they assume that:

- The disaster represents a need for social control because the affected group loses order.

- That is why the Authority must impose order and that's what determines the recovery ways.

Defines who the victims are.

In terms of population and housing, the relocation program has urban references in some housing State Law (called Ley de Fraccionamientos) . Resettlement Program ignores social needs, because it reduces only to providing housing





## Consequences

- There is a high failure degree on the housing occupancy which corresponds to two problems:
  - a) The time the builders takes to finish the housing, and,
  - b) The time the affected people takes to decide if they will occupy the resettlement housing when they have already had to solve the problem on their own

**Very low efficiency in accomplishment, less than 40% of occupants were original beneficiaries in Relocation Program**

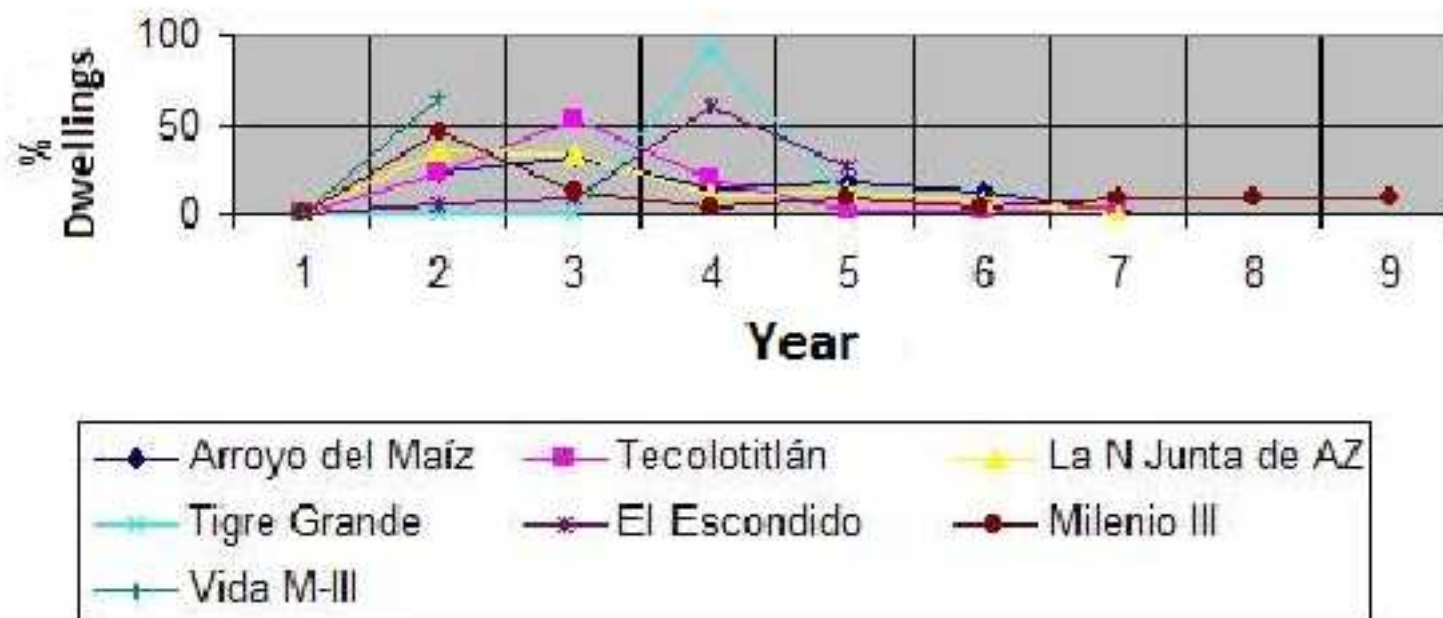


# State of housing occupation

<b>Occupant Category</b>	<b>%</b>
Original Beneficiary	38
Renters	19
Purchasers	16
Unoccupied	27
Totales	100

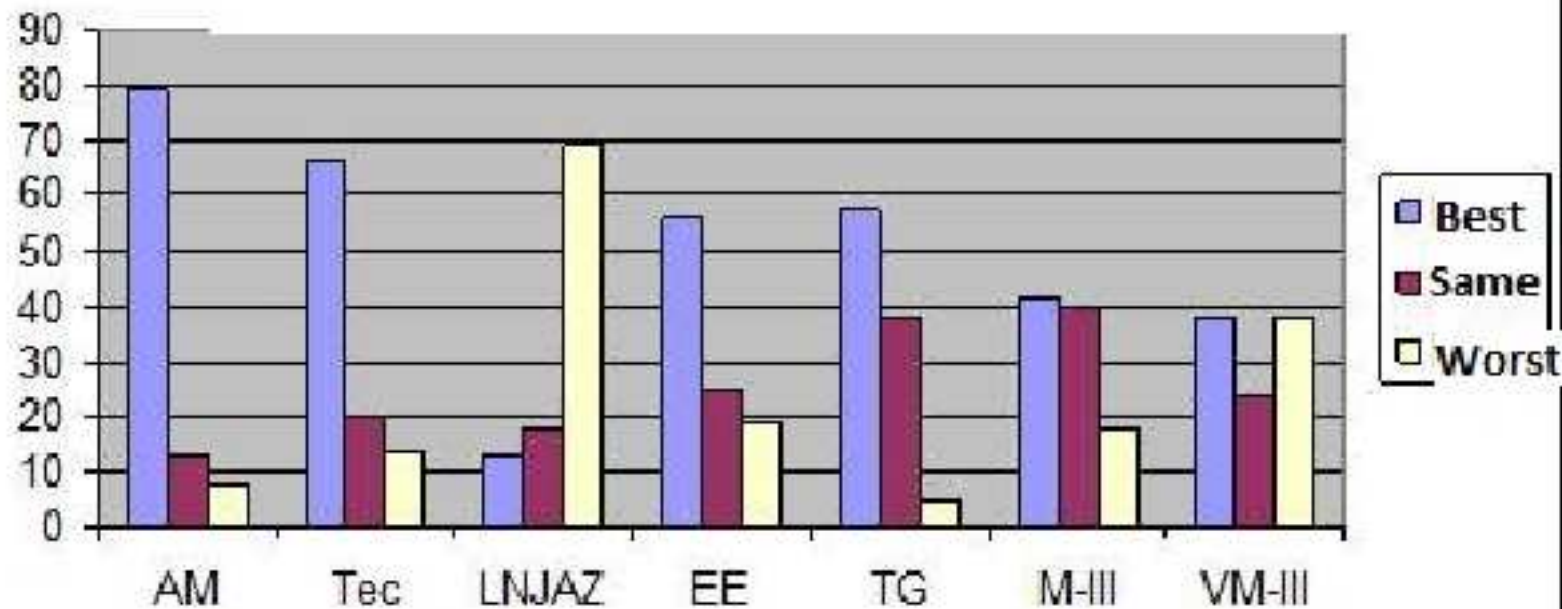


## Occupation of dwellings by year



4 years is the average of important occupation of dwellings. This explains the movements of purchase sale, rent, transfer or invasion of houses

### Perception of improvement of living conditions in Relocation %



**The widespread perception of improvement in living conditions corresponds to the category of occupants: most accessed the House voluntarily. The original beneficiaries are not the main category of occupants**



## **Desiratum or... recommendations**

- 1) There must be a change of assumption about disaster process because it actually means little governance problems and there is a huge demand for social inclusion.**
- 2) A Social Protocol should also be defined in order to design Resettlement Programs that takes care of the social, economic and psychological needs.**
- 3) Government intervention in Mexico related to relocations, at least ought to emulate notions like “officially protected housing”, so that means the use of public funds to provide secure housing according to international standards.**

**We believe that current Mexican conditions, requires having legal order and clarity on land use planning basis and about the responsibilities of three government levels. This is a dark sphere in Mexico.**

**A Disaster Preventing Program involving Resettlement cannot be justified without adopting actions based on territorial order and knowledge and scientific application over risk components.**



**Merci**