

Paradigm Shift: The Situation of Development Induced Displacement in India

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ABSTRACT

The industrial and infrastructural development is the key word to the success of any country. However, when this lead to the internal displacement of millions of people the same become a boomerang for the country with the rise of problems like insurgency, poverty, illiteracy etc. The present paper tried to highlight the shift in the policy of the Government of India from only developmental to humanitarian developmental programme.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Development Projects, Internal Displacement of Persons

INTRODUCTION

The industrialization process is said to be yardstick for development of any country. However development induced displacement is one of the most troublesome yet global phenomena which are experienced by millions of people. Each year millions of people rendered homeless due to development projects in their country. In the name of building dams, roads, reservoirs, mining, railways, industries millions of people became homeless and displaced. These people lost their homes for the benefits of the other. As this people never crosses the border of their territory they are regarded as Internally Displaced Persons (hence IDPs). It is quite understood that a country can be developed only if its economic sector is developed but by affecting a vulnerable sector in the name of development is not development at all. Earlier it was easy to plan any development projects as population was very few and there were in abundance of land moreover there was no such mega projects to deal with at that time. But as time passes with growing demands from population the government has no other option but to opt for mega projects like multi-purpose dams, bigger industrial zones, more and more widening of roads, railways etc. This particular paper tried to highlight the shift in the mentality of the affected IDPs. Moreover how government changes its policy from only development related policy to constructive social development policy is the main theme of the paper.

Types of Development Process

The types of development projects which caused wide stir among the people can be ranged from hydro power projects to tourism. The development projects in India can be categorized under the following types:

1. Hydro or water based big developmental projects like big dams, irrigation, canals etc.
2. Power or thermal projects including mines, nuclear power reactor.

3. National security related projects like setting up of defence headquarters in various zones, defence training school etc.
4. Natural resources including agriculture and its related industrial set up e.g. tea, coffee, rubber, jute plantation etc, natural gas and petroleum, refineries, oil rigs and its related set up.
5. Tourism projects which includes tourist spots, tourist lodges and hotels, theme parks, beautification of cities, religious places, places of interests, reserve forest areas which debarred human habitation except primitive tribes which are on the verge of extinct etc.

The development projects eventually lead to two types of displacement- direct and indirect displacementⁱ. In direct displacement process there are some people who will be directly affected by the project. The directly displaced people any how got the compensation in both cash and kind (although not satisfactory) and have legal rights to demand protection from the authority. In case of indirect displacement the persons will not be evacuated directly. But these people usually dwells on these areas and dependent on the forest and in nearby areas. They may be people who has shops, the vendors, the daily wage earner, depend on forest for logs, herbs, vegetables and fruits, medicinal plants etc. When project installed these people eventually lost its traditional business, its market and related economy. Their means of livelihood got changed. Many started searching jobs in cities. This again leads to the pressure in cities. Many a times these people started to live within the vicinity of the project area as slum dwellers. It made an insecure life for them. During the time of Bhopal Gas Tragedy most of people who died there live in a slum area near the industry.ⁱⁱ The people who are affected indirectly by a development project can be termed as Project Affected Person (PAPs). The point here is that as we do not know how many people are indirectly affected by a project so many a times wrong judgments happened. Moreover sometime installation of a small rig near paddy field by Oil companies leads to disaster for the family and those who dwells in those fields suffers. The accidental spill of oil leads disaster for farmers in the long run. Both direct and indirect displacement is cause of concern for the government. Both should need to provide with not only economic assistance but also how they could be accumulated in the long run in the process of development is the responsibility of the planners.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN INDIA

In India the development projects became more intense after independence. Earlier the development projects are not as big and multipurpose as it is now a day. The first Prime minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's vision was to make India at par with developed countries of the world. He considered 'Big Dams' as the temple of developmental progress. However if we look at the history of development process in India it is found that there are no accurate data of internally displaced persons before and after the British came to India. History has examples that during Gupta period (of third century) many people were got displaced due to developmental projects. But there were no data of that time. The problem started to become more intense when during British period the government undertook certain projects for economic development and industrialisation e.g. establishment of tea garden, coffee plantation, township, oil refineries etc. The first such example however was building

ⁱ Das, Banerjee and Kumar (2004), *People On Move: How Governments Manage Moving Population*, (Kolkata: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group), p.94

ⁱⁱ Biswal, T. (2006), *Human Rights Gender and Environment*, (New Delhi: Viva publishing House), p.465

of Jai Chammand pond in the Udaipur area of the Rajasthan.ⁱⁱⁱ It needs to be mentioned here that apart from other things the government during the time frame of British period they exploited forest resources, river systems and mineral base and have displaced many people. But at that time as population was very sparse in India so people need not have to think much and just live in some other place. It took a serious turn only when the British government in order to have an easy land acquisition system formulated Permanent Settlement Act 1793. According to Dadabhai Naoroji although no data regarding the IDPs were found at that time however there were more than 350 lakh people displaced at that time in the name of development projects. Eventually because of that in many areas rebel started fight against the British Government. The Mulchi Peta Movement in Maharashtra during 1920s was one such example.^{iv} After independence of India due to emotional sentiment and patriotic feelings among the people whatever development project government started it was accepted without any doubt and criticism. Sometimes even if someone becomes serious about the negative outcome of the project he or she had compelled to silent under patriotic feeling and nationalistic emotions. During 1950s and 60s in order to made India parallel to the western countries the government ignored negative impact of the development related project. The masses believed that the development projects will bring back prosperity and happiness. Many of them happily gave up their land in the belief of overall development of the country and of their own. The national consensus and patriotic feeling was so strong nobody dares to go against the decision of the government^v. But, as time passes this has started to become a serious issue. Studies carried out in development projects sites started to highlight the growing number of displaced people and their deteriorating economic situation, social implications etc.

The Paradigm Shift

The illusion of the 'displaced for the sake of the development of the nation' started to disappear when studies came out regarding developmental projects. However, the most intense study about displacement came out only during 1980s. It needs to be mentioned here that India has one of the highest development induced displaced population in the world. There are fifty million people displaced due to development projects. There are some 3,300 big and small dams in India during the last fifty years.^{vi} it constituted total 15% of the dams (big & small) of the world.^{vii} The big dams were once glorified by Jawaharlal Nehru as *temples of modern India*. But with the progress the studies revealed that Sardar Sarovar Dam and other dams on the river Narmada directly affected more than one million people. But

ⁱⁱⁱ Ganguly, Thukral Enakshi and Singh, M. (1995): *Dams And Displaced In India*, in Hari Mohan Mathur And Michael Cernea (Ed.) *Development Displacement And Resettlement: Focus On Asian Experiences* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd), p.94

^{iv} Bharali and Fernandes (2007), *Unnayan Bonam Sthanantor, a Qualitative and Quantitative Study of Land Acquisition and Development in Assam From 1947-2000*, (Guwahati: NESSRC Publication), p.13

^v Negi, N.S. and Ganguly, S. (2011): "Developmental projects vs internally displaced populations in India : A literature based appraisal" Paper presented at the ESF-UniBi-ZiF Research conference on " environmental change and Migration: from vulnerabilities to capabilities, Bad Salzflun, Germany, 5-9 December, 2010 , COMCAD Arbets Papiere- working paper no.103,2011 (http://www.unibielefeld.de/tdrc/ag_comcad/downloads/workingpaper_103_negi_ganguly.pdf) retrieved on 23 September, 2013, p.5-7

^{vi} Ibid, p.8

^{vii} Nag, Sajal (2002): 'Whose Nation is it Anyway: Nation Building and Displacement in Indian Sub-Continent' in C. J. Thomas (ed.) *Dimensions of Displaced People in North East India*, (New Delhi: Regency Publications), p.26-50

when planners of the nation conceived the policy regarding developmental progress of the country they ignored this particular aspect. It was in the 1970s as illusion started to disappear that the people started to question the utility and pros and cons of the big dams. Eventually question raise only about big dams and in some cases mining projects but no major question raised against usefulness of other developmental projects. It was seen that there was a communication gap among planners (who are top officials, ministers sitting in AC rooms), those who are at ground zero and affected person. Lack of information and no study on ground reality and no data base for how many people will be displaced from the projects (lead to a problematic situation. The protest first started against big dams especially in case of Narmada River where thousands of big and small dams were planned to install. In 1980s Medha Patekar along with those projects affected and settled near river Narmada started Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). After that lots of question came up regarding developmental related projects and policies regarding project affected persons (PAPs). From 1951-1995 there are 16 lakh people displaced in Kerala due to development related projects, in Andhra Pradesh it was 32 lakhs, in Kerala 10 lakhs and in Goa 1 lakh. In West Bengal and Assam from 1947-2000 it was 17 lakhs and 19 lakhs people displaced.^{viii}

Although millions of people displaced due to development projects the process of rehabilitation is very slow in India. Barring few individual Resettlement and rehabilitation programmes like Coal Bearing Act 1957, National Highway Authority Act 1956, and National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and in some individual states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, there is no proper planning in India. The NTPC first formulated its policy only during 1980s although it was engaged in building thermal projects much before that. However a proper policy for the benefit of the IDPs came out only in 2005. Until 1980s no proper programme for Resettlement and Rehabilitation came from the side of the government. It was in the year 1976 that Maharashtra became the first individual State to promulgate its own set of policies to rehabilitate displaces. It happens because of World Banks suspension over funds on Sardar Sarovar Project and finding of the study that revealed that 40% of the affected people are tribal people.^{ix} This particular information initiated Central government's action towards R & R or Rehabilitation and Resettlement.

The government acquiring land till now under the Land Acquisition Act 1894. The act is more than hundred years old and did not have a proper R & R policy for the benefit of affected persons. In case of Common Property Resource (CPR) (which is the backbone of tribal socio - economic life and culture) there is no compensation process.^x According to laws compensation will be given only to those who has Myadi Patta (permanent land holding agreement) but as most tribal people do not have any kind of legal documents on land rights so they became deprived from compensation^{xi}. Apart from that, villagers are often not properly informed about the projects. There are instances where the affected persons never informed or not properly informed about the projects that are going to be installed in their area. Studies found that only 35.27% in Orissa, 28.82% in Andhra Pradesh, 40.78% in Goa, 13% in Kerala and 9% in West Bengal got rehabilitation benefit. Many times development projects leads to multiple displacement. Michael Cernea provided eight potential risks for

^{viii} Bharali and Fernandes(2007),p.14

^{ix} Nag (2002) p.39

^x Bharali & Fernandes (2007),p.15

^{xi} Nag (2002)p.39

displaced and affected persons.^{xii} These risks factors are- a) Landlessness, b) Joblessness, c) Homelessness, d) Marginalization, e) Increased Morbidity & Mortality, f) Food Insecurity, g) Loss of Access to Common Property and Services, h) Social Disarticulation. Apart from above risk they faced exploitation, human rights violation, lack of proper education, inaccessible communication and transport system and an uncertain future. Anger, hatredness, loss of faith towards social and administrative system started to show among them. It seems that the rise of anti-nationalistic sentiment become very intense in deprived areas e.g. Maoist movement in Central India, insurgency Movement in North East India. The anti-governmental and anti-developmental approach is very much rise in such areas. These often lead to arguments and dharnas, strikes, protests etc. e.g. Krishak Mukti Morcha Movement in Assam against Subanshiri dams, Narmada Bachao Andolan in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The Government of India was being criticised for using The Land Acquisition Act 1894 for land acquisition of projects. This compelled the government to shift some basic ideology regarding land rights. However, policy shift in developmental projects started only in the year 1984 when strong criticism came from all quarters in respect to Narmada River and Sardar sarovar Project. Eminent personalities like Sundarlal Bahuguna, Medha Patekar, Aruna Roy later on Arundhati Roy commented strongly against the project. Before that the Indian government was not very much keen towards displaces and only few organisations have had their rehabilitation policy which was not sufficient for them. There was no strong and consensus effort to rehabilitate the displaces among policy makers. The government after independence believed development to be the most powerful weapon. But slowly it started to realise that in many cases it is just churning money. In many cases there are examples that it only makes losses rather than profit. Moreover half of the policies are half baked or that policies never saw the light of the day.

As the criticism become more serious and acute towards government regarding the development issue the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the year 1984 prepared a policy to cover IDPs. But till then there was no accurate database of IDPs. The policy was criticised for becoming too narrow in its objective and also as it is not helping the tribals in getting compensation. In fact there was no systematic regulation towards Common Property Resource (CPR) which is very much necessary for the tribal population. Keeping that in mind a more constructive effort came up after a long gap of eight years when the next draft came in the year 1993 and the third in the year 1994. In between the World Bank in the year 1991 formed a review committee to discuss the impact of Sardar Sarovar dam which revealed that the project does not properly address the needs of the displaced population.^{xiii} The World Bank withdrew its support from the project. As the 1993 resettlement and rehabilitation act was not enough satisfied the victims, the civil society and NGO's who fight for the displaces The Ministry of Rural Development in the year 1998 prepared a fresh Rehabilitation and Resettlement policy which is very wide and helpful for the displaces. However there are lots of loopholes in the policy. The 1998 policy faced lots of criticism from all quarters. Even an alternative draft was prepared and presented to the Government by the Civil Society, Project

^{xii} Cernea, M.(1997): *The Risks And Reconstruction Model For Resetting Displaced Populations*, The World Bank, Environment Department, WashingtonDC,USA, August, 1997 viewed on 25 April, 2010 (<http://www.policykiosk.com/quote.html>),

^{xiii} Fernandes (2007) : India's Forced Displacement Policy and Practice, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/NESRC/Walter/chp-7.pdf> retrieved on 14 October, 2013

Affected Persons, Legal Practitioner's, Social Science Researcher.^{xiv} Ultimately now in 2013 a policy is introduced which will hopefully fulfils the interest of all. But it is still in Parliament and will need some time become totally effective. The present policy will consider the case of IDPs first. The policy will see that less and less people will become victim. Moreover for the loss of land of every individual family a very fair compensation will be given to them depending on the location of the place. The infrastructural development of the rehabilitate area will be foremost concern for any organization before delving deep into the project. It restricted the use of cultivable land and support permission of the environment protection agency before installing any project. It needs to be mentioned here that there are certain instances where the big projects suffered more loss due to not built up within the time frame. The government incurred heavy losses in projects like - Sardar Sarovar dam, Subanshiri project (almost 40% works done but facing lots of trouble due to its impracticality and geographical situation of the project), Pagladia dam (initial cost was Rs.12.8 crores according to 1971-72 now government granted Rs.1,0594 in year 2000 yet it is incomplete) , Karbi- langpi project(for this project the Assam state electricity board spent 30 lacs every day although it started working now).^{xv} The present act of 2013 will also see the viability and sustainability of the project before its installation.

This all shows the changes of policy of the government towards development programmes. The Government is now set up Environment Tribunals to see the environmental impact of any project. The setting up of various committees before considering any project is very new idea of government to tackle the issue of IDPs. This is nothing but shifting of policies.

CONCLUSION

The displacement has multidimensional effect on the people. The social exclusion, alienation, higher growth in poverty, pressure on land and resources in nearby areas where development projects started, rise of anti-nationalistic feeling compelled government to see that less and less people are getting affected by the governmental projects, that displaced people will get proper compensation, and very few cultivable land being used for the development projects. It needs to be mentioned here that whatever kind of compensation is given by government but losing of home is very much a sentimental issue. Every home says something. When this home is lost that means losing of everything for a person. In every occasion they remember their home. It also leads to the loss of culture; families become defunct, suspiciousness, hatredness, unfaithfulness become more among them. The feeling of alienation and dejectedness is very common among them. The nation is now making it very clear that development projects should affect less and less people. Inclusive education is the need of the hour for PAPs. It became a paradigm shift for India's developmental programme from only development to becoming humanitarian development projects. The present study found that after much trials and tribulations the government is now going to accept the present Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement act 2012. However the success of the act will possible only after it's real implementation in the field.

^{xiv} Ibid.(2007)

^{xv} Bharali et. Al

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