



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Social Science

REHABILITATION OF DISPLACED TRIBES- ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Development-induced displacement in the country has brought severe economic, social and environmental problems to the displaced people. Magnitude of people displaced and severity of the problems due to multipurpose dam projects is too high as compared to other projects in the country. The experience of post-Independence period from projects across the country suggests that the long drawn out process of displacement has caused widespread traumatic psychological and socio-cultural consequences. Economically and politically dominant groups - large farmers, contractors, bureaucrats and politicians are pushing many more projects that will cause massive displacement. As economic liberalization and globalization facilitate the penetration of the Indian interior, the lives, livelihoods and lifestyles of those who critically depend on the natural resource base will continue to be seriously affected.

INTRODUCTION

Displacement is nothing but uprooting of people from their long habitual settlement, cultivated land, source of water, animals, community life and social and cultural networks. In other words, it is removal of the people from their natural place of living with comfortable accommodation with cultivated land, natural resources, water resources and animal resources in well adjusted community life.

Since India's independence in 1947, there has been a surge of economic development activities in the form of massive infrastructure development projects such as the construction of dams for power and irrigation, the building of roads, urbanization, mining, building of thermal power plants, etc. Proponents of large dams argue that only these types of massive projects can improve India's economy and the lives of millions of people.

India today has over 3600 dams; more than 3300 of them built after independence in 1947. At least 700 more dams are under construction. Tribals constitute 8.08 percent of India's population as per 1991 census figures. According to an Indian government working group, 40-50 percent of those displaced by development projects are tribals. Information about number of tribals displaced by dams is available in case of a few of these projects, which is tabulated in table below. It clearly shows that the tribals have faced a disproportionate share of displacement.

More than 60 million people are estimated to have been displaced in India since independence, the highest number of people uprooted for development projects in the world. This amounts to around one million displaced every year since independence.

Rehabilitation of the Displaced Tribals

Resettlement and Rehabilitation are often taken to be synonymous by the authorities concerned, who fail to understand that the two are different. Resettlement is the process of physical relocation, while Rehabilitation involves a longer process of rebuilding people's physical and economic livelihood, their assets, their cultural and social links, and psychological acceptance of the changed situation.

During the process of resettlement, the men are taken to be as representatives of the entire community, while women often remain uninformed, unaware about the project or the details of the rehabilitation. Resettlement as a precautionary measure may not be taken up willingly by the would-be-affected people themselves, because of financial inability, as expected by the authorities, as relocation involves a complex process of moving people from one place to another along with their economic, socio-cultural, natural physical and built environment-infrastructure.

The major issues related to displacement and rehabilitation are as follows:

Developmental projects that displace people generally give rise to severe social, economic, ecological and environmental problems. Family as a system crumples down and its bond by long established heritage and ancestry is scattered. Community structure and social networks are weakened, kin groups are thrown apart; coupled with this, cultural identity, traditional authority and the potential for mutual help are diminished. People's values, belief systems, attitude, custom and tradition receive severe setback. Family as a system of production ceases to exist and the nature of religious worship also gets affected. The sense of belonging to their birthplace is threatened and the feel of security generated by symbolic creations such as places of worship, graveyards of ancestors, scared mountains, trees and deities are destroyed. It is generally associated with psychological stress and results in sickness, grief and death. The roots of cultural identity are suddenly snapped. People are bound to live in a new atmosphere and compelled to change their attitude and values, which changes the entire socio-cultural lifecycle of the affected people.

Forced population displacement is always crisis-prone, even when necessary as part of broad and beneficial development programs. It is a profound socioeconomic and cultural disruption for those affected. Dislocation breaks up living patterns and social continuity. It dismantles existing modes of production, disrupts social networks, causes the impoverishment of many of those uprooted, threatens their cultural identity, and increases the risks of epidemics and health problems.

The tribals are not familiar with the market policies and trends. Even if they get cash compensation, they get alienated in the modern economic set up. Kinship systems, marriages, social and cultural functions, their folksongs, dances and activities vanish with their displacement, even when they are resettled; it is individual-based resettlement, which totally ignores communal settlement. The indigenous knowledge that they have regarding the wildlife and the herbal plants are lost.

Consequences of Displacement

Human Displacement refers to the forced movement of people from their home, or country of origin. Displacement is also interchangeable with the term forced migration. Human Displacement can be a result of many different factors. Generally all forms of displacement fall under given below.

Landlessness: Up to one quarter of the world's poor is estimated to be landless, a condition that in rural areas is often the best predictor of poverty and hunger. Access to land and its resources, land tenure security, ownership and control over

land, and the ability to dispose of land or transfer rights in land are necessary for the fulfilment of fundamental human rights, and are frequently tied to the indigenous, ethnic, and cultural identities of peoples. The social and economic impacts of landlessness, including hunger, threats to health, homelessness, and exploitative labour conditions, create conditions intensifying exploitation by both landowners and states.

Unemployment: Unemployment means a person is said to be unemployed if he/she is willing or available to be employed but is not able to find the work. In a new settlement area the people may not get immediate employment opportunities or possess the qualification or training to fit into the new jobs.

Problems with New type of education: Children often face difficulties in learning because of medium of education (Language and Slang), lack of understanding with new learning techniques and devices and adjustment problems with new teachers, new school environment and peer group.

Expensive healthcare: It's also clear that while low income contributes to poor health status, poor health can also contribute to lower income. Poor health can limit one's ability to work, reduce economic opportunities, inhibit educational attainment, and lead to medical debt and bankruptcy. The tribals who have sacrificed their lands, homes and sacred religious spots and displaced are unable to understand the healthcare services like Super speciality hospitality, health insurance schemes etc and are vulnerable for exploitation.

Loss of access to common property resources: Access to land, forest, river, sea, fisheries, cattle, grazing land and other common property resources, which support subsistence livelihoods and provide greater security against risk of poverty to women. In addition, women have the responsibility of collecting fuel, wood, fodder, and minor forest produce and water for their family.

Sense of insecurity: Sense of insecurity linked with rehabilitation has to do with the change in topographical and social environment. Failure to understand and adjust with the new environment, the individuals feel insecure and chance of feeling stress, anxiety and confusion.

Unfamiliar hostile environment: This type of environment is not only detrimental to productivity, but it also have a profoundly negative impact on mental, emotional and physical health.

Adjustment problems with locals: In a new environment it is difficult to adjust with the locals. Locals always suspect these people are burden and get a share in all opportunities and resources. But the fact is that the local farmers and traders will get labour for cheap wages.

New environment: It is no more their ancestral land and the close knitted kinship society, but confusing and complex society. Indirect relations prevail and it is very difficult for the new people to understand and adjust.

Cultural problems: In Individualistic societies, people define themselves in terms of 'I' and their unique attributes. Autonomy and independent thought are valued and the interests and goals of the individual prevail over group welfare. Personal attitudes and needs are important determinants of behaviour. Ties between members are loose.

In Collectivistic societies, people define themselves in terms of 'we' and their group memberships. Members are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups. Social interdependence and collective harmony are valued. Relational ties and obligations are important determinants of behaviour; group goals take

precedence over individual goals.

Lifestyle diseases: While there are communicable diseases like malaria, cholera, polio, which can be managed with the help of proper treatment, there are lifestyle diseases which are very difficult to control. As the purchase power increases, people's food habits and life style change to a great extent. **Obesity, diabetes, Heart diseases, High blood pressure, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease etc are common in the cities and towns.** All these incidences just illustrate the myriad ways in which displacement leads to a breakdown of lifestyles.

Vulnerability to Exploitation: Exploitation is the act of selfishly taking advantage of someone or a group of people in order to profit from them or otherwise benefit oneself. As the evacuees in a new environment may not understand or aware of the prevailing wages, salaries or cost of the goods and are exposed for exploitation.

Un-healthy Food habits: Sudden and radical changes to eating habits may have negative health effects. Scientists have shown in new research that dietary changes are linked to alterations in gene expressions that could affect overall health and physiology. The food we eat gives our bodies the "information" and the materials they need to function properly. If we don't get the right food and right information, at proper time our metabolic processes suffer and our health declines

Difficulties to understand commercialism: Commercialism is nothing but exploiting objects, people, or the environment for private gain for the purpose of generating profit. It is very difficult for the people who are rehabilitated in urban or semi-urban areas to understand the concept and adjust with this type of environment around them.

Loss of traditional authorities: The tribal people believe in leadership by heredity or physical power and unconditionally surrender to the verdicts. But in the new environment the leadership is not by birth or choice but by election. Decision making depends upon democratic process with a written rules and regulations.

Worship and Rituals: The tribes in the forest worship nature and trees, mountains or hillocks, rivers or streams, rocks are their sacred objects and Gods. They have sacred spots in their forest and farm. Graveyards of their ancestors are sacred to them. Due to displacement they have to forgo worshipping all the sacred objects or deities. All their rituals are considered as sacred and followed with trust and at most care and reverence. In the new settlement area neither forest nor sacred objects are available for them to worship.

- Recommendations**
- To overcome the issues and challenges regarding rehabilitation and resettlement of tribals displaced from the forest can be addressed by following recommendations;
- Provide food, potable water, clothing, shelter, basic health care, education etc.
 - Creation of livelihood opportunities:
 - Land to land. Cash is not the solution.
 - Cottage industries.
 - Cooperative societies and marketing facilities to sell their handicrafts
 - Training programmes to upgrade their skills
 - Industrial parks
 - Need for Central and State Governments to re-examine and amend laws, policies, plans, regulations and practices
 - Basic principles in the National Relief and Rehabilitation Policy [NRRP] must be incorporated in the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007 (R&R Bill).

- Social impact assessment and understanding local aspirations are best captured through continuous dialogue with local people who are affected and NGOs.

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