




Resettlement Site Selection and Design


A briefing note from SRA


Some Principles


 **Project Life:** Sites should be large enough to accommodate all resettlement envisaged over the life of the project, plus organic growth over time. Sites should also be at no risk of future displacement themselves.


 **Affordability:** Site development, operations and maintenance should be affordable, for both the project and those affected.


 **Handover:** Operations and maintenance responsibilities for public infrastructure and facilities should be handed over to local authorities, as appropriate, over time. Doing so requires close engagement with local authorities from the outset.


 **Social Networks:** Site location and layout should reflect existing social networks, and facilitate the re-creation of existing support systems.


 **Livelihoods:** Sites should enable successful livelihood restoration, through for example provision of lots that are big enough to accommodate current household activities, access to sufficient resources (e.g., agriculture land, forests), as well as employment and commercial opportunities.


 **Flexible:** Sites should be sufficiently flexible to facilitate development and expansion over time, at both the household and community levels.

 **Laws and Standards:** Sites should comply with national laws and regulations, as well as international and company standards. Doing so often has significant implications for building materials and the provision of public infrastructure and facilities.

 **Resiliency:** Site selection and design should consider the risks and opportunities associated with a changing climate, and include measures to make the resettlement community more resilient to related impacts.

 **Security of Tenure:** Sites should ideally provide security of tenure to those being resettled, with some exceptions (e.g., displaced renters).

 **Gender and Vulnerability:** Site selection and layout should consider the needs and concerns of woman and vulnerable peoples.

 **Host Communities:** Site identification and design should consider the needs and opportunities associated with host communities, including for example the possibility of providing / improving shared services (e.g., common water supplies).

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Key Steps in Resettlement Site Selection

- **Identify Any No-Go Areas:** Identify any areas that would not be suitable, due – for example – to the need for safety buffers or likely project expansion areas.
- **Review Statutory Development Plans, as well as National Legislation and Regulations:** Use these documents to understand local and regional development aspirations, and national planning and building requirements for new neighbourhoods or towns.
- **Analyse Existing Baseline Data:** Develop a detailed understanding of project-affected households and communities by analysing baseline data and available aerial / satellite imagery. Prepare a preliminary development profile of the eventual resettlement site(s), including the number and size of plots, buildings and infrastructure.
- **Consider an Appropriate Range of Resettlement Possibilities:** Consider the possibility of providing one site, a number of sites, infill development, and/or standalone housing, depending on project and local circumstances and the wishes of project-affected households. Also consider how many project-affected people may wish to resettle themselves (i.e., through assisted self-resettlement or relocation).
- **Identify and Assess a Long-List of Potential Sites:** Use a broad set of objective evaluation criteria and undertake an initial, discreet, desk-based assessment of potential sites using aerial / satellite imagery. Consider availability of undeveloped land, livelihoods, services, proximity, topography, drainage, land uses, etc.
- **Undertake Discreet Site Visits:** As appropriate and possible, visit potential sites and ground-truth emerging findings ahead of any negotiations/consultations with prospective owners, project-affected people and local authorities, with the objective of minimizing the opportunity for speculative building activities.
- **Develop a Shortlist of Potential Sites:** Prepare a shortlist of potential sites that appear technically appropriate, and bring this forward for negotiation / consultation and agreement with project-affected people, local authorities and ultimately the owners of the sites in questions.
- **Engage with Affected Communities and Households:** With the shortlist in hand, engage intensively with those affected, local authorities and other stakeholders to review technical work to date, validate the short-list, define a process for final site selection, and – over time – decide on a final preferred site(s).
- **Undertake a Detailed Assessment of Prospective Sites:** Use a set of objective evaluation criteria to undertake a more detailed assessment of short-listed sites. Ensure that this is a participatory exercise, informed by relevant technical expertise, and that it thoroughly evaluates the feasibility of site development, including geotechnical stability, the availability of water, etc.
- **Engage with Local Authorities and all Agencies:** Work with local authorities and all other government agencies involved in approval, development, operations and maintenance of new housing developments. Seek early advice, inputs and buy-in, well in advance of formal approval processes, and later handover of infrastructure and facilities.

Note: this Briefing Note will be followed shortly by another on design of resettlement housing and public facilities.

Connect with SRA

If you have a question or comment on this briefing note, or anything related to land access and resettlement, please email us at info@steynreddy.com.

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About Us

SRA helps our clients acquire the land they need – on time and on budget. We work collaboratively with our clients' teams and affected communities to identify, assess and manage displacement impacts in a practical, responsible and sustainable manner.

SRA's experienced team:

- Has managed hundreds of land access and resettlement projects around the world
- Has a track record of realising win-win-win solutions for our clients, communities, and host governments
- Applies international standards and best practices in a pragmatic, innovative and locally appropriate manner
- Is results-oriented and hands on, working largely at project sites with clients and other stakeholders
- Are well recognised thought leaders in the field, co-authoring a well-known guide and publishing a popular Insight Series.