



A Study on overall Impact of Displacement on Society in India

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ABSTRACT

Large dams, a tool for development in the past century, have changed the lives of millions, altered nations and had widespread environmental, economic and social effects. With the increasing amount of data available, the effects of dams can be assessed with greater accuracy and validity. Development-induced displacements now exceed those resulting from conflict situations and natural disasters. The displaced population usually suffers various forms of impoverishment including homelessness and social disarticulation. This study seeks to contribute to strategies for mitigating these negative impacts by improving resettlement policies. The problems of resettlement and rehabilitation are emphasized in the article as are further displacement effects due to this process. The inequality between development beneficiaries and those who must bear the majority of the development costs is also addressed.

Keywords: Involuntary resettlement, dams, hydropower, dam resettlement, social impacts, indigenous people, World Bank, benefit-sharing, compensation

INTRODUCTION

Development-induced displacements have a track-record of leaving the uprooted people impoverished in multiple ways. Until relatively recently those challenging this state of affairs were mainly confined to people directly affected by displacement, some social scientists and a few activists. Increasingly, however, a wider spectrum of civil society the world over is concerned that projects undertaken in the name of development ironically cause massive impoverishment.(Colchester & Peoples, 2000)

Development discourse emphasized the use of mega-projects to realize national objectives. The manipulation of natural resources, part of the post-independence development plan, included the damming of India's largest rivers to provide irrigation for modern agricultural practices, drinking water and electric power generation to support industrialisation. The large dam epitomizes an ideology combining modernization, development and mega-projects that was encapsulated in Prime Minister Nehru's 1950s description of dams as the 'modern temples of India'.(Edwards, n.d.)



Such developments cause massive displacement and frequently the impoverishment of those moved. Furthermore, those displaced are often already the most marginalized in society. Despite the flourishing of opposition to these forms of development project, the government is still intent on pursuing development along the same lines. So it seems that, at least for the time being, India will witness ‘more of the same’.(Gates, n.d.)

The failures and adverse consequences of large dams are regarded as symptomatic of projects premised on the western model of development, prioritizing economic growth over social and environmental impacts. Opposition to large dams may therefore be situated within the challenge to the dominant development model, including a critique of the state as an implementer of ‘big development’ using top-down centralized planning as its tool. The flip side of the coin is that this form of development involves ‘a transformation of people through the reduction of an enormous diversity of life ways into a significantly reduced set of social, cultural and economic relationships that are compatible with the industrialized forms of production’.(Parasuraman & Balasubramanian, 2015)

Impact of Displacement

The consequence of the present pattern of development is the continuing powerlessness of the weaker sections due to displacement and without any benefits from these development projects. Since independence, development projects of the five year plans have displaced about five lakh persons each year primarily as a consequence of land acquisition. This figure does not include displacement by non-plan projects. Changes in land use, acquisition for urban growth and loss of livelihood have also caused environmental degradation and pollution. Hydro electrical and irrigation projects are the largest cause of displacement and destruction of habitat. The other major sources are mines, industrial complexes as well as military installations, parks and sanctuaries, etc.(Sundar, 2016)

Several studies have documented the qualitative consequences of forced development. These consequences vary with local circumstances, but the ultimate common factor underlying the displacement effect is impoverishment. This occurs along the following crucial dimensions: landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, food insecurity, social disarticulation, loss of common property increased morbidity and mortality.(Wong, 2013)



Tribal regions are more particularly affected in this process of development. A significant number of displaced tribals have historically been dependent on natural and common resources for their subsistence. Their displacement on a massive scale adds a serious dimension to the problem. These tribal communities have an ethos and a way of life based significantly upon their natural resource base. Due to developmental projects, they are forced to move out of areas where they have lived for generations. Apart from depriving them of their lands and livelihood, displacement, other traumatic psychological and socio-cultural consequences, tribals also have been victimized on the basis of their political rights. These include dismantling of the production system, scattering of kinship groups and family systems, disruption of trade and market.(Colchester & Peoples, 2000)

The oustees who bear the pain never share the gains of development. Thus critics have argued that displacement caused by large development projects has actually resulted in a transfer of resources from the weaker sections of society to more privileged ones. This has generally been the case with India's development model. The large development projects, particularly mega dams, create victims of development- mainly tribals and other weaker sections of the society. It can be said that the bigger the development project, the greater the centralized control over it. This centralization has a bias in favor of large landholders, rich farmers, engineers, bureaucrats and politicians.(Feldes, 2017)

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Huang et al., 2017) Dam projects are inevitably accompanied by massive displacement and resettlement, which imposes intricate social impacts on the host community. This study aims to investigate the social impacts of dam-induced displacement and resettlement in China through a comparative case study where both the control and experimental groups were investigated. Data were collected through a mix of questionnaire-survey, archival files, and face-to-face interviews. The results show that dam-induced displacement and resettlement was conducive to improving residence conditions and facilitating the acceptance of rural cooperative medical insurance. But it had negative impacts on employment, income level and income resource, and overall well-being. Implications for theory and for practice are provided in the end.



(Luxion, 2017) Since 2000 the Indian state of Gujarat has been working to construct a state-wide water grid to connect 75% of its approximately 60 million urban and rural residents to drinking water sourced from the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River. This project represents a massive undertaking – it is billed as the largest drinking water project in the world – and is part of a broader predilection toward large, concrete-heavy supply-side solutions to water insecurity across present-day India. This paper tracks the claims and narratives used to promote the project, the political context in which it has emerged, the purposes it serves and, following Ferguson (1990), the functioning of the discursive-bureaucratic 'machine' of which it is a product. The dam's reinvention as the solution to Gujarat's drinking water shortfall – increasingly for cities and Special Industrial Regions – reflects a concern with attracting and retaining foreign investment through the creation of so-called 'world-class' infrastructure. At the same time, this reinvention has contributed to a project of nation- building, while remaining cloaked in a discourse of technological neutrality. The heavy infrastructure renders visible Gujarat's commitment to 'development' even when that promise has yet to be realized for many, while the promise of Narmada water gives Gujarat's leaders political capital with favored investors and political supporters. In conclusion, I suggest that the success of infrastructure mega-projects as a political tool is not intrinsically tied to their ability to achieve their technical and social objectives. Instead, the 'spectacle' of ambitious infrastructural development projects may well yield political gains that outweigh, for a time, the real- world costs of their inequity and unsustainability.

(Feldes, 2017) Large dams and their social consequences have been subject to extensive debate in recent decades. In India, the National River Linking Project (NRLP), which is the world's largest water project in the making and involves the construction of several dams, has been at the centre of this debate. The 168-billion-dollar project is designed to connect the majority of Indian rivers to a gigantic water grid. Historically, large scale water infrastructure in the subcontinent has been discursively linked to imaginaries of development and national progress, as underlined by Nehru's famous quote proclaiming large dams as 'the temples of modern India'. However, these imaginaries clash with the experiences of those affected by the construction of dams: not only are the displaced communities among the most marginalized in Indian society, but they also benefit the least and suffer the most from such projects. This article begins by exploring the degree to which such imaginaries continue to be prominent in



contemporary political discourse, by undertaking an analysis of the media coverage received by the Polavaram Project, i.e. the first project implemented under the NRLP scheme.

(Drolet et al., 2014) Environmentally induced displacement is a growing concern across the globe. The human and social dimensions of affected displaced and migrating populations are of concern to the profession of social work, as many social workers are directly involved in working with vulnerable populations affected by environmental changes due to climate change, disasters, and environmental degradation. This new reality presents challenges in addressing social and economic inequalities and disparities, and this commentary argues for a need to build capacity among practitioners to consider the interconnections of social, economic, and environmental challenges in bridging practice and policy in ongoing legal discourses.

(Maitra, 2009) The paper explores the dynamics of the phenomenon of Development Induced Displacement and the theoretical, legal, and policy level issues which have impeded the fluent process of implementation of development projects in India. Modern India has found itself embroiled in this tussle between the development plans of the State at the macro level and their undesirable consequences for the specific project affected people. Though the exigencies of time and the logic of the liberalization policy demand the continuous articulation of development projects, it is equally imperative to transcend the disempowering effects of displacement on its people. Despite recent initiatives by the government, concrete policy statements and laws governing the issues of compensation and resettlement are found wanting. The paper argues that there is an urgent need for the state to reach a necessary balance between its efforts to augur development and to make it sustainable, just, and equitable. The problems encountered in the allocation of compensation and resettlement in such projects form the focus of the article.

(Argentino & Internacionales, 2003) Resettlement of affected persons and rehabilitation of their lost assets (land and / or structures) and livelihood are critical yet imperative social development exercises of linear road projects that require displacement of individuals and groups in order to either upgrade / widen existing road networks or else to construct new road systems for better transport facilities and streamlined movement of vehicular traffic essential for economies undergoing reforms. Involuntary resettlement caused by road projects should be informed by comprehensive mitigation measures in order to reduce adverse impacts on the existing social fabric of Project Affected Persons.



Challenges

- **Inclusion and Integration of Displaced people:** Internal displacement is not viewed positively in India and policies are often aimed at reducing internal displacement, as a result, there is a lack of integration of displacement with the process of development.
- **Psychological and Emotional Stress:** Any person displacing to a new country faces multiple challenges, from cultural adaptation and language barriers to homesickness and loneliness.
- **Employment challenges:** Foreign labor displacement often faces unacceptable treatment from their employers. For instance, some labors are paid below their contract wage and may be forced to work long hours and denied regular time off. Systems like reservation of jobs in many states and countries for the locals (visa barriers in US, Saudi Arabia’s Nitaqat law) pose as the main hurdle.
- **Contract Wage System:** The problems faced by displaced people in destination places range from contract violation, non-payment of salary, long working hours, and poor working conditions.
- **Health Hazards:** The poor and harsh living conditions coupled with difficult and risky working conditions, lack of information, and lack of medical health support also leads to several health problems of the migrants.

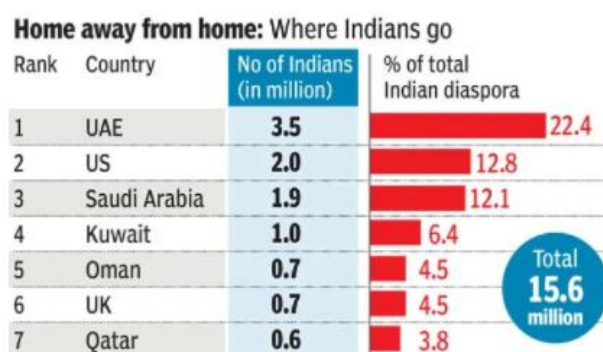


Figure 1: Displaced People from India to other countries

CONCLUSION

Displacement is a disruption in social life which results in landlessness, homelessness, joblessness marginalization, poverty and food scarcity, increased morbidity, and loss of access to common property resources and social disarticulation. Most displaced and project affected persons belong to the marginalized and powerless classes, or to landless labourers and small



marginal farmers with no assets. As per many independent assessments displacement has made the lives of displaced people very worst, by deteriorating their standard of living to the lowest. The damage caused by resettlement far outweighs its benefits and the vast resources wasted on the various programs would have been more profitably employed elsewhere.

Thus, development projects have done little to alleviate existing social inequalities. On the contrary, they have further aggravated the social structure in favor of the already socially, economically and politically powerful, thus throwing to the winds the socialist pretensions in the Constitution.

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