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Sujatha C.N
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
Post-Graduation Centre
Government Arts College
Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

Crisis of development - Displacement as a challenge of social transformation in the Indian context

Sujatha C.N

Abstract

People move from one place to another for various reasons. Some get displaced from the place they reside for reasons like clash and discrimination, natural disasters like floods, droughts, famine and other reasons. The displacements can be of temporary or permanent nature for reasons like betterment of economic status, seasonal employment, casual employment, contract employment and others. Sometimes the Government takes initiatives to evacuate people to safer habitats to avoid violence, hazards and the like. The present paper accounts for the displacement of people with the special focus on Development – Induced Displacement.

Keywords: Displacement, evacuation, development

Introduction

Growth of economy and expansion of cities influences the need for investments as well as infrastructure expansion. The increasing investment and expansion of infrastructure further stimulates demand for land for new industrial estates, for services, commercial estates, communication, and road networks and for transportation corridors¹. To accommodate such development, land redevelopment becomes a necessity. However, much of that land is already populated which makes displacement and resettlement of the existing population a prominent feature of development projects in the urban setting.

Patel *et al.* pointed out that, in a crowded central city almost any improvement in provision of water, sanitation, drainage, roads, railways, ports, airports and facilities for business, needs land on which people currently have their homes². According to Koenig, high density in urban areas means that even small projects displace many³. Population displacement because of development projects causes various negative effects to the displaced households both socially and economically. This is because many people who are displaced are not resettled and rehabilitated socially and economically⁴.

The concept of displacement

Displacement involves physical eviction from a dwelling and the expropriation of productive land and other assets to make possible an alternative use⁵. According to Cernea, displacement can start before people are physically evicted from the residence by legally

¹ Cernea M.M. *the urban environment and population relocation*. The World Bank. Washington D.C, 1993.

² Patel S, D'Cruz C, Burra S. *beyond Eviction in A global City; people managed resettlement in Mumbai*, 2002.

in: *Environment and Urbanisation*: 14:159 <http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/14/1/159>

³ Koenig D. *Urban Relocation and resettlement; Distinctive Problems, Distinctive Opportunities in liver*, 2009.

Smith A (Ed). *Development and dispossession, the crisis of forced displacement and resettlement*. School for Advanced Research Press, Santé Fe, New Mexico, 2009.

⁴ Cernea M.M. *for a New Economics of Resettlement; A sociological Critic of Compensation Principle*, *International Science Journal* 175 Blackwell. Paris, 2003.

⁵ Downing T.E. (2002): *Avoiding new poverty: Mining-Induced Displacement and Resettlement* 14 June 2010).

Correspondence

Sujatha C.N
Assistant Professor
Department of sociology
Post-Graduation centre
Government Arts College
Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

stopping construction, entrepreneurial investment, and public infrastructure investments. This makes households suffer economically before actual removal from their land/houses and eventually leads them into impoverishment⁶. According to Cernea & Kanbur displacement can be experienced in many forms including the people who realise less benefit as a result of development process and those who face severe consequences and for those individuals and communities who involuntarily move leaving behind homes, networks, jobs, social capital and emotional ties to place⁷.

Development – Induced population displacement

Development – induced population displacement, is the upheaval of communities to make way for large dams, industrial zones, transportation routes, game parks and commercial forestry, concerns the balance between the benefits of infrastructural development and the costs and pains of being uprooted and consequently resettled, and the risk of impoverishment carried by those forcibly displaced. Involuntary displacement is not a phenomenon that will disappear in the foreseeable future, as the number of projects that entail the acquisition of land, which is already large, will increase further. As the needs grow for the irrigation, electricity and infrastructure necessary to satisfy the demands of growing and increasingly urbanized populations, there remains enormous pressure for infrastructural development⁸.

Population displacement

Population displacement is an outcome of multiple sets of factors. The many “push factors” leading to internal displacement can be aggregated into a range of overlapping categories: natural and human-made disasters, ethnic or religious persecution, development, and conflict.

Displacement occurs where coercion is employed, where choices are restricted, and where the affected populations are facing more risks than opportunities by staying in their place of residence, which distinguishes it from “voluntary” or “economic” migration.

Displacement is, by definition, forced and involuntary and involves some form of Deterritorialisation. It is commonly described as taking place within the confines of a state (e.g. internally displaced person) or across an internationally recognized border (e.g. refugee).

Displacement deprives people of many things, some of which are fundamental to their lives, including homes, productive assets, and livelihoods, familiar environments to which skills and practices have been attuned, community networks, and a sense of local belonging. What determines the extent of their deprivation and suffering depends on what they face in their new location and the resources with which they arrive there. If an uprooted community could simply be transplanted from one location to another site that is equally productive, healthy and desirable, then the

deprivation would consist simply of the loss of accustomed place and the stress of relocation.

However, the experience of being uprooted by development has typically been very different. Instead of being compensated by relocation to a situation of equivalent living conditions, or, better yet, improved living conditions, the characteristic pattern is for the uprooted to be scattered, compensated insufficiently or not at all, neglected or relocated to worse land, and provided with inferior or greatly delayed community facilities. Illness, malnutrition and mortality often increase. The dislocated often find themselves in places where they are treated as threatening outsiders or inferiors, discriminated against or exploited in their vulnerability, and excluded from whatever influence or decision making the incumbent populace has.

The study of displacement by development is complicated by the fact that development is a notoriously ambiguous term. It can refer to a social goal, an ideal of social well-being to which peoples, their governments and international agencies aspire. It can also refer to a complex of social and economic policies, practices and changes that lead towards achieving such a goal. Typically, economic development policies and practices promoting growth have been advocated

for the development goal of reducing or eliminating poverty; economic growth would provide employment for the poor, purchasing power for consumers to buy what poor people could produce and a tax base with which governments could provide essential services to the poor, including schooling to make them more competitive in job markets.

There is no doubt that development since 1950 has accomplished much of this. Life expectancy and educational levels have increased dramatically⁹. Nevertheless, some of the development practices serving these goals have been far from ideal. Development has also been a source of large scale human suffering insofar as it has displaced people, evicting entire communities and denying families their accustomed livelihoods. Here is the paradox- the tension between development as an ideal and development as an actual process - with which we are confronted when development causes displacement¹⁰.

Displacement - Indian experience

The displacement of people from their land and livelihood has been a part of India's history even before the advent of the British. Prior to British rule, highly skilled agricultural groups displaced tribal cultivators and less organised groups from their land. The economic agenda of colonialism led directly to the plundering of natural resources, to enable the colonial power to meet the demand made by rapid industrialisation and commercial expansion in the west.

Legal instruments such as the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894 further consolidated state power and legalised all forms of state-sponsored acquisition. The collapse of colonialism meant a shift from one type of development to another. The most powerful logic for modernisation and development in India is based on the notion that the standard of living can be improved by modern science and technology and by creating basic infrastructure.

⁹ UN Department of Economic and Social affairs, 2008, 8. UNESCO, 2006, 165-166

¹⁰ Displacement by development: Ethics rights and responsibilities by Peter Penz, Jay Drydck, Pablo S. Bose, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

⁶ Cernea M.M. for a New Economics of Resettlement; A sociological critic of compensation Principle, International Science Journal 175 Blackwell. Paris, 2003.

⁷ Cernea M.M. Impoverishment Risks, Risk Management, and Reconstruction: A model of population displacement and resettlement, 2000.

⁸ Refugee and forced migration studies-volume 2 Understanding impoverishment the consequences of development induced displacement-edited by Christopher McDowell, 1996)

This development has benefited a small minority only, while millions of people pay the price without reaping any benefits. Increasing disappointment about the failure of development to produce the promised benefits and the distress caused by the victimization of many of the targeted beneficiaries of development, especially among the marginalized, have led to a reconstruction of the potential of the dominant development paradigm to create a just and humane society¹¹. The Indian experience of displacement induced by development projects shows that the government made too weak an effort to minimize the extent and trauma of displacement, and to comprehensively resettle the displaced.

One important cause is the lack of recognition of people's rights. Even though development is planned, its impact on people is not taken into account in the planning process. Displacement has consistently been treated as a non-issue because the planners, leaders fail to appreciate the empirical reality. Another problem is that the administrators are primarily concerned only about the physical location, but the basic needs remain unsatisfied. Further displacement has not been recognised as a serious issue because most of the people affected belong to the weaker sections of the community¹².

Key terms on the movement of people

Migration

The movement of a person or group of people that is, to some degree, voluntary. The decision to move is complex and associated with multiple drivers, including economic incentives and family ties, in addition to shocks and stresses such as conflict and disasters. Migration can take place either within or across national borders.

Displacement

Situations where people are forced to leave their homes owing to sudden shocks or stresses, including armed conflict, civil unrest or natural or man-made disasters. Displacement can take place either within or across national borders. Migration can be relatively 'voluntary' or 'forced', with the latter blurring the line with displacement; in reality, voluntary migration and displacement are two poles along a continuum of choice and coercion.

Mass displacement

The sudden displacement of a large number of people. Internally displaced persons (IDPs): While there is no official definition, an IDP is understood to be someone who is forced to flee their home due to conflict, disasters or other shocks or stresses, but who remains within their country's borders.

Refugee

A person who has been forced to move across national borders for fear of persecution. This a legal term defined under the 1951 Refugee Convention, which obliges countries not to return refugees to the country from which they have fled persecution. Refugees come under the mandate of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the host

country; a person who has applied for protection as a refugee but is still awaiting determination of his or her status is known as an asylum seeker. The definition is generally accepted to include people fleeing armed conflict, but does not include people fleeing disasters, environmental change or other shocks or stresses. In this paper, mass displacement to urban areas includes IDPs, refugees and people displaced across borders as a result of disasters or other shocks or stresses.

Review of literature

Maitra 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 researcher 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. The experiences of dam-induced displacement at the Sardar Sarovar Project in the Narmada River Valley Project in Gujarat in India are highlighted to serve as illustrations.

Caspary (2007) ^[19] argue that development interventions (defined as the financing and implementation of development projects or policies by nation government or development agencies, such as the World Bank) may, via the 'comprehensive' set of security threats affect human security. In particular, of course, the article makes references to those scholars who have previously argued that the security paradigm may apply to (forced) migration. Development induced displacement may impact human security severely. Institutions financing the development projects that give rise to development induced displacement have a considerable hand in lessening displacement have a considerable hand in lessening these potential human security impacts of their business.

Kibret (2018) ^[20] propagates that the displacement as the result of urban expansion and 'slum clearance' has been increasing rapidly worldwide and is becoming a significant phenomenon particularly in the large cities of the developing world. As the demands of the urbanizing population increases, notably in Africa and Asia, it is inevitable that the need for infrastructure development will grow enormously and displacement is likely to occur on massive scale. Resettlement requires careful and systematic planning particularly in the selection of sites and verification of different infrastructure and social services notably in terms of health and education.

History of displacement in India

The first displacement to be reported is the big Durgapur steel plant in West Bengal, built by the government of India in the 1950s and 1960s which together displaced over

¹¹ Sen J. "Displacement and Rehabilitation-Some Points towards Changing Course of Current Thinking", *Economic & Political Weekly*, 1995; 30:17.

¹² Walter Fernandes, Samayadib Chatterji. "A Critique of the Draft National Policy," *Lokayan Bulletin* 11. 5 [March-April 1995].

125,000 people. Durgapur alone displaced 33,000 people of various ethnic and caste groups. The second case is a project for port construction and enlargement, the Jawaharlal Nehru port near Mumbai, which displaced 12,000 people. The five dams developed in Maharashtra displaced over 200,000 people. The Karnataka programme, involving two dams has displaced over 220,000 people. The Bolani Iron ore mines in Orissa displaced some 1300 people. The famous Sardar Sarovar project, a high dam on the Narmada River whose reservoir extends into three Indian states - Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh has displaced 300,000 people¹³.

Development and displacement may appear contradictory terms, but they are facts of our national life and these facts are more astonishing than any of our fictions. In India during last 50 years more than 50 million people have been uprooted from their homes and huts, displaced from their farms, jungles and rivers and sacrificed at the altar of 'National Interest'. These millions bear witness to the destruction of their own lives, livelihoods and lifestyles.

However, development-induced displacement has largely remained a non-issue for the governments, politicians and policy planners during all these years. This is evident from the fact that the government has no data about the actual number of the people displaced as a consequence of the various development projects like Hydroelectric and Irrigation Projects, mines (especially open-cast mines), Super-Thermal and Nuclear-Power Plants, Industrial Complexes etc.

The development paradigm favoured by much of the post-colonial world, including India, has inevitably resulted in massive displacement of the vulnerable sections of the population. This is because the cost of development is not borne equally by all sections of the society. The most vulnerable of the population, such as the indigenous people, the minorities, Dalits, etc. bear the cost of development while the more endowed, such as the upper castes enjoy the fruits of development. India has over 4,300 large dams and a total of 9 percent of the world dam population¹⁴.

Large dams in India are estimated to have submerged about 37,500 square Kilometres — an area almost the size of Switzerland—and displaced tens of millions of people¹⁵. According to one estimate, from 1951 until 2000, dams alone displaced between 21 million and 40 million people in India¹⁶. The total number of development-induced displaced according to one researcher points to 50–60 million displaced persons. This figure includes: 3 million in Jharkhand, 3 million

in Orissa, 5 million in Andhra Pradesh, 1 million in Kerala, 2 million in Assam, 4.2 million in Gujarat, and 7.5 million in West Bengal¹⁷.

¹³ Parasuraman S, the Development Dilemma: Displacement in India, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1999.

¹⁴ Bansuri Taneja, Himanshu Thakkar. "Large Dams and displacement in India," Cape Town, South Africa, Submission no. SOC166 to the World commission on Dams, 2000.

¹⁵ International Rivers.Org, "India".

www.internationalrivers.org/en/southasia/ India accessed 12, 2011.

¹⁶ Taneja, Bansuri, Thakkar, Himanshu. Large Dams and displacement in India, Large Dams and displacement in India, 2002.

¹⁷ Walter Fernandez. "Development-induced Displacement: The Class and Gender Perspective," paper presented at the International Conference on "The emerging woman in the Indian economy," Christ College, Bangalore, 2007, 26–7.

Much of those affected by displacement are indigenous people belonging to the scheduled tribes. Though the tribal population constitutes a small percentage of the country's population, among those displaced their percentage is much higher. One of the main reasons for the displacement of the tribal population is that over 80 percent of coal and 40–50 other minerals are found in tribal inhabited areas. Much of their land is owned by the community, so they have no papers for individual ownership of land. The vulnerable section of the population, of whom the tribals are but one, are displaced not only because of dam building but also because of other projects such as rapid urbanization, mining, and formation of special economic zones or SEZs, etc.

The effects of displacement often lead to loss of traditional means of employment, loss of resources, disrupted community life, change of environment, marginalization and profound psychological trauma. Yet even though development-induced displacement disrupts lives in so many ways and increases morbidity and mortality, it is still continuing today in the name of national interest. Rapid liberalization of the Indian economy in recent years and increasing inflow of foreign investment for major infrastructural projects including investments by the World Bank and international financial institutions, has led to widespread displacement and loss of access to traditional resources and means of livelihood of many in the country.

Industrial development projects in India have been vigorously implemented, affecting large sections of the population who are increasingly being marginalised, particularly through displacement. In the years immediately after Independence, the overarching ideology of nation building favoured a development model of accelerated economic growth through the agency of a mixed economy, combining centralised planning and command investment with capitalist free enterprise. Equity concerns were pushed to the backburner, and it was believed that growth would itself take care of poverty and unemployment, hunger and inequality.

Mega-projects like big dams, towering steel and power plants, mines and ports, symbolized breaking the colonial chains of underdevelopment. Dam-building was considered synonymous with nation-building and the ascendancy of humanity over nature. Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, while laying the foundation-stone for India's first major river valley project, the Hirakud Dam in Orissa in 1948, said to the tens of thousands facing the grim prospect of displacement: 'If you have to suffer, you should do so in the interest of the country and described big dams as the secular temples of modern India. However from the start this model of development was challenged by ideological sceptics, which also included followers of Gandhi.

Although their voices were in the beginning muted amidst the nationalist rhetoric and charisma of mega-projects, this alternative view questioned a model of development that equated development merely with increased production of goods and services. It demanded that the human, social, equity and environmental impacts of such 'development' interventions be carefully assessed. It was based on the conviction that more important than merely how much was produced were questions about what was produced, how it was produced, at what costs and for whom.

Fifty years of planned development in India have entailed large-scale forced evictions of vulnerable populations, without the countervailing presence of policies to assist

them to rebuild their lives. Most of the negative aspects of displacement, such as lack of information, failure to prepare in advance a comprehensive plan for rehabilitation, the undervaluation of compensation and its payment in cash, failure to restore lost assets or livelihoods, traumatic and delayed relocation, problems at relocation sites, multiple displacement, and neglect of the special vulnerabilities of the most disadvantaged groups are in fact the direct result of state policy.

Although enthusiasm for mega-dam projects amongst policy-makers remains largely undimmed, a formidable body of independent empirical research into many of these large dams has established how their social, human and environmental costs have been ignored or grossly understated in the planning of these projects, and the expected benefits exaggerated. The actual output of irrigation and power of these projects has fallen short, sometimes spectacularly, of the level on the basis of which investment on the project was initially justified of the very many neglected costs of the big dams, some of the most grave are the social and human consequences of displacement. However, national leaders and policy-makers typically viewed these as legitimate and inevitable costs of development, acceptable in the larger national interest¹⁸.

Land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement bill, 2011

Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill in India is a much awaited bill for Land acquisition reforms and rehabilitation for the development projects in India. The bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in India on 7 September 2011. The bill will be central to legislation in India for the rehabilitation and resettlement of families affected by land acquisitions. The Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, 2011 Bill is also known as LARR Bill 2011 LARR.

2011 seeks to repeal and replace India's Land Acquisition Act, 1894. The Bill seeks to enact a law that will apply when:

- Government acquires land for its own use, hold and control.
- Government acquires land with the ultimate purpose to transfer it for the use of private companies for stated public purpose. The purpose of LARR 2011 includes public-private partnership projects, but excludes land acquired for state or national highway projects.
- Government acquires land for immediate and declared use by private companies for public purpose. LARR Bill 2011 aims to establish the law on land acquisition, as well as the rehabilitation and resettlement of those directly affected by the land acquisition in India. The scope of LARR 2011 includes all land acquisition whether it is done by the central government of India, or any state government of India, except the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Conclusion

Displacement can be voluntary or forced. The eviction if backed by adequate compensation, security or social support mechanisms with assisted resettlement can be progressive.

The other case is that of a distinct, negative process violating the fundamental human rights. The situation is very critical as it would have to assist them in relocation, re-establish productive activities, services and community life. Restoring the livelihood of the displaced people determines the economic and social situation of the people. The economic impact coupled with the social impact requires special attention. Due to its irreversible nature, implementation of development projects leads to serious social consequences. Poorly implemented resettlement plans, unaccompanied by adequate compensation for lost assets and mechanisms of social support, lead to long-term or even irreversible deterioration in the conditions of large communities. Those responsible for the planning, preparation, and implementation of resettlement, and for the further adaptation of resettled people, therefore carry heavy individual responsibility for their decisions.

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