



An Assessment of the Status of Rehabilitation: A Case study of Land Acquisition for Sonpur-Bazari Open Cast Project in Raniganj Coal Belt, West Bengal

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Abstract: Land based economic activities through new or extended projects often lead to displacement of the project affected people. Mining induced displacement is one such example. The growing awareness of Human Rights and the concomitant spread of Human Rights Groups across the nations have formulated resettlement and rehabilitation of the project affected and displaced persons. With the provision of welfare policies and laws by government, assessment for the status of rehabilitation of project affected people are the burning issues of environmental and human rights discourse.

In this context Raniganj coal belt of West Bengal is very important, where large scale open cast mines are operational. One such project is the SonpurBazariOpen Caste Project (OCP). Development project induced displacement and dispossession most often affects the marginalized rural sections of the population. The present study pertains to the status of utilization of the rehabilitation packages offered by Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) to the marginalized households of the 12 affected villages that fall within the ambit of Sonpur-Bazari OCP under ECL in Raniganj Coal belt.

One of the principal objectives is to assess the viability of rehabilitation packages for alternative livelihood. For this purpose the target groups of population are the landless household and household with less than 6 bighas of land. In this purpose a cross section of the target households have been interviewed. A number of parameters have been taken into account and detail analyses have been done for the study. Different kind of scenario has been noticed in both tribal and non-tribal villages.

Index Terms: Land Acquisition, Displacement, Marginalization, Resettlement, Rehabilitation.

I. Introduction:

The term 'Development' refers to the positive change but it has its costs as well, because large scale production based development that began with the industrial revolution caused development and destruction to go hand in hand.

In yester years when developmental projects commenced, all public eyes were on the 'development', and not on the 'cost'. With passage of time, each year, thousands of people around the globe are forcibly relocated and resettled away from their homestead, lands and livelihoods in order to make way for large-scale development projects like mining, irrigation, road and dam construction etc. Such activities also lead to large scale defacing of land, deforestation, soil erosion and other inter related irreversible environmental disasters. In India, the Twelfth Five-Year Plan blandly noted that of the estimated 60 million people displaced in development projects since independence, as many as 40% were adivasis (Choudhury, 2013).

Any form of coal mining, surface or underground causes a wide range of social and environmental problems such as decline in agricultural production, displacement and other socioeconomic impacts. Opencast coal mines damage a large land surface area, displace people from their ancestral homesteads and cause agricultural losses (Mishra, 2015).

'Displacement' is not merely physical removal from one's land; it destroys people's lives economically, socially and culturally. Such displacement is often caused by land based development projects that wrecks communities' social structure and leaves those displaced more vulnerable to impoverishment (Maldonado, 2009). The forced relocation by mining project is known as Mining Induced Displacement and Resettlement that basically caused by acquisition of homeland from the marginalized section.

'Land Acquisition' is a legal process of acquiring land of individual or organization by the central or state government for public purposes or for private entity after paying compensation to its owner. Though availability of land is limited on this earth but it is in great demand in farm sectors, industrial sectors, mining sectors, government sectors etc. and all these leads to acquisition of land

which creates large number of landless people, evicted from their place of earnings. The accumulation of private and communal land for the expansion of mining results in massive displacement of people in the Sonapur Bazari area (Mondal, 2017). Though Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 states that as far as possible, land will not be acquired in the scheduled areas but this basically affects the marginalized rural, scheduled people because they can't raise their voice against the disorderliness.

So Marginalization is the process of relegating a group of people to outer edge or margin of the society and is accorded with lesser importance. It may be social or economical, basically emanate from social backwardness and deprivation of economic means. Generally the marginalized group bears the brunt of any development projects. The present study highlights how and at what amount the marginalized people have obtained and utilized the compensation packages given by ECL due to their displacement caused by open cast mining.

It is against this background that awareness of human rights and the concomitant spread of human rights groups emerged forcing governments across the nations to take proactive legislations to ensure the dignity of human beings and their right to livelihood. These legislations, centre on some basic premises that are defined below.

Resettlement means physical relocation or displacement of large group of people from their homestead to another region, often a form of forced migration imposed by state policy or international authority after getting full compensation for land and properties.

Rehabilitation means restoration of the displaced people to a satisfactory state. It refers to the reconstruction of livelihood of the displaced people which includes various measures and strategies to make the resettlement site ecologically, economically and socially sustainable. Thus rehabilitation is a mode of re-establishing the lost livelihood of the displaced people through the following designs ----

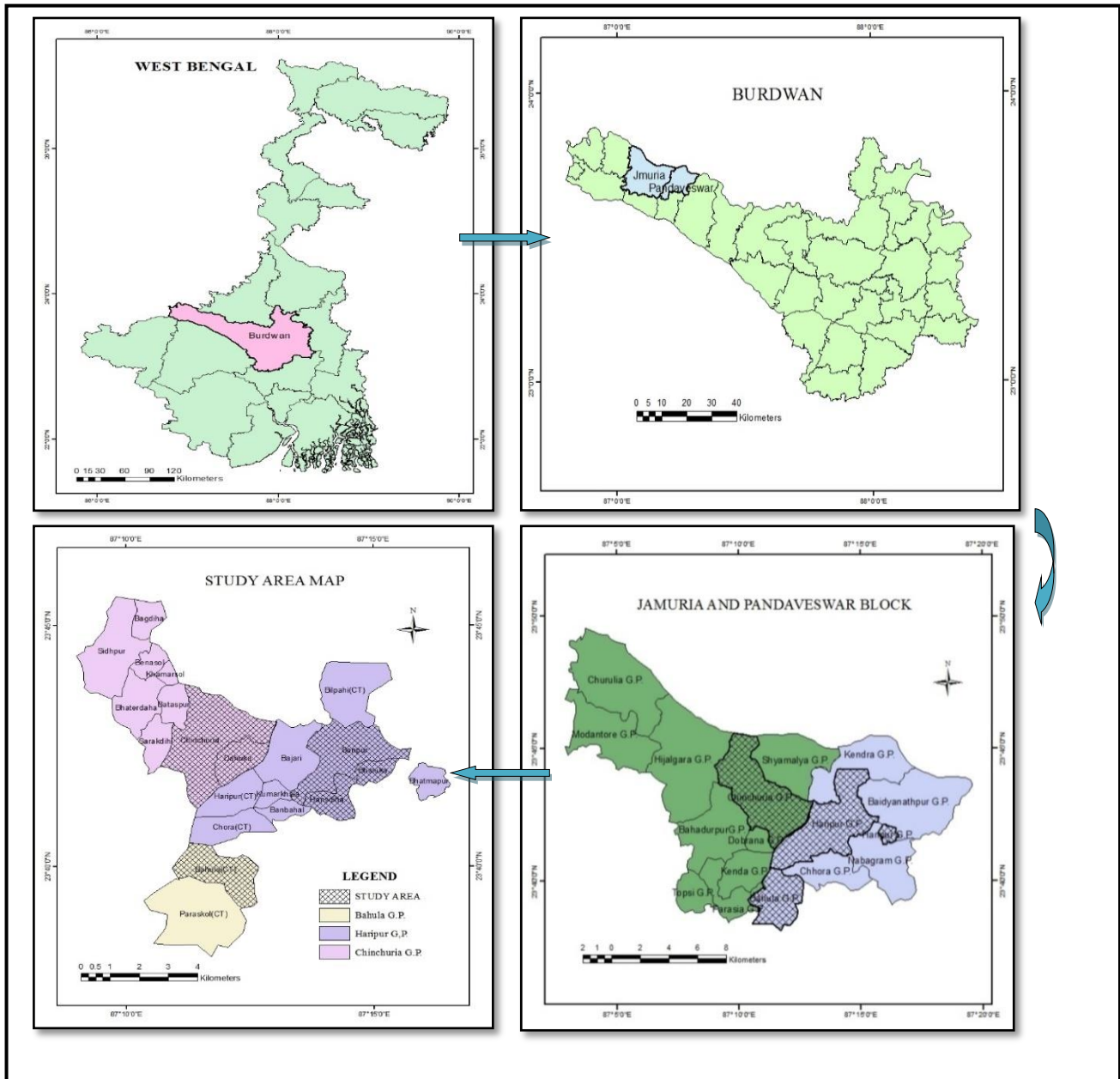
- a) Cash Based Rehabilitation
- b) Land Based Rehabilitation
- c) Employment Based Rehabilitation
- d) Ecological Rehabilitation
- e) Socio-Economic and Cultural Rehabilitation. (<http://sodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/>)

II. Study Area

The study area, Sonpur-Bazari Open Cast mine and its affected area ($23^{\circ}40'45''$ to $23^{\circ}42'28''$ N & $87^{\circ}13'11''$ to $87^{\circ}15'37''$ E) that fall in Haripur panchayas under Pandabeswar CD block of Paschim Bardhaman district, West Bengal.

The Sonpur-Bazari Open Cast project (OCP) is located in the eastern part of Raniganj Coalfield at a distance of about 30 km from Asansol, 15 km from Raniganj and 19 km from Durgapur town. The Raniganj-Suri Road passes through this area and the Ukhra Railway station on Andal-Sainthia line passes through the south west portion, at a distance of 8 km. The area is covered in Survey of India Toposheet No. 73 M/2 & 73 M/6.

Map 1. Location Map of the Study Area



Source: 18th All India Livestock Census, 2001, West Bengal

III. Description of the Project:

It is one of the largest OCP (Open Cast Project) of Raniganj Coalbelt of Paschim Bardhaman district, first started in 1979 as Kumarkhala OCP then renamed as Sonpur-Bazari OCP in 1991 under Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL). Total 2404.85 hectare of the land has been acquired under CBA(Coal Bearing Area) / LA(Land Acquisition) Acts, 1957 and direct purchases out of which presently 1594.66 hectare of land is under possession of the mine and 110.87 hectare (5%) have been taken for resettlement and rehabilitation purposes (CMPDI Report of Sonpur Bazari OCP, Aug 2014).The project has already rehabilitated 12 affected villages and 5 are in the way of rehabilitation in its near future. Where, a total of 3665 Project Affected Families (PAFs) to be shifted of which 41% (1486) has been shifted. The rehabilitation of the project affected people (PAP) has been done in Dahuka and Chinchuria Mouza of Jamuria block and Bahula mouza of Pandabeswar block (Map 2 and Table 1&2).

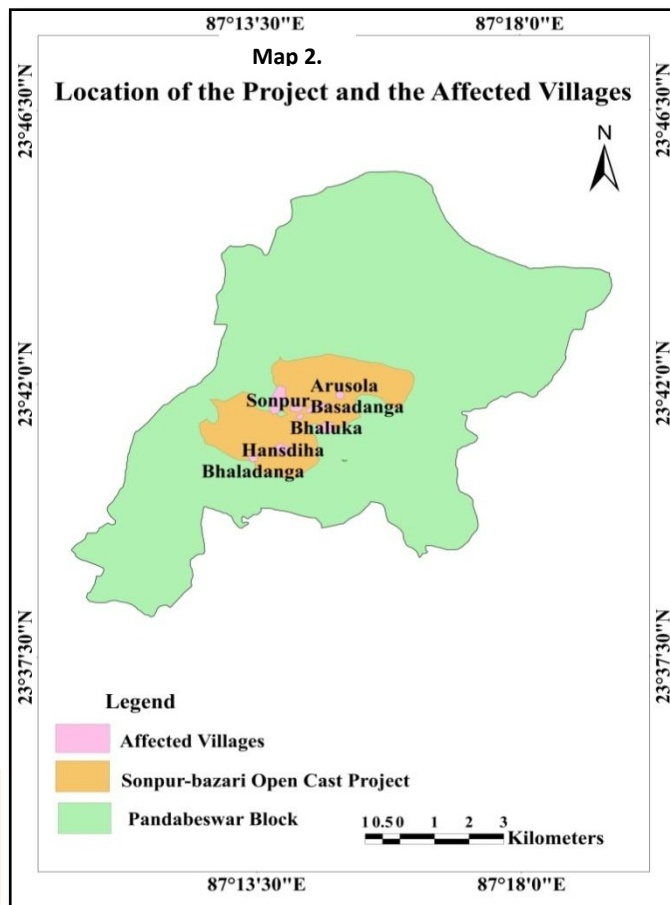
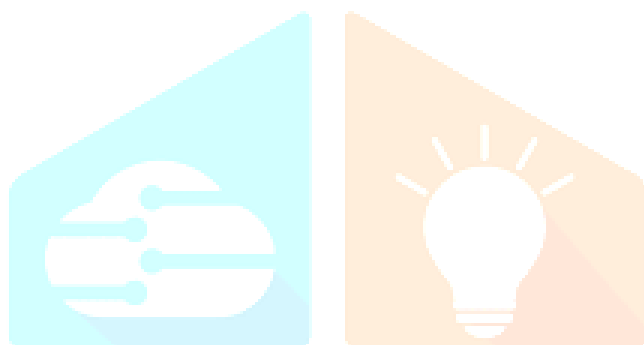


Table 1.Land Acquisition Details for Sonpur-Bazari Project:

Source: 18th All India Livestock Census, 2001.

Mode of Acquisition of Land (Hectare)							Total
CBA Act Ph-1, 68.01 ha	CBA Act, Ph-2 547 ha	CBA Act, Ph-111 1200 ha	LA Act, 398.54	Inherited 38.58 ha	Govt. land 42.65 ha	Direct Purchase Ph—1, 110.07 ha	2404.85 ha

Source: CMPDI Report of Sonpur Bazari OCP, Aug 2014.

Table 2.Land Use Details of Sonpur-Bazari OCP:

SL. NO.	Land Use Type	Present Land Use
1.	Excavated Area including haul road	466.0
2.	Undisturbed Area	1225.40
3.	Colliery Infrastructure/Built-up	135.45
4.	Village	28.59
5.	External OB Dump (Active)	60
6.	Plantation on External OB Dumps	5.0
7.	CHP	-
8.	Railway Siding	-
9.	Road	9.50
10.	Nallah	38.21
11.	Tank	18.62
12.	Lagoon	-
13.	Greenbelt/ Plantation	82
14.	Backfilled area (Active)	222.21
15.	Plantation on backfilled area	3.0
Total		2293.98
Land outside project area		
	Project Township and Rehab Site	110.87
Gross Total		2404.85

Source: CMPDI Report of Sonpur Bazari OCP, Aug 2014.

IV. Objective: The major objectives of this study are –

- a) To study the status of utilization of the rehabilitation packages offered by ECL to the marginalized household of the 12 villages that fall within the ambit of Sonpur-Bazari OCP under ECL in Raniganj Coal belt.
- b) To assess the viability of rehabilitation packages for alternative livelihood.

V. Data Source:

The study is based on detail database and information. In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, both primary and secondary types of data have been taken from different sources, which are of both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

The secondary sources are District Census Handbook of Bardhaman District, Official Website of Sonepur Bazari Area and EIA & EMP Report of CMPDI (2014).

For primary data household surveys have been conducted in the 12 displaced villages to get the real picture of that region and of which only those households have been surveyed which are landless and with less than 6 bighas(acre) of land. Moreover the perception study with the residents of the village has been done for verification of the result.

VI. Methods: The methods are grouped into the following grounds.

A. Identification of the Target Groups

For this purpose, two target groups of population have been identified from the 12 displaced villages under the Sonpur-Bazari OCP.

- a) The landless households and
- b) The household with less than 6 bighas of land.

The basis of selection of this two target groups is their vulnerability emanating from socio economic marginalization as they did not qualify for employment based rehabilitation policy because the household with more than 6 bighas of land have been rehabilitated under Employment Based Rehabilitation by ECL itself. Precisely stated 1 ECL job has been provided in lieu of 2 acres (6 bighas) of land to the adult member present in a particular household as per RR Policy, 2012 of CIL.

B. Social Composition of the Target Groups

The target groups of the study is the 12 affected villages of which only the marginalized sections of population have been taken into consideration. To assess the socio economic marginalization, the social compositions of the surveyed households have been analyzed here. From the figure1, it is evident that two major caste groups are noticed here, Schedule Cast and Schedule Tribe. 30% households are SC dominated and 61% are ST dominated. Besides 7 % households are OBC and 2% are general caste.

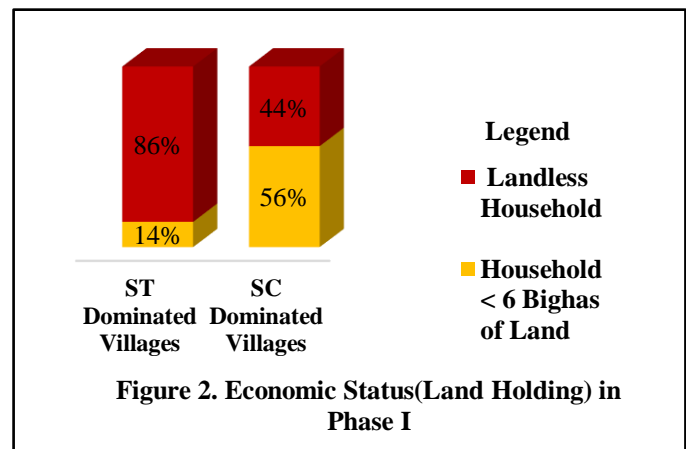
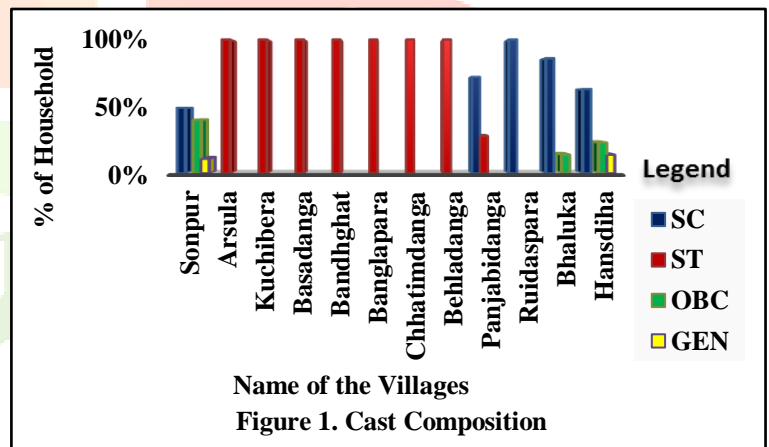
After assessing this, target groups are divided into two categories based on their social composition.

- a) Tribal dominated villages: Arusola, Kuchibera, Basadanga, Bandhghat, Banglapara, Chhatimdanga, Behladanga, Panjabidanga.
- b) Non-tribal mixed character villages: Sonpur, Bhaluka, Hasdiha, Ruidaspara.

C. Economic Status and occupational structure of the Target Groups

Having identified their social marginalization we now see the economic status of these groups. Since this is a rural area, the indicators for identification of economic status are the land tenurial rights, size of the land holdings and the occupational character of the occupant households. For this purpose two indicators of land ownership have been examined for the following two phases for the two major caste groups.

- a) Phase I: Period before land acquisition by ECL (Before 1992).
- b) Phase II:Period after land acquisition by ECL (After 1992).



Source: Field Survey, 2019

a) Phase I:

Land Holding:

In case of land holding it is found (figure 2) that in phase I, among the ST dominated households 14% had < 6 bighas of land and 86% were landless. Whereas among the SC dominated households 56% had < 6 bighas of land and 44% were landless.

Occupational Character:

In the context of occupational character it is found (figure 3) that in phase I, 100% household were basically engaged in agriculture of which 31% as cultivator and 69% as agricultural labour. It should be mentioned here that the landless household were the labour and household with little amount of land were the cultivator. It is very clear from the table that there was no other occupation except agricultural activities

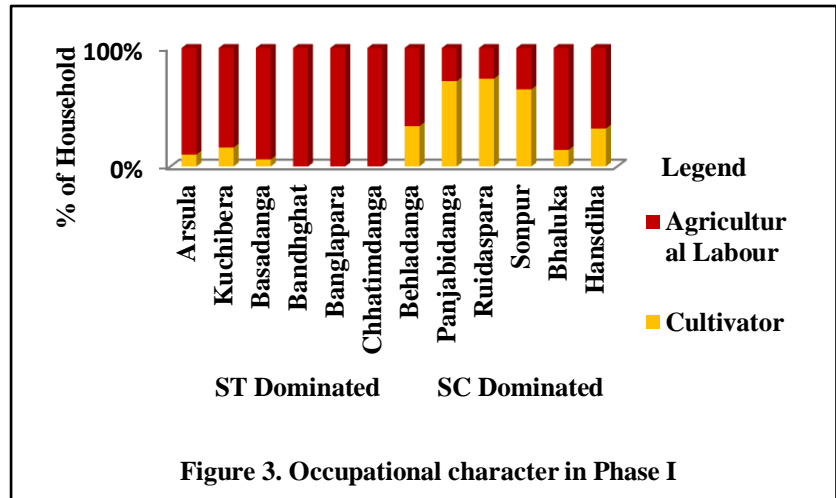


Figure 3. Occupational character in Phase I

a) Phase II:

Land Holding:

In phase II (figure 4), the scenario becomes totally different. There is no land in all the villages because these lands have been acquired by ECL for extension of the project.

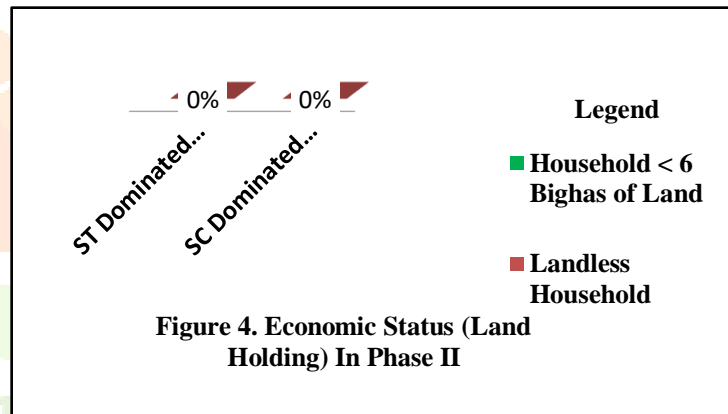


Figure 4. Economic Status (Land Holding) In Phase II

Occupational Character:

In phase II (figure 5), after land acquisition by ECL the scenario become reversed as the earlier producers or cultivators has turned into an industrial labour force. Due to non availability of land there is no cultivator. The household having less than 6 bighas of land are engaged as daily wage labour (26%) in the OCP patches but not in permanent basis. Whereas the land less household did not get any alternative livelihood from ECL and they engage themselves as construction labour (27%), brick kiln labour (28%), farm labour (15%) and some other activities (4%) like dairy business, religious activity or as worker in electric or medical shop.

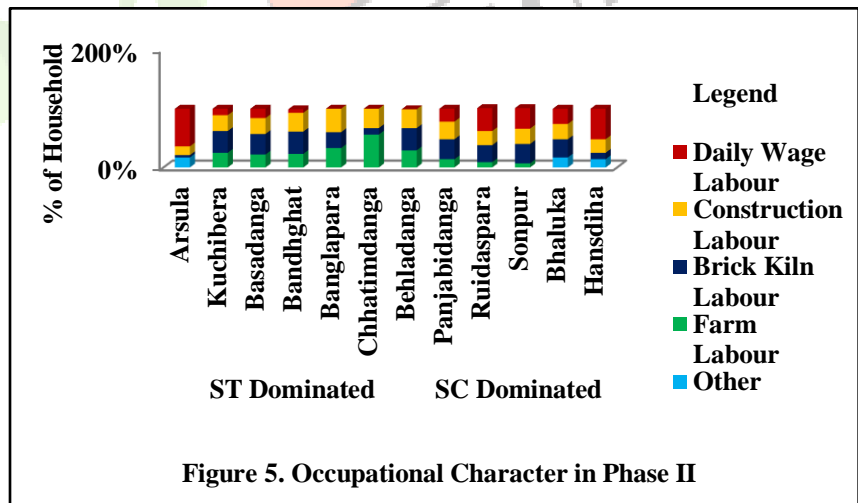


Figure 5. Occupational Character in Phase II

Source: Field Survey, 2019

VII. Extent and Impact of Land Acquisition on the Target Groups:

The ECL has acquired a total amount of 2404.58 hectares land for the whole project which is clearly mentioned in table 1 & 2. Now in table 3, it is found that from the 12 displaced villages a total amount of 788.5 hectares land have been acquired by the project of which 516.2 hectares from Sonpur mouza, 95.1 hectares from Bhaluka Mouza and 177.2 hectares from Hansdiha mouza. From the total households of the 12 villages 47% are the target population that means they have been affected by the project.

Table 3. Extent and Impact of Land Acquisition on the Target Groups:

SL. No.	Name of the village	Panchayat and Block	Area of Land Acquisition (in hectare)	Total population	Total No. of household	No. of household having less than 6 bighas of land	No. of landless household
1	Sonpur	Haripur Panchayat and Pandabeswar block	516.2	2358	520	47	25
2	Arsula			300	100	10	83
3	Kuchibera			250	50	8	41
4	Basadanga			300	100	6	93
5	Bandhghat			80	30	0	30
6	Banglapara			38	12	0	9
7	Chhatimdanga			90	34	0	34
8	Behladanga			212	94	31	61
9	Panjabidanga			317	119	58	22
10	Ruidaspara			200	64	35	12
11	Bhaluka	95.1	681	153	5	30	
12	Hansdiha	177.2	482	210	23	42	
Total			788.5	5308	1486	223	482

Source: Census of India, 2011 & Field Survey, 2018

VIII. Compensation Packages for Rehabilitation Provided by ECL:

According to **CMPDI (Central Mine Planning & Design Institute)** report of EIA & EMP(2014), the rehabilitation scheme involves provision of adequate compensation for the losses of land and homestead for the oustees from Sonpur-Bazari Project through the following ground:

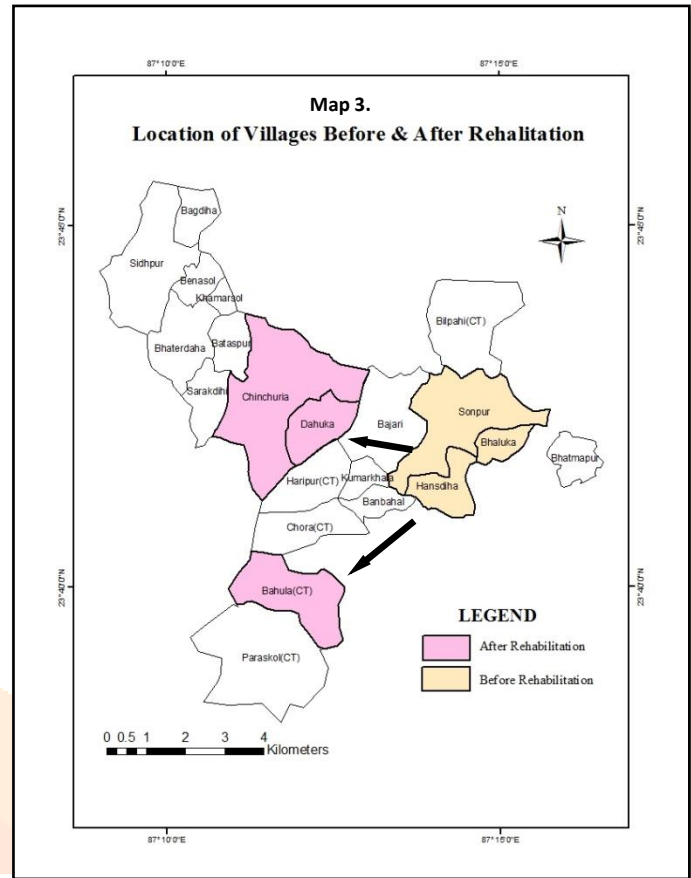
- Land for construction of the houses:** An area equivalent to twice of the plinth area of existing house has been given to the owner for construction of his own houses subject to a minimum of 3 katha lands.
- Amount for construction of the houses:** House survey committee assesses the value of existing houses and after assessment the adequate amount has been paid to the house owner for construction of his new house.
- Monetary Compensation for the loss of land:** A monetary compensation of Rs. 3 lakhs has been paid to each ward of the affected families who have gain above 18 year old age. Moreover 1 ECL job has been provided in lieu of 2 acres (6 bighas) of land as per RR Policy, 2012 of CIL.
- Moreover the report also said that the land looser families who are not provided with employment in lieu of loss of earning from land will be compensated as per RR Policy, 2012 of CIL. Tribal affected families are to be given one time financial assistance of 500 days MAW (Minimum Agricultural Wages) for loss of customary rights or usage of forest produce.

IX. Rehabilitation Status: The project has sufficient land in possession for township. It has already rehabilitated 12 affected villages and 5 are in the way of rehabilitation in its near future, where 1486 families have been rehabilitated. The rehabilitation of the project affected Families (PAFs) has been done in Dahuka and Chinchuria Mouza of Jamuria block and Bahula mouza of Pandabeswar block which is clearly shown in table 4 and map 3.

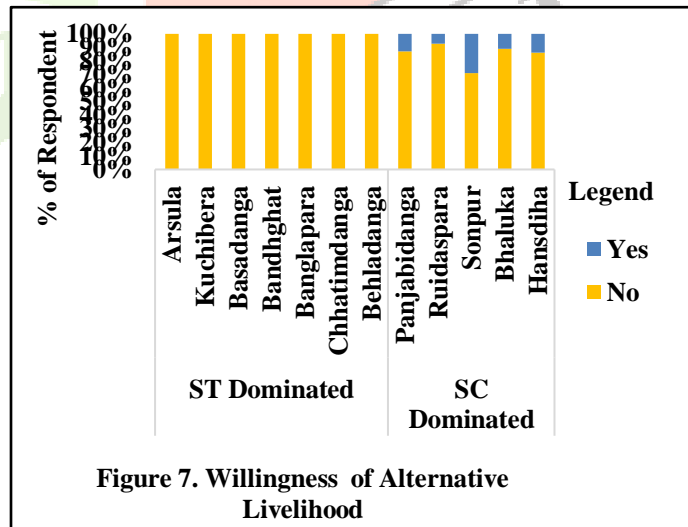
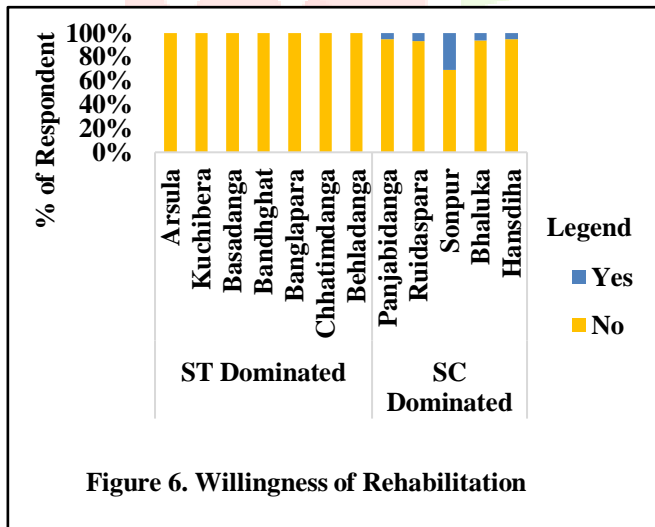
Table 4. Rehabilitation Details

SL. No.	Name of the village	Year of Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation Site	
1	Sonpur	Sonpur	2016-17	Dahuka
2		Arsula	2014-15	Dahuka
3		Kuchibera	2014-15	Dahuka
4		Basadanga	2014-15	Dahuka
5		Bandhghat	2014-15	Dahuka
6		Banglapara	2014-15	Dahuka
7		Chhatimdanga	2014-15	Dahuka
8		Behladanga	2006	Bahula
9		Panjabidanga	2000	Kalipahari
10		Ruidaspara	1996	Chinchuria
11	Bhaluka	2016	Dahuka	
12	Hansdiha	2004	Dahuka	

Source: www.secureloginecl.co.in>rehabilitation



Source: 18th All India Livestock Census, 2001. West



Source: Field Survey, 2019

X. Target Group’s Perception about the project: The people’s perception regarding the project was very positive before land acquisition and Rehabilitation. They thought that project would open the door for livelihood opportunities to them. Moreover being locals they would be hired as mining labour. They did also expect that ECL would provide them vocational training so that after rehabilitation they will have another option for new livelihood. But all their expectation and perception regarding the project went in vain. The ECL did neither give them job for alternative livelihood nor provide alternative cultivated land to maintain their previous livelihood. Moreover in new relocation site they are feeling lack in access to resource and infrastructure and the tribals are feeling insecure than previous. They express their reluctance to rehabilitation and to accept the alternative livelihood instead of their previous agricultural activity, which is very clear from the figures 6 & 7 that the tribal villages are completely unwilling in both for rehabilitation and for alternative livelihood respectively. So they were far better in their previous location in comparison to the new relocation site.

XI. Major Findings: The displacement and Rehabilitation has caused deprivation to the project affected families (PAFs) and these are as follows.

- a) **Landlessness:** Before displacement they had little amount of land and would lead their life with their land but after displacement in the new relocation site the ECL did not provide them any land for production only provided little amount for residential purposes. So they are suffering from landlessness.
- b) **Joblessness:** In the context of providing employment opportunities, ECL has given employment in lieu of land only to those who have 2 acres or more land. But the scenario of landless tribal and marginalized rural people having less than 2 acres of land is very miserable. The household having less than 6 bighas of land only get work as daily wage labour in the OC patches but not in permanent basis, whereas the landless households are actually jobless. The landless tribal people engage themselves as labour in brick kiln or building construction in some months of the year and rest of the time they remain jobless, whereas, the landless non tribal people remain engaged in dairy business, religious activity or as worker in electric or medical shop. So the situation is that during pre-mining period the major source of income was agriculture and forest resources and that was permanent sources but the source of income become mining centric after post mining period and not in permanent basis.
- c) **Loss of Traditional Livelihoods:** The traditional economy and livelihood of the displaced people in the study area has completely changed after the initiation of mining activity as the earlier producers or cultivators have turned into an industrial labour force. There are no people with cultivation because they don't have land for cultivation after displacement. So displacement has compelled the villagers to accept this change.
- d) **Loss of Culture & Breakdown of Lifestyles:** The displacement has broken down the traditional way of living and culture of both the tribal and the non-tribal marginalized one. Loss of agriculture and forest base resources has brought a loss of social relation, traditional rituals and customs.
- e) **Infringement of social and cultural rights:** Displacement has negatively affected the unity, cohesion and social bondage of the rural people. As in new relocation site the residential plot allotment was not done after maintaining the neighborhood position as it was in previous.
- f) **Inadequate Compensation for the Lost Property:** After displacement they lost their ancestral property such as land, homestead, livelihood, culture and tradition. As ECL has given them some amount of cash and land for only residential purposes not in terms of alternative cultivated land, livelihood, cultural and ecological aspect.
- g) **Inability of the Community to Capture Economic Benefits:** For the indigenous people the main source of economy is agriculture but due to landlessness their traditional source of income gets hampered and the displaced people are unable to capture the economic benefits from their ancestral property. In some cases the aged people are not willing to do other type of work instead of their previous agricultural activity.
- h) **Inability to handle cash compensation:** Mostly the marginalized rural people, particularly the tribals have little experience in handling cash. As ECL has given them cash based rehabilitation, so cash received as compensation is depleted by fraud, repayment of old debts, construction of house in new relocation site and in liquor. In sequel to this they don't have any deposited money for the future and now living their live in a hand to mouth situation.

XII. Conclusion & Suggestion: Based on the above findings it is obvious that through this project the most affected groups are the tribal. It is clear that displacement involves injustice to the tribal people and also violates their traditional way of living and socio-economic rights. Though ECL has given a good amount of compensation for the residential purposes but did not give any permanent alternative livelihood to these marginalized rural people in lieu of their lost income. Not only this, the company also acquired their land and homestead merely by paying some money at the cost of their livelihood and forced to move out from their homeland on the strength of payment of compensation. But compensation alone does not work in resettling populations rather alternative strategies are needed in addition to compensation. So it may be said that the socio-economic benefit derived from the project is much less than its cost significantly.

Based on the above study it may be suggested that

- The resettlement and rehabilitation should be done plan wise and the plan should be based on the principle "Beneficial to the production and Convenient for living".
- Compensation before actual displacement of people can be the best way to reduce the risks of joblessness, homelessness, marginalization in post displacement period.
- Both the land acquisition and land possession activities should carry out simultaneously.
- The company should provide all infrastructure facilities to the new rehabilitation site. The plight of landless households should be considered. They should give much emphasis on rehabilitation rather resettlement.
- Moreover the environment and health aspect have to provide attention.

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