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IMPOVERISHMENT RISKS AND REALITY: THE CASE OF ICTT PROJECT, KERALA

Displacement and Impoverishment reality: A Historical analysis

Development induced displacement is not a recent phenomenon in India. The displacement of people from their land and livelihood has been a part of India's history even before the advent of the British. The use of land has often been defined by the needs of the dominant group and displacement of the other parts of the population has often been justified as legal and rational (Parasuraman 1999). For example, in Eastern India, the chieftains of tribal groups in the intention of accumulating wealth encouraged the immigration of peasants and settled cultivators into their land which naturally displaced the aboriginal tribal population.

The instances of the displacement in the country witnessed a sudden ascend when colonialism was established in the country. They brought with them legal and taxation systems which institutionalize the exploitation of the peasantry. Colonial legislation facilitated commercial expansion through a wide range of measures, over ruling people's customary rights and physically capturing their resource bases (Parasuraman *et al.*). The Permanent Resettlement Act, 1793 introduced by Lord Cornwallis was a clear indication to the interference of legal systems with pre existing patterns of land ownership which favored zamindars and ignored the peasant's right of land. Although after independence the system of permanent resettlement was abolished, land ceilings were imposed and tenancy reforms were enacted with the aim to rehabilitate those displaced or affected by the earlier systems, due to the limited effectiveness of these mechanisms in most part of the country, these alternatives could not achieve the end.

The modern era of Displacement and Colonial displacement experiences are related by the LAA of 1894 which was followed in the country's development projects ever since its inception. This consolidated the power of the state but couldn't contribute appreciably to better the plight of the project affected. The 1894 LAA was formulated at a time when the role of the state in promoting public welfare was negligible (Vaswani 1992). This historical inadequacy of legal and policy frameworks was alarming during the boom of

dam projects in India. Most of the displacements in the country owe to construction of dams. The recorded history of dam construction in India dates back to the 1700s when the Jaisamand Tank near Udaipur in Rajasthan was built (Thukral 1995). But in the case of Kerala most of the development induced displacements were due to infrastructure development projects (Murickan:1999). The inadequacy of the legal and policy framework that results in heightening impoverishment of the displaced was also visible in the displacement scenario of the state, where even large scale developments projects were not happened. The present study discusses the impoverishments undergone by the evictees of ICTT Vallarpadam in the light of Risk and Reconstruction framework of Cernea and the urgency of creating a better resettlement and rehabilitation policy in the state.

Introduction

Michael M Cernea introduced the Risk and Reconstruction model into the development literature. The model is based on the argument that the construct of impoverishment risk contains the model for the re-establishment of those displaced. He considers risk as a potential provider of predictive information of impoverishment that can be used for effective resettlement planning rather than waiting for the displacement to happen (Cernea, 1998). The theoretical framework uses relative poverty because it can easily assess the changes in peoples' welfare and livelihood due to specific intervention. The theoretical framework brings into concern not only economic but also social, cultural and ethnic paradigm of the affected people. He enlist eight fundamental and regular risks of impoverishment after analyzing the empirical findings reported by many researches, and examining a massive body of data on socio economic mechanism of resettlement processes.

- *Landlessness*
- *Homelessness*
- *Joblessness*
- *Marginalization*
- *Increased morbidity and mortality*
- *Food insecurity*
- *Loss of access to common property and services*
- *Community Disarticulation*

The crux of the whole model is evident from the words of Cernea.

“...but the potential risks do not have to become reality ineluctably. The path from risk to reality can be broken. It can be interrupted through responsible policy, through good planning and targeted preventive measures,

through adequate resource allocation and through the mobilization of the resettlers' and hosts' participation and energies. When such policies and measures are not adopted however, the path from risk to reality goes unbroken"- (Cernea, 1998)

He describes the model as a progressive step from reporting traumas to predicting trends and describing actual remedies. Regarding the origin of Cernea's risk and reconstruction model Ismail Serageldin argues that the model has a close connection with the "self destroying prophecy of R K Merton".

The model emphasizes the recovery issues of the displaced people rather than explaining the evolution of resettlement. Thus effective resettlement and rehabilitation through active and informed intervention constituted the major aim of the model. Every element in this model strives for prescribing the best alternative strategies to reconstruct the shattered lives of the displaced. One core element of the IRR Model deserves comparison to the Scudder's Four Stage Framework. In the Four Stage Framework the transitional phase is characterized by the passive long term waiting for the termination of 'risk averse' that is people to become active investors in the dynamic development activities of the resettlement community. The possibility of spending such a passive long-term period for the psychological transformation of the displaced is replaced by the active and timely sociological interference through the method of 'risk reversal' in IRR Model. Every negative impact has been at its origin nothing more than a risk which has not been arrested and pre-empted in its infancy. This is the internal logic of the framework. This can be accomplished through targeted strategies backed up by adequate financing (Cernea, 2000). By understanding the empirical findings of many resettlement programs, Cernea cautions about the tendency of 'risk denial' that is seen widely in the management of resettlement. Some risks to some stakeholders are considered while other risks to other stakeholders like the risk-set imposed on the displaced populations are beyond the horizon in the mindset, attitudes and management discourse (Cernea, 2006).

The functions and scopes of IRR

The four distinct but interlinked functions that the risk and reconstruction model performs are:

1. a predictive (warning and planning function);
2. a diagnostic (explanatory and assessment function);
3. a problem resolution function, in guiding resettler's re-establishment;
4. and a research function, in formulating hypothesis and conducting theory led field investigation (Cernea, 2006)

Use of predictive function for stakeholders

In the fundamental and most influential phase of planning, if the stakeholders are enriched with the possible risks inherent in the development project as early as possible, the chances of avoiding impoverishments are more likely, as they can search for alternative strategies. The uncertainty caused by involuntary resettlement could be thus reduced in this way. It also provides primary ideas for planning which in long run would have positive impact on the reconstruction alternatives chosen by the resettlement agency.

Use of diagnostic function in planning

This refers to the capacity of the model to explain and assess by converting the general prognosis into a specific, on the ground diagnosis of the project situation at hand (Cernea, 2000). It assists the planners by objectively identifying the possible magnitude of each and every impoverishment risks in a refined and measurable form. The counter measures thus formed could provide adequate resource allocation, effective cost benefit analysis etc.

The problem resolution function and RAPs

One significant advantage of IRR model over the previous models was its practical orientation. Identification of the key actors is an indispensable part of this function. A key requirement of the model and of equitable resettlement is the identification of key social actors participating in the process and their perceptions of risks (Muggah). Recently, many development projects, especially those funded by international agencies increasingly produce RAPs (resettlement action plans) for their project based on the IRR model and subject the same for public scrutiny. The core content of RAPs is the targeted action it offers to counter the risks of pauperization and to reconstruct the income generating activities of the resettlers. The RAPs increase the practical dimension of the IRR framework along with more participatory provisions.

The research function

Ever since the inception of the IRR frame work in the discipline of forced involuntary resettlement, it has been a handy tool for researchers in various stages of their research such as in giving a proper direction for the researcher in his field, in explaining the logical relations between the variables of his study, etc. More over the ever increasing body of IRR related studies with its richness of empirical findings that they could reach by applying the model, prove its worthiness in research.

Methodology

The researchers used interview schedule as the tool for data collection. It enabled the researchers to have more face-to-face interaction with the

respondents. The units of study were displaced families due to rail and road construction for the project. The selection of snowball sampling as the sampling technique was useful in tracing the evictees most of whom were located in remote areas. The informal interactions that the researchers had with the evictees helped to build good rapport and confidentiality among them and this has in turn helped in eliciting more accurate compensation details and more objective account of the impoverishment they faced because of displacement. The informal interactions that the researchers had with the evictees were rich with Quantitative information regarding the displacement experience.

Impoverishment Reality: ICTT Vallarpadam

Landlessness

In most of the development projects the gravity of the Landlessness to which the evictees are exposed to is enormous. The threat of the Landlessness was visible for the evictees of ICTT Vallarpadam even before the actual displacement happened. As soon as the news spread about the displacement, the values of the land nearby the proposed area have witnessed immense increase owing to the rising demands and prospective development of the area in future. Logically, with the nominal compensation that the evictees received for their lost land was inadequate in purchasing land plots, especially the land having similarity in quantity and quality in the near by areas. And this resulted in reduced landholding of the affected people.

Although Vallarpadam resettlement process had the provision of land for land compensation for the affected, due to various reasons this provision was a disappointment. Firstly, the quality of the plot which was created by filling marshy land was constantly challenged. Secondly, only those who lost their land along with the part or whole of their houses due to the acquisition were the only beneficiaries of the provision. Thirdly, the monetary compensation fixed by the DLPC (District Land Purchasing Committee) was well below the actual market value of the land.

A number of studies attribute the reason of inadequacy of compensation to the blind following of the Draconian Land Acquisition Act of 1894 which ask the authorities and Government agencies to provide only the rate of the land as at the time of the insurance of notification under Section 4 of the Act. In addition, the Act does not require the authorities to stick to a time limit. (Vaswani)

The impoverishment risk of Landlessness could have prevented to a considerable extent, if the R&R policy for the evictees had included the following re-constructional elements in its framework:

- Inclusion of land losers in the provision of land-for-land

- The authorities should ensure that the land provided is of comparable quality to the pre-displacement landholding.
- The policy must specify the time period within which the compensation should be provided.

Homelessness

The loss of shelter through displacement is temporary for most of the displaced, but for some families it may become permanent condition. If resettlement policies do not explicitly provide improvement in housing conditions or if the compensation for the demolished houses is paid at their assessed or depreciated value rather than their replacement value, the risk of homelessness is increased. The labor cost involved in rebuilding a house may delay considerably house reconstruction and force the displaced into temporary shelters (Parasuraman: 1996). The most notable fact in the resettlement process of ICTT Vallarpadam was the inadequacy in the evaluation of intangible resources such as house, wells etc. Although the homeless people were identified by the authorities and were provided land plots for house construction, the cost of house construction rose 2-3 times when the basic amenities appeared in the resettlement sites. Further, very few could rationally handle and keep the compensation money for house construction while a considerable number of people spent their money to meet consumption needs and/or day-to-day expenses and/or expenses related to marriage and/or to repay loans etc. Thus, monetizing of compensation pushed many families into permanent Homelessness. The criticism that even the officials agree with about the rehabilitation is that the Government couldn't identify the most vulnerable people to the impoverishment of Homelessness and failed in giving preference to their needs immediately.

Joblessness

The productive inter-relation between the counter measures for Landlessness and Joblessness was identified by many scholars in this field. They recommended land-based livelihood reconstruction as an imperative solution that can at the same time resolve the issue of Landlessness and can reduce the unemployment rate among displaced. But before implementing such a strategy the ground reality of the affected must be clearly understood and the policy guidelines should direct accordingly.

To a great extent the resettlement and rehabilitation method adopted by the authorities decides the impacts on the livelihood means of evictees. In the case of Vallarpadam the displacement deprived many small scale private enterprises from their shops and many others from their work space (mechanic shops, clinics etc.). Once it becomes known that people are to be moved from an area, everybody stops investing in that area. Government investment in

infrastructure and services slows down or ceases, entrepreneurs withdraw from the area (Chris De Wet: 2001). The investments in the notified regions of ICTT Vallarpadam came to a standstill ever since the news about displacement spread out.

Marginalization

The concept of Marginalization is not limited to economic. It has other dimensions namely, social, psychological and cultural. In many cases the loss of psychological and social infrastructure leads the affected to marginalization (Walter Fernandez:). Parasuraman in his studies of irrigation projects describe the phenomenon of marginalization as follows:

“Marginalization is a component of impoverishment occurs when affected families cannot be restored to their previous strength. Medium sized farmers become small holders. Small holders previously balancing precariously above the poverty line may fall below it and never recover, even without becoming landless..... Marginalization also occurs due to the loss of off-farm income sources previously available”.

Thus, the vulnerability to marginalization need not be uniform among all sections of evictees. So identifying the highly vulnerable sections of evictees to marginalization and eliciting their preference can be a useful mechanism in counteracting the impoverishment. If the phenomena is viewed in the sociological perspective the concept of social mobility explain it best. Displacement creates both vertical and horizontal social mobility among the oustees. For instance among the evictees of Vallarpadam there were people whose livelihood were depending on the landholding (shops, and work space) and those families whose earning members were employed in organised sector. The economic marginalization faced by the former category is much worse (vertical downward mobility) than the latter category, because while the latter category had a fair chance to keep their social and economic position in society in a more or less same degree (horizontal mobility) no such chances were available for the former and they completely became depended on the state. The present study asserts that where the authorities failed to identify the vulnerable sections of the displaced population and give them special attention, the resulting vertical social mobility would place them into the lower social strata of the society which increases their dependency and marginalization.

Social Disarticulation

There are support networks and arrangements in each and every community which has very definitive role in the smooth functioning of the community such as mutual help arrangements, production oriented informal organization, child-care reciprocity, food borrowing, burial activities etc. When these support networks and arrangements are dismantled a multi-faceted resource is lost (Parasuraman). In the case of displacement in ICTT

Vallarpadam, the social disarticulation has its beginning in the earlier stages of the process itself. The time it takes between the decision to initiate a project through its design and implementation, is a period of escalating uncertainty and insecurity for the potential oustees (Kothari:). During this period among the potentialoustees of ICTT Vallarpadam a mutually antagonistic division emergedbetween those who accept displacement and those who do not. These divisions were mostly based on rumors rather than facts regarding the nature and extent of displacement because the bureaucrats were keen to keep the real facts as obscure as possible from the oustees.

Displacement uprooted people from theircommunity weakens or break kinship ties. There are cases among the affected families of Vallarpadam where the members of joint families came into conflict with each other over the sharing of compensation of their ancestral property acquired by the project.

Increased Morbidity and Mortality

The scholars in the field of development induced displacement question the ground on which the planners and policy makers usually ignore the health implications of displacement. The displacees of Vallarpadam revealed that for a long period after displacement they had to live in low quality temporary shelters which were built in the small pieces of available land. There they had to undergo the kind of living condition that severely challenged their physical health. Many families slept under plastic roofs and when it rained the temporary shelters were filled with water. They spent many nights without getting proper sleep. Their routines were severely disordered and as a consequence of this n change, the physical health of the displaced especially those of the aged persons was weakened.

The term health can imply both mental and physical health and both the dimensions of health influence each other. But the mental health aspect in this regard got only feeble attention. The impoverishment realities on the contrary, points towards the urgent necessity of developing assessment mechanisms about the mental health status of displaced along with the assessment of physical health. The strong psychological trauma that still exists among those displaced by ICTT Vallarpadam is evidence in this point. There have been reported cases of suicide attempts among the displacees due to their unbearable fear of uncertainty, insecurity and seclusion that they would be pushed into when once the authorities took away their homes and lands. Lack of social support, disintegration of kinship ties, alienation in the resettlement site, uncertain future of their children etc. severely deteriorated the mental health of the displaced. It can be concluded that the vulnerability to the negative impacts on both physical and mental health of the people considerably increased after displacement. In this regard, the World Bank's two policy recommendations namely - to conduct baseline survey to determine the "level of the living" of the families to be displaced and; to assess the health

status of the community along with the strategies to enhance the nutritional status of the children needs to be emphasized (Mathur).

Food insecurity

Cernea describes the identified impoverishment risks as mutually reinforcing in nature. This feature of interaction between the impoverishment risks is visible in the case of impoverishment dimension of food insecurity. Landlessness and loss of livelihood have a direct impact to food insecurity where as the indirect influence of the loss of common property resources on the impoverishment dimension is emphatic. The displaced of ICTT Vallarpadam faced the worst kind of food insecurity in the immediate days after the actual displacement. Although they could recover from such a worst level of food insecurity caused by the irrational method of eviction and lack of adequate social support, the rehabilitation efforts failed to eliminate the threat of food insecurity which is evident from the prevailing economic deprivations and indebtedness of the displaced.

Loss of Access to Common Property Resources

The issue of the loss access to common property resources and its dependents is prominent in tribal communities and self-sufficient village communities. Although it is difficult to find resources that can be classified as common property in the strictest sense of the term in urban areas, it is a fact that there exists some form of sharing of resources between neighbors in such areas the relevance of which is noticeable in some cases. In this regard the case of Mulavukadu deserves special attention. There was an estate of a big landlord in the region which had so many coconut trees; vegetable plants, etc. The people in the locality were allowed free access to the resources in the property by the land owner. Many families could get enough coconuts and firewood from the estate. But displacement of the families took away this resource sharing and the families paid for all the resources that they could have been afforded without money in the pre-displacement place.

The Scopes of reconstruction Efforts

It is evident from the Impoverishment analysis of the ICTT Project displaced in Vallarpadam that the scopes for the reconstruction efforts were unutilized. Thus, the resettlement strategy was weak in terms of the counter acting forces against the impoverishment risks that were inherent in it. The socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged population lost their hopes for support from the government authorities and unfortunately there has never been any legislations to held them responsible for the impoverishment realities that the displaced face. The context demands, a pragmatic appraisal of the solution sets that can at the same time ensure the displaced with favorable solutions towards their overall well-being as well as the sustainability of the

well-being such achieved. The applicability of the counteraction strategies prescribed in the IRR framework is the matter of further discussion here.

Landlessness to Land-based Re-establishment; and from Joblessness to Re-employment

To prevent landlessness in the wake of displacement, land-based resettlement must be conceived before displacement even begins, and such initiative must rely upon the local land contingencies (Cernea). Land based re-establishment in the context of Vallarpadam deserves a critical attention as a counter-action strategy. When the studies show that mere providing of new land is not enough even for the voluntarily displaced, and emphasis that technical assistance and social policy measures must accompany land-based-resettlement, it clearly points towards the fallibility of the instances such as that of the adhoc mechanism adopted by the Vallarpadam Project authorities for providing land-for land. The mechanism was lacking the back up of appropriate technical assistance and social policy measures. Thus, the land-based resettlement for the project displaced must emphasis the two core components in its strategy and execute the strategies in a time bound manner.

The need for creative approaches in addressing the difficulties faced while devising land-based resettlement strategies is noteworthy in the case of ICTT Vallarpadam, where the bureaucrats devised irrational and unscientific plans such as filling lake side land (puzhapuramboke) and created resettlement sites out of that. The implementation of the plan does not in any way contributed to the betterment of the affected people. As the area is highly industrialized the land based reconstruction could be an effective method if the replicable development approaches that the few successful Projects in the country have been followed. Besides the land scarcity in the immediate periphery of a large city like Cochin, there were options for the authorities to effectively link the land-for-land provision with the economic development opportunities by providing land in the command area or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to the people. If this had happened, the people could have freely negotiated with their land in the command area or sell their development rights with the amount of money they feel deserving and thereby could have progressed very far in terms of their economic conditions. When they become economically stable, they can get more quality lands. This can at the same time resolve the unemployment issues and landlessness. This addresses the unemployment issues because if they are provided land in the command area of the project, small enterprises could be built in there which can avail them with fair profits. The land right documents (pattas) that the Government provided to the oustees as a pivotal rehabilitation input indeed resulted in no appreciable progress in their economic condition, because the legal barrier which direct that the allocated land must not be sold, or mortgaged for 25 years from the date of issuing of the land makes it a dead-asset for such

a long time especially in the hands of people who are in need of active and investable assets. Thus, this aspect of the legal framework must be subjected to a thorough revision.

From homelessness to house reconstruction

Many prior studies have identified that the house re-construction have a pivotal role in the overall improvement of any resettlement and rehabilitation programme. Such an improvement was possible in the case of Vallarpadam also if it had adopted a financially supportive role. But in reality, the authorities could not provide their rightful compensation in a time-bound manner. After displacement the resettlers tend to display a strong propensity to improve their living standards over past levels (Cernea). This propensity was also seen in the case of Vallarpadam where, those few who could materialize their need for building a house were careful to make the houses better than the one they lived before the displacement. This propensity however made them more indebted as for realizing the need for a good house, they took heavy loans.

Usually, the rights of compensation appear as a differentiating factor between the condition of refugees and that of the displaced people. But this difference was made thinner in the case of Vallarpadam by the negligible compensation provided, irrational compensation criterion followed and the huge delay that took in providing the compensation. This could have been reversed, by an intentional improvisation by the project authorities through broadening the compensation criterion. It could have made a breakthrough in enhancing the housing conditions of the displaced, if the authorities did allow professional interventions by incorporating the services of Non-Government organization for minimizing the procedural delays, active consulting for the better use of compensation money, etc. The financial support from the government at a low interest rate is inevitable for the house re-construction activities.

From disarticulation to community re-construction; from marginalization to social inclusion; and from expropriation to restoration of community assets

The trend of combining the strategic variables in such a manner as provided above was encouraged by Cernea and the reason he gives is that by manipulating the three model variables, the synergies from the partly overlapping and partly distinct dimensions can be used for effective re-construction programme. Disarticulation to community re-construction, like the other two dimensions were not at all recognized in the resettlement and rehabilitation programmes of ICTT Vallarpadam. But the rehabilitation plan for the ICTT Vallarpadam deserves appreciation in executing community-based land allotment in the rehabilitation sites as far as possible, which to an extent would help in re-articulation of the social networks in the displaced

communities. But for a more inclusive re-articulation of such communities, it is necessary that the people should take initiative in integrating its authority systems and in encouraging leadership among the members.

In reality, the community re-construction and social inclusion are much advanced stages of re-construction strategies and is possible only when the displaced families constructed their houses in the resettlement sites provided. The effectiveness with which the landlessness and joblessness were countered also matters in this stage. The authorities in this stage should increase the interaction among the resettlers by providing natural platforms. In the case of Vallarpadam, the community reconstruction can be achieved without much difficulties, as the resettlers continues to be giving much importance to religions and associated belief system. Moreover, religious institutions are also accessible to them which enable interpersonal interaction. The greatest hurdle in achieving the community restoration however lays in other unaddressed impoverishment namely landlessness, homelessness and joblessness.

Conclusion

The displaced of ICTT Vallarpadam evidently have undergone the eight recurrent impoverishments and the ways adopted by Government and Project authorities had no crucial positive impact on the lives of the displaced. The diverse needs of the displaced population were not given attention in any part of the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts they made. The unpreparedness with which the Government approached the displacement is contemptible to the core. The heedlessness that followed in choosing the reconstruction strategies is no less contemptible. Here, a simultaneous attack on the impoverishments is inevitable. It should be noted that Chris De Wet while acknowledging the reconstruction potentials of IRR framework give much emphasis to its planning aspects. By applying resettlement-as-development approach consistently and redesigning policy, planning and finance accordingly, the risks posed by displacement can be inverted into opportunities for reconstruction (Chris De Wet). But the ever widening gap between theory and practice must be solved as the first step. It could be solved to a great extent if a dedicated body exclusively for rehabilitation planning and implementation is set up at Ministerial level. Even the guidelines for selection of members to this body must be carefully laid down which should contain the representatives of the displaced along with the concerned scholars and activists. Handling of the resettlement and rehabilitation as many scholars perceives necessitates a considerable number of officials and this problem can be solved by active coordination of the body with reputed and reliable civil society organizations and NGOs. Inter departmental coordination which in most cases are lacking should be given much consideration by the dedicated body at Ministerial level. Public Relation campaigns must also be strengthened by the body so that it can achieve confidence among the displaced and the

campaigns must emphasize the transparency and accountability aspects of the new body.

The usual practice of governing the resettlement and rehabilitation processes through GOs in the state must be replaced by proper policy guidelines and these policy guidelines must be periodically revised. Kerala which is a model to other states with respect to health, education etc, can achieve the feat of being a model in resettlement of the displaced by the back up of a strong legislation for their resettlement and rehabilitation that duly considers the pragmatic reconstruction strategies recommended by the Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction Model of Cernea with necessary modifications.

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