

Resettlement and Rehabilitation : reasons, issues and objectives(Environmental studies _BT-307)

Resettlement and rehabilitation

People are forced to move out of their land due to both natural and man made disasters. Natural disasters like earthquakes, cyclones, tsunami etc. render thousands of people homeless

and sometime even force them to move and resettle in other areas. Similarly, developmental projects like construction of roads, dams, canals and flyovers displace people from their home. You must all be aware of the recent nuclear leakage in Japan due to which millions of people were forced to leave the area for their safety. Thus, resettlement refer to the process of settling again in a new area. Rehabilitation means restoration to the former state.

Reasons for displacement of people

- Natural disasters like earthquake, cyclones, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions,

prolonged droughts conditions, floods, hurricanes etc.

- Man made disasters like industrial accidents (e.g. Bhopal gas tragedy), nuclear accidents(Current disaster in Japan), oil spills(Exxon Valdez oil spill), toxic contamination of sites etc.

- In search of better employment opportunities.

- Developmental projects like:

- construction of dams, irrigation canals, reservoirs etc.

- Infrastructural projects like flyovers, bridges, roads etc.

- transportation activities like roads, highway, canal etc.

- Energy related project like power plants, oil exploration, mining activities, pipelines like HBJ pipeline etc.

- Agricultural projects
- Projects related with the conservation of wildlife like national parks, sanctuaries and biosphere reserves.

Resettlement issues

As per the World Bank estimates, nearly 10 lakh people are displaced worldwide for a variety of reasons. I have tried to mention a few of the sufferings that these people have to face but we are unable to feel for them:

- Little or no support: Displacement mainly hits tribal and rural people who usually do not figure in the priority list of any political authorities or parties. Why do you think that the rural people have become the red Robinhoods of today which are the Maoists?

- Meager compensation: The compensation for the land lost is often not paid, it is delayed or even if paid, is too small both in monetary terms and social changes forced on them by these mega developmental projects.

- Loss of livelihood: Displacement is not a simple incident in the lives of the displaced people. They have to leave their ancestral land and forests on which they depend for their livelihood. Many of them have no skills to take up another activity or pick up any other occupation. Usually, the new land that is offered to them is of poor quality and the refugees are unable to make a living.

- Lack of facilities: When people are resettled in a new area, basic infrastructure and amenities are not provided in that area. Very often, temporary camps become permanent settlements. It is also a major problem of

displacement or resettlement that people have to face.

- Increase in stress: Resettlement disrupt the entire life of the people. They are unable to bear the shocks of emptiness and purposelessness created in their life. Payment of compensation to the head of the family often lead to bitter quarrels over sharing of compensation amount within the family, leading to stress and even withering of family life. Moreover, land ownership has a certain prestige attached to it which cannot be compensated for even after providing the new land. With the loss of property and

prestige, marriages of young people also become difficult as people from outside villages are not willing to marry their daughters to the refugees.

- Increase in health problems: Lack of nutrition due to the loss of agriculture and forest based livelihood, lead to the general decline in the health of the people. People are used to traditional home remedies. But th herbal remedies and plants gets submerged due to the developmental projects.

- Secondary displacement: Occupational groups residing outside the

submergence area but depending on the area for the livelihood also experience unemployment. Village artisans, petty traders, laborers etc, lose their living.

- Loss of identity: Tribal life is community based. The tribal are simple people who have a lifestyle of their own. Displacement have a negative impact on their livelihood, culture and spiritual existence in the following ways:

- Break up of families and communities are the important social issues of displacement. The women suffer the most as they are deprived even a little

compensation.

- Inter-community marriages, cultural functions, folk songs and dances do not take place among the displaced people. When they are resettled, it is generally individual based resettlement, which ignores communal character.
- Resettlement increases the poverty of the tribal due to the loss of land, livelihood, food insecurity, jobs, skills etc.

- Loss of identity of individuals and the loss of connection between the people and the environment is the greatest loss in the process. The indigenous knowledge that they have regarding the wildlife and the herbal plants are lost.
- The land acquisition laws do not pay attention to the idea of communal ownership of property which increases stress within the family.
- The tribal people are not familiar with the market trends, prices of commodities and policies. As such, they are exploited and get alienated in the modern era. My

mother often says about the plight of people from Nepal who came newly to the city of Gangtok. Earlier, when they demanded four meters cloth piece, the shopkeeper used to measure the same from all the four sides of the piece.

Actually it was only one meter in length but they used to charge the priced of four meter cloth.

Objectives of rehabilitation

The following objectives of rehabilitation should be kept in mind before the people are given an alternative site for living:

- Tribal people should be allowed to live along the lives of their own patterns and others should avoid imposing anything on them.

- They should be provided means to develop their own traditional art and culture in every way.

- Villagers should be given the option of shifting out with others to enable them to live a community based life.

- Removal of poverty should be one of the objectives of rehabilitation.
- The people displaced should get an appropriate share in the fruits of the development. I should say that it is really a good move by ISC to share its profits among the active contributors.
- The displaced people should be given employment opportunities.
- Resettlement should be in the neighborhood of their own environment.

- If resettlement is not possible in the neighbor area, priority should be given to the development of the irrigation facilities and supply of basic inputs for agriculture, drinking water, wells, grazing ground for the cattle, schools for the children, primary healthcare units and other amenities.

- Villagers should be taken into confidence at every stage of implementation of the displacement and they should be educated, through public meetings, discussion about the legalities of the Land Acquisition act and other

rehabilitation provisions.

- The elderly people of the village should be involved in the decision making.

Examples of resettlement and rehabilitation

- *Displacement due to dams*

India has been constructing dams and other hydel projects. In the last 50 years, *20 million* people have been affected by the construction of such projects.

The Hirakud dam displaced about 20000

people living in about 250 villages. The Bhakra Nangal dam was constructed around 1950's and displaced a number of people. Some of them could not be rehabilitated even today.

- *Displacement due to mining*

Due to possibility of the accidents or sinking of the land, people have to be displaced in and around the mining area. Mining takes up several hectares of land and thousands of people have to be evacuated.

Jharia coal fields posed a problem years ago to the local residents due to the underground fire. Some 3 lakh people were to be shifted and it became a

problem to find an alternative site. A huge amount of money to the tune of Rs 115 crores has been spent to put out the fire. Still the problem persists.

- *Displacement in Japan due to nuclear crisis*

You must all be aware of the current nuclear crisis in Japan where there was an explosion in three of the major reactors of Fukushima city due to tsunami. Currently, more than 2,00,000 people have been displaced from their native place and yet many are unable to find an alternative home. People were evacuated to protect them from the possible nuclear hazard and exposure.

They are suffering from acute hunger as all the food supply was interrupted due to contamination of food particles by radiation.