

COPING WITH DISPLACEMENT: AN INQUIRY INTO THE PROBLEM OF RESETTLEMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract :

The current study aims to make an inquiry in to the problems of Rehabilitation and resettlement in Polavaram project affected people with special emphasis on poor agricultural labor, and marginal and small farmers and emphasize on certain aspects of inclusiveness, equity and sustainability in accessing the new livelihood of displacees and would analyses the changes in social, economic and cultural institutions under new livelihood setup.

Introduction :

Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose hydro irrigation project which is considered a project given national status and funded by the central government. The main objective behind the project was to distribution of the water from Godavari to the water shortage region of Krishna delta area. It is assumed that the project is a permanent solution for all the water needs of the state. Polavaram project dam which is under construction on River Godavari can benefit the region by diverting and use Godavari water to Krishna and other rivers. Apart from this, The Polavaram irrigation project is anticipated to displace 276 villages and presumed to be one among the many displacement-inducing development projects that are being either under construction or already constructed in India

Major existing research works reviewed :

World research showed how development caused forced displacement and improper resettlement policies leading to impoverishment risks (Agnihotri and Ota 1989; Pandey 1998; Mathur and Marsden 1998; Mahapatra 1999; Cerena 1999,). Harvey's (2003) 'accumulation by dispossession' and Levien's (2015) 'regimes of dispossession' explain how dispossession of land is politically organized in different socio-historical context to different class interest. Tan and Ding (2008) proved how the hasty land dispossession for economic development and urbanization neglected social equity and environmental sustainability. Oliver-Smith (2007) emphasized on precondition of social reconstitution and cooperative action for restoring social fabric among the land dispossessed people. Cernea (2007) discussed the need for payment of economic rent and benefit-sharing of the project to the land dispossessed and other dependents people. He compared best resettlement practices by different countries - Colombia's proportionate benefit sharing, Brazil's sharing proportion of royalties, China's initiative of Post-Resettlement Development Fund, Japan's Land leasing model and regular rent payments. These studies are much relevant for the case of Polavaram project displacees for inclusive, equitable and sustainable resettlement of land dispossessed people.



Identification of Research gap :

The literature survey shows that though there have been many of studies on land dispossession and resettlements under different types of development projects in the Indian context, but there have not been many studies to understand the R&R Schemes by focusing on problems of livelihood transition by resource poor in contemporary India. Earlier studies focused much on the dispossession of land and livelihood of direct land owners, but not on the indirect land dependents like agricultural wage labors, tenants and other resource poor. Specific to polavaam case, there has not been any comprehensive interdisciplinary research study to understand the problems of livelihood transition by the land disposed people in terms of equity in access to new non-farm livelihoods, skill development and sustainability by focusing more on resource poor such as agricultural wage labour, tenants, marginal and small farmers.

Framework and methods proposed for research :

The current study proposes to follow the interdisciplinary framework of social sciences to study the research objectives. It will adopt the mixed methodology of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative method includes collection of data from both secondary and primary sources from the village field survey. Qualitative method includes collection of information from in-depth personal interviews from the sample households, key informants, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and field observations. Purposive sampling method will be used for the village selection based on spatial, economic and social criteria. The village census survey will be conducted for collecting basic profile information of all the households. The purposive sampling method will be used for the selection individuals for FGDs and key informants' interview.

The problem of land acquisition :

Land is acquired for various developmental purposes such as laying roads, building dams and irrigation canals, founding manufacturing industries for urban development has been going on for since long period of time, which is must for economic growth and development of any nation. and at same time it has created numerous obstacles and caused various debates around the consequences of such developments for the downtrodden and for the ecology and environment. In an effort to accelerate the industrialization process, huge factories, industrial parks, heavy electricity generation projects and big mines have been allocated very considerable portion in our country along with a strategy to modernize the agriculture sector, as part of this strategy, the major allocation of government investment in agriculture has become need of the hour and on an emergency basis, respective governments have begun constructing large dams. This kind of growth strategy has led to situation where it desperately created the need for acquisition of huge tracts of agricultural and forest land. Government has resorted to its Land Acquisition Act 1894 for acquiring land to build public infrastructure, mines or factories despite several popular protest against the forceful land acquisition. It is generally alleged that the profits of large projects like irrigation, roads, electricity are mainly enjoyed by creamy layer of the society and the consequences of these projects are burdened by the small and marginal farmers, agricultural laborers, schedules castes and the scheduled tribes. For example, in Polavaram project the displaced people are belonged to the tribal communities

in the upstream areas and beneficiaries are the rich farmers of dominant caste in Andhra Pradesh

Draw backs of R&R Policy for resettlement in Polavaram Project :

The progress of rehabilitation and resettlement process has been delayed for the mega project. According to a report, only 3,922 project disturbed families (PDF) have been rehabilitated so far against the total of 98,818 families. Similarly, around 9,000 project affected people were only rehabilitated so far against total 1,92,259 persons¹. The incremental approach has a number of disadvantage which greatly undermine the projections of achieving satisfactory R&R policy for displaced people, for example, the approach pursued by the government demanded no planning of some aspects which are fundamental to proper execution of R&R, especially in case of submergence area, identification and appropriate enumeration of affected and displaced people, and an assessment of the ecology and environment and estimation of figure of people dislocated by reservoir, canals and other irrigation structures along with a range of resources and institutional mechanisms required for resettlement and rehabilitation and with regard to an idea of number of people displaced by Polavaram irrigation.

Burden of relocation :

It is pointed out by displacees that the process shifting of people to relocated sites normally occurs at the last minute. People are subjected to immense pressure to shift within short period of time i.e., stipulated time prescribed by government which a period of 6-8 months prior to the anticipated submergence of the inhabitant area. This led to chaos situation where people do not have any other substitution but to vacate their original place and shift to resettlement area. An important issue to be noticed here that the Shifting has to be carried on irrespective of whether they have compensated with land and other benefits or not and whether R&R sites are prepared suitable for living with all facilities and amenities in accordance with all provisions prescribed in R&R policy. Another important problem that it has caused is that once people are shifted, they inevitably lose their right to come back and complain about their whatever problems they are going through. Resettlement and rehabilitation is a protected and continuous process and it demand successful rehabilitation overseen by project personnel for a long period. In incremental strategy, the involvement of personnel from R&R project is always short-lived and completes immediately after shifting work is done, Therefore, resettlement and rehabilitation process is required a significant amount of time to make sure that displacees establish a decent livelihood and rearrange their social system in the new setting. In an incremental strategy, the present R&R policies emphasizing more on relocation and not rehabilitation, which require considerably longer periods of time.

Lack of Information :

R&R policy fails to achieve its objectives in project affected areas where literacy is historically low among the tribal people. Further, many of these tribal areas are remote and

¹ The HINDU (2018)

hilly areas and difficult to reach, which creates restraints for satisfactory awareness among the public. The right of the land holders to make objections under Sec. 5(A) of Land Acquisition Act is a creditable and praiseworthy provision of the Act. However, problems arise in the exercise of this right because it is not necessary on part of the government to provide required information about the proposed project, which could potentially raises some objections. Further, the time limit for exercising this legitimate right seems to be unfitting. 'Requirement of details such as the description of the land by its survey numbers, its boundaries and its approximate area, the analysis of the public purpose for which the land needed is more essential and more than one month would be required merely to acquire this information from the respective Government'. Despite of Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) benefits are an integral part of the land acquisition process, transparency regarding their implementation is dreadfully deficient because of the absence of a legal mandate for the project proponents to provide R&R benefits or make public the information relating to collective purpose.

According to this strategy, agricultural land, resettle sites and human resource for R&R work has to be identified every consecutive year. Money for R&R work has to be also located in the same way. This process is beset with a number of problems. For instances, land for resettlement has to be purchased from different farmers and we need find out its availability and its price which is subject to sweeping changes in the land market. Failure to acquire an adequate resettlement land would put the displaced in a precarious position. Since irrigation projects tend to fluctuate considerably, making R&R provisions on year basis has not met the R&R needs effectively in any projects. Serious dislocation and hardship to the people have been the oblivious consequences. Furthermore, displacement due to unexpected flooding leads to displacement of more inhabitants of the project site area. As number of displaced people gets accumulated and the R&R system does not have the mechanism and the capacity to absorb the backlog displaces especially where droughts and floods are regular and common phenomena, therefore, negligency on part of any government in allocating of sufficient funds for R&R implementation process cannot be appreciated

Conclusion :

Generally, in India, dam construction and irrigation infrastructure required huge amount funds and these projects were financed by the World Bank or the other loan providing agencies and in turn it subjected to the time period and construction schedule which can even be prolonged for years because of disturbances by droughts and floods. However, R&R activities are conducted and funded purely through allocation in the the state budget. In case of a drought, funds for resettlement work becomes very difficult to obtain or it may sometime get substantially reduced. As a result, people get displaced and scattered without having any idea with regard to what is sufficient rehabilitation.

It is also observed that the prolonged construction schedule and successive demarcation of people through deflected resettlement entitlement may dents the capacity of the project affected people to engage in organized action. Thus, a large number of people who are scheduled for resettlements in later period in the project area eventually end up a loser. For example, tribals who were displaced due to Nagarjuna Sagar project either they are yet to get rehabilitated or become unaware or made to forgotten about rehabilitation and resettlement



process. In many instances, villages proximity to peripheral areas of Polavaram project site were left unattended. .Apart from the disadvantage that the incremental approach has, there are several R&R problems which are typical, regardless of whether the approach is incremental or not. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, at any given point of time, a large number of people are displaced by a number of projects and awaiting resettlement and rehabilitation. Displacement due to drought, flood and natural calamities which have become regular phenomena in India requires the urgent attention of the government.

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