



5. Ethics of Development and Displaced Women of Odisha

Dr. Urmimala Das

Former Director
Women's Studies Research Centre
Berhampur University, Odisha

Abstract

Development-induced displacement is a draconian issue for India particularly for a resourceful state like Odisha. In post post-independent period many developmental activities have been taken up by the state for the growth of Indian citizens. In the name of developmental projects, such as the construction of dams, industries, wildlife sanctuaries, mining, and development of cities, many villages have been evacuated, slums are demolished and people are displaced. There is an increasingly contradictory view that such development projects damage the lives of marginalized and indigenous populations. Among displaced people, women are the worst victims. Odisha has attracted a large number of corporate developers and multinationals to start industries and mining as its hills and mountains are full of minerals along with long coast lines, forest and marine resources etc.

Both the private sector and the Government have acquired thousands of acres of people's land for the sake of establishing their projects. As a result of which thousands of natives have left their homes, agricultural land, pastures, perennial sources of water, minor forest products and also the common property resources. Women were affected badly being at the lowest position of the social matrix. Tribal women were the worst sufferers when their sustainable source of livelihood was snatched. The present review-based paper from secondary data highlights the issues related to the ethics of development and displaced women in Odisha.

Key words: Development projects, displacement, gender, livelihood, rehabilitation

Introduction

After independence development initiatives were focused on various industrialization, mining , developing urban centres, construction of dams, wildlife sanctuaries aiming betterment of people.

In contradiction to this is the increasing view that such development projects harm not only people in general but more of the marginalized especially indigenous populations and women the most. Large number of women and men were evacuated for the sake of country's improvement projects, their present life situation has become precarious which is not taken into consideration. The normative foundations of development itself affect social justice, obligations, and responsibilities. The increasing tension between human rights and the right to development and women's spaces in them are some such issues that require analysis. Already existing gender inequality in society compounds the problems of development-induced displacement and has surfaced as hurdles on the path of establishing distributive justice between men and women. The issues of development-induced displacement have entered into the mainstream debate as well as theories of rehabilitation including policy prescriptions. At the global level practical models like Impoverishment, Risks, and Reconstruction (IRR) of Cernea were developed in the late 1990s for involuntary displacement. Much earlier Colsons and Scudder developed four stage model of voluntary resettlement(Caroline.A,etal, 2019).

Another assumption is that continuous uprisings and protest movements of deprived displaced people give rise to conflicting situations and thus constant threat to peace and harmony in the state. John Rawl's argument is that development does mean benefits to be equally distributed where all can grow equally and the condition of each and everyone will be fair; otherwise, it will go against the general conception of justice(Rawls ,J ,1971).

Displacement Overview in Odisha

Development-induced displacement is a draconian issue for India particularly for a resourceful state like Odisha . Just before independence and mostly in the post-independent period, many development projects are taken up by the state for the progress of the populace. For the sake of developmental ventures, such as the construction of dams, industries, wildlife sanctuaries ,



mining, and development of cities, many villages have been evacuated, slums are demolished and people are displaced. There is an increasingly contradictory view that such development projects damage the lives of the marginalized and indigenous populations.

Odisha has attracted a large number of corporate developers and multinationals to start industries and mining as its hills and mountains are full of minerals along with long coast lines, forest and marine resources etc.

Both private sector and Government have acquired thousands of acres of peoples land for the sake of establishing their projects. As a result of which thousands of natives have left their homes, agricultural land, pastures, perennial sources of water, minor forest products, and also common property resources. The government's plea is that for the greater common good individual interests are to be sacrificed (Das,U,2015).

With 'development' as a magic word securing maximized extraction harnessed to the expropriation of natural resources and with consumerism and modernism as the basic paradigm proposed and imposed on the majority, the eviction of both urban and rural communities has reached an unprecedented scale.

Development projects in Odisha may be divided into four phases; in the first phase Hirakud Dam and Rourkela Steel Plant were established. After that Second segment of developmental projects in Odisha includes Hindustan Aeronautics Limited(HAL) , and Thermal Power Station in Talcher . Many dams were constructed during the 1970s such as dams of Subarnarekha, Rengali , Upper Kolab, Balimela, and Upper Indravati.

In second phase around eighties; NALCO the National Aluminium Company, The Ib Thermal power station (ITPS) were started. Third phase started with the onset of liberalisation during 1990s onwards when a large number of nationals and multinationals started investing in their mega development projects such as TATA Steel at Gopalpur, Chilika Prawn Culture, Lower Suktel project in Bolangir, Utkal Alumina in Kashipur, Vedanta in Lanjigarh, Zindal Power Plant in Anugul, Tata Steel in Kalinganagar and Posco in Jagatsinghpur.



In last 50 years nearly 50 million people have been affected and displaced because of development projects for some reason or not in India. Out of the total internally displaced persons (21.3 million), construction of dams has displaced 16.4 million, mining 2.55 million, industries 1.25 million, parks and wild life sanctuaries 0.6 million (IIT Roorkee, 2011).

Each year, another 5,00,000 people are being displaced because of various projects such as industrial complexes, superthermal and nuclear power plants, mines, hydroelectric and irrigation projects (Kothari, 1997, 95).

Development projects in Odisha have directly affected 20 lakh people till 2000, around 5 lakh have become homeless and physically ousted from their hearth and homes (Pandey, Balaji, 1998). It is reported, out of 5 lakh people, 3.5 lakh (70%) are displaced only due to dam and irrigation projects. Nearly 60,000 people are displaced by industries which is around 12% of the total displaced, 3.37% due to mining, 12.86% for urban development projects, 2.60% in thermal projects and 0.5% for wild life sanctuaries. Some projects are completed, others are on-going and many are finalised or proposed between 2000 to 2012.

On the other side, while looking at Odisha's economy, it is a poverty-ridden state with homelessness and poor people are malnourished with ill health. Sex ratio is skewed for last one century or more, infant mortality and maternal mortality are also higher than in other states. Female illiteracy is higher than male which is reflected proportionally in the occupational ladder showing marginalisation of women mostly either as agricultural labourer or as daily wage earners in other sectors.

The concept of development needs to be clarified from the beginning before delving into related larger issues. Development does not mean installing industries, doing mining, constructing dams etc. at the cost of sons and daughters of the soil which calls the attention of concerned citizens. Development is surely not for the vested interest groups in the case of MNCs or Indian corporates, rather it is a holistic concept based on distributive justice. Development-induced displacement impacts men and women differently. Women lose their livelihood which they were deriving out of easily accessible natural resources prior to displacement. Food, fodder, water, firewood, marine resources, and other minor forest products which were operated and processed

by women sustained their living at the native place became a day dream in the displaced place. The collection of these essential commodities in the new habitat where they might be resettled inevitably requires greater time and effort thus problems are aggravated. Due to displacement most of the women experience greater pauperization by losing the earlier income they derived from the habitat. Schools in new places become less accessible for displaced children .Traditional fellow feeling and socialisation pattern of the community is disrupted which used to take care of their needs in the well-knit community (Kothari , 1997:95). The worst result of development projects are clearly visible in impoverishment, marginalization, dehumanisation, and frustration of the displaced people . Among the people affected, women are the handset hit.

Conflict of interests has led to struggle and movements against displacement. The characteristics of these struggles are not only limited within rehabilitation or compensation rather it extends the debate between local and global perspective , subsistence versus market economy, profit and loss, mainstreaming and ethnicity .

Displaced Women at Risk

Women members of the displaced families remain marginalized in every respect. They are never consulted in R&R (Resettlement & Rehabilitation) package. The compensation payments (for the land acquired from the displaced families) are made only to the heads of the households (who are invariably males) and women are left to deprivation. The impact of displacement is not gender neutral. Restoration at a new place after displacement is always a distressing and dreadful journey for any group of people (Morse & Berger, 1992).

It is clear that Government used to grab the land of the people for development projects and they are shifted to resettlement colony without taking their consent. Due to involuntary restoration people face manifold serious problems like family disintegration, distressed migration and vulnerable health hazards, and increasing violence against women (Das.U,2015).

Here arise the real question that development for whom and at the cost of whose interest? Rehabilitation packages were few and far between .Women were affected badly being at the lowest position of the social matrix. Tribal women were worst sufferers when their sustainable

source of livelihood was snatched. Mining and industries polluted the serene and natural environment of the tribal hinterland. In the project area violence against women has increased; girls and women were trafficked. Domestic violence against women was at its height as men received cash compensation and became alcoholic. Cases of desertion and divorce have been traced in the new situation created by displacement. The poorer women are forced to work outside homes as domestic helpers. Women especially of old age, disabled, widows, women with HIV AIDS have become more vulnerable.

The normal life of women is distorted by the loss of community sustenance arrangements and they have become non-persona (Das, U, 2015). Their political rights in terms of voters and representation, i.e. win ability as a candidate is jeopardized as they have already nurtured the original constituency from where they are displaced. They also lose the right over land and common property resources of families and communities.

Women have turned into daily wage labourer after losing their agricultural family land due to displacement, some have migrated in search of job. All of them are deprived of their access to common property resources which were sources of self-sustaining livelihood in their pre displacement place. No rehabilitation framework has been able to provide life sustaining and cultural package to displaced women.

Open cast mining and industries have polluted the environment, agricultural fields, air, soil and water including health of human beings specifically that of women and children. Women and children are becoming vulnerable to infections related to pollution. This has led to infertility of field and productivity has declined. Inroads of multinationals have eroded the state structures which are meant to serve the interest of the people. According to Rawls, displacement induced by development projects are unjust activities as it impoverishes the people. In his opinion displacement generates fresh disparities by divesting people not only from their property, land, and sources of income non-the less it has harped on their social prestige, dignity and curtailed freedom and prospects (Rawls, J, 1971).

Displacement affects differently men, women and children but it afflicts women much more. Allocation of resources after displacement becomes serious issue because of already existing

gender disparity in our society. Women in families never get strength to raise voice for their share because of age-old culture to remain silent when such delicate but important issues arise at the time of rehabilitation. This sort of patriarchal mindset is also reflected in policy making and thus increases the gender inequalities for displaced people (Mehta, L, 2009).

Relocation and Restoration : Gender Discrimination

Prior to 1970s there was no rule or regulation for project affected people except the colonial 1894 Land Acquisition Act. In 1973 first rehabilitation policy was formulated for Rengali dam project in Odisha. In 1990s central government came up with policies for PAP (project affected population) by different ministries for their specific projects which were hardly been implemented. In Odisha resettlement and rehabilitation policy (ORR Policy, 2006) was passed in 2006. It aimed at zero displacement and is expected to minimize the negative impact of developmental projects through the process of transparency and people's participation. Gender discrimination and anti-women elements are visible in the Orissa R&R Policy 2006, that the definition of family is that where women are expected to marry latest by the age of 30 and thus if unmarried below this age will not be treated as a separate family (as beneficiary). A widow or a divorced woman is also to be treated as a family. Here however the issue of joint 'patta' (land records of right) in the name of the couple (both wife and husband) is critical but it is absent in the policy statements.

In 2007 national resettlement and rehabilitation policy was passed to be followed by Irrigation projects, Sanctuaries, Urban projects, National Parks, Industrial projects and Mining projects etc. In R & R policies earning options, skill development and livelihood substitution are not available for women, though in some norms livelihood replacement measures are there for men only.

In their native place before displacement, women used to take up income generation activities which were home based as they manage both household work and the allied production activities such as poultry, livestock rearing, mushroom culture, fishery and also some small scale business. In rehabilitation colony, these activities are totally disrupted (NCW, 2008). Due to the disruption of economic activities, the status and identity of the women in the families as well as

in the community is degraded . After displacement large scale de-skilling happens with the women, as they do not find any use for their skills that they possessed and used in earlier locations. This severely restricts their economic independence along with their mobility in a new displaced scenario. Resettlement policies face failure because they have neglected gender assessment, not taken in to account cultural, environmental and social aspects of rehabilitation.

In the discussion it is found that three aspects of women's basic needs are not taken into consideration by any of the policies for resettlement purpose. They are natural resources, common property resources, and the patriarchal traditional societies. Development projects have snatched the natural resources from their hand which was the basic structure of their economy and that shaped women's identity as they were more closer to nature and taken responsibility to take care of the family depending on the sustainable resources of nature. This also gave her a social image of prestige and authority in family .All these are not considered by the planners to provide them with any such substitute in rehabilitation package.

Next is the deprivation from the common property resources that the whole community was enjoying for consumption purposes. The last one is the traditional patriarchal societies that have never given land in the name of women, making them ineligible to receive any compensation because of their gender.

Voices of Displaced Women

Deprived and displaced people of Odisha by various development projects have raised their voices against the state and development companies to save their livelihood and soil. In present day scenario, not only in Odisha but all over India, women are found to be very active in asserting their rights and protesting against displacement. (Palit. C, in Meheta.L ed. ,2009). In Odisha out of 30 nearly in 26 districts development projects have displaced people and the project affected people have raised their voices against displacement in all these area(Das.U,2015).

Marginalised women and men are often displaced from their homes and soil in the context of greater public purposes. The corporate interest has been disguised under the mask of 'public

purpose' and ' public interest' to make profit at the cost of common people who are displaced from their homes and livelihood. Women invariably played a conspicuous role almost in all the movements against displacement in Odisha such as Balco,Baliapal, Posco,Vedanta,Kashipur,Gopalpur and Kalinganagar etc. The very concept of development was questioned, and the ethical issues encircling women's lives , livelihood and right to survival were asserted in these movements. The movements were initially erupted in the concerned areas organised by sons and daughters of the soil, later on various indigenous organizations were formed. Political parties had their support, affiliation, and solidarity with some of these movements, others were led by the indigenous people. Mostly the movements were participated by women in large numbers but hardly they were given the leadership.

Perspective

Concerns of displaced women are to be broad-based and need to be linked to women's right to property, gender and power relations , poverty, gender discrimination and gender equality. Rights of the children and their safety and security are to be integrated into rehabilitation package. Prior assessment of the impact of development project affected people need to be done with informed consent of people including women. Striving should be made to have zero displacement. Resettlement and rehabilitation policy should plan for substituting cultural integrity, livelihood support, and sustainable development for displaced women and men. Moreover, rehabilitation policies need to be gender sensitive. Women were at the forefront of anti-displacement movements, they were imprisoned, lathi-charged and suffered more than men rebels. Women's issues were coined within the broad based demand for right to land, water ,common property resources. Women's movements were a part of social movements in Odisha and no such independent women movement was visible carrying forward the definite issues like violence against women, her right to compensation and her right to property etc.

State has always repressed anti displacement voices and hardly has taken into consideration the poor displaced peoples right and gender-specific demands into consideration. Civil society needs to emerge with right right-based approach in such cases. There is a need for more research on the impact of displacement on women and children. Dialogue is another area of engagement

that state and civil society may take up with all possible stakeholders. Solidarity among activists and researchers is the need of the hour for a better world in future where understanding of ethics of development will be able to bring about peace in the country.

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