

Forced Displacement: A Gendered Analysis of the Tehri Dam Project in India

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Abstract

Development induced displacement has brought about a profound economic and socio-cultural disruption to the affected communities. Under conditions of deprivation and marginalization, the rights and entitlements of those forced to move and fundamentally change their traditional means of livelihood have been lost. They lose their social networks, cultural identity, sense of well being and existing modes of production. These processes of impoverishment question the developmental model that perpetuates displacement causing human misery to the displaced communities world over.

The premise of using gender as a category for analysis in the effects of development-induced displacement is based on the assumption that women experience displacement and relocation in a particularly gendered way. This occurs due to the gendered division of labor that has arisen from socio-historical processes of men's traditional incorporation in wage earning and performing labor oriented tasks while women remain on the land jobs and its management on a daily basis. The insensitivity of the regimes constructing large developmental projects in the state has created conditions where women have been the greatest sufferers. These projects characterized by formal centrally managed systems, displace informal, decentralized and participatory structures that form part of daily lives of women. Such conditions push huge numbers of women into marginal environments where critically low level of water supplies, shortage of fuels, and over-utilization of arable lands have deprived them of their livelihoods, cultural identity and sense of well being. Resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) policies expose the male biases inherent in the insensitivity of the governments towards needs of women. This paper examines the lived experiences of displaced women and the current practices in displacement. The arguments presented in the paper are based on the empirical findings of research that looks at women displaced by the construction of Tehri dam in the Bhagirathi

valley and relocated in New Tehri town and the plains of Uttaranchal state of India.

In October 2003, when the Uttaranchal government sealed the shops in old Tehri the livelihoods of many poor women was affected. For instance, some of them made traditional necklaces, which earned them Rs.100 to Rs.150 per day. They collected the raw material from the jewelers in the market who paid them on a per piece basis. However, once the markets shut, these poor, illiterate women lost the only means of earning that they had. Said 50-year-old Haseena, who earlier supplemented her watch mechanic husband's income by making these necklaces, "I don't understand what development means when it has taken away the only means I had of looking after my five children. This government has no concern for our problems" (Arya 2002).

Introduction

The process of modern development in post independent India was related to the role of state as a primary agent for advancing the agenda of development. Development was marked by large scale, capital-intensive projects, and an international system of aid for infrastructure projects for increases in agricultural productivity and livestock management. In its most basic definition, development was viewed as a tool for modernization launched by third world countries to transform them into modern complex western societies. In the aftermath of colonial rule, development became synonymous with economic growth and industrialization. Development categories included large dams, irrigation projects, urban infrastructure, transportation, power plants, mining, park and forest reserves, agricultural expansion and population redistribution schemes. While these categories may be beneficial in the broad development paradigm it has resulted in fostering social and economic inequalities, serving the interests of narrow elite, destroying the environment, displacing and impoverishing people dependent on land. Shiva (1994) calls the traditional model of development as an indicator of "maldevelopment". Escobar (1995) argues that development has to be seen as an invention and strategy produced in the first world about the "underdevelopment" of the third world. However, this is not to deny especially in the context of India, that a process of ironing out social inequalities and opening up a space for alternative voices and institutions that claim to represent the marginalized groups has arisen over the years. In post-independence India movements like the Narmada Bachao Andolan against the Sardar Sarovar dam, the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangthan have brought into focus serious issues regarding the planning of development projects, and the paradigm of development itself. It has exposed the fraud, deceit and suppression perpetrated in the name of "public purpose" and "national interest", while indicating - along with similar movements - the

alternative path of humane, just and sustainable governance rooted in a truly democratic polity.

A large number of scholars and activists have questioned development projects that displace, marginalize and impoverish thousands of poor (Fernandez and Thukral 1989; Kothari 1996; Thukral 1992). A consensus seems to have emerged that development induced displacement causes considerable social, economic and cultural disruption and losses for both the individuals and the communities (Dwivedi, 1999; Dreze 1997; Scudder 1993; Oliver Smith, 1991; Thukral 1992; Parsuram 1993; Morse 1992; World Commission on Dams 2000). Impacts of displacement include socio-economic impoverishment, human rights, loss of livelihoods, loss of land and housing rights, loss of community cohesion all of which contribute to the impoverishment associated with displacement. Dwivedi (2002) argues that the displacement discourse falls into two categories – the reformist managerial and the radical movementist. The managerial approach treats displacement as a consequence of past and future development and focuses on how to manage the inadequacies and failures of resettlement to minimize negative effects. The radical movementist position holds that development results in unequal distribution, and cost and benefits are borne disproportionately. They challenge the notion of development that is equated with economic growth. Growth or development that cannot be just, fair and equitable cannot bring social or economic justice for men and women. They raise concerns of fundamental political nature like rights and governance. They advocate for a paradigm shift to poverty reduction, environmental protection, social justice and human rights.

Another path breaking work in displacement and resettlement is of Michael Cernea (2000) who points out that forced displacement and being ousted from one's land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before. Cernea's impoverishment risk and reconstruction model proposes that the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement. These are identified as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social integration. Muggah (2000) and Downing (2002) add loss of access to community services and violation of human rights.

In spite of a surge of literature on forced displacement, the debates have been highly ungendered. Gender as a specific category is yet to be recognized in mainstream discourses. The oustees or the Project affected persons have been portrayed as a homogenous category and not

differentiated in state policies. The National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy (2007) declares “land may be allotted in the joint name of husband and wife.” However, it leaves for the states to formulate their own policies, as resettlement is a state subject. The fact that women experience displacement and relocation in a particularly gendered way is lacking in policy related guidelines concerning oustees or Project affected Persons. Beyond a general recognition that women suffer more than men there are no detailed studies of a gendered analysis of forced displacement and resettlement programs. Most standard works on displacement make a general reference to women with other vulnerable groups like tribals or poor but works of Mehta 2000; Mehta and Srinivasan 2000; Srinivasan 1997; Parsuram 1993; Colson 1999, have recently advanced our understanding of gender and forced displacement and outlined the adverse economic impact on women. In this paper, a gendered analysis of displacement and resettlement of women of the Bhagirathi valley has been discussed based on the experiences of women displaced by the Tehri dam construction.

Research Methodology

Field research and interviews were conducted from August to December 2004 at new Tehri town and the villages of Mallideval and Sirain before submergence. The closure of the T2 tunnel during that time had submerged many parts of the old Tehri town and rehabilitation was in progress for the forcibly displaced. Interviews were conducted in the New Tehri town constructed at a height of 2000 meters to rehabilitate the displaced people. Research work was again undertaken from June to September 2009, in the new Tehri town and in the resettlement sites of Pashulok and Athurwalla in Hardwar after the submergence of Mallideval village and Sirain. My preliminary investigation coupled with my current engagement in fieldwork enabled me to capture an in-depth description of pre and post displacement scenarios in the lives of the women. Interviews were conducted again in the town of new Tehri and rural area of the Bhagirathi valley and its resettlement sites.

Women as knowledge keepers were the main source of information, as their relationship with water is part of their everyday life. Interviews of women were based on the purposive sampling method (Bernard 1994). Diversity in terms of socio-economic standing was also kept in mind to enable me to understand the differential impacts within the broad category of women. The fieldwork was facilitated with the help of Vimal Bhai of Matu People’s Organization. The specific aim of the research conducted was to assess the impact of

displacement and resettlement on women of the region based on their narratives expressed in terms of comparison of the past and the present lived experiences. A narrative based approach was adopted because the memorable experiences of these women are meaningful as they help in establishing terms of reference to evaluate their experiences since the displacement process began and thereafter.

Gender, Development and Displacement

Gender is most commonly used to refer to social roles, social relations and social practices (Gallin and Fergusson 1991). Gender encompasses structuring of power and resources, and the ways in which certain groups and forms of knowledge have gained legitimacy over others (Duerst and Kelly 1995; Kurian 2002). Gender is a powerful social and cultural construct determining the ways in which social relations are structured between men and women. Gender is central to how societies assign roles, responsibilities, resources and rights between men and women (Mehta and Srinivasan 2000). It constitutes the entire gamut of relations that govern the social, cultural and economic exchanges between women and men in different arenas from the household to the community, state and multilateral agencies (Jackson and Pearson 1998).

Gender is not merely about bodies, it also includes the institutionalization of masculine and feminine values in the practices of organizations, institutions and the state. Gendered values and practices thus have the potential of marginalizing certain groups of people, including third world peasants, tribals, women and poor. In the context of development projects, gender becomes especially significant for several reasons. Gender and class (class/race) based division of labor, distribution of property and power, structure people's interactions with nature and in the process structure effects of environmental change on people and their responses to it (Agarwal 1996: 126). The differences in the divisions of power, labor and property, based upon perceived and ritualized gender differences, result in women and men of the same class-experiencing environment in different ways, hence having a different knowledge of the environment. For example, peasants and rural women, especially the poor play a crucial role as providers, producers and managers. As such, these women experience displacement in a specifically gendered way as it affects their everyday lives.

Gender analysts also point to the way in which these development projects are borne differently by women and men. Several studies elaborate on vulnerable communities like women and children that tend to be impacted by displacement in ways that require an evaluation

beyond monetary loss of land (Colson, 1999; Thukral, 1996; Parsuram, 1993 and 1997; Srinivasan 1997; World Bank 1994, 2001). Additionally in an unequal context of gender, disparities tend to be further exacerbated.

Many international conventions have drawn attention to gender justice and reduction in gender inequality. India remains committed to many of these conventions but there exists a gap between on the ground realities and government's commitment to these rights. Often rules that are intended to protect women, list women as dependents, rather than full citizens (March, Smith and Mukhopadhyay 1999). State institutions often end up marginalizing women because of their ignorance as to what constitutes gender sensitive programs that are suitable to local needs of the people. These gender inequalities are comparatively more starkly evident in this hill region of Uttarakhand where women are the backbone of the hill economy and most men migrate to the plains in search of jobs.

Gender in the local context, Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand, formerly a part of Uttar Pradesh became a state in the year 2000 after a major movement by the hill people of Kumaon and Garwhal mandals – where people demanded a hill state in which their control over rivers, land, forests and development would actually mean livelihood security and dignity for the common man and woman. At the heart of the Uttarakhand movement lay the demand for a state, where women constituting half of the population and forming the pillar of the hill economy would face fewer hardships, landless would be guaranteed land and employment and jobs would be forthcoming for youths. The region is geographically and culturally different from the plains. Sixty five percent of the area is covered with forests and a majority of the population is dependent on these forests for their living. The mountain area is underdeveloped and there are no means of livelihood except government jobs. Most men migrate to the plains in search of jobs and mostly get recruited in the army or work as truck drivers. Being a money order economy, the task of planning the household and the community is left to the women. Women are the able-bodied men and take care of household needs, trudge long distances to get water, work on land, get fuel and herbs from the forests and earn additional income for household by doing side business. Women form an integral part of the hill ecosystem. Women in Uttarakhand are the backbone of the mountain society. Despite their illiteracy, lack of exposure and drudgery they have exhibited great potential as leaders. Women in Uttarakhand have spearheaded several movements across the

state and played a pivotal role in the formation of the state. They have been in the forefront of all these struggles. The Chipko, Antiliquor, Uttarakhand and the anti Tehri dam movements had the support of almost all the hill women of Uttaranchal.

However, as one woman commented:

The women of Uttaranchal are the backbone of this economy. Most men in the region migrate to the plains in search of jobs to earn a livelihood. We manage our homes, children, the old, cattle, fuel, water – everything. We take part in protests and movements but we still have to do the household work. Its double duty for women, but no one recognizes that.

These hill women are bound together by the common fact of their tremendous work burden and have traditionally been the invisible workforces, the unacknowledged backbone of the family economy wherever they live in the state.

Development and Displacement in the Local Context

The new state of Uttaranchal was largely formed as per the aspirations of the women – the dream and vision of a sustainable society, one that would be in harmony with the nature in the region. The women visualized a state where they can effectively guide the development of the region in a way that benefits all and is sustainable. In the nation's quest for modernity, generation of electricity, facilitation of irrigation and creation of a conservation reservoir, a 260.5 m rock fill dam was envisaged on the confluence of Bhagirathi and Bhilangana Rivers. The dam was conceived in 1949 and consent was granted to build the dam by the planning commission in 1972. The Tehri Dam project, a multipurpose project with a reservoir storage spread over 45 square kilometers is supposed to generate 1000MW of power, irrigate 2.70 lakh ha in western Uttar Pradesh, provide 300 cusecs of drinking water for Delhi and 200 cusecs of drinking water for towns and villages of Uttar Pradesh (Shiva and Jalees 2003). Apart from these benefits the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation brochure mentions integrated development of the Garwhal region, including construction of new Tehri town with provision of all civic facilities, improved communication, education, health, tourism, development of horticulture, fisheries, and afforestation of the region. The dam construction began in 1978 amidst police protection as protests gathered momentum. The dam is the highest earth and rock fill dam in Asia and the fourth largest in the world. The dam affected the Tehri town and 125 villages of which thirty-seven were fully submerged and eighty-seven partially submerged (HRC 1997). Estimates are that around 85,000 people have been displaced (Paranjpye 1988) in

both rural and urban locations as a contribution to the painted rock messages enroute to the dam: *'Nation before Self'*.

The Process of Resettlement

The process of resettlement was designed to mitigate economic hardship, socio-cultural alienation that the displacement may bring. Resettlement was to help displaced families and communities, and re-establish their social relations, institutions and value systems. In doing so, resettlement goals should provide adequate compensation to face the hardships of relocation. Relocation is the process of evicting and transferring earmarked population to new sites ideally with the participation of the oustee. Relocation seriously affects the survival systems and adaptive strategies of the dam oustees. The adaptive strategies aim at achieving the steadiness in the flow of resources that they obtain from different sources, as well as to control and reduce the uncertainty that impairs the functioning of their survival systems. In spite of these strategies, resettlement in itself is a very traumatic experience for most countries (Cernea 1997). In the region under study, people in general and women in particular are unhappy at the way in which resettlement and rehabilitation programs have been conducted. Rukhi Devi of Mallideval village who strongly reprimanded the present government on this project aptly summed up their agony of displacement.

British colonists took away our culture, similarly today this project is also like an imperialist conquest on the hill people's culture. It is an ethnocide in a region, which we struggled to establish for our separate identity and development.

The government however, claims to have completed all resettlement of the affected areas but the ground realities seem different from the government claims. The principle findings of the SANDRP report published on resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced people read as follows:

There is practically no participation of TDP affected people in the process of displacement, resettlement or rehabilitation, even if we leave aside the lack of participation in the project decision, implementation and monitoring and options assessment..... The present packages offered to people are unjust and inadequate to ensure that resettlement will lead to attainment of original standards of living (Matu 2004).

These processes of involuntary displacement are therefore surrounded by 'physiological, psychological and sociological components' (Scudder 1993:13) that destabilizes their traditional cultural practices with a 'reordering of space, time, relationships, norms and psycho-social-

cultural constructs'. The shifts in these traditional practices result in newer practices. These practices are negotiated and renegotiated in the socio-cultural setting of an environment which emerges only after the breakdown of earlier routines and practices. This change makes it very difficult for women to adapt in a new and hostile environment. The research demonstrates that as people experienced new realities, women experienced marginalization in the process. This experience can be traced back to the historical processes of gendered division of labor. The male biases perpetuate gender inequality and state institutions and policies are insensitive to women's needs that are far different from a monetized economy. Processes of development are not gender neutral, a gap exists in the ways in which distribution and calculation of benefits of development is accomplished. Women's contributions as the invisible workforce have either not been calculated or its benefits have been disproportionately enjoyed by men (Agarwal 1996; Elson 1998). A gender gap exists in both policy and practice. Thus, gender justice remains distant in local and state discourses.

'Resettlement' according to Colson (1999: 26) 'involves a re-ordering of gender relations across a wide spectrum, but that re-ordering emerges from previous assumptions about gender and the gendered experiences of those involved'. The understanding of gender and their roles is entirely misplaced in resettlement policies. While both men and women experience disempowerment and dependence due to displacement, women experience it more due to their roles in the domestic sphere and a demonetized economy. Policies that are insensitive to gender, gender assumptions and roles embedded in social and historical processes work to the disadvantage of women. In this study, the marginalization and disempowerment of women was evident in the policies and processes of compensation and resettlement of the displaced families. The following section describes women's experiences in the process of displacement and resettlement:

Lived Experiences of Women during Pre and Post Displacement Processes

Traditionally, the natural environment has provided livelihood support to the women in this region. Biomass played a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of rural households led by women of the region. Food, fuel wood, fodder, fertilizer, organic manure etc. forest building material (timber thatch) and medicines (herb) form different kinds of biomass used by women. An important aspect of this biomass-based subsistence economy was that it was mostly non-monetized. Water, fuel, fodder, building materials and even food to a

certain extent were all gathered freely from the immediate environment; production and processing of biomass-agriculture, forestry - minor forest produce and village crafts based on use of biomass as raw material were the biggest sources of employment.

Women have been responsible, in this subsistence or survival economies for water, food, fuel, fodder, habitat etc. forming the survival needs of the family. Collection of minor forest produce and herbs not only provided extra income to women but valuable nutrition and medicinal support. Animal husbandry was also an important supplemental activity that contributed to household income. The family members normally shared a single roof living under a single patrilineal unit. The families were mostly subsistence farming communities that provided enough for them to survive as the topography did not allow them to market or reap surplus produce. Thus women had free access to these resources, which they claimed by traditional rights (Rawat 1989) while men migrated to the cities to ensure a more adequate livelihood. Most men worked in the plains and sent money home to the women who took care of the children, aged and the household.

Women in the resettlement sites complained of lack of access to common property resources that not only constituted a major portion of their survival strategies but also led to a loss of supplemental income generating strategies. Maina Devi from Mallideval complained:

I used to make some extra money by selling wood and milk in the nearby hotels on the highway. The fodder for my cattle was free. Today I have not only lost my land but also the extra household income for my kids.

Research in this study demonstrated that women's income at this level mainly fulfils household and nutritional needs of the family. Yet these aspects of the women needs often receive no consideration. The gains that women make from CPRs are not valued in a market economy.

There was also a marked difference in the living conditions of communities in their earlier places of residence and the present sites of relocation. The Ganga in the pre displacement sites was not only a free flowing river but also a sustainer in terms of providing them fish, fuel wood, drinking water and water for irrigation. They never experienced scarcity of water even in the hottest summer. As a woman from New Tehri observed:

If you came to my house in old Tehri we could cook you food, go down by the river and get cold water to drink. You did not need a fridge. But in this town, there is no water for three days. Then the quality is bad. It smells in the tank. Tanker and hand pumps are there but you have to go and get it. Tanker will stand

here and how does one living at a height come and get it. I see it but I cannot take it. Water in the taps comes only once a week.

This comment depicts the condition of many women who lived in the old town of Tehri by the riverside where water was easily accessible. The new town of Tehri has been constructed at a height of 2000 meters and water has to be pumped from the river at two different points to reach the town. Women experience great difficulty in accessing water as the water pumped to the tanks reaches the taps at times only once a week, and at other times for a couple of hours in the morning. While tankers and community hand pumps try to fulfill this gap in demand and supply of water, the construction of the city is such that it is difficult to carry water from tanker supplies to their homes, situated on considerable heights.

As another woman remarked:

This is hell, it looks like new but for us we have lost our culture, goodwill, water, environment and everything. It is three days since we have been without water. It is hell, the hell of Asia. British used to send people to Andaman and Nicobar for punishment now if you want to punish people send them here to New Tehri.

However, women resettled in the plains also face the same problem. On the question of their post displacement status Rani Nautiyal responded:

We have been given land but if we have no water how can we grow crops and irrigate the land. The government assured us that all amenities would be provided to us before we moved. To this day, we await fulfillment of those promises. Frustrated by the absence of water many families have sold their lands.

The loss of free access to water, timber, roof slate, stones and sand leaves them frustrated.

Water is a key issue even for the women in the plains where in spite of land compensation there is no water to irrigate the crops. The natural environment in the hills also provided them herbs and plants with medicinal value. As a woman from Athurwala in Hardwar district complained:

I was given land as compensation but agriculture is very difficult here because no irrigation is possible. We have to pay water to irrigate our fields and we do not have any money. The local environment is completely different from my village. Pashulok and Athurwala are in the plains of Hardwar District. The flora and fauna, the landscape and the fertility of the soil are not like our mountain region. There we had free water from the river to irrigate our fields and here we have to pay Rs.50 for an hour for a tube well water. There I went with my friends to collect water in my *bantha* (traditional pot to carry water) from streams, and herbs and fuel wood from the forests but now we have to buy everything from the

market.

Living in a labor intensive and demonetized economy they are suddenly exposed to the vagaries of cash economy in these resettlement colonies and become the double victims of profiteers, intermediaries and their own men.

The environment of the Garwhal region in which the women lived had tremendous crop diversity. They grew crops like *mandua, jhangora, urd, jwar, bajra, taur beens, ramdana, rice and wheat*. The cropping pattern of this region is systematically characterized by mixed cropping. The crop rotation, which is locally known as "Sar System", has been giving good yield of crops. Within a year, the land is given-up fallow for six months. Along with these varieties of crops, fruits cultivation is also carried out in the villages. The main fruits grown are *malta, orange, nut, peach, plum, apricot* and all varieties of *citrus* and *apple* fruits. These fruits though, are mainly grown for the domestic consumption. Nearly 90% of the total cropped area was devoted to subsistence food crops mainly grown for domestic consumption and local market. Commercial or cash crops occupied a very negligible portion of the cropped area. Women were the primary cultivators in the region as men migrated to plains for jobs or are working as wage laborers with petty contractors. But resettlement in the plains has pushed them from a subsistence economy into a consumer and market oriented economy where the crop diversity is lost, and there is hardly any free water to irrigate the crops. The prospect of cash earning for livelihood expenses are limited. Women observed:

The quality of land is very different here so we cannot produce the same crops. Earlier except for salt and sugar, we never bought anything from the plains. We had a twelve-crop food economy. Now we are forced into a consumer economy where we have to buy everything. We have lost our entire food culture.

Women experienced a sense of social disarticulation by the processes of displacement. Population displacements arising from the submersion of villages due to large dams disrupts the social support networks with kins and other villagers, built-up especially by women. These networks provide small loans of food and cash, or labor exchange and tide poor families through periods of shortage in their places of abode in villages. Their disruption usually goes uncounted in cost benefit exercise of large irrigation schemes, and rehabilitation programs associated with such schemes of resettlements. Community networks that helped cope with poverty through personalized strategies, informal loans, exchange of food, clothing and durable goods, mutual help with farming, building houses, and caring for children existed. These

multifunctional yet virtually invisible social networks are lost through displacement acts. They are a major cause of impoverishment. A lot of aged women whose sons have migrated or work in the plains, or who have been widowed lived in these villages. Mana Devi who lived her entire life in her village with the help of this community network felt an acute sense of social disarticulation and helplessness.

Married in this village, at the age of eleven I became a widow. Today I am eighty-three. I have lived my entire life in this community that has taken care of all my needs. With no land and no house, where will I go for support?

Another one said

As men are mostly away in the plains whenever there was a function like a wedding or death in the village, each family would contribute something and there was never any load on one family. Now everything is gone. We have been settled in different towns and our entire community network that sustained us has been lost.

Thus, women experience a lack of well being. However, their sense of well being is not just related to physical needs but also involves social, cultural, economic, political and psychological support systems. They miss their forest walks for fuel wood and fodder which was also the time they spent with friends and shared their daily activities. In doing these day-to-day activities, they found their freedom and autonomy to run their households. They also miss the relationship with the river, which has both material and spiritual significance for them. As a young woman from the resettlement site mentioned:

I used to get up at 4.am in the morning. I would make chai (tea) and start with the household chores. I would go to the spring to collect water; I would make breakfast and send my children to school. I would then give fodder to the cattle and then with some of my friends from the village. I used to go to collect wood and fodder from the forest. That was the time I spent talking to friends. In the afternoon, I would work in the fields and in the evening cook dinner for the family. I was busy and I could just wander out of my house anywhere I wanted. Here, I still get up at 4 am and finish my household chores but I have no place to go and no friends to talk to and nothing much to do. The environment in the plains is different from the hills. Women in this area do not work in the fields; it is considered inferior; so I am confined to the walls of this tin shed I live in.

In the plains, hired laborers are required to perform various agricultural tasks. In the villages women were an integral part of agricultural practices that also included decision-making and equal participation of men and women. In the resettlement sites, it is mostly men who negotiate hiring and supervision of the activities and women feel marginalized and disempowered in this

process. Their participation in day-to-day routine practices is negligible and the confinement to their household limits their space of social interaction. Confined to the four walls of the house, and fear of moving out in an alien environment makes many women depressed, stressed and lonely. This leads to high blood pressure and other health problems. In the town of new Tehri, there are different health issues. A shortage of lady doctors in that city creates problems for women. Due to poor and bad water quality, health risks have also increased in these areas and water borne diseases are common occurrence amongst women and children.

Women also experienced a sense of insecurity in the physical and social space assigned to them. Built houses and residential patterns, cultural and linguistic differences as well as hostility of host populations in the resettlement areas do not provide a sense of security that they experienced in the hills. In their villages and in old Tehri women felt safe and could move around even in late hours. They could freely wear jewelry and travel to different villages to attend weddings and ceremonies. Now their apprehensions are expressed as under:

I never put a lock in my village at Mallideval. Here I have to lock the house all the time and have to be in the house by 6 pm. It is just not safe and many people in this host village consider us outsiders. We have been dumped and are sufferers on both counts

Due to a sense of insecurity and distance between kinship groups, women also experience a loss of their support systems. Dependency has overtaken their role of being the primary household keepers. Due to the lack of familiarity and loss of social networks, they become dependent on male members in the household whether it is traveling back to the village or taking the children to the doctor.

The above analysis demonstrates that women experience displacement in a qualitatively different way from men. While displacement in general has created impoverishment risks such as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social integration (Cernea 2000) women share these risks with men but experience more marginalization in everyday life due to the socially exclusionary processes at work. In spite of a lesser work burden, women felt that the life of the hills was a better one.

In the interviews I conducted, women complained of lack of basic amenities like water, loss of land rights, discrimination in compensation, and absence of a sense of well being and security. "Men and women are affected differently by dam projects. Women are harder hit by

resettlement than men, since they are more likely to earn their living from small businesses located at or near their residences. Women may also be affected disproportionately in rural areas since they are more often dependent on common property resources” (World Bank 1984: 2/9 in Caroni 1999).

Gender Bias in State Resettlement Policy

Displacement compensation for the dam affected initially began in 1976 under the Department of Irrigation, Uttar Pradesh. Later with the formation of Tehri Hydroelectric Development Corporation (THDC) in 1990, a resettlement and rehabilitation policy was drafted that became effective in 1995. Two kinds of compensations were provided to the displaced population: land and cash. The displaced people were offered either two acres of land in the rural settlement areas or half an acre of land within the periphery of urban municipal centers. Some 200 square meters of plot to build houses and compensation for house was calculated on the age and type of house in existence at the pre displacement site. The resettlers were provided with a possession certificate of land but that did not give them legal ownership of land. In some cases constructed house allotments to the house were provided after a fixed deposit amount varying from Rs. 1,00,000 to 3,00,000. In many cases, corrupt government officials also demanded money, in the absence of which many men and women lost their allotted shops or houses. Nowhere was there a recognition of the significance and implications of displacement for women, nor did it recognize gender being an issue in formulating R&R plans. In most cases, allotment of land and cash compensation was made in the name of the male member of the family. Women claimed that the government had treated them unequally. The gender bias in the resettlement package was evident.

Due to discriminatory biases inherent in the R&R policy and its implementation, a 12-member expert committee under the Chairmanship of Professor C H Hanumantha Rao, a former member of the Planning Commission was formed in 1996. The committee brought to light the environmental and rehabilitation inconsistencies in the Tehri dam project and made specific recommendations about compensation for women. The unit *Family* was defined by the committee as (husband, wife, minor children and others dependents on the head of the household such as widowed mother. The head of the household is one in whose name the land is entered in the revenue records (HRC 1997: 14) and he represents the family for compensation purposes. The committee recommended that women should be granted separate compensation.

The Committee also approved Rs.43,000 for a single or widowed woman. It was due to the HRC that the new rehabilitation policy included wife as a beneficiary in the compensation package. In spite of the THDC website listing that "Effective from 9.12.1998, all rehabilitation benefits (land, house, plot and cash provisions) to the affected families, including ex-gratia to additional family members, would be given and registered jointly in the name of both husband and wife" in most cases this money, was not appropriately and equally distributed.

Women become victim of intermediaries, profiteers and corrupt government officials. Those who had the capability to pay bribes were granted compensation. Allotment/registration of land/house plot were required to be in the joint name of husband and wife subject to fulfillment of legal requirement if any, but almost all allotments have been made in the name of the male as household head. Cash compensations too have been given to men. Resettlement officers dismiss the idea of women being allotted land rights or compensation. Many women complained that cash compensation granted to their husbands had been squandered away in drinking and short-term consumer goods. Many felt that cash is not sufficient to build houses of the kind that they had in villages. As a widowed woman, Rukma Devi narrated her story:

We are getting a paltry sum of Rs.40, 000 to construct a house in Pashulok. We cannot even construct a single room for this amount in the plains. In Mallideval constructing a house is cheap. Slate and mud is free. So does wood. Help is forthcoming and you only needed a little cement.

Women who earned their living by selling household things by the roadside or were hawkers in the old Tehri town have been classified as landless and so are ineligible for compensation.

I was a hawker for the last 30 years and there is no provision for me in the R&R policy.

Another woman said:

My husband is unemployed. I used to stitch clothes and work for a living. I have been allotted a shop in Dehradun but have no money to pay for its structure. I lost my ancestral home but got no compensation for that. I live in a tin shed and I walked seven kilometers today to brief you about my entire grievance in the hope that you will help me. The state has been very unjust to us.

There is no acknowledgement of single women in the areas in spite of desertion, death of husband resulting in a large number of women facing extreme impoverishment. A widow,

unmarried adult daughter and a deserted woman will be considered as dependents. The State policy is even more gender biased as it asks a woman to surrender her right to property. For example, if a couple owns property separately as individuals; they are still treated as one unit. The compensation goes to the head of the household: man. A deserted woman has not even been referred to in any of the state policies. She can only receive compensation from her husband through the process of adjudication. She will not be entitled to a separate package (Singh 1992). Women's contribution to the village and the household economy are ignored by state policy. There is no attempt to compensate women's loss of access to resources that has a severe impact on women. Rural women have little political influence, are illiterate and ignorant and their exclusion from resettlement policy is openly unjustified. There exists insensitivity to women in policy planning and insensitivity in resettlement process. Although the government calls it a rehabilitation policy – rehabilitation does not take place in any form. The term rehabilitation does not end with compensation of land or cash. This process includes a comprehensive treatment of socio-cultural, economic and psychological needs of men and women that is lacking in the rehabilitation policy. Gender is yet to be mainstreamed and values neglect women issues. There are no alternative measures or women specific plans at the resettlement sites. The National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy (Ministry of Rural Development 2007) could not influence the THDC Rehabilitation policy 1998. Since the construction of the role of men and women is understood in a given socio-cultural context, decisions do not consider the needs of women.

Conclusion

The Tehri Dam case study applied a culture-based understanding of Tehri Dam displacement processes in Uttaranchal, India through the lens of women. The project asked the question, "How do women experience displacement and relocation in the dam project?" In a region where women and children make up the majority of displaced population, insensitivity to the needs of women has shaped post-rehabilitation programs in a way where women face impoverishment, income decline, and destitution. The eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement identified in Cernea's model as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social integration manifest themselves in the daily lives of these displaced women. They suffer from loss of land due to gender biases, corrupt officials or the inability to pay the deposit money.

They suffer from joblessness and homelessness as many of them live in tinsheds; they have lost their traditional houses and cannot afford to build new ones; they suffer from a loss of access to commons, which creates fodder and fuel wood shortage and decline in income and food diversity. Women face even further hardship when community support structures disintegrate and family and kinship networks break down. Systems of care, protection, compensation, resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) remain largely insensitive to women's needs leading to a fundamentally disenfranchising experience.

In this patriarchal society, women have been denied compensation for land that they cultivate for years but did not have a registration in their name. Cases of ineligibility have been identified in many women headed households and widows where women have been excluded from compensations in the resettlement package. Men are the recognized heads of household; therefore, compensation is often paid only to them. The resettlement process is fraught with impoverishment risks (Cernea 2000) and the reconstruction remains incomplete. Women are forced into adopting a culture they have never known, and limitations in their social space have prevented them from rebuilding their daily practices in a new environment¹. Thus, women remain marginalized at the community level as well as at the national level policy-framework because of their disadvantageous position ascribed by patriarchal gender relations, traditionally excluding women from political participation, even at the community level. The narratives of women clearly brought out the insensitivity of state discourses to the needs of women. All policies are conceptualized with male biases in mind. Although the national R&R policy acknowledges gender as a category in resettlement processes, the actual resettlement and rehabilitation is a state issue. The processes of displacement transform the everyday lives of women from a community owned network to individual private property ownership that undermines the socio-economic status of women. State policies should take into consideration these problems to enable participation of women and move towards gender justice. Ensuing narrative based approach highlights the concerns of women affected by displacement processes, for consideration by policy planners while making decisions that make far reaching transformations in the lives of women in the name of 'development and public purpose'.

¹ Women have started renegotiating their daily lives although it is a difficult process. For example, during my stay in the resettlement site women would often go to the nearby forestland in Hardwar region to gather fuel wood but it was always in big groups of tens of twelve. Women mentioned that they felt insecure as they were sometimes victims of the anger and disciplinary powers of the forest rangers who prevent them from picking fuel wood categorizing it as illegal and an offense.

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