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Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement in India

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Abstract

Displacement and resettlement due to developmental projects have emerged as a major public policy and human rights concerns in contemporary India. Since independence, large dams, coalmines, industry, power plants, infrastructure construction and urban expansion projects have evicted millions of people from their land, livelihoods, communities and social environments. According to various studies, after independence more than 60 million people have been displaced due to development in India of which the proportion of tribals and Dalits are very high. This displacement is not just a physical displacement; rather, it creates multidimensional issues such as loss of livelihoods, breakdown of social networks, cultural erosion, loss of access to common resources and psychological trauma.

The article analyses the historical context of development-related displacement, starting from colonial land acquisition policies to post-independence large-scale industrial and river valley projects. The real picture of eviction and rehabilitation is highlighted through discussion of various incidents, including the Narmada Valley Project, Rourkela Steel Project, Delhi Metro, Tata Nano Project in Singur. The National Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Policy (2003, 2007) and the policy limitations, lack of transparency, lack of gender sensitivity and problems of effective implementation are also reviewed.

Keywords: Development, Displacement, Resettlement, Rehabilitation

In India and around the world development and displacement have become major concerns in public policy as well as in administration. Displacement is happening as a consequence of developmental projects, with farmers, agricultural labourers, especially tribals and Dalits being the main victims. In India, more than 60 million people have been displaced in the past few years. Out of these, 50 percent are tribals and 20 percent are Dalits. Displacement of people usually gives rise to severe socio-economic and cultural problems.

Since independence, developmental projects induced displacement has emerged as a severe human rights concern in the country. Development is crucial for the economic growth of the nation; on the other hand, the people of the country have to pay some social, cultural and human costs as the results of this development, which are rarely measured. However, over the past few years, policy makers have acknowledged displacement as a serious concern and this concern has flagged the way for the rise of several perspectives related to this field. However, it is true that a complete and inclusive solution to this issue

has not yet been accomplished. Many studies on development induced displacement and resettlement have revealed that displacement not only moves affected peoples from one place to another, but that displacement is often forced and involuntary. However, it is not a one-time event. It creates interconnected problems such as the destruction of livings, the breakdown of social networks, the loss of traditional cultures, the loss of access to common property and psychological impacts that cannot be compensated. Many studies have also revealed that resettlement measures often fail to re-establish sustainable livings for project-affected persons because they are not long-term oriented and lack public participation. In many developmental projects that result in displacement, it has been observed that the difficulties of displaced people remain unsettled for years after relocation.

Development Induced Displacement in Indian Context:

Displacement of people from their land and livelihoods became a feature of Indian history even before the British arrived. Before British authority, highly trained agricultural organizations ousted tribal farmers and unorganized groups from their ancestral lands. Colonialism's economic objective resulted in the stealing of natural resources in order for the colonial state to satisfy its needs through quick industrial and trade expansion to the West. Legal measures like the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894 strengthened governmental power and legitimized any type of state-sponsored acquisition. The collapse of colonialism resulted in a change from one type of progress to another. The biggest justification for advancement and modernization in India was that modern science and technology, as well as the development of basic infrastructure, could improve people's level of living. This development has only benefited a small number of people, while thousands have paid the cost without benefiting. The Indian experience with dislocation caused by development initiatives indicates that government has made little effort to decrease the scope and trauma of dislocation and to reintegrate the displaced on a wide scale. One major cause is the lack of respect of basic human rights. Sometimes even when growth is planned, the impact on individuals is not considered. Displacement is frequently viewed as an insignificant issue because planners and policymakers fail to recognize the actual truth.

A brief history of Development Induced Displacement in India:

Development-caused displacement in the country is not a new issue; nevertheless, prior displacements were generally as a consequence of multifaceted river basin projects such as reservoirs and mining operations. We have considerable evidence of displacements dating back to the Gupta dynasty. In the medieval era, the Jai Samand Lake, created near Udaipur in the eighteenth century, evicted many residents from their ancestral homes. However, due to the small population and large amount of barren territory, displacement occurrences did not entirely disrupt or disrupt the lives of the people affected. During the colonial period, displacements occurred in a variety of places for raw resources for the development of industry in England, including the Raniganj coalfields, Assam tea gardens, Karnataka coffee fields, and so on (Fernandes, 2008).

Forced migration increased in India after independence due to growing populations, increasing population density, and the need to address the developmental requirements of millions of individuals. Apart from enormous enterprises, mining, river valley dams and other infrastructure initiatives, various newly launched construction projects across India

have resulted in massive involuntary migrations. Muchkund Dubey (2008) states in this context,

“Now human population is being uprooted by economic development, development of infrastructure, including the construction of roads, ports, airports, power stations, slum relocation, the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and other developmental initiatives like acquiring land for entrepreneurs to build factories, shopping centers, parks, swimming pools, hotels, and night clubs.” (Dubey, 2008)

Independent India is littered with examples of growth-related migration of people in the pursuit of national objectives. Be it the construction of dams on Narmada, Sardar Sarovar, and Tehri involving several states or the building of dams at Hirakund, Pong, Koelkaro, Silent Valley, Tipaimukh, Dambur, Pagladia; energy and transmission initiatives across states implemented by National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL); the mining sectors run by Coal India Limited (CIL), Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), mineral extraction in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. More steel manufacturing facilities have been built in Jharkhand and Odisha, including Rourkela, Bhilai, Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO), Nilachal Ispat Nigam Limited, Jindal Steel Company, and, in recent times, Special Economic Zones in Nandigram and Singur in West Bengal, Jhajjar in Haryana, Raigarh in Maharashtra, and Kashipur in Odisha. The Narmada Sardar Sarovar Reservoir project, which has displaced approximately 12.7 million people, is possibly the most well-known forced migration project in human history (Dreze et al., 1997).

The World Bank removed itself as a funding agency from the Sardar Sarovar initiative after receiving strong criticism from several groups, including civic organization members, NGOs, environmentalists, and social activists, for being apathetic and indifferent to the matter of resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) and human rights breaches by residents.

Because to policymakers' negligence and ignorance, there are currently no exact numbers on the total amount of persons uprooted. According to the World Bank's Environment Department, dams' construction, urban growth, and infrastructure and transportation initiatives cause around 10 million people to be displaced each year throughout the world. According to a single estimate, infrastructure projects have displaced 80 to 90 million people over the previous decade. This figure is surprisingly high, but it fails to compensate for the large amount of displaced people living near the construction project, whose livelihoods and socioeconomic status have been seriously affected by the initiative, even if they aren't forced to leave their legally acquired lands.

When we look at the scenario in India, the magnitude of this issue is worrying. According to a single estimate, India has relocated more than sixty million people since its independence. The majority of them didn't get adequate rehabilitation (Mathur, 2008). According to rehabilitation studies, approximately 20 million people have been relocated in India as part of development programs in the past, yet nearly 75 percent of them are still not rehabilitated. Surprisingly, more than 40% of the displaced individuals were tribals and disadvantaged farmers who depend solely on agriculture and woods. According to the Working Committee on Development and Welfare of Scheduled Tribes' report, the consequence of development initiatives on the disadvantaged is being studied. According

to an inquiry conducted during the Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95) on the condition of tribal rehabilitation programs, about 8,14,000 of the 16,94,000 individuals uprooted in the 110 projects reviewed were tribes. Taneja and Thakkar (2000) estimate that dam construction alone will cause 20 to 40 million people to be dislocated in India. The displacement figures explicitly show that development planners have planted the seeds of unrest and aggression among the population by removing millions of farmers and underprivileged people from their ancestral homes. The evolving condition has resulted in a contemporary battlefield in which the bourgeoisie (the affluent and capitalists) and the proletariat (peasants and marginalized) will compete for supremacy. The evolving circumstance warns that an increasing number of unemployed disadvantaged individuals, along with settlers' discontent, has the potential to burst and disrupt the peaceful social order. 'Sacrificing' people for the protection of biodiversity, animals, and advancement is objectionable not only from a human rights and social perspective, but also from an ecological and financial one (Modi, 2009).

Development-related migration has increased many of India's social and economic challenges. It has been neglected in the context of societal aims such as preserving ownership of land, executing land reforms and distributing land, to which the authorities has committed. By depriving a huge number of displaced individuals, it has intensified the complex matter of poverty alleviation. Statistics from the Planning Commission demonstrate this point of view. According to a poverty forecast presented by the Tendulkar Committee (Government of India, 2009), established by the Planning Commission, 37.2 percent of the national population lives below the poverty level, with 41.8 percent in rural areas and 25.7 percent in urban regions, which is in contrary to the nation's rapid economic expansion in the era of globalization, privatization, and liberalization (LPG) (Government of India, 2009).

Development-related Displacement incidents in India:

Delhi Metro Project:

In this endeavour, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has accelerated the eviction process by relocating slum people to make space for the metro line. It has been stated that the metro routes were designed to exclude the impoverished while benefiting the middle class. Approximately 2,502 slum residents were relocated during the initial phase of development. According to data collected under the Right to Information Act in 2005, 699 slum-dwelling households (about 3,500 individuals) were relocated from land administered by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The Delhi Metro Rail initiative has been modified amended multiple times since its inception, and there is a scarcity of solid government statistics on the number of persons affected by it. The initial proposal called for four stations to provide direct access to slum areas, but during execution, this was modified to promote and connect the middle-class society with businesses and markets throughout the National Capital Territory (NCT) as well as the National Capital Region (NCR) (Sharma, 2016).

Simhadri Thermal Power Project:

This project in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam district evicted 3120 households across 14 villages by acquiring 3384 acres of land. Displaced individuals were forced to migrate and suffered while others benefited. The governing body has often justified these programs by claiming the need for greater development and growth. The displaced people

have been unable to restore their old standard of living and have suffered losses in the advancement process. The project has caused unrest and deprivation among those affected by it. With the commencement of this project, 87 percent of the residents were forced out of their lands, and around 716 acres of land being used by the villagers for feeding their cattle have been lost. Many families have switched from joint to single family units (Sharma 2016).

Narmada River Valley Project:

The Narmada River, one of the country's seven rivers, is 813 miles long, starting in Madhya Pradesh and flowing westward to the ocean. The Narmada River Valley Project first came up in 1947, with plans to build 30 massive dams and dozens of minor dams. The project intended to supply hydroelectricity, irrigation water for agriculture, and sanitation facilities, particularly in drought-prone regions. The four states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan battled over electricity and water sharing. The state of Gujarat gained the most benefit from the Narmada Dam Project, while bearing the majority of the costs. However, the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have experienced the biggest environmental and social damage. Although water concerns are primarily state-level, the government of India was forced to intervene in 1969 to mediate a solution between state governments via the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT). Over several years, the states negotiated an agreement on each state's rights and obligations, as well as enhanced the basin-wide strategy to the project. The Sardar Sarovar Dam is the world's largest dam, submerging 37,000 hectares (142 square miles) of land in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh and expelling over 200,000 people (Wet, 2006).

Mandira Dam Project:

The Mandira Dam Project is part of Odisha's Rourkela Mega Steel Project, also known as the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), which is an initiative of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a government agency. In the mid-1950s, one of the world's most modern steel factories was established in Rourkela, Odisha. In 1953, the Indian government met with German steel corporations. The initial declaration came out in 1954 to acquire land for the steel factory and the new settlement. The Odisha government bought 19722.69 acres of land for construction of the Rourkela Steel Plant, displaced 2465 residents from 32 villages. In 1955, German engineers and architects went to the site. The Mandira Dam announcement was made in 1957. In 1957-58, the Hirakund Dam Company established the Mandira Dam on the Shankh River to supply water to the Rourkela Steel Plant. For the Mandira Dam project, 11923.98 acres of the most fertile land were bought and 1193 families from 31 villages were displaced. The overall number of displaced people was 8785. Thus, more over 30,000 acres of tribal lands were bought for the Rourkela Steel Plant, Ispat Janpad, Railways, Fertilizer Janpad, and Mandira Dam projects. It is known as the Mandira Dam project because the dam is near Mandira village in Dumerjore Gram Panchayat, Kuanarmunda Block, Sundargarh District (Sharma, 2016).

In addition, development initiatives such as the Tehri Dam construction project, the Jaipur Ring Road construction in Rajasthan, the Sita Mata Sanctuary, the Haldia Industrial Estate in West Bengal, the Kochi Airport in Kerala, the Polavaram Dam construction in Andhra Pradesh and others have uprooted thousands of people across India.

Issues of Resettlement & Rehabilitation in India:

India's after independence prosperity has been centred on huge dam building and significant businesses such as coal extraction, power stations, and highways, which have led in widespread population displacement. The bulk of development initiatives have displaced many people from their original residences and altered land use, water, and resource utilization patterns. It is apparent that numerous development initiatives were initiated without account for rehabilitation or relocation prerequisites. When there was no national resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) policy in place, state governments or even project agencies implemented their own principles and ad hoc strategies to handle the displaced people's rehabilitation and resettlement (Pandey and Rout 2004).

The National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation or NPRR (2003), specified the minimum amenities and compensation necessary for the resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) of persons uprooted as a consequence of a land acquisition for "public purposes". It created a grievance and monitoring procedure at the state and the national levels, as well as shared accountability for R&R between the state government and the Project Implementing Authority (PIA). Its main objective has been to assist Impoverished and indigenous families, particularly those who are at risk of losing access to their ancestral resources and livelihoods. The law stipulates that displaced individuals should have a better opportunity of living respectfully and achieving a living in the rehabilitated areas. The Supreme Court of India (2004) held that the rightful spirit of the Constitution is frequently neglected when it comes to the displacement and rehabilitation of displaced persons (Das and Das, 2014).

Most of state governments' rehabilitation initiatives and strategies, which relied on the 1984 LAA, had a very specific concept of compensation. It was determined that there was no such policy for displaced people between the 1950s and the 1980s. Opposition to unfair rehabilitation among displaced people and civic organizations emerged in 1946 with the Hirakud dam in Odisha. However, the resistance gained strength in the late 1970s with the construction of the Narmada dam, resulting in the Anti-Dam movement. This campaign was significant in persuading the state to revise its resettlement and rehabilitation initiatives. Furthermore, it heavily affected the Indian government's decision to develop a national resettlement and rehabilitation program (Kumar & Mishra, 2018).

In 1985, a group from the Ministry of Welfare produced the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy. It took a long time, with arguments over multiple draft rules spanning more than 20 years. In 2004, the National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) for Household Displaced in 2003 was implemented. However, in order to mitigate the negative consequences of relocation, this method must be more transparent and democratic. As a consequence, the national R&R policy was revised, and the R&R law was enacted in 2007. However, because the gender issue was overlooked, this strategy failed once more. Since 1985, there has been debate regarding relocation and rehabilitation initiatives (Pervez 2008). India's resettlement and rehabilitation initiatives suffer from a lack of transparency. According to the available literature, academia, NGOs, and government departments all provide divergent data about the displaced. Resettlement and rehabilitation programs continue to get little consideration from government officials, despite the fact that involuntary transfer is particularly sensitive. Viegas (1992) stated that the Hirakud dam displaced 1.6 lakh people, despite official estimates of only 1.1 lakh. This

data shows that government personnel are underestimating the population (Kumar & Mishra, 2018).

Furthermore, the displaced people were seriously hurt by a scarcity of land for compensation, making harder for them to acquire a plot of land elsewhere with the poor compensations they received. The displaced individuals who were cultivating the forest land experienced much more as an outcome of government's inability to pay monetary or land compensation. Given that the government had identified the land they were cultivating as state property. It put a lot of burden on the displaced people, who were already suffering tremendously (Nayak, 2013).

Conclusion:

India is a prospering nation with various development initiatives underway each year. Displacement, particularly involuntary displacement, results in the forced removal of millions of people from their ancestral homelands. The multitude of ecological risks resulting from poorly planned and implemented development projects have a severe influence on the lives of millions of people. Displacement disrupts social life, resulting in social disintegration, loss of access to common property resources, homelessness, unemployment, poverty and shortages of food, landlessness, and increased morbidity. Financial growth for displaced people, as well as resettlement within socially secure and institutionally effective communities, appear to be conditions for successful relocation and rehabilitation. Humans' intricate relationship with environment has tremendous effects on their political, social, cultural, and economic well-being. These connections must not be overlooked while preparing to relocate people from their home communities. Relocating people from one culture to another without taking into account these elements produce long-term discomfort and difficulties since rural traditions, faiths, and social behaviours are heavily influenced by their close relationship with their surroundings. To provide a responsible vision of fair progress, a development ethics based on social fairness, ethical principles, and the rights of the displaced must be formed.

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