

Development Induced Migration: A study of the Shillong Umroi Airport Project, in Meghalaya

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Abstract

The development model that the present day capitalist societies of almost entire world have been focused on the almost complete reliance on the consumption of non renewable natural resources by expropriations of land, water, forest and minerals by large scale projects. Through these expropriations by large scale projects are currently reshaping rural and tribal India. In this era where ecological disruptions and displacements of people is often heard as the inevitable outcome of these big projects, there are many projects that has also impacted peoples life positively by raising human development level of the community nearby the region and nation as a whole.

The present study is an attempt to study the impact of inception of Airport in the Umroi area of Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya. The study is focused on only to those villages which fall under the airport area where the villagers had to move out from their residence and had to stay to the new place since their village area have to be given to the Airport Authority of India for development of the airport. Hence the study is focused on the new settlement of the displaced people to understand their problems especially the victims of this development which has taken place, by assessing the resettlement agency's initiative to promote community reconstruction.

The findings of the study suggest that though the development project has separated the family members of few families but overall it has positively affected mainly the economic lives of the people as most of them find the remuneration for the plot very good and it has also given the opportunity to many of their family members to get employment in this project, which has helped to completely change their live. Moreover all of them have reported that they have also received alternative plot of land in exchange of their plot that was given to the Airport authority.

Key words: Development; Migration; Displacement; Natural Resources; Development Projects.

Development is a term that received great significance and apple of discord in the independent history of the nation. It received great impetus since the launching of five year plan projects were under taken in public

sectors serving national development priorities but displacing a great multitude of people from their land of origin, a root area where ones umbilical cord is buried (Woldselassie, 2000, p.22). Life of the displaced is a continue struggle against misery and poverty. The draft of resettlement policy prepared by Rural Ministry of Government of India 1994 confirms that displacement cause “state induced impoverishment” and “no development project can be justifies if a section of society is pauperized” (Kujur, 2005,p. 67).

The very basis of land acquisition (Land Acquisition Act, 1894) like ‘eminent domain’ and ‘public purpose’ given the unquestionable right to Government over the land, which was owned by individuals for generations before, negates the very preamble of the Indian Constitution “ Socialist sovereign democratic republic” and the fundamental rights assured to all its citizens. Displacement forces them to start their life afresh in a new-socio-cultural resettlement area, which is costly and laborious to the people who lost everything. As rightly stated by (Paranjpye 1998) “displacement of life of the people displaced. Production systems are dismantled, close knit kinship groups get scattered, long established relationship are disrupted, traditional sources of employment are lost market links are broken and customs related to community credit transfers get dissolved” (p,134). As Nayak (1996) has rightly stated total rehabilitations should include, apart from physical resettlement, replacement of common property resources and socio-cultural systems, psychological preparation and technical training to deal with the new society and economy. The b important to access to ‘common’ has been highlighted by the award of the (2009) Nobel (Swedish Bank) Prize to Elivor Ostrom and Oliverer Williamson for the studies of Management in common.

Development-Induced Displacement can be defined as the forcing of communities as the forcing of communities and individuals out of their homes often also their homelands, for the purposes of economic development. Geographic displacement can be within a city or district from one village or neighborhood to another. It can also involve displacement across long distances and borders, sometime economically socially, and culturally quite different setting. Those, who are forced to leave their home and flee because of conflict, human rights violation, and other natural disasters, can also be applied not only to refugee, victims of race and ethnic violence but also to individuals and communities made refugees primarily by development policies, programmed and projects (Bose, 2003). The displaced are not simply disadvantaged group of causalities of a natural distress. They are victims of violence, persecution and human rights abuse directed against them because of their membership in a particular group of residents in a particular area.

Hence the present study is an attempt on the new settlement of the displaced people to understand their problems especially the victims of the displacement caused by the construction of Airport in Umroi constituency in Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya, by assessing the resettlement agency’s initiative to promote community reconstruction and its impact on the families of the communities there.

Study Area:

The study area is in Umroi constituency in Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya. The study covered only to those villages which fall under the airport area where they had to move out from their residence and had to go and stay to the new place since their village area had to be given to the Airport Authority of India for development of the airport. Hence the data is collected from families of four villages i.e. Umden Mission, Umden Umsaitprah, Umden Arka and Khlieh Umstem.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To understand the social demographic profile and the impact of displacement on it.
2. To understand the economic profile and the impact of displacement on it.
3. To assess resettlement agency initiative to promote community reconstruction.
4. To find out the socio economic and physical difficulties faced by the development individual induced displaced people after displacement.
5. To suggest remedial measures to address the issue of the development displacement.

SOCIO ECONOMIC BACK GROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS.

It has been found that most of the respondents their educational background majority of them are under matriculation very few completed their under graduation and graduation. Most of the respondents are married followed by unmarried and widow/widower and divorced. The respondents mostly came to know about the project through the DC Office and Headman very few among them came to know from the news media and news paper. The respondents planned by themselves for resettlement after they came to know about the project to be taken place in their areas. Majority of the respondents' family income per month exceed to 10,000.

It has been found that the type of job engaged by the respondents significantly changed after the project as majority of them were earlier agriculturist, but, as soon the project has been taken place vast they were engaged in new types of job as local business, earned their income as taxi driver, start to open a shop within their locality or local market, work in animal husbandry, rearing cattle farm like pigs, goats, sheep and cows. Moreover the many of the family members of the respondents also got job in airport as sweeper, cleaner, security guards and working in the canteen. This has helped to the villagers not only in their economic life but also brought changes in their social life. The market areas and shops started to increase different type of commodities and product is now available in the areas unlike before when the airport was not there, mainly because of the road constructed by the airport authorities now. Most of them hardly used to go to market and mixed up with other people since they were living a very simple life most of their time was spent in the fields

and forest in farming and agricultural work. Since agriculture was the dominant type of job during those days. It has been found that presently the socio economic status of the respondents in Umroi area Airport has changed, people are now mixing up and co-operates to one another like in business partner and investing money in each other's business. Moreover, most of the people now don't need to go to Shillong which was the main venue for them to get their product and buying materials. People who did business like running shops within the local area itself keep all those commodities which the villagers needs. Recently the market has turned to be one of the common places for villagers to meet up, and people from different districts come and open shops during market day. This shows that the scenario of the present places is changing in the place and it is evolving and the present project played an important role in the changes.

PROCESS OF THE IMPACT OF THE DISPLACEMENTS AREA.

It has been found that most of the family is nuclear in nature (90%) but majority of the family has above five members (85%). Some of the family members they have to stay separate from the family after the project taken places like uncle, brother and sisters (40%). Majority of the respondents received their compensation through check and few of them through cash (80%). Every one of them is aware of the criteria on how the compensation was been received (100%). The compensation was paid right after the land was taken over (70%) and some of them received the compensation more than a year after the land was taken over (30%). The village headman, staff from DC Office and people from the Airport Authority of India came and inform them about the displacement project. The study also confirmed that most of the respondents agreed to give their plot of land for the project and some of them at first did not agreed and willing to give their plot of land (20%). After several time the village headman and members from the DC Office they went and interacted they too finally agreed to give their land. Most of the respondents find the amount of compensation adequate which (95%). As quoted by one of the respondents

“It's like a dream for us to get like this kind of offer and project to come in our village. We cannot imagine such good things will happen to us the villagers”. Words told by one of the headman “before no one wanted to buy a plot of land here in our village, since it was in the rural interior area. But, not after the project taken place, suddenly people from outsides started to come and search for a plot of land, that also with a good amount of money”.

“We thank the Airport Authority of India and also to the Meghalaya Government for bringing us such the biggest opportunities where by everyone have started to change and improve their life and socio economic status. As soon we received the compensation people started to build and construct their house and many other new steps have taken up which has raised the living standard of people and changes of the villages scenario”.

Conclusion

It has been found that from the respondents some of them who expected more than cash as a compensation as house with a plot of land, house with some cash and house with plot for agriculture and some cash. All the villagers agree that the displacement is productive for everyone while comparing the situation before and after the displacement project has taken place. It has changed the village environment in all aspect from socio economic to relationship of the villagers towards one another. It has turned mostly positively for majority of them, parents respondents they said they can send their children to study outside and continue their children's education. The form of occupation of the respondents also witnessed change for the project. Many of the youth who are drop out students both male and female got job in the airport in 4th grade jobs as security personal, cleaners, maintenance staffs etc. Those youth who wanted to study got the chance to study outside their village to cities and other states because of their better financial status due to the compensation they received. They believe that with the coming of this project the owners by giving the plot of land to the Airport have got a hope in future of getting new job within the airport campus itself for their children after completing their further studies. At present people from the villagers started to set up a shop nearby the airport and some of them work as daily wagers in the airport for construction the airport campus especially the male. The airport has also constructed the village road which before it was very difficult for them to travel and go to other place and to the cities because of bad road condition. Now they can easily travel from their village and transportation was no longer a problem for them. One of the uniqueness of the displacement was that though there was displacement but the entire village shifted to the nearby empty plots of land and hence the neighborhood remained the same unlike most of the cases of displacements where families are displaced separately in a new established locality facing the entire crisis particularly in the initial years of displacement.

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