

DEVELOPMENT AT THE COST OF UPROOTING PEOPLE **- AN INDIAN SCENARIO**

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Abstract

Development is an unavoidable phenomenon from the time of human civilization, but when it turns to hurt the life, living and sentiments of a larger mass, it becomes a serious concern. India is a developing country and hence the development initiatives should be a part and parcel of its progress. The uprooting of people to new unknown places did result in socio-economic and cultural disruption to the people and has disturbed the social network of local communities. Rehabilitation schemes, may have addressed some of the material losses experienced by displaced people, but the loss of their social status, community ties and support structures are unattended. The nation should be drafting its policies based on the guidelines of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in favor of those displaced. A monitoring commission must be established for ensuring that their rights are protected and justice ensured to them. This discussion paper considers aspects such as intensity of involuntary displacement, displacement and its effects on people, rehabilitation and resettlement policies, and brief mention on some affected regions in the name of development. The article also suggests about the recommendations on what could be done in order to enjoy the merits of development without anyone being affected adversely.

Keywords: Displacement; Rehabilitation and Resettlement policies; IDP

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1. Introduction

Displacement of people has emerged as one of the highly debated and discussed issue. Human displacement can be an outcome of natural disaster, conflicts, migration, or developmental activities. This article exclusively deals on the development induced displacement in India. The development induced displacements are not beyond human control when compared to other kinds of displacements, because it takes place in a designed way. It means that if there is a determination, dislocation can be minimised and the rehabilitation can be planned. In India, as a developing country, we can see that these displacements are mostly due to the construction of dams, mines, thermal power plants, railways, roads, ports, national parks and others; of those the majority who are displaced hardly enjoy its merits.

1.1 Displacement

The magnitude and intensity of the displacement can be understood when we look into the statistics, (though a clear recorded data till now is not available), Scholar administrator Dr. N.C. Saxena, places his estimates of persons displaced by big projects since 1947 as 50 million [1]. “Of those displaced, over 40% are tribals and another 40% consists of dalits and other rural poor”, says the Working Group on Human Rights in Indian and the UN. “The 80 million people displaced by dams in the 20th century probably represent more people than those displaced by the Second World War” [21].

In India, the development process taken up after Independence was that of rapid economic growth based on huge industrialisation. The planners focussed more on economic development during the national building process; this was flagged of with the launching of Five Year Plan. Dams were said to be the ‘temples of modern India’. Along with the construction of dams and irrigation projects, big industries, large-scale mining and roads and railways etc. were also commissioned. For this, government acquired land through various Acts like Land Acquisition Act, 1894, Coal Bearing Areas Act, 1957 and so on.

In order to ‘develop’ the nation, the people living there and who were dependent on these lands were forced to get displaced. The uprooting of people to new unknown places did result in socio-economic and cultural disruption to the people and disturbed the social network of local

communities. The displacement, rehabilitation and resettlement are not by choice but mostly by compulsion. Displacement is nothing but a disaster in slow motion [14].

1.2 Development- a debatable subject

The displacement issue has always been controversial and there are no such ready- made solutions. Rehabilitation schemes, may have addressed some of the material losses experienced by displaced people, but the loss of their social status, community ties and support structures are unattended. Compensation, mostly cash, given to the male ‘bread winner’ of the family hardly reaches the other members due to their unproductive ways. Thus, women and children do not benefit from those.

The debate and discourse is between two parties- one is those supporting economic development, they justify this act by stating that it is national interest. Though displacement is sad an affair, it is inevitable for national development. The other group gives priority to human development with economic growth and thereby achieving social justice. They stress that displacement can be minimised and it depends on the political will. The alternatives are available for minimum displacement but the will to implement is what is lacking and hence no alternatives are thought of. They raise the question like “development for whom” and “at what cost”, giving emphasis to political, social, economic justice for all.

Fernandes, 2001, examines that our approach to development projects that have been implemented are without adequate investments in human. Again in their article, Walter Fernandes along with Vijay Panranjpye portrays that the project authorities and the administration as a whole have proved to be inexcusably incompetent in reducing the trauma of displacement. While implementing the resettlement plans the administration has violated individual and group rights. Similarly, the award of compensation and dispensation of justice has often been delayed so much that people feel defeated and helpless.

The rehabilitation policies that are framed are cornered and absence of public participation in the drafting is noticeable. “The planning process and experience with development projects so far indicate that citizens have been totally excluded from the discussion..... Such denial of people’s

right to participation in the decision making process betrays the spirit of the Indian Constitution” [7].

1.3 UNHCR Guidelines on Internally Displaced

By 1995, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR was reporting that the numbers of the internally displaced exceeded the number of refugees...The UNHCR has in fact adopted a 30-point set of principles entitled Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to guide the behaviour of nation[22] It states that development projects ... without adequate resettlement and compensation ...could be considered as a "human-made disaster" and a human rights violation... It further says that all efforts should be made to avoid, and minimise displacement and its adverse effects.

Principle 7.2 emphasise the minimum conditions to be met like proper accommodation, satisfactory conditions of safety, nutrition, health and hygiene, and protection from family break-up. The Principle also provide additional safeguards like the displacement must be lawfully mandated and carried out, it must seek the free and fully informed consent of those affected, as well as their active participation, it must guarantee compensation and relocation, where applicable and it must be subject to the right of judicial review and effective remedy. Principle 9 emphasise that authorities must take special care to protect against the displacement of indigenous peoples, minorities, peasants, pastoralists and others with special attachment to their lands. Principle 18 on the right have an adequate standard of living and with regard to the access to public services and participation in public affairs & IDPs (Internally Displaced People) receive appropriate compensation for lost properties.

1.4 Rehabilitation and Resettlement

The ultimate objective of the Rehabilitation & Resettlement process is to rebuild and develop the social and economic life of the displaced. However, the manner in which it is carried out shows those representatives of the state use it more as a mechanism of power over the people than a process of development. One of the major drawbacks of the existing R and R paradigm is its dependence on state and project officials [2].

And one of the demerits of the Rehabilitation and Resettlement(R&R) policy as pointed out by Mishra, 2005, is the distribution of infertile land to the people which resulted in the decrease of crop yield to a large extent; the distribution of land in different patches and the distribution of disputed land which added more misery to the lives of the displaced people. So ultimately, these people who have no stake with these development projects are the only sufferers. R. N. Sharma, 2003 has stated that as from the experience it shows that leading NGOs concentrate more on questioning the legitimacy of projects; they are hesitant to enter into the task of implementing a good R &R- even if such opportunity is proposed by the project. Due to this, inexperienced local NGOs enter the scene and the fate of Project Affected People's (PAP) are left to project officials. The end result goes against the interest of PAPs.

2. Research Method:

The researchers here in this paper have taken the secondary data analysis in order to study on the topic of development induced displacement and about the rehabilitation packages. The given data are collected and analysed by various researchers and research institutions that have been cited as in the reference. The article can be helpful for conducting subsequent primary research in the same field and to provide a baseline for comparing the primary data collection results. The design of the study is a Descriptive one. Here in the study, the problem of internal displacement, three projects affected of displacement, and about the resettlement and rehabilitation are described. The sampling method adopted is purposive sampling. The cases of 3 projects were taken for analysis. The selections were based on 3 regions representing the central, west and east of India and based on the intensity of the issue.

2. Results and Discussion

3.1 The cases of few projects are analysed.

a. Sardar Sarovar Project

Perhaps no dam in India has been studied as extensively as the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP). Despite widespread agitation in the Valley against the project, objections of environmentalists, human rights activists and the newly formed Ministry of Environment and

Forests, the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam began in 1987 with funding from the World Bank, as the dam's height rose, the waters of the reservoir displaced thousands of families in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh [8]. Many of the villagers in Gujarat did not have their land rights recorded because those areas came under the jurisdiction of the forestry department rather than the revenue department after 1947. Therefore, the Gujarat government and the Ministry of Forest and Environment maintained that 'encroachers' were legally 'landless' and were not entitled to land compensation. There are about 8,000 families displaced at a dam height below 95 metres, but not resettled, and the state has no room for the rehabilitation. Still the government is pressing for increasing the height up to 95 or 100 metres. There are over 35,000 affected families from Madhya Pradesh alone and there is no possibility of land- based resettlement for them. Same is the case with Maharashtra. The people are displaced by illegal means like cash compensation and ex-parte land allotment.

b. Orissa

UNDP estimates that till date one lakh people in Orissa have been displaced since independence while 20 lakhs have been affected by various development projects. The Hirakud multipurpose river valley project, disrupted the livelihood of 22,141 families consisting of 1, 10,000 people. Around 4,744 scheduled castes and scheduled tribes' families were displaced forcibly with the help of the police. Only 2,185 families were resettled in 17 rehabilitation camps; 3,134.71 acres of private land and 221. 91 acres of forest were acquired for the resettlement. The core of the resistance at the Kalinga Nagar tragedy which took the death of 12 tribals rose from the feeling of being cheated; the Industrial Development Cooperation (IDCO) had bought land from the displaced people at a lesser price and was sold at 100 percent "profit" to the companies. According to Orissa Government, 1098 families are still to get the promised jobs even though 50years have passed [10]. The land acquisition by various projects in Orissa by 2005 is 1215679 Ha and the total number of villages affected is stated as 2171 excluding the mining projects [13] for which the official data is unavailable regarding the human habitations and families affected.

c. Gujarat (parks and sanctuaries)

The displacement of maldhari families from the Gir Sanctuary in Junagadh district (western part of Gujarat) was for the forest conservation. The rehabilitation of these families outside the forest was least known and changes in post-displacement era were also not documented. Despite the promise to continue the ST status of pastoral families, the administrative offices at district and taluka levels have denied the certificate and status of ST to these families as they live outside the forest. And they are not documented as ST in the Census [9].

Similar incidents are taking place in almost all the states in India like Andhra, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala where people in masses are been displaced as a result. Some are given attention by the media and reported; social action taking place in regard to few others and intervention by government in quite few others.

As stated by David Cox and Manor Pawar, there are four critical elements when we discuss about forced migrants: First is the element of **force**, generally people be attached to their homes, this forced migration breeds frustration and resentment and thus it makes them difficult to adapt to the new situations. The **stress** factor is another element; this is the outcome of a period of highly traumatic experiences. The third factor is about the **destination** which is totally unknown or vague. And the final one is the lack of **security**.

3.2 Recommendations

Each nation must be drafting its policies based on the guidelines of UNHCR and the necessary policies pertaining to those regions, in favour of those displaced must be added and implemented. A monitoring commission must be established at the Centre and in the State level for ensuring that their rights are protected and justice ensured to them.

In the planning process of development projects, citizens must be included [7]. The Rehabilitation and Resettlement should not be mechanism of power over people [2]; in the land for land policy, the distribution of arable land must be given instead of infertile one [14] ; the compensation in cash must be for every one affected, not alone to the bread winner [9] ; the promised jobs must not be delayed at any cost [10]; The project must not further until and unless it provides the necessary compensation along with Rehabilitation and Resettlement, [8]; people

should not be cheated in the compensation package [10]; development projects should be implemented only with adequate investment in human resources and assessment of human trauma involved; the individual and group rights must be protected, [7]; the experienced NGOs must come into force in initiating these process of Resettlement and Rehabilitation [19]. Ultimately the government and lawmakers should come forward to address the problems well in advance before the initiation of the project through proper planning and execution.

Conclusion

In the initial decades after independence, government succeeded in acquiring vast lands from people because of the people's ignorance of their rights and their faith in the political system. However, with the growing intensity of involuntary displacement and eroding public interest in various projects of government, the affected people started raising their voice. Coming across this, one must be aware about the kind of development we are focussing on. Instead of India pushing herself to the forefront with the other great nations and adapting the western policies in development, it must improve the quality of life for its citizens and guarantee social justice. Development is an inevitable factor for building a nation, but it must be executed in a more humanised manner. As Malika Basu said, we must have 'humanisation' in development, only then, can everyone enjoy its fruits.

In the name of nation's interest and development projects, people are chased away from their dwelling places like forest or rural areas and again in the name of urbanisation and beautification, they are wiped away from cities. It means, that the human settlements right from the rural hamlets to the urban settlement are been disrupted in the name of development. Is there a space on earth to shelter them? Are we living with the Darwin's principle of Survival of the fittest, and nodding our head to Mussolini's ideology where the disabled and weaker ones be erased from the community so that the nation can progress?

The aftermath of displacement is the resettlement and rehabilitation which is mostly devoid of basic necessities; the compensation for name sake and bogus guarantee from the authorities, that adds to their misery. The people are now aware about the false promises and pleasing speeches. The plight of their fellow beings in areas like Bhopal (Bhopal tragedy and its

rehabilitation), Kasargode (Endosulfan), Sardar Sarovar Project and other similar incidents have made them to discard these offers of government. Unless and until they see a proper rehabilitation done, they are not ready to sacrifice their land and life. Government is the sole authority and hence their responsibility to take necessary steps in order to minimise the consequences and adverse effects of activities regarded as developments.

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