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**Relocate or Stay put: Exploring family mobility choices in
the wake of 2004 tsunami in Laamu atoll, Maldives**

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Abstract

The question of choice is a fundamental issue in the discussion of human mobilities. In the context of natural disaster and resettlement programs, the affected population is reduced to victims devoid of agency, and their movements concluded as passive reactions. However, the post-tsunami mobility behaviour of the families in the Maldives after the devastating 2004 tsunami paints a very different picture. In light of the widespread destruction of entire island settlements, the national government decided to implement a series of donor funded planned relocation programs to move most severely affected communities from their islands to a number of selected islands with better economic opportunities and environmental protection. The response to the program was mixed, with some families exhibiting eagerness to move while others insisted on staying put and rebuilding their home islands. Through a case study of beneficiaries who accepted and rejected Gan Resettlement Program (GRP) implemented in Laamu atoll after the tsunami, I aimed to find out the motivation behind the divided mobility decisions of the families. The findings show the relocating families from Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo saw GRP as an opportunity for moving to a place where they can improve their livelihood and achieve upward mobility. Permanent housing, land tenure, access to the fishing grounds, educational and employment opportunities were among the key drivers underlying their decision to resettle. In contrast, stayers exhibited high degree of attachment to their 'home' island. For them, relocation seemed absolutely unnecessary when they can continue to survive, if not thrive, on the island through continuation of traditional fishing activities, and has unhindered access to nearby islands for basic services lacking on their island. This thesis concludes that in the post-tsunami context families used mobility and non-mobility as a livelihood strategy.

Keywords: Maldives, Tsunami, Planned Relocation, Migration, Livelihoods, Natural Disaster

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DRMC	Disaster Risk Management Center
FRC	Frech Red Cross
GoM	Government of Maldives
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRP	Gan Resettlement Program
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MPND	Ministry of Planning and National Development
NDMC	National Disaster Management Centre NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
PDC	Population and Development Consolidation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WB	World Bank

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1. Introduction

On the morning of 26 December 2004, the Maldives woke up to the worst disaster ever recorded in its history. The tsunami struck the tiny atoll archipelago around 9.20am, flooding all but nine of the 200 inhabited islands and affected nearly a third of the country's 300,000 inhabitants (MPND, 2005). Though the death toll (108) was comparatively low in comparison to other tsunami affected countries, for the Maldives the tsunami resulted in a disaster of national proportion (ibid.). Much of the country's entire physical asset base was destroyed; including people's homes, livelihood assets, social and physical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, clinics, harbours, telecommunication facilities and power houses (ibid). Entire island settlements were devastated, forcing 13 islands to be temporarily evacuated and left over 15,000 people displaced (ibid.). Tourism and fisheries, which are the main economic industries, were also badly hit with the total damages across all sectors estimated to be reaching a whopping 62 percent of the country's GDP (World Bank, ADB and UN, 2005).

The tsunami emerged as a wake up call, exposing the sheer vulnerability of the island communities and national economy to natural disasters and other impacts of climate change and sea level rise (MPND, 2007). As the recovery and reconstruction began, one of the most pressing challenges was related to the rehousing of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and restoring life and livelihoods on small islands where damage to homes and public infrastructure was most significant. Instead of rebuilding the worst hit islands, the Government of Maldives (GoM) decided to push forward with its pre-existing population consolidation policy, which aimed to relocate communities living on scattered remote islands into a fewer larger islands with stronger environmental protection, higher standard of social services, physical infrastructure and employment opportunities than what communities are used to have on smaller islands (Shaig, 2008; MPND, 2005; World Bank, ADB and UN, 2005).

It was not just in the Maldives that relocation schemes were initiated, but also in other countries affected by the tsunami including Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India. Planned Relocation is increasingly adopted by national and local state actors as a strategy to respond

to displacement of people caused by disasters, and also as a means to reduce future risks of disasters by moving people away from vulnerable areas (UNHCR, 2014; Ferris, 2015). The movement of individuals and communities under such macro managed relocation schemes can be either forced or voluntary to varying degrees, depending on the context (ibid.).

In the Maldives, the post-tsunami resettlement plans were carried out more voluntarily and on a demand driven basis (MPND, 2005; Shaig, 2008). Media reports from the time indicated several families from most severely affected remote islands were requesting help in relocating, while other families on the same islands wanted government support to support with rebuilding homes and livelihoods in place. In order to encourage all the community to relocate en masse from islands that were most severely affected, the GoM in collaboration with international donor agencies, designed a relocation action plan that, among other things, included provision of land plots, free housing units, compensation, and access to other social and economic services on the selected host islands for the relocating community (MPND, 2005).

However, in light of the divided attitudes of families within the island communities regarding relocation, the authorities ultimately decided to leave the decision to accept or reject relocation up to individual families (ibid.). As a result, on some islands, a number of families chose to move as a whole and today lives on host islands, whereas other families stayed put on their island to rebuild.

1.1 Research Question and Aim

In this paper, I conceptualise the phenomenon of whole family relocation and staying put as a choice of the families, and attempt to uncover the reasons behind the two different patterns of post-disaster mobility behavior. The empirical material of this research is collected from Laamu atoll (also known as Hadhunmathee) of the Maldives, where government initiated a donor funded voluntary relocation program to resettle the entire community of two severely hit islands Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo to a third island called Gan, situated within the same atoll group. At the time, Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo each hosted a community of about 500 people. All registered islands on both islands were offered the opportunity to resettle on Gan.

By conducting semi-structured interviews with the families that have

permanently relocated and those who did not move in relation to Gan Resettlement Program (GRP), I aimed to find out what were the underlying drivers behind the family motivation to relocate or stay put in place to rebuild in the post tsunami context. I combined the concept of migration as a household livelihood strategy and push-pull framework with wider post-disaster mobilities literature to understand the empirical material. The overall research question that guided my research has been:

Why families were motivated to resettle or stay put in place to rebuild in relation in post-tsunami context?

1.2 Research Purpose and Significance

This research intersects within three different strands of research; planned relocation, migration and livelihood. A substantial amount of research shows that disaster related displacement and migration is likely to increase due to increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters associated with climate change and the slow-onset environmental changes such as sea level rise and droughts (UNHCR, 2015). Today more than ever, there is more attention given to understand the relationship between environment and human mobility. However, little is known of the phenomenon of planned relocation necessitated by disaster induced displacement. Despite the numerous risks it entails, effective planned relocation is regarded as one of the most useful approaches in disaster risk reduction, especially when the original location is judged to be uninhabitable or at risk of future disasters. This research is significant because the low lying dispersed island setting of the Maldives makes it one of the most vulnerable countries to disasters, and other impacts of climate change. From media to academia, Maldives is often portrayed as a posterchild for the risks of climate induced displacement and forced migration. Such doomsday scenarios have diverted attention from the adaptation and mitigation strategies atoll nations can or is already undertaking to build resilience of communities. This research aims to fill a gap in existing literature by contributing knowledge on one such planned relocation program implemented in the Maldives as part of disaster recovery and adaptation strategy from the perspective of the affected population.

For the planned relocations to yield successful results, it is important that all beneficiaries participate in the program. However, little is known of the reasons why beneficiaries chose to participate or reject voluntary relocation programs. To my knowledge, no research has been undertaken in Maldives to understand what factors contributed to divided decisions of families in relation to post-disaster relocation. Knowing the contextual drivers underlying family's decision to stay in place or move can help to improve the management of future relocation programs necessitated by disasters and environmental change on the Maldives islands.

Furthermore, this research will help us to build a more contextualised understanding of post-disaster mobility behaviour of families in the Maldives. A range of studies have tried to explain the phenomenon of mobilities across different time and space scales in diverse contexts. This research will show that even in a critical situation like disaster, families consciously use mobility and non-mobility as a coping and recovery strategy.

1.3 Limitations and Scope

This study is conducted as a single case study approach. The empirical material collected concerns to the beneficiaries of GRP. I interviewed the household heads of Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo families currently occupying the permanent housing on Gan. Simultaneously, I spoke with the heads of families who rejected the program and continues to live on Mundoo. All the families from Kalhaidhoo had relocated as a whole, thus abandoning the island completely. Therefore, stayers perspectives are only from Mundoo. Although there are two origin islands from where people moved, I do not compare and contrast the findings between the two islands. I analysed transcripts of relocating families from both islands to draw general themes behind their relocation decision. This is because the origin islands shared more or less the same geographical, demographic and socio-economic profile, and all families were relocating to same destination. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to explore why one island became entirely abandoned and other did not given the similar contextual setting. However, that was beyond the scope of this research. Since this is a single case study, the findings cannot be generalized as well. However, understanding the family mobility and non-mobility choice in this particular context can show some patterns which can

be compared with other cases to draw more general conclusions. I also think that use of mixed method would have improved the credibility of findings, but I chose to rely only on qualitative data collection and analysis technique to grasp a more nuanced understanding of the situation from the people's perspectives.

2. CONCEPTS AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Natural Disasters

In this paper, I use the conceptualisation of disasters as defined by the United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN-ISDR): "A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources" (UN-ISDR, 2004:17). There is a popular construction of natural disasters as "acts of God" or something determined by fate in which no one is can be held accountable. In the early years, disasters were studied within its geo-physical domain, separate from a wider social-universe. However, a more human-centered conceptualization of disasters – including vulnerabilities, resiliencies and risks - resulted in a radical shift from focusing on the event itself, to the more wider socio-economic processes that determines the scale and severity of hazard and disasters. At the forefront of this new scholarship on disaster was Hewitt, who explored the relationship between the natural events and the pre-existing structures and social conditions, rather than focusing on the event itself. Hewitt (1983) states that most of the natural disasters can be explained better in terms of the "normal" order of things, that is, the conditions of inequalities and sub-ordination in the societal settings rather than the accidental geophysical features of a place. This view transferred the focus away from the disaster event itself and towards the "on-going societal and man-environment relations that prefigure [disaster]" (Hewitt, 1983: 24-27).

Disasters are often characterised by the crisis that results from the disruption of socio- economic activities, environmental degradation, loss of physical infrastructure and natural resources, injury and deaths. This paper is looking at the 2004 tsunami disaster and how the disaster played out demographically, in particular relating to the situation of migration out of affected areas in the Maldives islands.

2.2 Migration and Natural Disaster

Ronald Skeldon (2002: 1) defines migration as “all forms of human population movement”. These movements are then divided into a list of subgroups, depending on the context: for example international or internal, permanent or temporary, circular, seasonal, labour migration, voluntary or involuntary (ibid.). One of the pervasive categorisation of migration is that of forced and voluntary. Population movements in the context of natural disasters is often studies as forced migration. The disaster forced migration is used to refer to a set of demographic movements including flight, evacuation, displacement or resettlement which has both economic and social dimensions (Oliver-Smith, 2005; Locke et al., 2000). In this paper, I am discussing the post-disaster mobility pattern of whole family relocation and staying put in relation to a resettlement or planned relocation program. It is important to clarify that I do not conceptualise the movements as forced in this study context. Rather, I accept Hugo’s (1996) description of migration due to environmental change as occurring on a voluntary-forced continuum. In the strictest sense, forced implies there is no way for a person to escape from the movement (ibid.); and his/her ability to stay-in-place is entirely taken away through coercive force (Muggah, 2003).

In the context of GRP, all the families from both affected islands in question were given the choice to either accept or reject relocation assistance; hence the choice to stay remained intact. The findings show that families actually deliberately decided to stay put in the affected areas while others relocated.

Departing from the view of relocation/staying put as deliberate choice of families, I use wider mobilities literature on causes of migration to understand reasons behind the two different behavioral patterns.

2.3 Planned Relocation

In this paper, I use the definition of planned relocation and resettlement as defined by UNHCR in the context of climate change and natural disaster¹. UNHCR defines planned relocation as “a solutions oriented measure, involving the State, in which a community (as distinct from an individual/ household) is physically moved to another location and resettled there.” (UNHCR, 2014: 10) Resettlement is then defined as a component of the planned relocation process, which refers to the “the process of enabling

persons to establish themselves permanently in a new location, with access to habitable housing, resources and services, measures to restore/recover assets, livelihoods, land, and living standards, and to enjoy rights in a non-discriminatory manner.” (ibid.)

I use planned relocation and resettlement interchangeably to refer to the GRP which aimed to resettle entire community of Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo on Gan. Furthermore, I use the term relocation to refer to the phenomenon of whole family migration to Gan. I call the interviewed respondents that migrated from Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo as M.Relocatee and K.Relocatee, respectively. Those who stayed in place to rebuild are called stayers. All stayer respondents are from Mundoo, since all the families had relocated out of Kalhaidhoo. As stated above, movements of people within a planned relocation process can be either forced or voluntary depending on the context. In my review of literature on post-disaster mobilities and resettlement programs, I found a very few papers that focused on explaining what motivates beneficiaries to participate or reject the a voluntary relocation program This is primarily because resettlement schemes are primarily understood as forced migration, in which the affected individual, family or community is seen as having no choice over their movement.

Likewise, most of the studies on resettlement is focused on exploring the negative effects of impoverishment and vulnerability resettlement can have on resettled population due to a number of reasons; including loss of land and shelter, loss of livelihood assets and employment, cultural alienation and disruption of social support networks (Cernea, 1997). Due to the high degree of risks planned relocation entails, academics often emphasise that relocation must be regarded as a measure of last resort and all in situ adjustments must be considered unless the community propose it as the preferred strategy. This view is also echoed by UNHCR in the context of disaster or environment related planned relocations.

2.4 Livelihood Strategy

In this paper, I primarily conceptualise the decision to stay put and relocation as a household livelihood strategy. To understand what I mean by household livelihood strategy, it is important to clarify the definition of livelihood. In this paper, I refer to livelihood as conceptualised by Ellis (2000: 10): “A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical,

¹ The definition of resettlement can vary depending on the context. In the field of development, resettlement is used to refer to forced movement of people for infrastructure projects. Humanitarians use resettlement to refer to the process of rehousing and integrating refugees

human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household”.

As such, a livelihood strategy then refers to the strategic choice of a single or combination of activities the households and their members use to maintain, improve and secure their livelihood (Ellis, 2000; Mc Dowell and de Haan, 1997).

From a livelihoods perspective, migration is increasingly seen as one of the main strategies that households adopt to diversify, maintain, secure, and improve their long term livelihood outcomes (Ellis, 2000; Mc Dowell and de Haan, 1997). The livelihood outcomes includes material dimensions like gaining more sustainable source of income, and non material aspects like improved self esteem, greater sense of control and inclusion, physical security, good health, access to social services, and reduced vulnerability to shocks. In other words, migration is recognised as a means to achieve a broad range of assets which can in turn build the resilience of individuals and families against future shocks and stresses (de Haan et al., 2000:30).

A situation of disaster can result in damage to people’s homes, livelihood assets, activities and create sense of increased insecurity. Migration has always been a traditional survival and coping strategy used by communities faced with the prospect, impact or aftermath of disasters (Hugo, 1996). With regards to displacement in Sumatra after the Boxing Day tsunami, Gray et al. (2009: 29) stated: “The results indicate that post-tsunami mobility can be best understood as a coping mechanism that is, at least in part, voluntary. Individuals did not [necessarily] flee to the nearest safe haven and remain there, but instead drew on all of their resources and moved to a preferred destination ... This process was distinct from mobility in undamaged areas and differs from mobility as described by previous studies of migration in non-disaster contexts.”

Rather than packing and fleeing, Gray et al. (2009) posits that people were relocating to areas where they felt safe, or have access to resources that their origin environment cannot provide. Often, the receiving location tends to be close to the origin, and people have had some previous attachment to or movement within.

Furthermore, the empirical work of Belcher and Bates (1983) on Guatemalan earthquake also revealed that one of the key responses to the disaster was the relocation out of affected areas motivated by the need to find shelter or assistance, search for employment and send home remittance. The same study also concluded that people sought opportunity to live with friends and family in unaffected areas.

Migrating in pursuit of material and nonmaterial opportunities is not a new idea. In the context of post disaster movements, people who exhibit opportunistic mobility has been labelled as 'proactive' or 'innovative' movers (Morrow-Jones & Morrow-Jones, 1991; Dickinson, 2013). It is said that innovative movers attempt to change their household circumstances by moving rather than attempting to reestablish the status-quo - which is defined as 'conservative' (Morrow-Jones and Morrow-Jones, 1991). However, whether or not people can use migration depends on access to assets such as skills, savings, networks and intermediating institutional arrangements. On this subject, Kothari (2003) writes that poor families may be excluded from adopting migration as a livelihood strategy due to the lack of capital to make the move. She also notes that in some cases, migration can lead to further impoverishment and staying can help people to move out of poverty (ibid.).

In his research on post-tsunami forced relocation of fishing communities in Chennai India, Raju (2013) found that communities exhibited strong resistance as the new site was far away from their origin and to the sea (natural capital), essential to their livelihood. "The debates on relocation have shown that changes in physical capital (in this case, housing) can cause serious disruption in social capital (networks), distancing the community from their natural capital (the coastline), which may have an impact on their livelihood. The community must consider proximity to the coast and the design of their housing, and the connection between the two, in order to be able to make decisions that [positively] affect their livelihood. (Raju, 2013: 6)

Raju's findings were particularly relevant for my research as both Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo communities that I researched were predominantly fishing based communities. Though the empirical material of my study shows a different scenario with regards to mobility behaviour of affected population.

Additionally, some post-disaster mobility literature has highlighted that migration is not necessarily driven by opportunistic pursuits, but is also derived from the extent to which natural disasters and subsequent policies allows households to become mobile as fixed resources (houses, jobs, investments) are either lost or regathered. For example, Dickinson (2013), writing about Christchurch Victorian Bush-Fire Buyback Scheme in Australia, said that eligible landowners could have their plot purchased by the government. Binder et al. (2013) also observed that Home-buyout programs implemented after Hurricane Sandy in New York, facilitate out-migration from affected areas. However, whether or not people participate in these schemes depends on a number of factors; including degree of trust, the extent to which people feel they are engaged in the decision-making process, fairness of the compensation, locational amenities, support systems and etc.

2.5 Push-Pull Framework

In addition to the livelihood strategy, I also use perspectives from the most widely used Push-Pull model, underlying individual rational choice and spatial inequalities. The model conceptualises migration as outcome of diverse set of social, economic, political and environmental push and pull factors present in both origin and destination (King, 2012). Some of the push factors can be poverty, unemployment, landlessness, overpopulation, political repression, low social status etc. and pull factors range from better income and job prospects, better education, healthcare, social welfare system, access to land for shelter and farming, good environmental and living conditions, political freedom etc (ibid.).

Most of the early works on disaster related migration has been studied within the framework of push-pull (Dickinson, 2013). In such work, it is argued that people from affected areas are pushed to migrate when the disaster results in destruction of homes, livelihood assets, environmental degradation, and loss physical infrastructure etc. However, the push-pull model has received much criticism for being economically deterministic, ahistorical and methodologically individualistic (King, 2012). Simultaneously, the historical-structuralist school of thought challenges the rational utility maximization argument, arguing that migration is a symptom of uneven development that forces rural populations to move to cities to work in industries – which in turn is seen as perpetuating the regional inequalities and poverty (Castles et al., 2014). However, in the context of this research, as explained in chapter 3, the destination and origin islands were both located within rural areas and no

industries existed in the location. In contrast, fishing and agriculture were the predominant activity on destination (Gan). Hence, I do not use a structuralist interpretation.

More contemporary works of migration has highlighted that the decision to move is taken as larger social unit, mainly household and the ultimate decision on who moves, when and how long is determined by interplay of various social relations and structural factors. I use Lee's (1996) version of Push-Pull model, which conceptualizes movements as an outcome push-pull factors operating at origin and destination. Lee further posits that there are also a number of intervening obstacles that influence the flow of movements; such obstacles include the physical distance, financial cost of making the journey, cultural barriers such as language and unfamiliar lifestyle, and government restrictions. He also asserts that personal factors affect the decision to move or not such as economic status, life-stage and personality. For example, he states that an unmarried young adult would be more concerned about job prospects, whereas a family with children will place high emphasis on education. My findings in fact show that families were motivated to move because the destination provided better education for their children.

The push-pull model also has close parallels with Wolpert's Stress Threshold Model, which attempts to explore why people move after a disaster from an environmental perspective. In 1996, Wolpert proposed that the movements occur as an adjustment to environmental 'stressors' such as pollution, crime, congestion (Fredrickson et al., 1980). These stressors can be considered as non-economic push factors. The model suggests that an event like disaster can increase the stressors beyond the threshold of tolerance and bring about strain, which in turn may lead to considerations of relocation due to diminished residential satisfaction (Fredrickson et al., 1980). This model also comes very close to the premise of locational characteristics (physical amenities and disamenities) outlined by Spear in 1974. It is commonly asserted that scale of housing damage caused by disasters tips the threshold, and causes people to move temporarily and permanently.

For example, after their research on Hurricane Katrina, Myers, Slack & Singelmann (2008) concluded that the affected people who were pushed to move out of their home communities appears to be those who have experienced most damage to homes and infrastructure. In Gray et al's (2009) findings on 2004 tsunami mobility patterns and Chang's (2010) findings on Kobe earthquake in 1995, both researchers also concluded that the extent

of housing damage was related to displacement and out-migration from affected areas. However, the causal relationship between disaster damage and mobility has not gone uncontested. Belcher and Bates (1983) study on Hurricane David in Dominican Republic found no consistency between the willingness to move away and scale of damage. Furthermore, Cutter (2011), also concluded that people who did not suffer any damage and people who suffered damages, seemed to have migrated at similar proportion after Hurricane Katrina.

This is particularly relevant to this research because I found that families that had lost homes and did not lose their homes chose to relocate out of their origin islands after the tsunami, as well as stay in place – thus showing the housing damages is not a clear cut causal factor in post disaster mobility choice.

2.6 Identity and Security

The conventional wisdom on migration posits that people always move to areas that are relatively better relative to the origin in material and non-material aspects; including access to land, housing, jobs, social services, clean and hazard-free environment and etc. According to Kok (2006), there is an over-representation of mover's values or aspirations in classical migration scholarship. As such, he argues that one needs to look at security and identity as key concepts in understanding the motivation to move or not move. I use both these concepts as defined by Kok in analysing my empirical material.

He defines identity as the migrant's conception of self and feeling of belonging. He argues that people may be attracted to a place based on who they think there are. This is not dissimilar to the premise of place attachment. When the interaction between people and their environment (place) is deep and prolonged, people tend to define who they are by taking into account the spatial setting (Ryden, 1993). As an example, Kok suggests that if the movers families have a history in particular place going back to several generations, it adds to the attraction of the place. He refers to research findings on how some people prefer living where their ancestors are buried or at least being able to expect to be buried with them. He adds that for people exhibiting such attachments, the idea of moving can be unfathomable.

Sense of belonging or identity can also motivate people to move (Kok, 2006). He suggests that migrants may move to areas where people speak same language and culture. From a livelihood perspective, this can be conceptualized as cultural and social capital.

Likewise, in my findings, I found that several relocatees noted they were motivated to move because they had social networks of friends and relatives and ancestors who came from Gan.

According to Oliver-Smith (1982), people appear to resist relocation when it threatens their cultural and social identity, which is strongly defined by place. On the other hand, people are less likely to resist relocation when they are not forced and can be close to their previous residence. These suggestion seem to be true in my research context. Gan was an island located within the same atoll group and had long history of social relations with the origin islands which will be elaborated in the empirical discussion.

In defining concept of security, Kok refers to Gidden's theory of ontological security, underlying the human need to maintain routines for feeling secure. Since migration implies a break in the familiar environment and routined livelihood practices, he argues that people prioritise staying over moving. However, in the context of a disaster, damage to homes, physical and social infrastructure and disruption of livelihoods causes increased ontological insecurity. As such, moving - temporarily and permanently - to a new place with pre-existing attachments and support systems can be inferred as a coping strategy used by people to rebuild lost sense of security through recreating the environment and reestablishing old routines.

3. Context and Case

In this section I present a brief overview of the Maldives, the specific islands where the data was collected from and introduction to the GRP. This information will help the reader to have a better understanding of the next two chapters on methodological approach and empirical analysis.

3.1 Maldives

The Maldives is a small atoll archipelago in the Indian Ocean made up of nearly 1200 tiny coral islands grouped into 26 natural atolls, stretching a distance of 860 kilometers from north to south (MPND, 2007). Shaig (2008) observes that the total land area of the Maldives is a contested issue, and the most often cited figure is 300km², making land a scarce resource in the country. All the islands lie barely a meter above sea level, causing extreme environmental vulnerability to natural disasters and sea level rise associated to

climate change (ibid.). The country's unique geographical setting has incredible influence over the social, demographic, economic and political composition of the country.

The population of Maldives is about 350,000 and is unevenly distributed across 195 islands, of which only 28 are larger than a square kilometer (MPND, 2006). As commonly seen in other small atoll states, Maldives has only a single urban center which is the capital Malé, which is about 2km² in land area and hosts nearly one third of the population, making it one of the most densely populated capital cities in the world (Shaig, 2008; MPND 2007; Fulu, 2007; Luetz, 2013). In contrast, rest of the outer islands are sparsely populated, with 60 of the inhabited islands having a community of less than 1000 people (ibid.). The rapid influx of people from outer islands to Malé is attributed to the wide disparities between Malé and all other outer islands in terms of income, employment and social services such as education and healthcare (MPND, 2007; Luetz, 2013).

The country has made remarkable progress in human development and achieved universal goals of poverty reduction, health and education. Abject poverty is not widely prevalent on the islands, and as of 2014 only four percent people were estimated to be living below the national poverty line of Rf22 (\$1.5). In comparison, 40 percent of the population lived below the poverty line in 1997. With a per capita income of \$5973, the Maldives has the highest per capita income in the south asia region. Despite remarkable increase in national income over the past decades on the back of tourish and fisheries industries, the country suffers from wide income inequalities between Malé and other atolls.

While tourism contributes to two third of national income, fishing, smallscale agriculture and micor businesses plays an integral role in the livelihoods of the small communities on the outer islands (UNDP, 2011). The lack of large scale manufacturing or agricultural industries is associated with the lack of fertile land and natural resource base in the country. As a consequence, like most other small island developing states, the people of the Maldives are entirely reliant on imported staple food, fuel and other basic necessities (MPND, 2007; Shaig, 2008; MPND 2007).

The employment opportunities are available mainly on the tourist resort islands² that are separate from inhabited islands, and in the public administration or civil service sector. Since Malé is the center of all political, trading and financial activities, this attracts educated young people to move to Malé to look for formal employment in the public and private sector. Others migrate to resort islands for work. Both fishing and tourism are male dominated industries, while women primarily engage in home-based income generating activities such as fish cooking and also salaried work in civil service positions like teachers, nurses and office clerks (Fulu 2007; UNDP 2011). Lack of adequate employment opportunities on the outer islands is a major problem, in particular for women, as there are only few government paid positions and fish catch is exclusively done by males. Furthermore, social taboo prevents girls from going to resorts for work, thus leaving very few employment opportunities for women (Fulu, 2007; UNDP 2011; Luetz, 2013). Even though women are relatively economically active, they are also the primary care providers, and thus expected to balance both work and house chores (Fulu, 2007). Additionally, due to the high divorce rate and out-migration of males to work on resorts, other islands or fishing boats, large number of women act as household heads (Fulu, 2007).

Despite being scattered, the entire population is bonded by the same language, ethnicity and religion (Fulu, 2007). Everyone on all the islands speak the same language Dhivehi, and is required by the law to be a Muslim (ibid.). Islam is omnipresent on the Maldives, and thus has a significant influence on the country's culture, and its people's way of life and values (ibid.). The most important social unit in the communities is the family and it is also the primary welfare provider. Several related families live in same household in an extended family system. While living on rent is a norm in congested capital Malé, the outer islands exhibit a complete different housing situation. Under traditional land law system, it is a birth right of each citizen to have access to land plot on the island where they are permanently registered³. There is almost no social housing or real estate on the these islands, and families therefore have to use personal resources to build their houses on their allotted plots of land. For the poor families, this is can be an extreme financial burden. As all the land

² About 100 islands are developed exclusively as luxury tourist resorts under 'one island, one resort model'. No local community or settlement exist on these islands.

³ Maldives practices permanent household registration system in maintaining national population database. The registered island of a person determines where he/she has the right to land plot and voting constituency. It has no bearing on person's access to services as in Chinese Houko system. Since land allocation under traditional system is halted due to scarcity of land, the only significance of permanent registration is concerned with elections and voting.

is owned by the state, residential plots or land for any other purposes is allocated by the government with the deed or permanent tenureship.

The Maldivian society is very centralized and hierarchical (Fulu, 2007). At the time of the tsunami, the governance structure of the country was divided into three tiers: national government, atoll and island. Malé is the seat of presidential office, and all national ministries, which control all decision-making related to national development. The inhabited islands were grouped into 20 administrative atoll divisions⁴, headed by an Atoll chief (*Atholhuveriyaa*) appointed by the national government. Below the atoll tier, the inhabited island communities are overseen by centrally appointed island chief (*Katheeb*).

The highly centralised system of governance set the scene for the post-tsunami reconstruction efforts, in which all policy decisions on the DRM were taken by the national ministries on Malé, and international agencies had to take permission and collaborate via the national ministries and Disaster Risk Management Center (DRMC)⁵ to provide assistance to the remote island communities. Since the tsunami however, the country has undergone a rapid political transformation⁶, which among other things included the end of the local chiefdom system, and the establishment of elected local councils at both the island- and atoll-level.

3.2 Planned Relocation in the Maldives context



Photo of abandoned Kalhaidhoo island taken by author during fieldwork

In the past, several islands have been abandoned temporarily and permanently as a result of spontaneous and planned relocations. According to Shaig (2008), the early relocations were triggered by epidemics, hunger, spiritual beliefs, and natural hazards such as storms. He described that the first government sanctioned relocation dates back to 1970s, when an executive order was issued to depopulate all

⁴ Equivalent to that of province or state boundaries

⁵ DRMC was established after the tsunami.

⁶ In the wake of tsunami, series of democratic reforms were started that culminated into end of 30 year old autocratic rule of Former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (1978-2008) and ratification of new constitution which for the first time allowed freedom of press, assembly, multiparty elections and separation of judiciary, executive and legislature – which was before controlled by the president.

islands that does not have 50 adult men – the minimum number required for Muslim Friday prayer congregation. Shaig argues that this is less to do with religion, and more so an attempt by then-government to consolidate administration. When the 50 men rule was abolished in late 1970s, several islands were repopulated as the people returned to their former islands. One of the abandoned, and repopulated islands in the 1970s was Kalhaidhoo investigated in this study.

Perhaps, what comes close to the premise of planned relocation, as defined in this paper started in 1980s, was the movement of communities from the tiny islands that suffered environmental problems such as severe coastal erosion, water salinity and storms (Shareef, 2005; Shaig 2008). The government provided housing and livelihood restoration support on the host island for relocated families. These relocations were, however, undertaken more on a reactive basis, and without proper planning and funding.

In late 1990s, planned relocation gained increased prominence with the introduction of Population and Development Consolidation Strategy (PDC) as a regional development policy. At the time, the government stated that the attempts to provide equitable services to all atolls have failed due to high unit costs of providing services to small and dispersed island setting. As such, the PDC strategy proposed to “consolidate populations to economically viable sizes on the larger islands with potential for physical expansion and economic growth” (MPND, 2007: 27). In simple terms, the PDC aimed to create a number of focus islands with higher standard of services. This reflects how the government perceived migration and resettlement as a catalyst for development and modernization.

The strategy proposed three modes of consolidation; 1. Physically joining islands on the same reef through reclamation, or link by causeway, 2. Implementation of ferry services linking clusters of small islands and 3. Collective relocation of small populations on remote and tiny islands to other islands with better infrastructure, social services and expansion potential (MPND, 2007: 27-28). According to the policy, the planned relocations would be implemented voluntarily, and would only be “facilitated when the whole community formally lodges the decision to move”. The “explicit agreement and co-operation between the relocating community and potential host community” is stated as a prerequisite. (ibid.: 27). To motivate families to relocate, the government proposed to provide each relocating family a house for an occupied house on the previous island, and Rf 50,000 (US\$

3,900) as relocation compensation.

At the time tsunami hit the islands, 17 islands had reportedly lodged petitions for collective relocation to islands with better services. In the aftermath of tsunami, the government decided to accelerate the PDC policy and use the framework to encourage the most devastated islands to relocate to larger islands. This time justified more on environmental grounds than economic. The host islands were labelled as ‘safer islands’ and the government policy involved not only resettlement, but also providing enhanced mitigation to the host islands to make these locations more resilient. The relocation of Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo investigated in this study was justified under the PDC program.

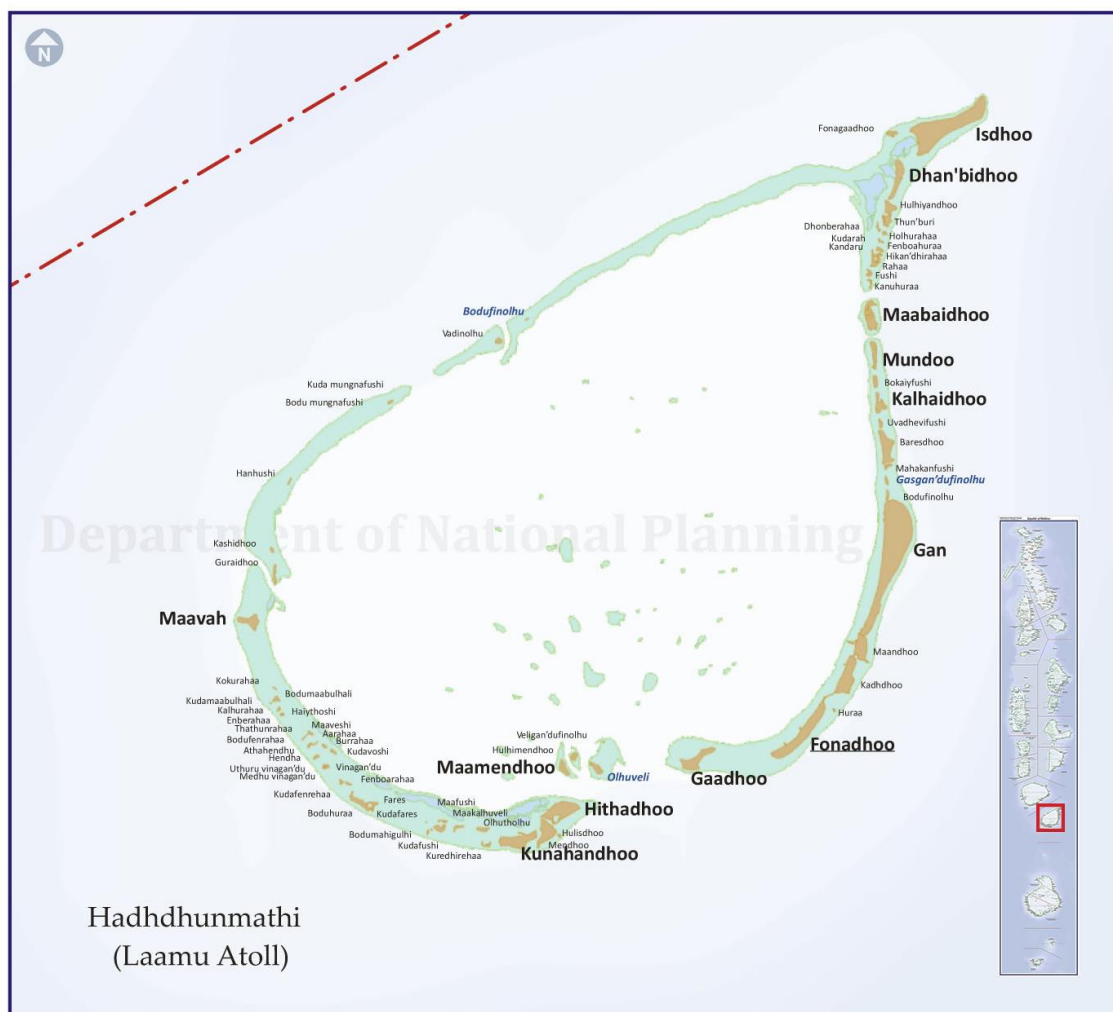
While there has been no intensive research conducted into the post-tsunami relocation process and mobility decisions of families, some authors have criticized the events for being politically motivated (Kothari, 2014), and disguising capitalist agendas (Klein, 2005). For example, in her bestselling book *Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein compared the post-tsunami relocation program in Maldives to disaster capitalism complex⁷. She claims that fishing communities were being forced out of their ancestral islands to make way for development of tourist resort islands. This, however, is nothing short of a sweeping generalization disconnected from the complex contextual reality on the islands. In fact, at the time of writing this paper, three of the islands abandoned by means of en masse relocation after the tsunami remains unoccupied, 10 years after the disaster.

The empirical discussion will show that families were social agents, deliberately seeking to improve their livelihoods by moving out of remote islands. People were not simply being moved by forces beyond their control, but were moving themselves, while effectively negotiating the terms of relocation and overcoming structural barriers. As for those who did not want to move, they were not forced out, and had the right to continue living on their home islands, as seen on Mundoo in this particular case.

⁷ Klein (2005) describes Disaster Capitalism Complex as the phenomenon of companies profiting from disasters, predominantly through accumulation of land of affected communities. While some cases (e.g. forced relocation coastal populations in Sri Lanka in the wake of tsunami) may come close to the premise of this argument, such concepts cannot be empirically generalized across all contexts.

3.3 Gan, Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo (Laamu atoll)

Laamu Atoll Map



Map of Laamu Atoll accessed from National Bureau of Statistics webpage <http://planning.gov.mv/atlas/>

This study is set in the Laamu atoll, one of the administrative divisions of the country consisting of total 73 islands, of which 11 are inhabited⁸. This study concerns, Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo, from where people moved, and Gan, the host island for the relocating families. The atoll is characterized as rural, and consists a population of about 12,000 relying mainly on fishing and agriculture for income. Other employment opportunities in the atoll include jobs on the resort island, a fish processing factory, and government paid positions in public administration and social service institutions. Nearly half of the population of the atoll is concentrated on the Gan and Fonadhoo, which is the atoll capital. These two

⁸ In 2004, Laamu had 12 inhabited islands (marked in bold in the map). Entire population of Kalhaidhoo relocated to Gan by end of 2010, hence now only 11 islands have settlements. The smallest settlement is on Gaadhoo, with about 150 inhabitants. Rest of the islands are uninhabited, although one individual island is home to one the most luxurious resort.

islands are connected by causeways and bridges, with two inhabited islands in-between (see map below). Kadhoo is the site of regional airport and Maandhoo is an agricultural island. These four islands together make up the second largest group of connected islands in the country, with a combined land area of 9.4km². When I discuss the physical and social infrastructure on Gan, I am also including the facilities that is present on the adjoined islands, as it is accessible by road to residents. Gan is the largest natural island in the Maldives, with a land area of about 5km². Given the abundance of land, Gan, along with the adjoining island has been identified under PDC strategy as focus area for regional development. Gan has a population of over 3500 people divided into three villages: *Mathimaradhoo*, *Thundee*, and *Mukurimagu*. The relocates are hosted in Thundee ward. The economy of Gan is primarily driven by fishing, fish processing, and agriculture⁹. A significant number of people are also employed by the government in the civil service sector. Residents of Gan also have access to employment opportunities at the airport and fish processing plant located in the connected islands. Gan is also home to the public hospital of the atoll, and provides the highest standard of education in the region. Therefore, even before the tsunami, people from smaller islands migrated to Gan for to access the island's social services. Since 2011, guesthouse tourism has also started on the island, opening up more potential for tapping into the growing local tourism industry. Although large scale manufacturing industry or business is not present on Gan, some family run micro-businesses exists including retail shops, construction, transport and tailoring.

In comparison, Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo are less than a square kilometer in land area, and are both isolated and not adjoined to other islands. Both islands are located about 10 kilometers from Gan, and accessible via a boat within half an hour. At the time of tsunami, Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo each hosted a subsistence community of about 500-600 people. Families primarily relied on fishing as a main livelihood activity. Few government paid positions were present on each island providing employment in the island administration office and other institutions. However, due to the absence of basic social services, the residents from both islands had to travel to Gan or Fonadhoo frequently even before the tsunami.

⁹ Agriculture on the island is seasonal and the crops consists of variety of vegetables and fruits (e.g. chilli, tomato, cucumber, taro, pumpkin, eggplant, breadfruit, cassava and green leaves, banana, water melon, mango, papaya and coconuts. (UNDP, 2009).

During the tsunami, about a 6-7 feet tall wave surged over the islands, damaging people's homes, livelihood assets, physical and social infrastructure. Nearly 10 people died from both islands. Entire community of both Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo evacuated to Gan on the day of tsunami. A large number of the houses on both islands were completely destroyed and rendered nearly 300 people homeless. Displaced islanders were provided temporary shelter inside two disused garment factories on Gan. Gan escaped the tsunami without any severe damages. Other families who had their own or relatives houses intact, moved back to the island. Local media at the time reported that several of the affected families in the atoll wanted to resettle on Gan, while others wanted to rebuild on their islands.

3.4 Gan Resettlement Program (GRP)

The focus of this study is GRP, which involved the resettlement of Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo community on Gan. The program was managed by French Red Cross (FRC). The program was funded through an estimated 17 million dollar tsunami aid funding from FRC. Although the housing construction and management of the resettlement was primarily done by FRC, the DRMC and national ministries took all policy level decisions regarding the project such as host site selection, setting beneficiary criteria and etc. This part presents information about the program that is collected from interviews with expert from FRC and MPND.

An area of 0.3km² was allocated on Gan Thundee ward for establishing a separate settlement for the relocatees from Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo (UNDP, 2009). In addition to the housing and infrastructure for the relocated population, the program also included upgrading of existing social services and infrastructure on the host island to alleviate pressure that could arise from population increase. Below is a brief overview of the major infrastructure and restoration initiatives undertaken within the GRP:

- Construction of 240 houses, each consisting three bedrooms, one bathroom and a kitchen. The first 80 houses were built on land plots measuring 371m², and the rest were built on land plots of 279m²
- Upgrading of the Gan Regional Hospital
- Installation of sewage system in settlement area
- Expansion of Gan's electrical grid
- Construction of roads in settlement area
- Construction of a community center

- Construction of a sports center
- Construction of preschool and one primary school building

Participation in the GRP was left entirely voluntary and up to the families. In September 2005, government opened application for the affected families from Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo to request for relocation. All registered residents who were living on the island prior to the tsunami were eligible beneficiaries. The program mandated relocating families to relinquish all property and land rights on their previous location, in return for ownership of permanent housing and the land plot on Gan. Relocating families were also permanently registered on Gan address, effectively giving all civic rights similar to that of natives. For families that were more than 11 members and had three married couples were eligible to receive two houses. In addition to the housing and infrastructure services, the GRP program also included compensation for coconut palms, timber and fruit bearing trees that relocatees owned on their previous island.

The first physical movement of the families occurred in 2007 after the completion of first 80 houses. Rest of the houses were completed and people moved in phases between 2008-2009. Houses were awarded based on ‘lottery system’. By end of 2010, all families from Kalhaidhoo had relocated, hence abandoning the island completely. The island was later awarded to the national defense forces for training activities. From Mundoo, nearly half the community moved, and rest stayed put. See the table 1 below for change in population due the relocation.

Table 1: Change in population of islands

Island Name	Population Size			
	Year 1997	Year 2004	Year 2006	Year 2014
Mundoo	580	550	372	236
Kalhaidhoo	567	433	434	0
Gan	1831	2346	2502	3543

(Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Maldives)

Nine houses were constructed by FRC on Mundoo for the stayer families, less than the estimated number of damaged homes that needed reconstruction. Rest of the families on Mundoo were allocated cash to rebuild their homes. Media reports from the time reported

major conflicts between stayers and movers on the islands. In one incident, FRC workers were also held captive on Mundoo, by stayers who were dissatisfied and angry about the delay in tsunami housing reconstruction assistance to the island (Shockwaves in Maldives, 2007). Some conflicts also emerged during the housing reconstruction phase between natives of Gan and the project managers due to public resource allocation. In one incident the local community of Gan protested and halted the construction process, demanding that the planned sewage system should be installed for the whole island rather than only in the relocatees settlement area.

4. Methodology

4.1 Case Study Design

This study aims to explore the reasons behind family decision to resettle or stay in place to rebuild in the post-tsunami context in relation to voluntary relocation program. The empirical case selected for this study is the GRP implemented in Laamu atoll. The rationale for selecting a single case study approach is because it allows me to conduct a detailed contextual analysis of the phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Using qualitative single case study approach allowed me to use multiple data sources and different data collection techniques to ensure that the families' decision-making process is thoroughly investigated and understood from a variety of lenses (Yin, 2003).

Lack of generalizability is a common criticism towards case study approach. This thesis is not making any attempts to claim the experience of relocated families in this case and other cases are same. Rather, it shows a holistic understanding of drivers that shaped family mobility behavior in this particular context. I'm hoping that the findings will indicate what might be visible in other cases of post-disaster planned relocation in small island settings – which can be verified through further investigation.

4.2 Location of the fieldwork and Access

I arrived in Maldives on January 2015 and travelled to the islands of Gan and Mundoo, situated in Laamu atoll. The empirical data was collected from Gan and Mundoo, as Kalhaidhoo is now uninhabited. The physical access to both islands, and connecting with the Mundoo families who rejected relocation, and the relocated families occupying permanent

houses on Gan was not a challenge for me given my background as a Maldivian national. I had pre-existing knowledge of the language, geography, and cultural norms. I also relied on my personal network of friends and former colleagues. After I arrived on Gan island, I stayed with a native family from Gan that I came to know through one of my contacts. The host family on Gan helped me in transportation to Mundoo, and also provided useful background information on the islands history and societal setting. I relied on my understanding of the local language and culture, to approach the families without any impediments or need for a gatekeeper. This form of direct contact with respondents without a gate-keeper, prevented an elite bias that may emerge in sampling procedure (Bryman, 2008).

4.3 Qualitative Methods

Semi-structured interview with household heads:

To understand divided decisions of families it was important for me to gain perspectives from families that relocated and stayed put. I conducted semi-structured interview with 11 household heads of relocated families currently occupying the permanent housing built by FRC on Gan. Six of these families were from Kalhaidhoo and five were from Mundoo. Of the 11 respondents, four were females. As mentioned earlier, in Maldives it's not unusual to find females as household heads due to high divorce rate and outmigration of males. Interestingly, even when men were present, they asked their wives to talk to me and sat close, observing and adding things that their wife may have missed. On Mundoo, I talked with six household heads, of whom only two were females. Even though, I primarily spoke with the head of the household, other family members who were present in the room always joined in the discussion sharing their views and experiences. Hence, I was able to get a grasp of diverse voices from within each house. Although I imagined myself as conducting semi-structured interview, the communication between me and the respondents turned into a conversation and life history narration. Though this was time consuming, I was able to get deep insights into the feelings and perceptions of families (See Appendix 1 and 2 for interview guide)

In selecting the interviewees, a convenience sample worked well because both islands are very small, giving me easy access to the dwellings of relocatees and stayers. Since I speak the same language and understand the norms, I was able directly visit people's homes.

On Gan, relocatees live in a separate neighbourhood making their houses easily identifiable. I walked around the whole neighbourhood, and entered houses located far from each other thus allowing some degree of randomness in sampling. To a reader this sort of house visits may sound intrusive, but in the context of close-knit small communities, a local to visit other's homes and starting a conversation is a common part of daily life. I preferred the intimate setting of home relative to a focus group discussion as the nature of the interview touched on a traumatic experience of the people. I found it is important for interviewed persons to have the privacy and comfort of their home while speaking about the tsunami and their mobility decision in the wake of tsunami.

Ethnographic Observations:

I also relied on ethnographic observations to get a deeper understand of the social relations within the community and how people interacted with their environment. To understand how a place can motivate people to move in or move out, understanding the context of interpersonal relations and interactions with the place is important. I regulated my observations by focusing mainly on how people interacted with each other within the community and how relied on the physical and material environment in daily lives.

Unstructured interviews with experts:

I interviewed Former Minister of Planning and National Development Mr.Hamdun Hameed (Expert Intw. MPND) and Former FRC coordinator on Gan, Mr.Xavier Chanraud (Expert Intw. FRC) to get background information about the management of GRP. These interviews are not used in the empirical analysis, but provided substantial amount of information to set the context of the case in chapter 3. I had face to face conversation with Mr. Hamdun and talked with Mr. Chanraud from FRC over skype as he was at the time based in Philippines. Since I did not have clear prior questions set for these interviews and relied more on the information they had to share, I have not included interview guide for each of these interviews. In Appendix 3, the reader can find the common topic guide I used to for the 'conversations' with the two experts. It must be noted that they were purposefully selected because of their direct involvement in the policymaking and management of GRP.

News articles and official reports:

In my research, I also used secondary sources including media reports relevant to the research question, and published governmental and non-governmental reports on the impacts of tsunami and reconstruction process.

4.4 Insider/Outsider Reflections and Ethical Considerations

Sharing the same nationality, ethnicity and language with the interview participants helped me to understand family narratives about their life of on the islands and relocation decision-making. No language barriers hampered our conversations, and I understood non-verbal cues and other local references used by the people. I found my insider status to be useful in navigating the field environment, identifying interview participants and communicating with people. While the islanders on Gan and Mundoo recognised me as an 'insider', my background as a university student and being from a different island gave me a certain degree of 'outsider' status. Interestingly, some community members also commented on my age and gender. For many, to see a young female living abroad and travelling alone to the islands was strange concept. But neither was my age and gender a hindrance the interview process with male or female participants. To further gain trust of the families and community leaders and motivate them to participate in my research, I explained the objectives of the research and ensured full anonymity at request.

4.5 Data Analysis

During the fieldwork process, I took intensive field notes and recorded the interviews when possible. The recorded interviews were translated and transcribed during and after the fieldwork process. After the transcribing, I used open coding technique to identify the themes relevant to my research aim which was set forth as identifying the motivation behind the mobility behavior of staying put and relocation. I primarily conceptualized the decision as a livelihood strategy which means people were moving or staying in order to secure and improve their situation of both material (income, housing, employment) and non-material well-being (sense of belonging, resilience, security). I used an eclectic conceptual framework consisting of perspectives on livelihood, push-pull framework and wider mobilities literature on post disaster context to draw themes on motivation for relocation and motivation for staying put.

5. Empirical Analysis

The analysis of interviews with families provided important insights into their post-tsunami relocation decision making process. The objective of this study is to identify the drivers underlying the decision of families to participate in the resettlement program and other families choice to stay put in place. The first part of the analysis explains the motivating factors behind relocation, followed by a discussion of drivers behind families decision to stay put.

5.1 Motivations behind relocation

5.1.1 Adequacy of the host site

One of the critical determinants of success in a resettlement program is the adequacy of the host site. Movement of people to improper sites can disrupt their livelihoods and as a result cause further impoverishment and hardship. Within the context of this research, I found that a major reason behind families' motivation to resettle was connected to their perception of host site as a better location to secure and improve their livelihood, in comparison to their origin islands. In particular, there were four major place-based factors that attracted people to resettle on Gan; 1. Beyond Fishing: Diverse Income Opportunities, 2. Access to social services, 3. Existence of social networks and 4. Safety.

Beyond Fishing: Diverse Income Opportunities

All the Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo relocated families that I interviewed mentioned that their livelihoods on the previous island prior to the tsunami were predominantly dependent on fishing. They reported that fishing did not provide a sufficient, and stable source of income for the entire family. Based on the interviews, I found that these fishing-based families' incomes can drop significantly from one day to the next depending on the fish catch, creating an environment of uncertainty and insecurity for the families. Some female respondents said that they cooked fish, and grew fruits and vegetables in home gardens on their former islands for consumption and income, but it was not sufficient to cover the expenses of their families. They also noted the poor soil fertility and scarcity of land made it impossible to scale up the agricultural activities.

Since families have to buy all their staple food, clothes and other durables, income insecurity puts them in a very vulnerable state. Respondents noted that no wage labour existed on the small islands, except for a few government paid positions, which some claimed were controlled by one or two influential families. Essentially, the absence of non-fishing work on the island made it impossible for other members of the family to alleviate the state of dependency and poverty. The impact of tsunami further compounded the vulnerability of these families.

In the families' explanations of their post-tsunami relocation motives, I found that they were actively seeking to diversify their livelihoods and minimise income insecurity by relocating to Gan. The interview data indicated that whole families relocated to Gan, because they were hopeful to find work not just for the male breadwinners, but opportunities for more members of the family on the host island, thereby increasing their income security. They did not want to rebuild a situation of vulnerability from depending only on the Malés sporadic fishing earnings.

The household heads, and males in particular, said they were able to continue their existing occupation of fishing on the host island as they had unhindered access to the sea: One relocatee puts it this way:

“It doesn't matter which island you live on as long as you have the ocean around you... I went fishing on that island, and on this island I am going fishing too. There is no change.” (K. Relocatee, 5)

Just as agricultural land is an essential natural capital for farming families, the sea is an important livelihood asset for fishing families. Hence, relocatees were extremely motivated by the fact they can have unhindered access to the sea. In his research, Raju (2013) concluded that Chennai's tsunami affected fishing communities resisted relocation as they were being moved away from the coast. However in the context of the GRP, I find that the accessibility to sea and availability of work on Gan fishing boats was major driver behind relocation of families.

Female respondents told me they were promised agricultural land plots on Gan, which motivated them to move. Additionally, when the household heads were comparing the income and job opportunities on their former island and Gan, it was very apparent that the decision to relocate included concern, not just for themselves, but also for the job opportunities for their children. A former fisherman who came to Gan with his family made the following comments when asked to clarify his motives to resettle;

“On a small island like that what can we do? Most people go fishing. There is no land for agriculture. Sometimes we get something from selling coconuts and timber. From this work we don’t get enough. Few people on the island take the civil service jobs. We lived in very difficult conditions there. Our family struggled to manage with what little I earned from going fishing. I came to Gan because I knew I can someday start my own business here and my children can find government jobs.. Insha Allah, today our family is doing better.” (M. Relocatee, Intw. 4)

Another relocatee also referred to the diverse opportunities:

“In this atoll, this is the island with the biggest land area and the most job opportunities. Even before people come here to work in agriculture and government offices, airport, police station and schools. When all the services and jobs in this atoll are located here there is no point in living on a small island.” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 9)

Within the existing literature, livelihood diversification is referred to as a situation where one or more members of the family move out of their origin, not primarily to maximise income, but to spread the income risks with the money remitted back home. The addition of an extra source of income (i.e. remittances) is said to improve the livelihoods of farming households and reduce fluctuations in their income by making them less vulnerable to climate vagaries such as environmental hazards such as droughts and floods. (Castles et al., 2014: 38-39).

Since Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo families relocated as a whole, there is no relevance of remittance income within this context. However, I still argue that whole family relocation was a livelihood diversification strategy, since families gave high importance to have access to diverse income stream on Gan; including fishing, agricultural work, micro businesses and

government jobs. This can be interpreted as a strategy of families to minimise risks and acquire insurance against the fluctuations in fishing-based income and enable investments to expand their livelihood assets.

Furthermore, there is also other social factors in play. I found that families gave utmost importance to sticking together and living on the same island. They shared negative perception towards members of the family, especially girls, migrating to tourist resorts and the capital Malé for work, even though the wages were higher there. They preferred to move to Gan, because they believed relocation would allow their children to find work on the island, and enable them to stay together as a family. Therefore, the relocation decisions can be understood as proactive and deliberate household strategy undertaken to diversify and secure their livelihoods instead of reactive and passive response to the disaster crisis.

Access to Social Services

Material gains such as income is recognised as the primary reason why people move. However, in the context of this research, I found that families placed high value on accessing social services, in particular education. Education and skills are fundamental elements of the human capital required to sustain and improve livelihoods.

Several respondents noted that they wanted to resettle because Gan provided much better educational opportunities for their children in comparison to their former islands. At the time of the tsunami, both Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo islands only provided free public schooling up to grade 7, whereas Gan's schools provided schooling up to grade 10. No hospital existed on these islands either, forcing people to travel to nearest hospital on Gan for any medical emergencies.

In his findings on climate migration on Maldives, Luetz also notes the importance of education aspirations underlying their decision to migrate: "Again it needs to be reiterated that while climate change looms large as a future threat with a significant potential to affect future migrations, present-day migrations are primarily influenced by aspirational pursuits, especially education" (Luetz, 2013: 258)

I believe that the families' rank education highly as they view it as a catalyst for attaining upward mobility. Most of the families that relocated to Gan were reliant on fishing and agriculture at the time. In the context of rapid economic transformation towards a tourism-driven economy and service sector jobs, fishing and agriculture is regarded as unattractive occupations and associated with lower social status. The household heads or parents recognised that by moving to Gan, they could give proper education to their children so they could in return find formal employment with higher wages.

Respondents noted that before the tsunami, they had to frequently travel between their home islands and Gan to access services. For many, this travel between their origin island and Gan was a hassle, and financial burden.

“To study, to give birth, or to even get an ID card we have to get on a boat and come here... Transportation is also huge expense. There are no services on the [former] island. I knew that only by moving to bigger island could we provide a better life our children. Here [Gan] we have the hospital, airport, police, schools and jobs.” – (M. Relocatee, Intw. 7).

As part of the resettlement program, FRC built a preschool, a primary school and upgraded the regional hospital on Gan. Many relocatees recognised these infrastructure investments as positive developments. Although some respondent observed that the quality of these social institutions were still poor compared to the capital Malé, they had hoped Gan had better potential for expansion of quality services in the future.

“Gan is biggest island in this atoll. If more people start living here we can have more progress here than on the smaller islands.” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 5)

Existence of Social Networks

A livelihoods framework does not only consider the material aspects, like physical capital and skills, but also includes non-materialistic realities of emotions, orientations and attitudes which have a bearing on the survival and meaning of life for families and communities. Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo relocatees described that Gan was not an unfamiliar place, and that they felt a sense of belonging. Both island communities are ethnically similar;

and speak the same language and follow Islam. Research has shown that such cultural identities are important as people move towards locations where they can feel attachments to the community and culture. Not having any cultural ties can instil fear of alienation, and thus discourage people from moving.

Some respondents expressed attachments to Gan based on shared atoll identity; living on islands of same atoll group. I found strong evidence to support Kok's assertion about how people are attracted to places where they feel a sense of belonging. When asked if moving to Gan was a problem, one participant commented:

"We are all Laamu atoll people even though we live on different islands... It was sad to leave my home island. But it makes me happy to live in my atoll." (K. Relocatee, Intw. 10)

On Maldives, inter-island ties are strongly visible within atoll groups, forged as a result of frequent exchange of goods, travels and marriages. Several respondents stated they had a network of close friends and relatives on Gan prior to the tsunami. Two of the interviewees from Kalhaidhoo said one of their grandparents came from Gan. For these families, having the opportunity to move close to their relatives and friends living on Gan was important. Such social networks are not only a major pull factor, but can also facilitate inward movement to their own places of residence by supporting the migrant's adjustment to the new location; e.g. job search, material support, encouragement, provision of new social ties (Haug, 2008: 589). From a livelihoods perspective, these networks are crucial components of social assets that families can rely on to secure their livelihoods.

I mentioned in the conceptual framework that studies have shown that communities resist relocation when it threatens their cultural and social identity, which is strongly defined by place (Oliver-Smith, 1982). From this perspective, it is clear that in the context of the GRP, families did not fear losing family, friends and the community as they knew it. Rather the familiarity, and presence of relatives on Gan acted as magnet.

Interviewed relocatees described how, after the displacement to Gan, they received crucial support from their friends, relatives and the community. Several people temporarily stayed in the homes of Gan residents after the evacuation, and received food, shelter and clothes from them. This reception from the local community in the aftermath of the tsunami

was recognised by many relocatees as a motivation to move to the island. They felt strong sense of connection, which removed fears of alienation and discrimination that could have been an impediment to migration.

“Not long after I moved here I got work on Gan person’s fishing boat.” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 5)

“When I came here, my cousins and other people I know gave me lot of support. They visited me in the camp and checked on my children and me frequently. They asked me to come and stay in their house... But I didn’t want to be too much of a burden. They asked me not to go back to the island, since there were no services and development. They helped my children to register in school here. I will not be living here if I didn't have any relatives”. (M. Relocatee, Intw. 9)

On the other hand, some relocatees in particular from Mundoo also described how they were discriminated against and verbally harassed on their former islands. Respondents said that some family clans controlled everything on the former island, and subordinated other members. For those who felt subordinated, moving to Gan was a way to escape the social control on their former island. However, to go deeper into the roots of these unequal community power structures was beyond the scope of this research, but the findings support the notion that weak social capital pushes people out of areas.

“For my family the tsunami was a blessing. It was an opportunity for us to escape from the discrimination and harassment on Mundoo. Some families of Mundoo want to keep other people in their fist. They control everything on the island and anyone who says something against them gets harassed. All the jobs on the island were given to children of these powerful families too... Over there, the big person always benefits while poor person becomes weaker.” (M.Relocatee, Intw. 3).

Livelihoods is not just about the material aspects, but also the psychological well-being of the family. To be accepted and empowered, is an essential part of security. Interviews with relocatees show that they imagined a better life - both in terms of income and social status on the new island.

Safety

Relocatees also mentioned that after the tsunami they feared living on their former islands. Some relocatees noted that they were motivated to relocate to Gan because the ‘experts’ told them that Gan was a safer island against tsunamis and wave surges. To live in a hazard free environment is a desire of many families, especially after experiencing severe losses.

“The government and the FRC said that small islands are not safe to live on... they said move to Gan, it is much safer to live there... They are the experts, they will know these things better, isn’t it?.. Gan did not get affected by the tsunami as much as other [smaller] islands.”
(K. Relocatee, Intw. 8)

Other relocatees also observed the problem of severe beach erosion and wave surges on their former island. According to them, they felt safer on Gan as it was a much larger island, and their new homes were built at a safe distance from the sea.

5.1.2 Housing, Tenure Security and Compensation



Some of the new houses built for relocated community on Gan. Photo taken by author

One of the most important elements of physical asset required for human wellbeing is a home (Ellis, 2000). It provides individuals and families with protection, a sense of security and a place to work and live. The donor funded reconstruction of the resettlers’ houses on

Gan was crucial to the reestablishment of islanders’ livelihoods. According to several families, their decision to move was dependent on the provision of free housing and land rights on Gan. The following comments illustrate how the relocated families from Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo described the importance of housing to their decision-making process.

“My house on the island was very badly damaged. So I came to Gan with my children and moved to the factory camp. They said if the tsunami-affected families want to stay on Gan, the government will build free housing and support with relocation. My biggest worry was housing. Where will I go with my children? I said to the officials if they give me a house on Gan I have no problem to move here.” (M. Relocatee, Intw. 2)

“My house was completely destroyed on the former island. The Government said that all relocatees will get free housing and land on Gan. That’s why I moved.” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 5)

Respondents also noted that their homes on the former islands were built by themselves on the land that they owned. Therefore, when deciding to move to Gan, they considered whether or not they could have similar rights. Under the relocation program, families were provided completed housing unit, and the land deed to the plot. The permanent registration of all members of the relocating families were also changed to their new home address on Gan. For the families, this was an important motivating factor as it provided them with the legal rights or eligibility to request for further land plots on the island under the traditional land law system. One relocatee even commented that without housing and land registration, he would not have moved:

“After the tsunami I lived on my island but when they finished constructing the houses I moved here with my family in 2008. I always wanted to move out of my island. It is very difficult to live on a small island like that when there are no job opportunities or facilities. But I didn’t move because if we do, then we will have to go and live on rent somewhere. We don’t have that kind of money. I moved here only because government gave me a free house, and land registration” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 8).

Some people also mentioned how they perceived the new housing provided on Gan to be of better quality to their previous dwelling both in terms of construction material, and in-house facilities. One relocatee noted that her house on the origin island was very old and deteriorated, and that she was happy to relocate because the government promised a house with modern facilities including water, electricity, and sewage system.

As noted in the conceptual framework, there has been several studies that have

concluded that the scale of housing damage can be a major push or strain that forces people out of the disaster areas. Nonetheless, this research also confirmed that families who did not lose their homes in fact relocated. For instance, majority of the Kalhaidhoo population continued to live on their island after the tsunami, until permanent houses were built on Gan.

It is important to note that for the poor fishing families on outer islands, building a house is an extremely expensive endeavour. No social housing exists on those islands. Even though they have access to land via the traditional system, they often lack the financial resources to build a house. Therefore, the promise of new housing, especially for those families who had lost their homes, was an important motivating factor behind relocation.

Relocated families also mentioned that they were promised a sum of Rf 50,000 (approx. 3900 USD) as relocation allowance, which further motivated them to move. However, they noted that the money was never distributed, creating some degree of reluctance on the part of families to move. Although I found that the lack of compensation was not a primary reason behind the Mundoo families rejection of relocation.

5.1.3 Information and Voluntariness

One of the major themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews with the community members is the importance of choice. All families that I interviewed, including 11 relocating families and 6 families which stayed put, explained that their decision was taken entirely voluntarily. All relocated respondents said they experienced no force or received any threats to relocate. For the relocatees, the voluntary nature of the program built a positive image towards the program and increased their trust in the management.

“Me or my family did not face any force. I came here because I wanted a better life for my family... The government officials said they will help us to relocate. From the day of tsunami I wanted to come and live on Gan. I could not have moved if FRC had not built us the house and helped us move.” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 5)

It is assumed that people move to a new location when they perceive it to be comparatively better than the origin. An underlying assumption therefore is that the migrant has perfect information about the context of both places to make a choice. If a person or

family does not know about the benefits of living in the new place, they are less likely to migrate. In the context of the Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo relocation, I found that all relocated families were well aware of the opportunities, resources and also the constraints on Gan. They gained this information through frequent travels to Gan, and also from relatives and friends. Many of them recognised that the place had better employment and public services that can help to improve their families' well being. Additionally, families also told me that they were motivated to move after speaking with officials from the government and FRC about the terms of the relocation program.

Many of them noted that they received proper information about the housing, tenure, island registration, compensation and other conditions of the resettlement to make a decision. Although there was communication between the relocation managers and the community, none of them stated that they took part in the decision making process of the relocation program. The management of the relocation program was extremely top-down, with little participation of the affected community. Nevertheless, no families complained about the lack of participation and rather they demonstrated high reliance on the top actors to 'help them'. Some family members noted that they were able to communicate complaints and recommendations to the FRC workers on Gan and the DRMC. The following comments echoes the trust most relocatees placed in the organisers.

“They decided everything. We just watched. If we didn't like something we told them. Some people complained about the size of land plot, poor construction material contractors were using, design of the house and other things.. delays in constructing the houses was also huge problem, especially for those families living in factory camp. But otherwise, FRC was very good in managing everything. I can say most relocating families didn't have a problem with relocation.” (M. Relocatee, Intw. 2).

According to some studies, people tend to resist relocation when it is forced and the host site is far away from the origin. In this context, however, the voluntariness and the close proximity to origins motivated families to move.

5.1.4 Whole Family and Collective Community Movement

For several families, being able to move collectively as a family was extremely important. Furthermore, respondents also noted that the movement of other close families, neighbours and friends was also a key determinant in their choice to relocate.

“I decided to move because most of the people from my island were moving here [Gan]... all my relatives now live here. When so many people are leaving, it is not the same to live on the island” (K. Relocatee, Intw. 5)



Some women of the relocated community playing local game Bashi in community sports area on Gan. Photo taken by author

In describing their lives of the former islands, several respondents shared stories of how they relied on kins and neighbours for help. Some told me they shared food, and other household amenities with each other. Furthermore, the families spent time together, playing sports and enjoying other entertainment activities.

These stories symbolised a strong kinship system that existed on the islands prior to

the tsunami.

Therefore, for the relocating families, the policy of whole family, and collective community relocation was a preferable option to the families since it would not disrupt their preexisting social support systems after the move.

The government’s motive to relocate the entire communities and consolidate the population on Gan was driven by its fiscal goal to avoid long term expenditures and climate adaptation. But, at the family level, people preferred to move collectively to preserve the kinship support system. In other words, it appears that people were motivated to move the relocation policy provided an opportunity to re-place the community in a new location, rather than be fragmenting it. This confirms the notion of environment recreation suggested by Dickinson (2013).

While there is a strong debate surrounding whether relocation should be collective or individual for successful results, in the context of this research I find that tsunami-affected families wanted to stick together as a family and as a community.

5.2 Motivations behind Staying Put

In the context of this research, I found that the post-tsunami voluntary resettlement program offered all the residents of the two affected island communities a chance to to resettle with adequate public assistance which included provision of free housing, livelihood restoration, compensation, access to social services, tenure security and other socio-economic rights. Therefore, there was no process of exclusion that forced people to stay in place. Rather, the families which stayed on Mundoo resisted and stayed in place to rebuild entirely by their choice. Interviews with six stayer families revealed a number of factors that motivated them to not move out of their islands despite the devastation wrought by the tsunami. This included sense of place, continuity in livelihood activities, transportation network and negative perceptions about the host island.

5.2.1 Continuity in Livelihood

According to some respondents from Mundoo, one of the major reasons behind their decision to stay on the island was motivated by the rich tuna fishing grounds surrounding the island that makes the island one of the best spots in the country for fishing. Two of the interviewed stayers have been working as fisherman on the island their entire lives. I was told that before the tsunami, Mundoo island was famous in the atoll and around Maldives for having rich fishing. Boats from other islands frequently visited Mundoo for fishing and stayed overnight. The fishing activities on the island provided a thriving subsistence economy.

“People come from other islands to fish in Mundoo. This is one of the best spots in the country for fishing. That is why many people did not want to leave this island.” (M. Stayer, Intw. 13).

Respondents noted that some of the fishing boats and gear were lost in the tsunami but families were soon able to recover them through government and donor assistance. Therefore, their primary livelihood activity was restored to normal within a short period of time after the disaster. Simultaneously, respondents added that the pre-school and primary school on the island was reconstructed and opened just few months later, allowing children to continue their primary education on the island.



Public atoll ferry providing inter-island transport at Mundoo harbour. Photo taken by author

Many of them agreed that the services on the island were insufficient, but the availability of transportation capital (harbour and boats), allowed them to travel to Gan and other main islands in the atoll for services. Hence, they felt that it was unnecessary to relocate when commuting is possible.

Some respondents noted that the families that relocated were motivated by income maximisation, but they were happy to live on their home islands as long as they can earn a sufficient living through the fishing activities.

“People who left think only about money, money, money... On this island too we can fish, and live a good life on that income.” (M. Stayer, Intw. 12)

Among six of the stayers I interviewed, four were also employed by the government and had monthly paid positions on the island before and after the tsunami. Some studies have shown that people want to stay put when they have secure jobs in place as opposed to those who are unemployed and looking for work. In post-disaster contexts, those who move out tends to those who does not have economic opportunities in the area.

It appears that these stayer families already had higher degree of income security, and relocation entailed risks of losing the position that is placed within the island. In addition,

while out-migration may lead to problems such as brain drain, a smaller population and lack of competition opens more opportunities for others who stay.

I was told by some relocatees that one of the reasons people are able to sustain a living on a small settlement like Mundoo is due to the presence of a few government paid positions in island administration and other service institutions such as schools. Likewise, some relocated respondents who used to live on Mundoo claimed that majority of the 200 people living on the island belong to a few related families, which has members who hold positions of authority on the island.

“They are there because they don’t want to lose their position and power. Almost all the families living there are part of the island counselor’s family. If they move here, they won’t be able to rule this island like they do there.” (M. Relocatee, Intw. 4)

There is some research that provides evidence to these claims. Writing about a Samoan community in US, Janes, C. R. (1990) posited that traditional leaders may choose not move when they anticipate loss of power under the changed circumstances. This is because the skills that made them qualified for leaders in their home society might be obsolete in the social setting of the destination.

Regardless of whether the decision to stay is shaped by quest for power, it looked to me that these families that stayed were doing so because they were able to find means of living on the island without having to move. Additionally, just as relocatees were motivated to move based on their relatives’ and friends’ decisions to move, in the context of stayers, they were also acting as a social group. All of the families I interviewed on Mundoo confirmed that their relatives were living on the island.

5.2.3 Island Attachment

When asked about the reasons to stay on the island, all the respondents noted they felt at 'home' on their islands. Some of the families that I interviewed have been living on the island all their life, and shared a strong sense of belonging. It was clear that for the stayers, the particular locality of the island mattered a lot. Some defined their identity through the island place.

“I am a Mundoo person. I can’t even imagine leaving my island and going somewhere. I was born and raised here... my mother’s grave is here... If I have to leave this island I will be heartbroken.” (M. Stayer, Intw. 14)

Another respondent also commented about the natural environment and how she felt happier on the island.

“This is a very comfortable island.. On both sides we have beautiful beaches. Since there’s so few people we don’t have any vehicles or noise. It’s always very calm... and the air is very fresh.” (M. Stayer, Intw. 16)

It is understandable that for people who shared values of rootedness, relocation would trigger a feeling of displacement and alienation. The six families that I interviewed on Mundoo responded that they did not want to leave their ancestral land. Some of them strongly opposed the abandonment of their islands and said they will fight against it in the future. Thus confirming Kok’s notion of placed identity and connections as a reason for not moving.

“As long as Mundoo families want to live here, the government cannot force us to leave... they have tried before and if they try to depopulate this island, they will fail again. Mundoo people are smart... we cannot be brainwashed. We won’t do whatever someone tells us to do, even if it’s main government” (M. Stayer, Intw. 13)

5.2.4 Crimes on Gan

Some stayers also further pointed out that Gan was unsafe and lot of drugs and violent crime takes place. Many of them suggested that they would not want their kids to grow up in a ‘dangerous’ place like Gan. For them, the smallness, peace and familiarity of the island represented a more secure life.

“Even before a gang from Gan attacked a person from Mundoo... The majority of young people there are drug addicts and thieves. I hear lot of bad stories from my relatives who moved... I know they wish they had not gone there. This island may not have services, but I know my children can grow up safely here. No one will stab them” (M. Stayer, Intw. 16)

Another stayer on Mundoo, said that he was living in the factory camp on Gan for

displaced islanders. He admitted that for some time he wanted to listen to his wife and live there for the children. After a long pause, he said in a low voice; *“a group of men hurt our daughter, and threatened that if she said anything they would kill her.”* (M. Stayer, Intw.12)

I asked some relocated families about this social problem and whether they were not concerned about this problem. They admitted crime was common. However, some respondents claimed that they had never experienced such a problem personally. Others said that they 'tolerate' these problems as life on Gan was still much better in terms of economic opportunities.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to uncover the reasons behind families' motivations to relocate or rebuild on the island in the context of GRP. Early on I decided to use an eclectic conceptual framework, comprising of livelihood perspectives, push-pull factors and identities to get a holistic picture of the drivers behind mobility decisions. Through interviews with families occupying the permanent housing on Gan, and those families from Mundoo who rejected the program, I gained some deep insights about the multi-dimensional drivers behind their mobility behaviour.

One of the most important themes that emerged was the adequacy of the host site or the destination island. Selection of proper host site is crucial to the success of a resettlement program. The empirical evidence from GRP case revealed that several relocatees were motivated to relocate because they perceived the destination to be a better location for improving their livelihood situation, relative to their pre-disaster status. As such, these families mentioned the availability of better social and physical infrastructure including hospital, schools, roads, airport and etc. as major pull factors. Now, from a livelihood perspective, these infrastructure represents broad array of physical capital that families can use in securing their livelihood. Furthermore, a very important finding was also that relocating families highly emphasised on being able to continue their pre-tsunami livelihood activities on Gan, in particular fishing. Most of these families were reliant on fishing as a

main livelihood activity, and for them, access to the sea (natural capital) on the host site was an important factor. Additionally, the respondents highlighted how they wanted more than simply to recreate their fishing-based livelihood, but also to have diverse and higher stream of income. As such, the availability of more formal employment opportunities for young educated members of the family attracted families towards Gan. In addition to these material aspects, families also underscored having relatives and friends on Gan as major motivating factor. These social network represented not just pull factor, but also crucial social asset that families relied on for support.

In addition to these place-based factors, the GRP program and government policy facilitated the relocation process of the families through provision of houses, land rights and registration, and supporting collective movement of the families and community. Overall, the management and relocation policy appears to have provided relocatees with the much needed access to the livelihood assets, thus motivating them to move.

As for the stayers, the main reason for them to stay put on the island was based on their sense of place and identity that is tied to their island. They exhibited high degree of attachment to their home island, and refused relocation out of fear of losing their ancestral land. Additionally, the possibility of continuing fishing-based livelihoods and having already secure paid jobs (civil service) were an important reason for families to stay put. This indicated that they families which stayed had some degree of economic security on the island to support their families. The stayers also made their decision based on their relocated families. Simultaneously, families also felt relocation to be unnecessary when they could use sea transportation to reach other larger islands such as Gan for services lacking on the island.

Overall, the research findings show that the voluntary nature of the relocation program provided high degree of choice for the Mundoo and Kalhaidhoo families in deciding about their post-tsunami residential location. While the findings confirmed the general notion that more people move towards locations with better socio-economic opportunities, I also found that not everyone shared the same mobility behaviour. Some families from Mundoo decided to stay put on their island to rebuild despite the comparatively poor socio-economic conditions, and the devastation caused by the tsunami. The decision to move or not were motivated by interplay of various social, economic and institutional drivers and aspirational

pursuits. In the context of this study, I can conclude that staying put and relocation were deliberate livelihood strategies used by families after the tsunami to recover, and improve their well-being. While the relocatees exhibited strong desires to diversify, and increase income and gain upward mobility, the stayers seemed to find satisfaction in continuity of living on ancestral land, and following traditional livelihood practices.

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Appendix 1:

Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Heads of Relocated Families.

Respondent Information:

Gender:

Age:

No.of household members:

1. Can you describe to me your experience on the day of tsunami and how your family coped?
 - evacuated/displaced/temporary shelter?
 - stayed on island?
2. What income earning activities were you and other household members engaged on the previous island? How did it change after tsunami?
3. How did you know about the government's relocation plans and what are your thoughts about the way it was implemented?
 - elements of the program motivated to move?
4. Can you describe to me your relocation experience.
5. Can you tell me why you were motivated to move to Gan with your family?
 - push factors (poverty, lack of employment, damaged housing and livelihood assets etc, discrimination)
 - pull factors on Gan (relatives, services, employment, land, housing etc)

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Heads of Families that Stayed Put.

Respondent Information:

Gender:

Age:

No.of household members:

1. Can you describe to me your experience on the day of tsunami and how your family coped?
- evacuated/displaced/temporary shelter?
- stayed on island?

2. What income earning activities are you and other household members engaged in? How did it change after tsunami?

3. How did you know about the government's relocation plans and what were your initial thoughts/concerns about the program?

4. Can you tell me why you decided to stay on when others were left?

Pull factors:

- attachment/identity?

- livelihood assets?

5. What kind of concerns did you have about relocating to Gan – any problems on specifically in Gan that deterred your movement?

Appendix 3: Expert Interview Topic Guide

- Rationale behind GRP
- Relocation action plan of GRP, components and policy considerations (housing, compensation, funding, beneficiary selection etc)
- The planning and implementation process (key dates, events and changes)
- Challenges and Outcomes