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The Causes, Consequences, and Challenges of Development-Induced Displacement with Special Reference to West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Displacement is inherent in the policy of development which is guided by neoliberal economic reforms under globalization. It is basically accumulation by dispossession and forceful expulsion of rural people from their land. The commodification of land is fuelling the land acquisition and forceful expulsion from land favour a minority group while millions of people pay the price without reaping any benefits. Along with land grabbing, resettlement and rehabilitation policies are integrally related. In India, the rehabilitation and resettlement policies were not framed properly and Indian government had also amended the existing land acquisition act for diluting the rehabilitation and resettlement clause. This inadequate rehabilitation and resettlement measures increases vulnerabilities for the displaced persons and this necessitates the role of fair compensation for the displaced person. This paper highlights the role of comprehensive compensation (not only cash) and its implementation, failure of which can increase the tensions between government and citizens and reduce public confidence in the rule of acquisition. In this regard displacement and land acquisition in Singur and Haldia deserves a special role. The negative effects of this displacement can be mitigated by using sustainable development principles. In this paper an attempt has been made to relate land acquisition with rehabilitation policies and also to highlight on the sustainable development policies for overall development of the displaced person and the population for the host country. Apart from this, the paper focuses on formulating fair compensation principle and also provides case studies illustrating, the socio economic decline of the displaced person as relocated communities face the task of restoring livelihood less favourable in new area and on the other hand and increase in well being and wealth in post displacement context from the pre displacement level if the policy intervention is inclusive in nature. So displacement cannot be seen always as a necessary evil if it is guided by proper rehabilitation.

Keywords: human rights, displacement, land acquisition, sustainable development policies, resettlement and rehabilitation.

1. Introduction

Development can be defined in countless ways. It is commonly viewed as economic growth or an improvement in people's standard of living. It can also be seen as a process of growth with redistribution or liberation from dependency and exploitation. Ultimately, development is about the real freedom that individuals can experience. To achieve these objectives, the concept of development encompasses progress in social, economic, educational, cultural, scientific, and

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technological aspects, which contribute to the transformation of economies. India is currently undergoing this transformation, but it is crucial to remember that development is not solely about economic changes; it also involves improving the lives of the people. However, in the pursuit of the so-called "Greater Common Good" or "The National Interest," the interests of the common people are often overlooked. The modernization process, particularly after the implementation of neo-liberal economic reforms, has led to inevitable displacement. This involuntary displacement has a profound impact on livelihoods, as well as social and cultural aspects, causing trauma. It also results in the alienation of rural communities from their land and habitat. Displacement is often justified as a necessary sacrifice to achieve the objective of the "greater good." This paper primarily focuses on the use of eminent domain to support development-induced displacement and land grabbing. It explores the policies of fair and just compensation in this context. The paper suggests establishing a relationship between the market value of land and the determination of compensation, as well as implementing comprehensive compensation criteria. Finally, the paper proposes sustainable measures to mitigate the trauma and resentment caused by displacement.

During the 1990s, the issue of development induced displacement gained significant attention due to the substantial increase in developmental projects and urbanization, which unfortunately resulted in unfavourable outcomes for those being resettled. The demand for land in these development projects led to the displacement of people, often referred to as physical displacement. However, it is important to recognize that this displacement also has economic, environmental, and social impacts, making life extremely difficult for those affected. Merely providing cash compensation is not sufficient to address the hardships faced by these vulnerable individuals (Kundu, 2017). A notable example highlighting the challenges of industrialization and displacement is the case of Singur, where attempts to industrialize were met with massive protests from the local population. This further fuelled resentment and protest among the displaced individuals, emphasizing the need for sustainable development policies that prioritize the protection of their social, economic, and cultural perspectives that they enjoyed prior to resettlement. It is crucial to understand that solely offering cash compensation and replacement housing cannot fully restore the living conditions and overall well-being of those involuntarily displaced. We must consider all other aspects of their lives that are affected by resettlement.

2. Methodology of the study

The study followed the standard methodology of retrospective studies. A pilot survey was run with framed questionnaire in Singur and Haldia to understand the types of impoverishments they have already faced. Selection of rehabilitation colonies was based on spatial as well as temporal criterion as land acquisition took place in three waves (as per Government Land Acquisition report). The Study was planned to divide the 2000–2020 period into three phases.

3. Discussion and results

The question of Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth

In 2015, the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development recognized Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and acknowledged the importance of including them in development planning. However, the applicability of the 2030 agenda has been questioned when it comes to addressing the needs of this vulnerable population who require protection and access to human rights. Therefore, a rights-based approach to development is necessary, and the government will establish policies to incorporate these displaced individuals into development and humanitarian planning (IDMC Report, 2019). A comprehensive and integrated approach to displacement should be considered in order to make progress under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address the vulnerabilities of IDPs. While no specific target was set to reduce the number of IDPs, it is crucial for both development and humanitarian actors to analyze their vulnerabilities, overcome obstacles to finding lasting solutions, and achieve measurable collective outcomes. As such, national governments should integrate internal displacement into their national development plans and SDG implementation strategies (Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2007).

Development and Development induced displacement: a conceptual and theoretical framework

Development brings about various advantages, but it is important to acknowledge that it often leads to social disruption through displacement. This displacement occurs abruptly and

without compromise, as individuals are uprooted from their familiar surroundings where they have acquired knowledge and experience, and are thrust into a new environment, leaving behind their social connections, income, and means of livelihood. Ultimately, this forced displacement benefits some at the expense of others. It becomes a symbol of social exclusion, where individuals are physically, economically, and socially marginalized. This concept of social exclusion can be understood as a form of poverty resulting from a failure in capabilities, which in turn gives rise to various forms of unfreedoms (Kumar, 2018). Furthermore, it perpetuates discrimination against individuals who possess the same set of abilities.

Due to the violation of human rights and the denial of the opportunity to enjoy true freedom without displacement, underdevelopment persists as a consequence of development-induced displacement. When considering the issue of displacement, the Washington consensus and the neo-classical theory of the 1980s have limited relevance. These theories primarily focus on market forces and do not prioritize government intervention in the economy to promote development in stagnant economies. However, the sustainable development models of the late 1980s and 1990s emphasize the importance of government intervention in addressing the disempowering effects of displacement. In the context of development-induced displacement, the state plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive growth and safeguarding human rights.

Development induced displacement in West Bengal

In India development projects like dams have tended to be a major source of displacement. Dams for irrigation and hydropower are major cause of displacement. The hydro-power project is considered as temple of modern India by the leaders of independent India. There are various reasons for the displacement of people, with developmental projects being the primary cause in India. The Indian government often undertakes initiatives such as constructing dams, reservoirs, power plants, and hydel projects, as well as urban development projects. Additionally, displacement occurs due to the extraction of natural resources. When a developmental or mining project takes place, the local population needs to be relocated for the project's successful completion (Goswami, 2018). This type of displacement is referred to as development-induced displacement. While development is necessary for modernization, it also brings about various challenges to human life and livelihood. Similar to other developing nations, India frequently experiences cases of induced displacement. In order to promote the country's growth, India, like other developing nations, prioritizes developmental projects, albeit at the expense of rural communities' lives and livelihoods. A study has shown that approximately 10 % of rural people in India are displaced due to development projects.

The rural indigenous communities in West Bengal are greatly impacted by the forced displacement, resulting in the relocation of thousands of tribal individuals from their ancestral homes. The issues arising from this induced displacement can be classified into various categories, including social, cultural, and economic concerns. One of the social issues is the environmental destruction caused by developmental projects, where the Indian government has been removing numerous forest areas that serve as the primary dwellings for these tribal communities. The forests and their resources are essential for their way of life and sustenance. The development-induced displacement has also given rise to sociological issues, as many cultural rituals of the tribal people revolve around forests and trees. The cutting down of different forest areas for development projects has led to the emergence of cultural problems. Hence, it can be concluded that both social and cultural problems can arise due to this induced development. However, in order to protect the interests of rural communities, legislation has been enacted under "the colonial Land Acquisition Act, 1894" (Randell, 2016).

Again in some large projects of development displacement has occurred but no resentment and protest are seen because some type of consensus is working but that does not imply sustainability. In this case also the conditions of the displacers were deteriorated from that they were enjoying before displacement. So this forced eviction is unjustified in the true democratic sense. Several million people displaced by modernisation are still awaiting rehabilitation.

Resettlement and rehabilitation plans

The National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007 (referred to as NRRP) aimed to address the shortcomings of the previous 2003 policy. Under this policy, the government is required to conduct a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) study during displacement programs. The SIA should assess the adverse effects on affected families in terms of their economic,

environmental, social, and cultural needs in a participatory and transparent manner. In August 2013, the Government of India introduced the Land Acquisition and Resettlement and Rehabilitation (LARR) Act, 2013, which encompasses a comprehensive approach. It defines the "public purpose" for which the government can acquire land and replaces the outdated Land Acquisition Act of 1894. The government believed that a combined law was necessary to ensure that rehabilitation and resettlement are mandatory and simultaneous with land acquisition for public purposes. However, this bill fails to consider the socio-economic reality of compensation. While the bill intends to provide owners with the market value of their land and property, determining this value is challenging. Market value is based on official records and sale deeds of similar properties, but these documents often understate the value to avoid stamp duty charges. This information gap raises concerns about the fairness and efficiency of compensation. Additionally, determining the market price is complicated as land records are solely possessed by the government, and sometimes the improvements made on the land are not accurately recorded, leading to an underestimation of the value of upgraded land that was previously of lower grade (Goswami, 2019).

Central Concern of Land Acquisition: Compensation

The term "compensation" in this context refers to a comprehensive compensation package in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act. The individuals who have an interest in the land under this act are as follows:

1. Proprietor, Co-proprietor, and Sub-proprietor.
2. Occupier of the land.
3. Mortgagee.
4. Tenant.
5. Any person who is known or believed to have an interest in the land.

When settling compensation for land acquisition, there are several factors that should be considered:

- a. The location advantage in relation to the adjoining land.
- b. The nature of the land and its potential for higher use.
- c. The current use of the land.
- d. The impact of the neighboring land's use on the acquired land.

Provisions of different types of rehabilitation

a. Rehabilitation based on cash: Displaced individuals are entitled to receive cash compensation in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. This compensation should be determined based on the current market value of land that is of equivalent size and location. Cash-based rehabilitation is a commonly practiced method of providing assistance.

b. Rehabilitation based on land: Land is a valuable asset that can support livelihoods and serve various purposes such as production, trade, and community living. Therefore, a one-time cash payment, as provided in cash-based rehabilitation, is not sufficient. Instead, this policy aims to replace lost land with new land in another location. However, this approach has faced controversy due to the limited availability of suitable land and the challenge of finding land with similar fertility.

c. Rehabilitation based on employment: Providing one job per family is a well-known measure to mitigate the impact of displacement. However, both the government and corporate entities often struggle to fulfil this commitment in the aftermath of displacement.

d. Socioeconomic and cultural rehabilitation: Social rehabilitation emphasizes the importance of family, caste, religion, and community. Cultural rehabilitation involves the reconstruction of temples, churches, other institutions, and the celebration of social festivals, among other aspects.

e. Ecological rehabilitation: This form of rehabilitation grants individuals special rights to access common property resources in their new location, ensuring their continued connection to the environment.

The most contentious issue in determining compensation is the market value of the acquired land. This value is established by considering what a hypothetical purchaser would be willing to pay on the date of acquisition, assuming the vendor is also willing to sell at a reasonable price. By analyzing comparable instances, an index of market value can be formed (Bhushan, 2008). This

approach is known as the principle of prudent purchaser. It is important to consider not only the realized possibilities but also the potential future uses of the land when settling its value. The land acquisition officer should also utilize the comparative sales method, basing the market value on the sales of comparable land in the surrounding area. If there are no comparable sales, the method of capitalization of net income can be used. This involves determining the annual income derived or expected to be derived from the land, considering factors such as average gross yield, cost of cultivation, and prices of agricultural crops. Therefore, when determining the value of the land, it is crucial to consider its potentialities rather than solely relying on past sales. Resettlement programs should go beyond monetary compensation and address various factors that contribute to well-being, such as employment opportunities, access to social networks, location, and level of autonomy.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the crucial matters pertaining to resettlement practice, factors determining suitable compensation, and the inability of resettlement to ensure sustainable livelihoods, as exemplified by the cases of Rajarhat and Singur in West Bengal.

Case study of Singur and Haldia at West Bengal

a. Singur

Singur, West Bengal, a recent case of development-induced displacement has occurred due to the establishment of an automobile project. The project involved the takeover of 997 acres of farmland through eminent domain, citing the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. However, the farmers who were unwillingly displaced protested and joined the opposition's movement to save the farmland. This project sparked a significant controversy regarding the acquisition of fertile land for private enterprise. The planned investment for the project is approximately Rs.1000 crore, which aims to create a mini auto city and further industrialize West Bengal through backward and forward linkages with ancillary industries. This development is also expected to promote job growth in the non-agricultural sector. Criticism was raised against the forced acquisition of land and the inadequate compensation provided, which was lower than the market valuation. The process of land acquisition, as well as the determination of compensation and rehabilitation packages, became the subject of intense debate. Normally, the market value is determined at the time of land acquisition notification. However, over time, the expected price of land increases, especially if it is agricultural land, due to a shortage of agricultural production and growing demand. Unfortunately, this fair price concept is not taken into consideration when settling the compensation for the acquired land. As a result of the widespread protests and violence, Tata ultimately decided to relocate the Nano factory from West Bengal to Gujarat ([Ghatak, 2012](#)).

Singur serves as a prime example of the government's failure in land acquisition and its futile attempt at industrialization. The primary reason behind this failure lies in the incorrect calculation of compensation, stemming from the misclassification of high-grade multi-cropped land and low-grade mono-cropped land in Singur's official land records. Consequently, there has been an inadequate compensation for the high-grade land, leading to its rejection. The acquisition of land is now a contentious issue primarily due to two reasons: the insufficient package of compensation and rehabilitation programs, and the government's disregard for the property rights (indirectly) of unregistered sharecroppers, landless agricultural labourers, and women whose livelihoods depend on the land despite not being direct landowners. Notably, some landowners refused to accept the compensation, resulting in a violent turn of events that garnered national and international media attention.

b. Haldia

Land acquisition started in Haldia in 1960s. In early 1990s the State Government formed a Resettlement Advisory Committee. Additional District Magistrate of Tamluk was its Chairman. This Committee was the authority to certify the entitled PAPs for allotment of rehabilitation plots. The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee had been formed by the State Government with Additional District Magistrate, Tamluk as its Chairman. The Committee was constituted of two administrators, two Land Acquisition Officers, and four elected (political) persons.

All the processes of resettlement were done by this committee. The processes included:

- Application for resettlement,
- Hearing of cases,
- Allotment of plots and

- Dealing with grievances.

The ground level survey was done by the political representatives. At Panchayet level the political representatives identified the “affected persons” and distributed the entitlement certificates. Then the displacees could apply for the resettlement plots.

Till mid of nineties more than 16000 families (more than 83,000 people) were displaced for establishment of Port and industrial development projects in Haldia. Some of them have been displaced with a notice of 48 hours, some got two weeks, and few had a month to prepare themselves for shifting. Bulldozers crashed their homes. They had to leave their pond, homestead land; cattle and other livestock and stayed in temporary tent made by ‘hogla’. Some of them left their ancestral land and emigrated to South 24 – Paraganas (according to Government Officials). Some took shelter on vulnerable river bank areas so that nobody could displace them. Mouza were uninhabited till 1971. After land acquisition, it was inhabited by four households in 2010 was occupied by 28 households in 2020. Displaced people were forced to settle in vulnerable areas in Haldia. During 2000–2010 there were many organized agitation in Haldia, demanding proper resettlement for them. They were completely landless and homeless PAFs. The doctrine of “eminent Jurisdiction” underlying this act established that all the land in a country is owned by the Government. Basically it ignored the individual’s ownership on land. When Government acquired land it had minimum liability, only to pay compensation to the land losers. The Act was amended later to provide solarium to the land losers on account of compulsory acquisition. In Haldia Government as well as Land Acquisition Authority did not pay attention to resettle the displaced person till 2010 (Guha, 2006). Ultimately they formed the R&R Committee, but they also put least attention to minimize the PAFs’ impoverishments. As these agrarian people were poor, powerless; hence voiceless it was taken for granted that they will bear the cost of development. This kind of development was ‘exclusive’ for one section, not ‘inclusive’ for all (Siddiqui, 2018).

Societal responses to development induced displacement and its implications:

The development induced displacement also contributes to the economic issues, as those who are displaced often lose their traditional means of livelihood when they are forced to relocate. This loss of traditional livelihood further marginalizes them, as they are already the most vulnerable members of society. In many cases, government development projects have required the removal of tribal or rural communities from their ancestral lands, resulting in significant loss of property and traditional occupations. Due to their limited education levels, rural and tribal individuals have limited opportunities for finding skilled employment. Consequently, after being displaced, these individuals face significant challenges in terms of economic, cultural, and sociological losses (Maitra, 2009).

The process of acquiring land should involve consultation with all stakeholders. It is important to involve local communities and ensure that they are educated about the legalities of the Land Acquisition Act and the provisions for resettlement. In order to minimize the negative impact of displacement on both the environment and the people, it is crucial to consider all possible alternatives for the project. In some cases, it may even be necessary to abandon the project altogether after assessing its socio-economic impact. Therefore, there should be a transparent flow of information at every stage and the negotiation process should remain open-ended (Negi, 2011).

At the national level, policy reform should focus on providing greater clarity and setting specific goals for Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR). It is also important to enforce policies that address human rights, sustainable development, and poverty elimination. Many countries have not incorporated the provisions of international treaties that protect economic, social, and cultural rights into their national legal systems. The current attempts at resettlement have been inadequate as they have only focused on the economic aspect, neglecting the political issues and the relationship between the resettled communities and the wider regional and national systems they belong to.

The political aspect refers to the distribution of power among individuals in affected communities, the protection of human rights for those who have been displaced, their ability to govern themselves locally, and most importantly, their influence over decisions made by national institutions. All of these factors are crucial for sustainable development. Therefore, when addressing resettlement issues, it is important to consider not only the economic aspect but also the political aspect in order to prevent the political marginalization of displaced individuals and allow them to have a say in how and where they live. While Cernea's risks and reconstruction model has been highly

valuable in identifying the risks associated with reconstruction and promoting economic livelihoods, it has been less effective in addressing the political aspect of resettlement (Fernandes, 2007). Ultimately, a democratic and participatory approach to project planning and implementation is necessary to achieve sustainable development from a broader perspective.

Impact of displacement on wealth and well-being of the resettled household

In order to assess the impact, it is necessary to gather data on the socio-economic conditions of individuals before and after displacement. This data needs to be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, there are challenges in collecting pre-displacement data due to reliance on memory and potential selection bias. Additionally, locating households after displacement and identifying a suitable control group is difficult, as development projects indirectly affect the socio-economic and environmental conditions of non-displaced households. Estimating post-displacement income is also challenging, as displaced households are in the process of rebuilding their livelihoods. Nevertheless, we can still collect data and compare the socio-economic conditions of displaced households with those of unaffected households within the same communities. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects, we combine qualitative interview data on changes in kinship systems, social structures, and livelihoods with quantitative data analysis.

Once again, due to the multidimensional nature of resettlement studies, it is necessary to consider both monetary and non-monetary factors when analyzing the impact. In addition to changes in wealth, we must also examine the effects on overall well-being. To assess the change in wealth, we can compare the pre-displacement and post-displacement scenarios. In this case, wealth serves as a proxy for income, as many households rely on compensation in various forms. The measurement of wealth can be based on an index of assets, property ownership, and housing conditions. However, subjective well-being provides valuable insights that extend beyond monetary compensation. It is important to note that higher economic compensation does not always equate to higher well-being. The maintenance of social and familial networks plays a significant role in determining well-being. Additionally, the preservation of local support systems, such as remaining close to family or friends, also contributes to subjective well-being. To further analyze the variables of wealth and well-being, we can conduct regression analysis stratified by whether or not the household received compensation.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that displacement of people is caused by both developmental projects as well as due to climate based issues. The displaced people are found to face huge issues in terms of economic distress, socio-cultural losses. Loss of traditional livelihood and environmental loss are the main issues which are encountered by the induced displacement problem. It is a fact that individuals are reluctant to relocate from their current location, and from a human rights perspective, every person has the right to reside in the place they desire. Therefore, when displacement occurs due to development, it can be viewed as a violation of human rights. The issue of displacement is often seen as a necessary sacrifice in order to achieve the greater good or national interests. In light of this, the local government has a responsibility to fulfil certain duties. Efforts should be made to ensure that the local economy continues to thrive by creating job opportunities and generating additional income in the new location. Policies should not only focus on addressing the economic impact but also the physical and psychological effects, in order to improve the overall well-being of the affected individuals and maintain their cultural and social continuity, which is crucial for preventing social disintegration. Similar to development, resettlement is a complex phenomenon that encompasses various aspects of life, and all the areas that are affected by resettlement should be taken into consideration. Monetary compensation, even if it is based on market value, is often insufficient as it fails to adequately compensate for the value of the land that has been lost.

The debate between development and its negative consequences is a topic of discussion. It is crucial not only to implement resettlement policies but also to focus on improving the practice of resettlement. The role of impact assessment and project appraisal is significant in this regard. The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness, particularly among individuals who are unfamiliar with the importance of impact assessment prior to land acquisition. When conducted appropriately, resettlement, especially after a thorough social impact assessment, can enhance overall well-being.

Additionally, it is essential to have land conservation policies for agriculture and land grabbing policies for industrialization to ensure the income security of small and marginal farmers.

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