



Rights of The Development Induced Internally Displaced Women In India: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Development projects are very often linked with the problem of displacement. The development projects in India have affected the poor powerless people specially Women. Absence of adequate resettlement and rehabilitation policy for the displaced has led to further pauperisation marginalization and helplessness among oustees. The study has made an attempt to find out the development-induced displacement. The main focus is on its impact on displaced persons particularly on displaced women. The sources of data are secondary one. The secondary data are collected from articles, seminars papers, books and news reports published in different news papers.

Keywords : Development induced Displacement, Internally displaced person, Project affected people, Resettlement, Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

Right to development is a fundamental human right. The developmental projects in different fields are vital for the progress of the nation. At the same time these projects have tremendous impact on the environment as well as the common people which includes Women also. The most significant impact of developmental project is the displacement of population whose land is acquired for the projects. One of the major challenges of today is the growth of the number of internally displaced person (IDPs) worldwide. The people are uprooted from their present habitat and have to start their life elsewhere. Each year, millions of persons are forcibly displaced by development projects, whether dams, roads, reservoirs or oil, gas and mining projects. While such projects can bring enormous benefits to society, they also impose costs, which are often borne by its poorest and most marginalized members¹. The suffering of those displaced by developmental projects can be very severe and has several dimensions to it. E.g., the displaced people suffer from financial and social insecurity because of their shifting to new set up and face many problems in adjusting to the new

¹ W. Courtland Robinson, risks and rights: The causes, consequences and challenges of development induced displacement.

environment. More importantly, they have deep emotional attachment to their ancestral land, tradition, culture and way of life and hence the displacement also affects them mentally and psychologically. Development-induced displacement has become a common feature in all countries particularly developing countries. In India massive developmental projects have been undertaken since independence in order to achieve socio-economic progress. India has invested in numerous industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities. These projects have been made possible through large scale acquisition of land. As a result around 50 million people have been displaced due to development projects in over 50 years². The rehabilitation of these displaced people is one of the most complex and sensitive issue and needs to be viewed from socioeconomic as well as human rights perspectives.

Development-Induced Displacement

Development-induced displacement (hereinafter DID) occurs when people are forced to abandon lands or relocate because of development³. It can be defined as the forcing of communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purposes of economic development. Use of coercion or force of any nature by the state is central to the idea of DID. At the international level, it is viewed as a violation of human rights⁴. It is a subset of forced migration. DID has occurred throughout history and is commonly associated with the construction of large dams for hydroelectric power and irrigation purposes, mining, and industrial projects. So also DID may occur due to military installations, airports, weapon testing grounds, railways and road developments, urbanization, conservation projects, forestry, etc. DID is a social problem affecting multiple levels of human organization, from tribal and village communities to well-developed urban areas⁵.

DID may be divided into two categories—direct and indirect. Direct displacement refers to those cases, where due to the initiation and construction of developmental projects there is a direct displacement of people who have inhabited these sites for generation together. E.g., displacement due to projects such as mines dams and industries, wildlife and other projects. Indirect displacement occurs when the people are forced to leave the area due to the functioning of those developmental projects. This is because the functioning of the projects consumes the natural and environmental resources in the surrounding and deprives their traditional means of livelihood. It is to be noted that these types of displacements affects mostly indigenous people who depend on their natural surrounding for their livelihood⁶. DID can again be classified as physical, economic, or both depending on the impacts of such displacement on people. Thus the actual relocation of individuals, families or communities from one place to another is termed as physical displacement, and when people lose access to vital natural resources that they need to sustain their livelihoods such as forests, grazing lands, and fresh water, it is termed as economic displacement. The causes or categories of DID may include water supply

² Nalin Singh Negi and Sujata Ganguly, Development projects V. Internally displaced population in India: A literature based appraisal, http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/tidrc/ag_comcad/download/working_paper_103_negi_ganguly.pdf.)

³ Jay Drydyk, unequal benefits: The ethics of development induced displacement, 8 GEO.J.INTL AFF.105(2007).

⁴ Kelly A.Dhru, acquisition of land for “development” projects in India: the road Ahead http://www.rfgindia.org/publications/Land_acquisition.pdf.)

⁵ www.wikipedia.org.

⁶ *Supra note 2*

(dams, reservoirs, irrigation), urban infrastructure, transportation (roads, highways, canals), energy (mining, power plants, oil exploration and extraction, pipelines), agricultural expansion, parks and forest reserves, and population redistribution scheme.⁷ The vast majority of DID is involuntary, with government authorities, security forces, or private militias forcing people from their homes and lands.⁸

Impacts of Development-Induced Displacement

Development-induced displacement linked to development. According to Alf Morten Jerve development induced displacement could be caused by government decision to acquire land for implementation of public project; or state decision to change the use of land owned or claimed by itself; or changes in the use of the land owned by state agencies; or not complete change of ownership but introduction of new restrictions on current use of land; or indirect impact areas like population, erosion, etc.⁹ Displacement refers not only to those who are forced to physically relocate in order to make way for project and its related aspects but also includes those who are displaced from their resource base and livelihoods. It is commonly experienced through the loss of land and the disruption of social and economic relationship¹⁰ Development induced displaced people are persons or a group of persons who are forced to leave their lands or homes or their possession as a result of a development process which undermines or excludes project affected people (PAP) who include the landless, the non-asset class, the seasonal farmers, the fishermen, boatmen, those engaged in work of art, culture and handicraft, and small shopkeepers in the affected village.¹¹ Another synonymous term used for the PAP and displaced person is 'oustees'. It includes not only the owners of land in question, but also those "carrying on any trade, occupation or calling or working for gain in the area likely to be submerged temporarily"¹² In India, it was estimated that more than 25 million persons have been displaced since 1950 on account of development projects. Less than fifty per cent of them have been rehabilitated. The rest were pauperized in the process of development of which 40 per cent were tribal.¹³ The impacts of DID are of varied nature and can range from loss of livelihood to mental and psychological impacts. According to a research conducted by Michael Cernea, a sociologist based at the World Bank, the forcible displacement from one's land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before the displacement. Those displaced are supposed to receive compensation of their lost assets, and effective assistance to re-establish them productively; yet this does not happen for a large portion of oustees".

⁷ Ashirbani Dutta, Development Induced Displacement And Human Rights 19 (2007)

⁸ Kate Hoshour & Jennifer Kalafut, A Growing global crises : development induced displacement and resettlement

⁹ Alf Morten, Jerv, (1999): "Social Consequences of Development in Human Rights Perspective : Lessons from the World Bank", in Human Rights in Development Global Perspectives and Local Issues, ed. By Hugo Stokke and Arne Tostensen (Kluwer Law International), the Hague, p.51)

¹⁰ Bartolome J.L., Danklemaier, C.M.(1999), Displacement, Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Reparation and Development (Argentina report, WCD), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org> 1999)

¹¹ Renu Modi, 2004 : Sardar Sarovar Ousteas, Coping with Displacement. Economic and Political Weekly, March.13, vol.XXXIX, No.11, p-1124).

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Jain, L.C Jain 2001 : Dam vs Drinking Water : Exploring the Narmada Judgement, Pune, Parisar

They are, landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, food insecurity, marginalization¹⁴ increased morbidity and mortality¹⁵, loss of access to common property, and social disintegration.

Impact of development induced development on women

Displacement not only results in physical dislocation, but also in women's disempowerment. All feel the impact of the consequent impoverishment but women and children feel it more than others do. The lower the social stratum they belong to the greater the impact. It takes the form of higher joblessness, greater malnutrition and deterioration in their social status. Resettlement policies and programmes, in the Indian context, have largely remained gender biased and fail to take into account the difficult process for them. Children suffer more than adults do mainly because the mother is unable to attend to her duties as the caretaker of the family. As stated above, access to work declines after the project alienates the land that is also the foundation of the tribal woman's relatively high status. While the access of the whole family declines, that of women declines more than that of men. We have said already that, if the project gives jobs, except in women headed families they go almost exclusively to men considered heads of families. If they are rehabilitated, land is allotted to men. So domestic power passes fully to the man and from him to his son¹⁶. As a result, after displacement joblessness is higher among women than among men. But for exceptions, women who want to work have to be satisfied with unskilled daily wage labour. It reduces women to being housewives alone depending on the man's single salary. But men spend a part of their salary on alcohol. Tribal women who are deprived of the resource that is the basis of their relatively high status, experience downward economic and social mobility. Dependence on men grows further among other women whose social status is not the same as that of the tribal¹⁷. It also deprives women of the resource that met the family's food, water and other needs that are traditionally their responsibility. Their role does not change but they have fewer resources to attend to it¹⁸.

Coping Mechanisms

Moreover, forced displacement is a traumatic experience. A mode of coping with it is drunkenness. One of its results is rise in domestic violence. Both drinking and domestic violence existed before displacement but they increase enormously after displacement as a coping mechanism meant to deal with the trauma. It becomes a coping mechanism even of many women. Since they have no work, many of them spend their time gossiping or drinking as we noticed even in a rehabilitation colony in Orissa.¹⁹

¹⁴ Marginalization occurs when families lose economic power due to loss of their land and job. Many individuals cannot use their earlier acquired skills at the new location and face difficulties in adjusting economic marginalization is often accompanied by social and psychological marginalization, loss of confidence in society and in themselves, a feeling injustice and deprived vulnerability.

¹⁵ Massive population displacement threatens to cause serious decline in health levels. Displacement induced social stress and psychological trauma are sometimes accompanied by the outbreak of relocation related diseases. Unsafe water supply and unhygienic living conditions in new location systems increase vulnerability to epidemics.

¹⁶ Thekkekara, Stan. 1993. "Historic Adivasi Sangamam at Mananthavady," *Social Action* 43 (n. 1, Jan-March), pp. 88-92

¹⁷ Menon Geeta. 1995. "The Impact of Migration on the Work and Tribal Women's Status," in Loes Schenken-Sandbergen (ed). *Women and Seasonal Labour Migration*. New Delhi: Sage, pp. 79-154

¹⁸ Thukral, Enakshi and Mridula Singh. 1995. "Dams and the Displaced in India," in Hari Mohan Mathur (ed). *Development, Displacement and Resettlement: Focus on Asia*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing Company, pp. 93-121.

¹⁹ Fernandes, Walter and S. Anthony Raj. 1992. *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation in the Tribal Areas of Orissa*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute (mimeo).

A second coping mechanism is internalisation of the dominant ideology. For example, influenced by the consumerist values that enter their area with the outsiders coming to the township, men spend much of their income on clothes and entertainment. Hence, even those who earn a higher monetary income than in the past leave women with a relatively little share of their salary to attend to their role in the family. Thus, women have to find economic alternatives in order to deal with the reality of catering to family needs with reduced resources. In the absence of other alternative many of them sell their body since that is the only asset they own. For example, in most mining towns of Jharkhand, a specific locality has emerged called “Azad Basti” (freedom shanties) where men who leave their families behind and work in the mines, come to satiate their sexual thirst.²⁰

Besides, the project changes the economy of a village drastically. Village women who were used to a barter economy in which they played an important role have now to compete with the salaried class to buy food in the market with no control over its price. This combination of landlessness, joblessness and lack of exposure to the market economy reduces their access to food. Already before displacement, women did not have full rights over land and forests. But as long as they were community resources, they had some control over it. Displacement deprives them of this control and leaves them with very few resources to take its place. Malnutrition is one of its consequences.²¹ Women too often internalise the dominant ideology as a coping mechanism. For example, when less food is available than in the past, many take to the dominant custom of the woman eating last after feeding the elders, men, boys and girls in that order. In case of shortages women and girls live on gruel as studies of the DP/PAP in Orissa and the Delhi slums show.²²

Internalisation of this ideology continues also in the attitude towards unskilled work. As stated above, most women are forced to take up unskilled daily wage jobs since they do not have other alternatives. Some men whom the project employs as maintenance staff in their offices do not want their wives to do domestic or other unskilled work because “it is against an office worker’s dignity to have his wife doing menial work”. Many women internalise the ideology of their place being in the kitchen and of not being intelligent enough for skilled.²³ It closes the vicious circle against them.

Conclusion

Although the development projects are necessary for the country but proper rehabilitations and resettlement are also important for those who are losing their land. People face very bad experience after giving their land for the necessary development projects. Women are the most sufferers of these displacements because maximum numbers of women have no title right to the land therefore after losing the land displacing to new place they became totally dependent on the male members of society. Although all the communities have

²⁰ (George, Sujitha Susan. 2002. “Women and Mining in the Singhbhum Districts of Jharkhand,” in Anon (ed). *Women and Mining: A Resource Kit*. New Delhi: Delhi Forum, pp. 16-20.

²¹ Bhanumathi, K. “The Status of Women Affected by Mining in India,” in in Anon (ed). *Women and Mining: A Resource Kit*. New Delhi: Delhi Forum, pp. 20-24.

²² Fernandes, Walter and S. Anthony Raj. 1992. *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation in the Tribal Areas of Orissa*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute (mimeo).

²³ work (Menon, Geeta. 1995. “The Impact of Migration on the Work and Tribal Women's Status,” in Loes Schenken-Sandbergen (ed). *Women and Seasonal Labour Migration*. New Delhi: Sage, pp. 79-154).

provided the property right through the inheritance and succession but still women are facing many difficulties while accessing the property rights. Therefore government should make adequate arrangements for the women who are being displaced irrespective of kind of projects whether it is government purposes or private purpose. Special provision should be made to safeguard the interest of rural and tribal women.

This bird's eye view of development-induced displacement from a class-caste-gender perspective shows that Indian society is divided on a ladder of class, caste, habitat and gender. The lower one is on that ladder, the greater the negative impact of changes introduced in their lives without their consent. Most DP/PAPs feel the negative impact of displacement but women feel it more than the others do and women among them are the worst affected. They are deprived of the resources that were basic to their survival and are denied access to education, health services and nutrition. It forces them to deny their children right to childhood and to a decent adulthood. Women are deprived of the little autonomy they had. Development cannot be real till such failures are remedied and its benefits reach those who pay its price.

