



STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON DISPLACED FAMILIES DUE TO SARDAR SAROVAR DAM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes how India's Sardar Sarovar dam is an example of a development plan that has resulted in huge environmental displacement. This happens directly by displacement and implicitly through the loss of livelihoods as a result of environmental changes. The essay emphasises the difficulties of relocation and rehabilitation, as well as the potential for more displacement as a result of this process. The inequality between development beneficiaries and those who must bear the majority of the development costs is also addressed. For any group or society, displacement is harrowing, both in terms of livelihood and culture. The article argues that the state must strike a balance among its efforts to promote development and those to make it durable, just, and equitable. The study focuses on the issues that arise in the allocation of reimbursement and relocation in such programs. Dam-induced displacement occurrences at the Sardar Sarovar Project in the Narmada River Valley Project in Gujarat, India, are emphasised as examples. The project is unsustainable due to the misrepresentation of its prospective benefits, as well as its massive social and environmental effects.

Keywords: Resettlement, displacement, development, Sardar Sarovar Dam, Socio-economic impact.

INTRODUCTION

Dam developments on a large scale are a common occurrence around the world. The Belo Monte dam in Brazil seems to be the focus of international media interest in recent years. However, large scale dam projects are being implemented worldwide, in countries such as Turkey, China, Egypt, South Korea and Japan, often supported by international development organizations such as the World Bank. (Sonawat, 2001) In the case of India, the Sardar Sarovar Project at the Narmada River has brought large scale dam infrastructure and their social consequences into the spotlight since the 1990s. Recently in India, there are about 4,900 big dams, 4,600 of which have been completed after the country's independence in 1947, as well



as 300 more are continuously being built. Dam development is accompanied by the expropriation of citizens.

As for displacement, it is explicitly recognised as development pathology. Yet displacement is widely perceived as inevitable in the course of development. Thus, the rural is to be displaced by the urban, agriculture by industry, low, simple or traditional technology by high, complex or modern technology. However, a moment's reflection would unfold that what goes on is not only displacement but also accretion. The pathological obsession with a particular direction of 'development' and displacement it entails is playing havoc with people and hence the present spotlight on it.

While the Sardar Sarovar Dam is sometimes called the most studied dam in the world, the majority of that research has focused on justifying the dam, the upstream human and environmental impacts of the dam, the flawed resettlement process, and the anti-dam movement and legal battle surrounding its construction.(Terminski, 2013)

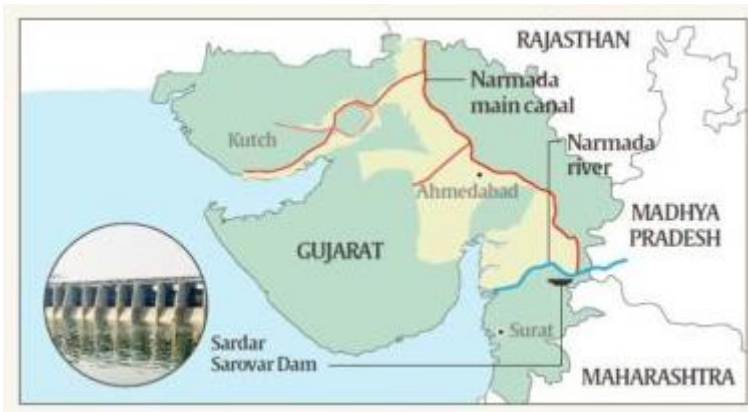


Figure 1: Sardar Sarovar Dam Project

The Sardar Sarovar Dam as Unethical Development

Development is supposed to be beneficial. It is supposed to be the creation of a better life. Within the context of a nation, the state is supposed to be committed to the development of the people as a whole. It has a responsibility to ensure an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of development projects, especially when they are state projects. Yet the potential benefits of the creation of the Sardar Sarovar Dam are to accrue to a better-off segment of Indian society-those who can afford electricity and those who hold land in Gujarat or Rajasthan which would become properly irrigated as a result of the development project. In turn, the costs



are largely being born by an already disadvantaged segment of society- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. (Polprasert, 2015) Many members of these groups do not have formal title to their lands and therefore little recourse to mainstream legal channels when it comes to compensation. This leaves the vast majority of displaced people with practically no bargaining power over their fate. (Siddiqui, 2012)

Although there are provisions to resettle and rehabilitate at least some of the people who will be displaced as a result of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, resettlement still generally means a drop in the quality of living. (Borphukon, 2015) The resettlement and rehabilitation project, which is supposed to be a "development opportunity," is, in actual fact, undermining the economic livelihoods and quality of life of these people. Over the long term, this might even mean further displacement as essential needs are not met. (Tacoli & Mcgranahan, 2015) As such, resettlement is not improving the standard of living as defined by the displaced people themselves. In addition, there are all those who, though harmed in various ways by the dam project, are not receiving even the inadequate compensation of rehabilitation, because they hold no formal title to the land or waters that they use for economic livelihood purposes.

Socio-economic impact on Displaced People

The Sardar Sarovar Dam Project affected people's economic security in some very fundamental ways. Many people who were directly displaced as a result of the project received no economic compensation whatsoever. (Nagendra et al., 2013) People who have been relocated as a consequence of the canal system, for example, were not designated "oustees" by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal in 1979, and hence were not actually fit for resettlement.

For those who were supposed to be covered under the resettlement and rehabilitation program, there were still many forms of economic victimization. Many, if not most, of the people to be displaced by the development project were tribal "encroachers" on state land because they held no legal title to that land. (Caspary et al., 2007) Both the state of Maharashtra and the state of Madhya Pradesh chose to interpret the Tribunal ruling regarding "oustees" to mean that only those with formal title to land, and their adult sons, would be given land for land, despite the fact that this would make tribal people, who hold their land by customary usage, landless oustees. (Narain et al., 2014) What must be understood here is that landlessness is an economic disaster for these people's well-being since land is their source of subsistence and knowledge of their local environment is their major skill. (Kalin, 2008)

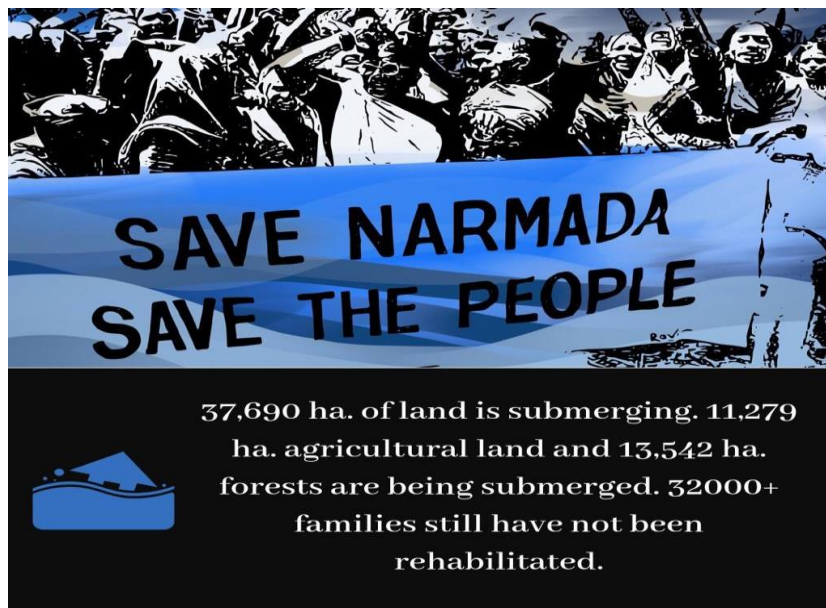


Figure 2: Narmada Bachao Andolana

In addition, the resettlement and rehabilitation policy did not recognize other aspects of economic livelihoods. It did not take into account economic practices such as fishing, pastoralism, and gathering. Also, the level of economic productivity which results from local environmental and cultural knowledge has been, for the most part, ignored.

Many of these people are also victimized in terms of their cultural well-being. Perhaps the most important means of cultural victimization is the policy stance taken by both the state of Maharashtra and the state of Madhya Pradesh. (Zetter et al., 2011) However, in cultural terms, resettling in Gujarat is a loss. For many it would mean moving away from other important family and other social ties. As well, language would become even more of a barrier, since few tribal men and no tribal women know languages other than their own and even then it would be only the official language of the state that they live in. (Siddiqui, 2012) In all cases where people have resettled, they have expressed a feeling of loss over leaving their home and their gods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Parasuraman & Balasubramanian, 2015) analyzed that the Sardar Sarovar Dam reached a height of 121.92 m in 2006 and at this height the dam has enough water to generate most of the promised benefits – irrigation, drinking water, and electricity. Meanwhile, just 30% of the targeted communities currently have reliable water supplies, somewhere around 20% of the



canal network has been built, and electricity generation is still significantly below the capacity attained. Even though the dam is nearing completion, the rehabilitation of thousands of families is substandard or non-existent. This, despite the fact that the project had clear legal obligations to reduce people and the environment costs, as well as being under constant public inspection and Supreme Court oversight. The conduct of this project appears to be similar to that of other significant irrigation and power projects in India: while the primary civil works are completed, the structure and activities required to realise the project's rewards remain unfinished.

(Fast, 2015) analysed the difficulties that the Nepalese government faces in guaranteeing that hydropower infrastructure projects contribute to social justice as well as development for everyone, particularly displaced people. Second, it adds to ongoing research discussions on development-forced displacement as well as resettlement (DFDR) by critically examining the applicability of DFDR research in countries such as Nepal, which are characterised by poor state regulatory capability and social inequities. It was discovered through a review of academic studies as well as interviews with Nepali civil society activists, government officials, and water resource professionals that DFDR research has had relatively little impact on resettlement policies in Nepal.

(Sahoo et al., 2014) observed that the Sardar Sarovar Dam, located on the Narmada River in Gujarat, India, is a gravity dam. It is also the highest dam in the Narmada Valley Project, which is a massive hydraulic engineering project that includes a series of huge irrigation as well as hydroelectric multi-purpose dams. The project began in 1979 as part of a larger development plan to expand irrigation and generate hydropower. The SSP's hydroelectric power will be split among Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, while the irrigation benefits will go to Gujarat and Rajasthan. We understand the complexities inherent with the Sardar Sarovar Valley. The concerns arise as a result of the dam fight and the emergence of a paradigm that promises material wealth in a chimerical way. Researchers would like to highlight the water issues in Gujarat's water shortage areas. The Indian government has provided its approval for the SSP in Gujarat as well as the NSP in Madhya Pradesh to be built.

(Wong, 2013) studied Large dams, a tool for development in the past century, have changed the lives of millions, altered nations and had widespread environmental, economic and social effects. With the increasing amount of data available, the effects of dams can be assessed with greater accuracy and validity. This thesis examines the evaluation of the economic,



environmental and social effects of dams, and lessons learned from previous dams. It then emphasizes on cost benefit like a pre-project decision-making method for investigating the prospective gains and disadvantages of building a dam, as well as a framework for analysing dams that have already been built. It examines the fundamental assumptions that must be made in order to do a credible cost-benefit analysis, as well as the method's inherent limits. The Sardar Sarovar dam is used as a case analysis for how cost benefit analysis is used and abused in decision-making, interstate politics, advertising, and campaigning. This also shows how difficult it is to divide expenses and rewards fairly at the national, state, and ground levels.

(Mcdonald-wilmsen & Webber, 2010) observed The World Commission on Dams offered a comprehensive analysis of the long-term implications of dam construction. Consequently, little has changed dramatically in terms of resettlement strategies since the WCD. In fact, significant agencies' requirements, such as the Asian Development Bank's, have been decreased and reduced in comparison to previous regulations. A 'managerialist' strategy to planning, wherein solutions are searched internally and subservient to the finances that justify the project's existence, suffocates dam-induced development and displacement. The goal of successful resettlement is to eliminate poverty and allow displaced individuals to benefits from the operation. Within the field of dam-induced resettlement, this is a lofty goal rarely achieved. Furthermore, in other areas of resettlement, including such refugee studies and climate change adaptation, such an objective is considered a minimum level. Researcher hope to widen the study agenda on dam-induced resettlement and increase the quality of development projects that include resettlement in this study.

(Oommen, 2006) traced the trajectories of different types of anti-dam mobilisation in independent India with a focus on the well-known Narmada Bachao Andolan. While the studies on anti-displacement mobilisations produced a substantial body of knowledge, they are useful neither to the civil society activists nor to the policy makers. It is suggested that, in order to render sociology relevant, we need to combine the sociology of movements and polices with sociology for movement and policies.

(Cullet, 2000) studied the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is part of a gigantic scheme seeking to build more than 3,000 dams, including 30 big dams, on the river Narmada, a 1,312 km river flowing westwards from Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, touching Maharashtra and ending its course in Gujarat. The SSP is a multi-purpose dam & a canal system with irrigation as well



as drinking water as its primary goals. Another anticipated benefit is the creation of electricity. It is also the fastest growing of the Narmada dams projected, as well as its canal network is expected to be the world's largest. The dam is located in Gujarat, which will reap the most of the project's advantages, while the submergence – totalling 37,533 hectares – is predominantly hurting the state of MP (55%) as well as, to a lesser degree, the state of Maharashtra.

CONCLUSION

The Sardar Sarovar Dam is an example of a development project that is generating huge environmental displacement both intrinsically and extrinsically. This displacement isn't just happening now. Rather, the dam project's and its related relocation and restoration project's consequences are increasing people's economic vulnerability, paving the way for more relocation. As a result, opponents have claimed that large-scale development initiatives have ended in a transfer of funds from the poorest to the wealthiest elements of society. This has generally been the case with India's development model. The large development projects, particularly mega dams, create victims of development- mainly tribals and other weaker sections of the society. It is fair to say that the larger the development project, the more centralised control it will have. Large landowners, wealthy farmers, engineers, administrators, and legislators benefit from this centralization.

Thus, development projects have done little to alleviate existing social inequalities. On the contrary, they have further aggravated the social structure in favour of the already socially, economically and politically powerful, thus throwing to the winds the socialist pretensions in the Constitution. As a result, the urgent need is for the formulation of a thorough compensation and rehabilitation strategy that answers the real problems of the displaced population. So implementation of an inclusive strategy will best benefit sustainable development by establishing a more competitive market.

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