



Development Projects: Inclusion or Exclusion of Vulnerable Section

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ABSTRACT

Physical infrastructural development projects displace/affect complex categories of persons/families/villages/communities which are addressed as per the policy guidelines of the state or firm houses. The policy upholds to protect and provide not only the physical infrastructure of project affected persons (PAPs) but also bring back better economic stability that might have been disturbed in the process of Land Acquisition for constructing the projects. The challenge for the projects was manifold since the families getting physically/economically disturbed belonged to the vulnerable groups: SC, ST, women, children, physically challenged, minorities and elderly persons. In the present study, the author has gathered data through narrative tools to understand the PAPs' changing socio- economic status.

Keywords : development, eminent domain, exclusion and inclusion, land use, Rehabilitation Action Plan (RAP) and vulnerable group

Introduction

'Development' from capitalist perspective means a form of material domination, i.e. possession of physical property through land, water and minerals etc. But all forms of material domination are not deemed as 'development'. It is a relative concept. This is because a capitalist society considers how far people make materials useful with non-material property, such as, education, technology, skill and efficiency, etc. For an example, rural people use land for agriculture. Agriculture depends upon monsoon and favourable weather. Hence, agriculture is risky due to unfavourable monsoon, flood and cyclone. Therefore, capitalists argue for a differential land use that will be opened from such risk and bestowed wellbeing for a larger section of population. This differential land use concept brings a number of questions to our mind: What is development? Where is development? Development means for whom? Who pays for whose development?

The Government of India and its agencies have expropriated private and community land for 'public purpose'. This is because of its instrument of the Land Acquisition Act (LAA), 1894 that grants a power to the state to exercise 'eminent domain' for expropriation of land. The project authority pays cash compensation to the land losers in lieu of their land. They get cash by 'dispossession of land and meanings' (Da Coasta, 2010). However, the land was a source of livelihood for all the vulnerable members in a family.

Rehabilitation Action Plan (RAP) in lieu of land alienation is intended to 'integrate' vulnerable people into the main stream. In other words, integrating vulnerable people is an adjustment between 'isolation' or exclusion and 'assimilation' or inclusion (Nathan and Xaxa, 2012). Vulnerable community is believed to be in a state of exclusion because of their disorientation to use modern technology in the field of social life.

Objectives and Methodology

The present paper is based on a few narratives from the PAPs who have remained vulnerable in various ways: from the society, community, developer and the state at large. In broad sense Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), women, children and the elderly find it more difficult to cope

with the adverse pressures of land loss due to development project. It is also true that they are the ones whose voices are least heard. The narratives speak volumes about the strategies, policies and overall ideology of our development. The context of the following narratives is the displaced/affected persons from vulnerable sections through the Dhamra Port Company Limited (DPCL), a joint venture of Tata Steel and L & T at Dhamra in Bhadrak district (Odisha) in the year 2006; and POWERGRID projects at Ranchi (Jharkhand), Berhampore (West Bengal), Rengpo and New Mellie (both in Sikkim). The narratives are perception of the displaced/PAPs. Our conclusion through extensive field work is that all the vulnerable sections are adversely affected by land acquisition. But others might have gained from the same village. In our study, we have not included non-displaced and non-affected population who might have gained a lot through the establishment of development projects. The economic loss and gain of the project at the state level or for that matter for the company is not part of our narratives. But the narratives amply suggest that the only weapon for the poor is their bargaining power and since SC, ST, women, children and the elderly have least bargaining power they are likely to perish through development.

Narrative Analysis

Lakshmi Mondal, a forty-five year old unmarried woman is living in a hut near her two brothers' house in 0.04 acre at Chianipalli village of Dhamra in Odisha. The family before land acquisition owned 4 acres of land which was being cultivated by Lakshmi along with her two brothers. She was a permanent labour in her own land which gave her a secured status in the family of her brother. DPCL's acquisition of both agricultural land and homestead land completely marginalised all sources of Lakshmi's living, livelihood and status in the family. The compensation money was shared by her brothers and no one has given Lakshmi any shelter and she earns nothing and ended up with a begging bowl. All other affected in her community promised to help her but no help so far is rendered to Lakshmi either by the brothers or by the community. Lakshmi's voice has not reached the DPCL or District authorities and the state policy's incorporation of unmarried woman as 'beneficiary' holds no meaning in the field.

Munna Khan, 13 year old boy of the same Chianipalli village, along with his friends entered the boundary wall of the DPCL to be able to reach the sea where they were used to go every day helping their mothers in sea-shore fishing. He was killed by the guards on the spot for breaking law of entering the compound. His family since then is missing from that locality and no one knows about their whereabouts.

Salim Khalko, S/o Parmod Oraon was a resident of Tengaria Village in Ranchi district. He was about forty years old married man living with his spouse and five malnourished children in a mud house. He belonged to the Oraon tribe and Christian in faith. His father had four acres of un-irrigated agricultural paddy land of which POWERGRID had acquired 0.58 acres of land in 2011. His 75 years old father was awarded a cash compensation in lieu of land amounting Rs.17, 51,600.00 at the rate of Rs.73, 63,282.00 per hectare. His father had distributed this compensation amount between him and his two sons and the total compensation amount was deposited in a bank. They were illiterate people and had no knowledge regarding bank transaction for which they had taken the help of middle- man. Surprisingly, Salim, his brother and father could not count the money properly for which they were cheated by the middle- man. In addition, they lacked the knowledge of how to use their money for improving their life- style. In the mean time, the extremists demanded a part of compensation from Salim, which he denied. At last the extremists cut his throat and killed him. His family since that incidence was living inconsolably and haplessly.

Ananda Bishakarma, a 48 year Scheduled Caste man is living with two sons and a minor daughter. He has completed lower primary schooling. He has owned a patch of plain agricultural land (0.2716 hectare) at Samardong village of Rengpo in Sikkim. He has intended to convert this agricultural land into a small industrial unit for which he has taken a loan of Rs.20.00 lakhs from a bank. He has also purchased some machinery equipments amounting Rs.5.00 lakhs to start the work. However, this land is acquired by the POWERGRID in 2011. He is not informed about it either by the company or the state before land acquisition. He is awarded cash compensation of Rs.37, 18,341.00 lakh at the rate of Rs.97.57 lakhs per hectare of which he has received Rs.29, 74,673.00 lakh that is 80 per cent of the total amount. He has done repayment his loan and the rest amount he has expensed on his children's education. His elder son Aadersha is an MBA student where as his younger son Ashish is an Engineering student. Two years passed. He has not received the balance amount. Ananda is left with no money for his own survival. Livelihood is now tied up with driving in other's vehicle in the absence of his access to the only plain land on which his rice and intending industry was ensured prior to land acquisition.

Jolly Wangyal Lassopa, S/o Late Jigmi Wangyal Lassopa, 36 years old, is living at Namchi, the headquarters of South Sikkim District, which is about 40 kilometres away from New

Mellie. He is unmarried and living with his 62 year old widow mother and unmarried 37 year old sister. He belongs to the Bhotia tribe and Buddhist in faith. He has lost his right hand in an accident and remaining unemployed. He has owned 2.8 hectare agricultural land at Tokal village of New Mellie in Sikkim. He has complained that his land is measured by the revenue department along with the firm house without taking consent from him. After some days he is told that he will be paid cash compensation of Rs.1, 57,91,589.00 at the rate of Rs.109.32 lakhs per hectare for 1.34 hectares land which is acquired by the POWERGRID. He has received 80 per cent of cash compensation in 2011 and the rest amount is still pending at the state government though two years have already passed. He has approached the POWERGRID to award him contract works. However, the POWERGRID has kept a condition that the work orders would be awarded only to those persons who have experience for the same in other government agencies. This physically challenged tribal person is lacking that experience for which he is denied and deprived of justice though he is capable of doing it. In short, he lives with uncertain source of income.

The narrative of 50 years old Sambhu Kisku was depressing to all the residents of the locality. He was the resident of Dakhingram village in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. He was living in a *kachha* house with his spouse and two unmarried sons, and his only daughter was married away. He belonged to the Santal tribe and Maramburu in faith. The POWERGRID has served notice to acquire his 0.017 hectare land out of the total 0.034 hectare irrigated paddy land, on which he was living alone with full time activity in the agriculture field. The company had awarded cash compensation in lieu of land at the rate of Rs.10, 53,307.00 per hectare, which was unaccepted by the possible land losers and demanded more compensation. In the mean time, he had turned into a clinically sick person, which forced him to sell his land to the company at its fixed rate in 2012. However, he had lost his life because of sickness. Muna Khan, Salim Khalko and Sambhu Kisku's lives will not come back but the damages done to others may possibly still be repaired if development induced effects had any human face.

Conclusion

Development related displacement (both physical and economic displacement) issues have raised unrestrained controversies. In intellectual discourse, a common question is asked in almost every platform: what happens without development since it affects gravely to the primary stakeholders, i.e., eight impoverishment risks (Cernea: 2000): landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and services, and social disarticulation; in short exclusion of vulnerable people.

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