



Impact of Development Project on the Displaced Tribals : A Case Study of a Development Project in Eastern India

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An Overview of Development Projects and Displacement :

Human, by nature is progressive and ever-since he witnessed the industrial revolution in the Seventeenth Century, he never looked back. This is the prime reason for which mankind has marched forward in a long journey towards economic development and prosperity. This along with the social and cultural progress of a nation is characterized as economic development. To have an uninterrupted growth of the country's GNP, man has applied Science and Technology to augment production, expand employment opportunities for the rising population and increase the productivity of the factor inputs. For this, basic and heavy industries were created, hydel projects were established, irrigation system were developed, roads and railways, ports & harbors were constructed, canals were dug, mines were excavated and power projects were opened in suitable areas.

However, the infrastructure projects though increases productivity and production to a great extent, are not unmixed blessings. They give rise to involuntary displacement thereby creating untold miseries for the oustees as has been experienced in the completed and ongoing projects. We have witnessed it not only in a single

country, but also across the globe. This has affected not only the developing countries alone, but also the developed world as well. 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. But it is a pity that most of the projects are cleared on the basis of cost-benefit analysis which is solely based on the economic loss and gain completely ignoring the social cost of a project.

Development Strategy in Independent India:

Ever-since India embarked on the path of planning there started a series of infrastructure projects, be it Basic and Heavy industries, Dam Projects, Power Projects or railway lines. Several hydel projects were constructed to generate power to run the industries and supply irrigation water to the dry farm lands, apart from flood control. This led to a revolution in the field of crop production, what is called the 'Green Revolution' that enabled a food scarce country like India to export food grains. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had described the Dam Projects as the 'Modern Temples of India' as such projects bring in prosperity to a



region and to its large number of people. These Projects, no doubt helped a lot in achieving the goals like power generation, flood control and supply of irrigation water to the fields, but alongside it physically uprooted sizable number of people who lost their home and hearth and shattered their culture and kinship linkages built over several centuries and generations.

Most of the development projects particularly in the State of Orissa were constructed in areas dominated by the tribal leading to displacement of people from their homeland. The rehabilitation measures extended by the project authorities have so far remained very nominal. Numerous studies have been made by scholars to point out the loopholes in the rehabilitation measures that proved beyond doubt that not more than 25 percent of those displaced during 1950-1980 have been rehabilitated properly (Hansda, 1983:23). As per the estimate of Fernandez, Das and Rao (1989) the number of people in India who have been displaced and not rehabilitated properly between 1950 and 1980 is over 11.5 million.

The displaced, who generally belong to the most disadvantaged communities of the Indian societies, are pushed into impoverishment, marginalization and further backwardness and are often found to have pushed below the threshold of poverty. Most development-displacement-resettlement studies have focussed on the deteriorating living conditions and pauperization of the oustees, inadequacies of rehabilitation and resettlement, lack of basic amenities to the oustees, loss of livelihood, breaking of kinship ties and above all the non-restoration of the pre-displacement economic condition of the displaced.

Development and Displacement in Orissa: Orissa is one of the backward States of the

country. It however possesses vast deposits of various valuable minerals and other resources, which remained unutilized and underutilized due to various reasons. The State saw the setting up of large development projects like multipurpose river valley projects- Hirakud Dam, Rengali, Upper Kolab, Indravati, Subarnarekha etc. Large industries — Rourkela Steel Plant, NALCO, HAL and the like. Besides several private sector projects have either set up or signed MoUs with the State Government to start their units which include industrial giants Tata, Jindal, Birla, POSCO and others. But what is painful is the large-scale involuntary displacement of weaker sections, particularly the tribals. The findings of many studies relating to displacement and resettlement present a dismal picture. However, most of them have not been able to present an accurate picture of the socio-economic status of the oustees in the post-displacement period vis-à-vis their position in the pre-displacement era.

Statistical data indicates that a large portion of the project affected families belong to the tribal group. Since the tribal belt is invariably rich in mineral deposits, they are affected much by the ongoing power, mining and industrial projects. Conservative estimate reveals the percentage of tribal among displaced families in the ongoing and pipeline development projects will be as high as 80%. Different studies put the number of already displaced at more than 10 lakhs and those adversely affected in varying degrees at 50 lakhs. Table-1 displays the magnitude of displacement in various development projects in Orissa during 1950-1993.

Objectives of the Study

Keeping the aforesaid objectives in view and looking at the sufferings of the Substantially Affected Families (SAFs) in general and the tribals in particular an empirical study was undertaken



to find out the status of the displaced tribal families in the post project period and also to identify the factors responsible for non-restoration of the former standards of livelihood. However, the broad objectives with which the empirical study was undertaken are the following:

Assess the status of the displaced tribals:

- (i) Find out the extent of livelihood restoration of those affected
- (ii) Identify the factors responsible for non-restoration of livelihood and
- (iii) Recommend on the basis of research findings specific critical areas that need to be looked in to by the policy makers and implementing agencies for more effective resettlement and rehabilitation measures for the displaced persons in general and tribal displaced persons in particular in development projects.

Geographical Coverage of the Study and the Sample :

The study on the basis of which the present report is based has been undertaken on the sample displaced tribal families of Mahanadi Coal Fields (Ib Valley) project located in Jharsuguda district, situated in the tribal Pocket of Orissa. A total of 104 sample tribal households are covered in this study selected using stratified random sampling method.

Methodology :

For collecting empirical data a number of sociological and anthropological research tools were used. Some of the major research tools used for the study are:

- (i) Interview schedule.
- (ii) Focus Group Discussion.
- (iii) Participatory Rural Appraisal.

(iv) Case Study

Overview of the Development Projects under Study :

As has already been mentioned above, the research article has been based on an empirical study conducted in a development project ‘*Mahanadi Coal Fields Ib valley.*’ Therefore it is essential to describe about the project in brief so as to give a background in respect of the development project under study.

The Project: Mahanadi Coal Fields Limited (MCL)

Orissa’s coal deposits are mostly concentrated in two regions - Talcher Belt in Angul District and the Ib Valley Area in Jharsuguda District and in the State and mining is carried out by the Mahanadi Coal Fields Limited (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL).

In the Ib Valley area, five (5) open cast-mining projects are in operation affecting 19 villages. Of them 130 families belonging to 2 villages have been displaced. In all 1782.20 ha. of land was required for the project by the project authorities.

The Ib Valley Project has affected 19 villages involving a total number of 1306 families. A total of 90 families were displaced (homestead oustees), who were resettled in Madhuban Nagar. Of them 52 belonged to Scheduled Tribes, 2 to Scheduled Castes and 36 belonged to other castes.

Compensation by MCL: The MCL provided 10 decimals of homestead land to each of the oustees in the Madhuban Nagar resettlement colony to construct their own house of choice with provision of separate plots for all adult members of the household. But it was noticed that the dwelling conditions of the non-tribals are comparatively good with pucca houses with



concrete or asbestos roof while those of the tribals are thatched with *Khapar* roof in a bad condition. At the time of the study, it was found that this colony is situated near the Lajkura open cast mines and blasting causes vibrations to the houses thereby creating panic among the inhabitants and some of the houses in the sample study area were seen broken due to blasting.

For the loss of agricultural land, compensation at the rate of Rs.20,000/- per acre was given. A shifting allowance of Rs.2000 to each household and job to one member in the MCL according to their eligibility criteria were also provided. The homestead land at Madhuban Nagar was on *Gochar* land, which could not be converted to homestead land though the company sources confirm the payment of Rs.89,58,343/- to the Govt. of Orissa for the purpose.

Basic Amenities Provided by MCL: Towards the improvement of the socio-economic condition, the MCL Authorities had made provisions for School, Health Centre, Community Centre, Market Complex, Drinking Water, Electricity, Well, Road, Worshipping Centre, Anganwadi Centre etc. Though five (5) dug wells were sunk by MCL for drinking water, but now PHD supplies water to the colony, but the supply does not cover the whole colony.

People's demand for a pond for bathing purpose has not been addressed by the project authorities and the displaced people who have been resettled still use the nullah that becomes dry during summer, thereby causing hardship for the people.

Though MCL has provided a building for health care centre in the colony, it served no purpose as it lacks doctors, medicines and other facilities. As a result, the people of the colony have no choice, but to depend on the Brajarajnagar

Hospital for their health care needs. Likewise the community centre and the streetlight services provided by MCL have since then become dysfunctional due to lack of maintenance.

The information collected through interview schedules conversed through 100 PAFs, 70 of whom are from tribals proved that forced displacement causes significant changes (economic, social and cultural) in the lives of the project displaced families in general and tribal displaced families in particular. The main findings of the present study which are the impacts of development projects on the tribal displaced families are summarized below.

Impact of Development Project on Displaced Tribals :

On the basis of the empirical study conducted on the displaced families of Ib Valley Coal Mines, the following are some of the important impacts that have been revealed from the analysis of data by the researcher:

1. *Decline in Joint Family System:* The pre-displacement level of 40 nuclear and 60 joint families was changed into 74 and 26 respectively with both tribal and non-tribal families showing the same trend of breaking down of joint family to nuclear families. This is a general feature noticed in most of the development projects like MCL.

2. *Landlessness:* India being a farm dominated society with agriculture as the main occupation, displacement from land, removes the main foundation on which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihood are based. Unless this foundation is reconstructed elsewhere or replaced by steady income-generating employment, landlessness sets in and the affected families are impoverished. In most of the cases/projects, land for land, norm could not be



followed. But cash compensation is inadequate to make up for the loss of land. This impact has serious implication in the current project under study and therefore needs special consideration by the project implementing agencies in general and the policy makers formulating strategies for the impacted people of development projects at government level.

3. Joblessness and increase in the proportion of workers: When people were displaced from their habitat, they lose their means of livelihood. Creation of new jobs or alternative sources of income for them becomes very difficult since the oustees do not possess any skill to learn new methods of earning their livelihood. Hence those who were owners of the means of production before displacement have now become daily wage earners. In the Ib Valley Project, taken up for the study, though the MCL authorities followed the policy of providing a job to each displaced family, the other members of the displaced families remained jobless. The policy also discriminated against the landless labourers, artisans, share croppers and petty businessmen among others.

4. Homelessness: Loss of house and shelter may be only temporary during the transition period for most of the displaced. But for some, homelessness remains a permanent feature. The project authorities in Ib Valley only provided homestead plots while the displaced persons have themselves built their houses. Again when a split occurs in the family, those who leave the family become homeless.

5. Food insecurity: Forced displacement increases the risk of chronic food insecurity. In India, crops are grown to provide food to the family while vegetables are grown in the kitchen gardens that take care of the food needs of the family. Surplus is also sold in the market. But

forced displacements deprive the oustees from their former resource of livelihood rendering them landless. Even when homestead land was provided, the oustees could not properly reclaim and level the hilly area. In the Ib Valley project, the displaced families have to buy everything including food items from the market.

6. Loss of access to common property: For the poor people, particularly, the landless and otherwise asset less people, loss of access to common property (forest lands, water bodies, grazing land, etc.) leads to a major deterioration in their income and livelihood levels. Such lost resources are rarely compensated by the Government in the relocation sites. There are also frequent conflicts between the host population and new settlers over the use of forest land and other government land. As a result, the resettler do not get fuel wood and other minor forest produce, which they used to collect from the forests in their old habitat.

7. Social Disintegration: Forced displacement tears apart the social fabric of the oustees. Production systems are dismantled, kinship groups and family systems are often scattered and cultural identity of the people is under threat. Social and community networks that help people to cope with poverty through exchange of food and clothing, mutual help with farming, building houses and caring children are disrupted. Social disintegration has been a major impoverishment risk in all the projects undertaken. In the Ib Valley Project, the mutual help arrangement and other socio-economic relationships have been totally disrupted.

8. Increased Morbidity and Mortality: Loss of ancestral and homestead land, less no access to health care facilities, the psychological trauma caused thereby and the food insecurity together



often leads to serious diseases. There is also the danger of parasitic and vector born diseases in the relocated sites because of unsafe water, poor sewerage etc. In fact, lack of food, unhygienic living and environmental degradation in the new place were found in the project area to have a serious impact on the health of the oustees. In the Ib Valley project, pollution caused by coal dust and frequent blasting has caused skin diseases, eye irritation, gastric disorders, diarrhoea and other ailments. Though medical centers have been opened in the resettlement colony they are dysfunctional in the absence of the doctors.

The findings of empirical study in the project resettlement areas and the analysis of the empirical data gathered from the study reveals that the following situation prevails in the resettlement area and to the displaced people in general and the tribal displaced families in particular (as majority of the sample households were tribals):

- The general socio-economic condition of the oustees has deteriorated significantly.
- Socio-economic inequalities have widened.
- The cropping pattern has changed drastically.
- Dependence on trees and livestock has reduced substantially.
- Increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers.
- Increasing trend towards nuclear family.
- Poor dwelling conditions of the oustees.
- Improper use of compensation money.
- Rise in the incidence of indebtedness.
- Drastic reduction in the socio-economic condition of women in the PAFs.

Critical Areas of Concern :

The Key findings of the empirical study on the Impact of Development Project on the displaced Socio-Economic condition of the tribal families in Ib Valley Coal Mine Project clearly reveals that the vast majority of them live a life of penury and hardship in the post displacement period. Development projects have made the life of the oustees in general and tribal displaced families in particular more miserable and they have been further impoverished and languishing in poverty. The following are some of the critical areas of concern which the researcher has flagged to be considered by the policy makers and the project resettlement agencies to look into for improving the socio-economic condition of the displaced tribal families in particular in Ib Valley Coal Mine project and in all take precautionary measures so that the such issues do not figure in case of the ongoing and pipe line projects.

a) *Lack of basic amenities:* - Most of the development projects failed to provide basic amenities to the displaced people, which is a critical area of concern.

b) *Non-availability of wage work:* Avenues of wage work are severely restricted in the resettlement colonies, forcing many oustees to migrate to places outside the district and even the State.

c) *Decline in the Role of Women and Relationship in the Family:* Women play a vital role in the family, community and society. But after displacement, their income has either dwindled or has come to a halt altogether. They have become totally dependent on their husbands or sons for household expenditure. This made their role and status very limited.



d) The cordial and intimate relationship of the pre-displacement period is now disrupted. Decrease in family income have created conflicts and bitterness among them.

e) Problems arising out of cash compensation: Most of the project authorities pay cash compensation to the PAFs, which is often misutilised by the male members on consumer durable items or liquor. Increased alcoholism has led to a rise in crimes in these areas.

f) Increasing difficulties in arranging marriage for Daughters: Women oustees now face great difficulty in getting married because of the demand for more dowry. Use of cash compensation on the marriages leave the family pauperized.

Conclusion :

In view of these after effects of displacement, especially on the tribals it is necessary not only to identify, avoid and mitigate risks in each development project that entails displacement, but also to focus on benefits over and above compensation and rehabilitation for damages as well as benefit sharing arrangement. A prudent approach demands long term commitments, financial and institutional guarantees and the use of professional approach in dealing with the issues of social development of indigenous people. Constant monitoring by technically competent independent observers can go a long way in ensuring more effective resettlement and rehabilitation arrangements in case of the displaced families which can end up in not only restoring the pre-displaced living condition of the millions of displaced families but also in substantially bringing in improvement in their socio-economic condition in the post-project period.

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