



Cover Page



## DEVELOPMENT INDUCED DISPLACEMENT IN INDIA

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### Abstract

After independence, India faced massive challenges in the economic front. Determined steps were taken in the form of large-scale development projects such as dams, reservoirs, power plants, roads, plantations, urban renewal, oil and gas, mining projects etc. to bring development and make India an industrialized and modern nation. These developmental projects, though increase productivity and production to a great extent, give rise to involuntary displacement. This forced relocation is called development induced displacement. These projects not only deprived people from their livelihoods but also from their homelands and age-old ancestral ties. This paper will critically explain an overview about development induced displacement in India, how many people it affects and what are the impacts of it. It also recommends some measures for welfare-oriented development which can be enjoyed by everyone.

**Keywords:** Development, Displacement, Livelihood, Environmental Problems, Agricultural Degradation, Community Development.

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

**“There is a new venue for theory, necessarily impure, where it emerges in and as the very event of cultural translation. This is not the displacement of theory by historicism, nor a simple historicization of theory that exposes the contingent limits of its more generalizable claims.”**

**Judith Butler**

A familiar Feminist Lady, Writer and Speaker, USA

Development has become the lifeline of every economy. It is a procedure to achieve human needs and goals at one side and social plans and projects on other side. It is translating economic progress into better living conditions for people in society. It is declaring war on poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, inequality, irrationality and oppression prevalent in society. It aims at not merely uplifting the weak, the under privileged and the disadvantaged people but also at improving the quality of life of all citizens.

All these pro-development activities require acquisition of land. After independence, India started its development through Five-year plans. Large dams were constructed, industries were established, national highways and ports were built, minerals were explored with the objective of development. This type of developmental activities not only create positive results, but also have negative consequences like involuntary or forced displacement. As the government needs to acquire land for starting these projects, the people in the area face involuntary displacement. The number of displaced persons (DPs) and project affected persons (PAPs) are increasing continuously.

Displacement affects community as a whole leading to the impoverishment of many people. It disrupts their livelihood and displaces them from their habitat, environment and social networks. They lose their land, forests, rivers, pastures, cattle etc. and are pushed into poverty. The all-round deprivation of displacement causes other traumatic, psychological consequences making their life more miserable.

#### Development induced displacement

Development-related Displacement may be divided into two subcategories – direct and indirect. Direct displacement refers to those cases, where the installation and commissioning of development projects lead to a direct displacement of people who have inhabited these sites for generations together. Indirect displacement emanates from a process whereby installation and functioning of projects continuously push up the consumption of natural and environmental resources, thereby depriving the indigenous people of the surrounding regions of their traditional means of wherewithal and sustenance. Apart from the cost of displacement and relocation, there is also the problem of deforestation, loss of agricultural land, environmental degradation, and marginalization of the weaker sections. These adverse effects are called the ‘backwash effects.’ The benefits of ‘spread effects’ are enjoyed by the nation at large, while it is the local population that bear the brunt of the backwash effects.



Cover Page



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### Displacement in Indian context

In India, Displacement because of developmental activities has been occurring from 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these developmental projects came up in mineral-rich areas, upper stream of the rivers and coastal belts. In post-independent India, approximately three thousand big and small dams have been constructed in the last fifty years which led to the forced eviction of millions of people. Mining also became one of the major causes of displacement in India. A large part of our natural resources lies in the hilly and forest areas mostly inhabited by tribals – one of the most disadvantaged and suppressed sections of the population. Urban planning, building infrastructure projects, industrialization etc. led displacement in India.

The speed of developmental project construction got momentum with the adoption 1991 economic reforms; the foreign investors have increased their presence in India. Various collaboration and joint ventures projects have been launched. For example, in recent years as many as 341 SEZs have been approved and set up across India.

During 1950s and 1960s in order to make India parallel to the western countries’ government ignored the negative impact of the development related project. People believed that the development projects will bring back prosperity and happiness and they were happy to give up their land for the overall development of the country. Later the illusion started to disappear and people began to question the pros and cons of the developmental projects. People began to protests, for example, major projects such as Sardar Sarovar, Salient Valley, the Mangalore Thermal Power, the Dabhol power, Maha Mumbai Special Economic Zones (SEZ), the Nandigram SEZ, the Singur Tata Motors and so on led to great resentment among people that were displaced and affected by these projects.

### Magnitude of displacement

Every year, more than one crore of people has been forcibly displaced across the globe by different developmental projects and majority of them belong to marginalized section of society (Kumaran 2013). Since independence, millions of people have been forcibly displaced from their native places for various developmental projects. India has 60 million DPs/PAPs (1947-2004) from 25 million ha. of land including 7 million ha. of forests and 6 million ha. of common property resources (CPRs) (Fernandes 2007). It has also been seen that the 80% of DPs/PAPs are voiceless belonging to poor and marginalized sections. While tribal people constitute 8.08 percent of India’s population, they constitute more than 40 percent of the PAPs. Another 22 percent of PAPs are Dalits (lower and marginalized castes) and the rest of the PAPs are rural poor. Since most of the DPs/PAPs are tribals and rural poor, their rehabilitation and resettlement percent are very low. The government of India admitted that several million people displaced by dams, mines, industries, power plants etc. and are still waiting for rehabilitation.

TABLE  
ESTIMATE OF TRIBALS AND OTHER PEOPLE DISPLACED BY DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS IN INDIA  
DURING 1951-1990

(In lakhs).

Type of project	All DPs	%	Tribal in DPs	% of tribals
Dams	164.0	77	63.21	38.5
Mines	25.5	12	13.30	52.2
Industry	12.5	5.9	3.13	25.0
Wildlife	6.0	2.8	4.5	75.0
Others	5.6	2.3	1.25	25.0
Total	213.0	100	85.39	40.0

(source: Fernandes, 1997)

The above table shows that more than 20 million people were displaced in India during 1951-1990. Most of them were displaced by the dams i.e., 77 percent of total DPs, next 12 percent by mines, 5.9 percent by industry, 2.8 percent by wildlife and 2.3 percent by other activities.

### Impact of displacement

Displacement caused through involuntary actions creates the scenario where people are rendered without land, shattered homes and with no job to rely upon. Dislocation breaks up living patterns and social continuity. It dismantles existing modes of production, disrupts social networks, causes deprivation along with impoverishment of many of those uprooted, threatens their cultural identity, and increases the risks of epidemics and health problems. Women, children and elderly people are the most impacted ones by



Cover Page



the displacement. The projects also affect the environment of the entire area by depleting its natural resources and polluting them. Projects like mining, industries etc., affects the health and living conditions of the people in surrounding areas. All DPs and PAPs not only lose their livelihood and employment, but their human rights are also violated. Michael Cernea, a sociologist based at the world bank who has researched on development induced displacement and resettlement proposed eight potential risks that are intrinsic to forced displacement. They are:

- (1) Landlessness: Land acquisition can result into de-capitalization and pauperization of displaced people. It disrupts the basics of displaced people by affecting their system of production, earnings and commercial activities.
- (2) Joblessness: Involuntary shift threatens the wage employment of affected people working in industries, service sector or agro industries located at rural or urban areas. Discomfort of physical relocation is short lived but the negative impact due to unemployment or underemployment may linger long.
- (3) Homelessness: Displacement at times deprives the displaced of their shelter. Temporary homelessness is common feature in such cases and some faces this problem for longer periods.
- (4) Marginalization: Downward mobility is also one of the consequences of forced and involuntary shift, reason being the change in economic conditions due to relocation. The trend of slipping to the lower levels is called as marginalization. Reduced social, psychological and economic statuses are the visible impacts of marginalization. Feeling of injustice and inequality lowers the self-confidence of affected masses in society and themselves.
- (5) Food Insecurity: At times forced uprooting may result into temporary or chronic under-nourishment. It can obstruct normal growth and work.
- (6) Increased Morbidity and Mortality: Cernea found that serious decline in health levels is directly related with displacement. Involuntary shift imposes social stress and psychological trauma which at times are accompanied by outbreak of vector borne diseases such as malaria etc., supply of unsafe water, filthy drainage system. All these negatively affect the health of the family members and most vulnerable children and elderly.
- (7) Loss of access to common property: Many traditional activities are dependent on common property resources of particular locality. With the loss of it, income and livelihood sources also deteriorate. Upon that usually displaced are not compensated for these losses by Government.
- (8) Social Disarticulation: Involuntary relocation ends up into number of social changes at individual, family and community levels. Fragmentation of families, scattering of kinship network, uprooting of communities and dismantling of social and interpersonal ties are some of the major social changes associated with the involuntary displacement and relocation. It disperses informal life supporting social network.

Apart from these, the DPs and PAPs also get affected in various other ways due to displacement.

- (9) Loss of access to community services: The community services like schools, hospitals were easily access to people before displacement. Loss of income after displacement makes it difficult for people to avail them. Even under rehabilitation programme, community services are not given much importance.
- (10) Impact on women and children: In Indian patriarchal society, women have not given their due rights in the form of compensation on the resettlement package. Nowhere land is registered on their name and as such they are totally neglected. Even women head household and widow used to not get any compensation after being displaced. Women in India usually take part in agriculture in their lands. Due to deprivation of their land, they are forced to remain as homemakers. So, after displacement joblessness is higher among women than men. He becomes the sole earner in the family and the part of which is spent on the alcohol. Men increase drinking as a coping mechanism, which is the reason for domestic violence and women fall prey to it. Basically, the women are attached with the family and community bonds. But, due to displacement, the well-knit social fabric completely shatters. There occurs serious disruption of family bonds. This emotionally marginalizes the women. Other than that, women face serious crime against them like rape, polygamy, destitution by husbands, increased dowry system etc.

Children loss access to their schools after displacement. The deprivation of income pushes the children to take up either household jobs or become child labour, to supplement the income to the family.

- (11) Violation of Human Rights: In addition to violating economic and social rights, forced displacement can also lead to violations of civil and political rights, including: arbitrary arrest, degrading treatment or punishment, temporary or permanent disenfranchisement and the loss of one's political voice.
- (12) Environment degradation: All the developmental activities disrupt the environment by pollution the air, water and the surrounding lands. This in turn affects the climate and the health of the people living in the nearby areas. Children, women, elderly people are the most vulnerable people. The environmental pollution also affects the animals living in the area and the death of domestic animals in turn affect the income of people.



Cover Page



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## Measures for welfare-oriented development

The developmental projects must be promoted but, the government must ensure that destructive effects upon people who are displaced are minimized. The government must adopt measures to ensure that adequate compensation is provided for all the affected people. There should be proper economic estimation of all the assets which are being confiscated or destroyed by the government or private companies for the projects. The government should also make proper Environment and social Impact Assessment (EIA). It must take required measures to reduce the impact of the developmental projects on environment and pay for the emotional and psychological pain suffered by the people. Every displaced person should be provided with proper rehabilitation and resettlement with all the facilities like basic shelter, essential food, potable water and sanitation, mandatory medical and healthcare services, livelihood sources, education facilities for children, protection of human rights and also some entertainment and amusement facilities. Institutions like civil society organisations, political parties, bureaucrats and local government bodies can also play a big role by working for the betterment of the people.

## Summing up

One of the greatest costs of development is the forced displacement of millions of people. It is evident that development induced displacement is inevitable. But, economic development without human development is meaningless. Development cannot be real until its benefits reach those who pay price for it. In India, people are becoming rich at the cost poor and vulnerable people. The government has to be responsive and mitigate the negative impacts of the developmental projects on people. There should be proper compensation and rehabilitation mechanism adopted for DPs and PAPs. Development should be a holistic concept that encompasses the progressive improvement in the quality of human life in terms of food, clothing and shelter and conditions for healthy living with increasing longevity of life and happiness (Rajkishor Meher, 2009). So, the paper tries to summarize the impact of the developmental projects and suggests some to reduce the impact of those projects.

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