## MODULE 17: DEVELOPMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

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### Objectives
- To understand the dominant concept of development, that is, economic development.
- To develop insights about the social cost of development.
- To understand the features of a resettlement and rehabilitation policy based on principles of human rights and social justice.

### Keywords
Development, Displacement, People’s Movements, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

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MODULE 17: DEVELOPMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Introduction

Economic development is regarded as indispensable for the progress and prosperity of any country. Ever since human beings have existed, development is taking place and the countries in different parts of the world are marching ahead. Since without development, there will be status quo, there can be no progress and growth. Seen in this perspective economic development is desirably required for the betterment of man. Economic development raises the living standards of people so that they are better off from their previous state. It necessarily involves creation of basic infrastructure like railways, roads, shipping, civil aviation, power station, irrigation facilities, means of communication, and establishment of industries. Such projects are invariably required as they improve lives of people, provide employment to them and supply them better services (Kaushal, 2009).

However, this economic development model has flip side to it as well. According to Harvey (2003), imperialism in the age of neoliberalism has rediscovered "the original sin of simple robbery". Global capitalism continues to recreate, preserve and extend itself through an ongoing process of primitive accumulation. In Harvey's exposition this process of "accumulation by dispossession" is actively promoted through the neoliberal agenda. In India this process has been driven in particular through privatization of resources held in common and state redistributions in favor of capital.

One of the fundamental issues with regard to such a model of economic development is the consequent displacement of people on whose land different development projects are planned and implemented. Thus, displacement is the negative side of this process of development. Since displacement is induced by development, policy makers of a country cannot ignore this harsh reality. This reality has to be accepted and measures are required to be taken to reduce the sufferings of the people. Development induced displacement forces individuals and communities to leave their homes and homelands for the purposes of economic development. Such displacement can be within a city or a district; from one village, city, district, state to another. It can also be across long distances, at times to socio-culturally and
economically different settings. Development induced displacement involves a fundamental dilemma: economic development as a move to improve living conditions of people is desirable but displacement associated with it is undesirable. Worldwide the effects of displacement are strongly felt amongst economically and socially vulnerable and politically marginalized groups and indigenous communities. In recent years increasing globalization, economic liberalization policies, structural adjustment and stabilization programmes have intensified development induced displacement.

The Indian development experience in terms of development and displacement process of transition is closer neither to legal rational authority syndrome nor to alternative notion of development. It is carrying in itself several ingredients, not only for development but also of constraints. The overall State and its administrative instruments are under tremendous pressure, as the people are increasingly demanding the realization of the promise. The built-in structure is not designed for this purpose, in spite of the fact that the State is mandated by the Indian Constitution to play a transformative role, it ran into several dilemmas both on the frontiers of displacement and development (Mohanty, 2009).

The development projects have raised questions of equity, fairness, justice and equality before law, in the matter of distribution of benefits and burdens. Today the project affected people are no longer in a mood to suffer displacement like occupational degeneration, social disorientation, pauperization, loss of dignity getting cheated of the compensation amount, which serve to make the experience a trauma.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. Knowledge of the causes of development induced displacement.
2. Understanding of the process of land acquisition in India.
3. Knowledge of the impact of development on displaced people.
4. Understanding of people’s resistance to development induced displacement.
5. Knowledge of a just displacement and rehabilitation policy.

**Topic Name:** Development and Displacement
**Sub-Topics:** Causes of Development; The Process of Land Acquisition in India; impact of Displacement; People’s Movements; Resettlement and Rehabilitation.

**Causes of Displacement**

Various causes have given rise to development induced displacement. These causes include: water supply—dams, reservoirs, irrigation; urban infrastructure; energy—mining, power projects, oil exploration and extraction; agricultural expansion; transportation – roads, railways, highways, canals; and parks, sanctuaries, and forest reserves.

Large multi-purpose river valley projects or dam projects displace people in several ways like construction of colonies, canals, catchment area treatment, downstream impacts, compensatory afforestation, and related conservation schemes like sanctuaries and national parks. Displacement takes place where townships are established for personnel involved in the construction of project; and where protected areas are established as compensatory measures for the forest lands and natural habitats lost as a result of submergence. Mining induced displacement occurs where rich deposits of minerals are found. Urban infrastructure and transportation projects that cause displacement include slum clearance, establishment of industrial and commercial estates, building of sewerage systems, roads, railway tracks and stations, power projects, schools, hospitals, ports, airports, and communication networks. In recent times, displacement of people has been witnessed increasingly with regard to construction of Special Economic Zones, shopping malls and multiplexes.

**The Process of Land Acquisition in India**

Before we discuss the impact of displacement on the lives of those displaced due large development projects, it is imperative to discuss certain critical aspects of the Land Acquisition in India. Till 2013, land acquisition in India was governed by Land Acquisition Act (1894). Post-2014, land acquisition in India is governed by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. This itself is a cruel joke on the displaced people of India that they had to wait for more than sixty years after independence to change the British era law that allows the acquisition of land for some public purpose by a government
agency from individual landowners after paying a government-determined compensation to cover losses incurred by landowners from surrendering their land to the agency. The arbitrariness and absence of people’s voice can be easily comprehended from this above mentioned basic statement of the act. Most of the affected people’s movements against development projects (which have been mentioned in the next section) have had to struggle against this law that in a way legitimizes displacement in the name of development.

The Land Acquisition Act only deals with compensation and rehabilitation of the affected persons whose lands have been acquired. The responsibility of the state towards the affected persons ends with the payment of compensation only. The act considers the payment of compensation to individuals who have legal ownership rights over land. This means under this Act no compensation is payable to landless laborers, forest land users and forest produce collectors, artisans and shifting hill cultivators.

The calculation of compensation on the basis of market value not only deprives the land owner, but it also hides the various socio-cultural dimensions of land ownership in an agrarian society. Land does not only have a market price at the time of acquisition, but it also serves various social, political and psychological functions to its owner. The ownership of a small piece of land can empower a landless family and increase the status and prestige of that family in the local milieu. A piece of land supports a family for generations, not simply its present members at the time of acquisition. In addition, the Act only recognizes individual property rights, but not community rights over land. As a consequence, the rights of the tribal and non-tribal communities over common land do not find any place in this law. Thus, the underlying grey areas which are subject to multiple interpretations are misused to serve the purpose of the rich and the powerful, who acquire these tracts of land for development projects, at the cost of the displaced people. Having critically discussed the nature of land acquisition process, let us now discuss the impact of displacement on the affected people.

Impact of Displacement
Landlessness: Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihoods are constructed. This is the principal form of de-capitalization and pauperization of displaced people, as they lose both natural and human made capital. Impoverishment from landlessness may take various forms: (a) initial loss of land to development project; (b) damage to land's productive potential in surrounding, non-appropriated areas; (c) subsequent losses in the productive potential of land on account of environmental problems; and (d) loss of land occurring due to inability of landless people to gain access to alternative lands.

Joblessness: Displacement dismantles local income-generating resource base and disrupts economic opportunities linked to local and regional economic cycles and sustained social relations of production. Therefore, post displacement unemployment or underemployment is often chronic and continues long after physical relocation has been completed.

Homelessness: Homelessness is loss of house-plots, dwellings or shelters, be it permanent or temporary. In poorly executed development projects, homelessness is chronic. It is often associated with loss of identity and cultural impoverishment. The symbolic importance of of pre-displaced place in terms of family cohesion and a location for mutual support from household and neighboring households is also lost.

Marginalization: Marginalization occurs when individuals and communities loose economic power and move into relatively lower socio-economic status. Economic marginalization is accompanied by social and psychological marginalization. It results in loss of confidence in resettled people especially when displaced become outsiders and newcomers in host communities. Host communities are usually unwilling to accept resettled outsiders. This leads to socio-cultural incompatibility and competition for scarce resources and jobs. In most cases displaced people are at disadvantage.

Besides the above mentioned macro-impacts there are other impacts vis-à-vis health, education of children, loss of access to common property, etc. that impacts the lives of displaced people. With following words of a former chairperson of the Narmada Valley Development Council, might fittingly, conclude this section:
“No trauma could be more painful for a family than to get uprooted from a place where it has lived for generations and to move to a place where it may be a total stranger. And nothing could be more irksome than being asked to switch over to an avocation which has not practiced before. Yet the uprooting has to be done because the land occupied by the family is required for a development project which holds promise of progress and prosperity for the country and the people in general. The family getting displaced thus makes a sacrifice for the sake of the community. It undergoes hardship and distress and faces an uncertain future so that others may live in happiness and be economically better.”

**People’s Movements: Displacement No More Taken for Granted**

The issues regarding displacement brought forth by the struggles are manifold. No more is displacement being taken for granted by the affected persons. Their demand and struggle is not to remain confined only to the resettlement aspect. People have started questioning displacement itself. Some of the questions that they have raised include: Why displacement? For whom? What is the public purpose? Who decides the public purpose, the propriety of displacement? Whether the evaluation of resources of the affected people, which includes their social, cultural and other aspects of life, could re-compensate them adequately? The consent of the people becomes an important factor. Right to information, right to participation and host of other rights of the oustees are being asserted. The new movements have raised the pre-displacement rights of the affected people along with their post-displacement rights.

The trade-off theory regarding the people’s lives and the so-called benefits which is instrumental in unleashing the floodgates of large-scale displacement, needs to be rejected off hand. Except in very genuine cases, in no other cases should the local inhabitants be allowed to be displaced. At the same time, the people’s organizations will examine on the basis of justice, equality, sustainability and other factors, the transformation and utilization of resources and its forms.

Thus, the struggles regarding the displacement and resettlement are directly linked with the development policy and the projects. The oustees and their organizations asserted their rights to question the project in its entirety, examining all its aspects. Contrary to the expectations of the power-holders that the oustees should
only be concerned about their individual gains, the new movements emphasized the right of the oustees to question the project itself which would be making them destitute. More importantly, the demand to take the consent of the prospective oustees before a project is conceptualized and formulated, is also being asserted. All these aspects have radically altered the discourse regarding displacement and resettlement into an issue of development and displacement and if need be, of ideal resettlement (Patkar, 1998).

Some of the major people’s struggles and movements in recent times which have strongly questioned the process of development induced displacements are:

- Protest movements brought about the withdrawal of Rathong Chu Project (Sikkim) in 1997 and the Bedthi Project in 1998.
- Kashipur movement in Orissa against the Utkal Alumina Limited owned by the Birlas.
- Movement in Erasama near Paradip in Orissa is against permission given to South Korean Multi National Corporation, POSCO, to set up greenfield steel project.
- Movements in Punjab are against the forcible acquisition of land for Trident Group in Barnala, for international airport in Ludhiana, and for thermal power plant at Nabha.
- Movement in Manesar in Haryana is protesting Special Economic Project of Reliance Industries.
- Movement in Singur in West Bengal is against small car project of Tata Group.
- Movement in Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh is protesting the proposed setting up of steel plant by Tata Group.
- Movement in Nandigram in West Bengal is against the acquisition of farmland for giving it for Special Economic Zone.
So far the most publicized protest movement against big dams is against Sardar Sarovar Project. In 1988 Save The Narmada Movement (Narmada Bachao Andolan) was started. This movement, under the leadership of Medha Patkar, is using Gandhian techniques like non-cooperation with project authorities, blocking of all project related work and people refusing to leave their villages.

People under the banner of Adivasi- Moolvasi Raksha Manch in Jharkhand are resisting acquisition of tribal land by Arcelor-Mittal steel conglomerate for setting up of steel plant.

Due to the above stated strong resistance movements by the displaced people, issues of proper resettlement and rehabilitation have received some attention from the government. Therefore, let us enlist some suggestions on Development, Displacement, and Resettlement and Rehabilitation.

Development, Displacement, and Resettlement and Rehabilitation

It is wrong to talk about a rehabilitation policy or even a resettlement and rehabilitation policy, as both formulations take displacement for granted. We need a displacement and rehabilitation policy (D&R, not R&R). The first thing to be said about displacement is that it is ordinarily unacceptable. Being uprooted (displacement is a bland term for this) is a traumatic experience under the best of circumstances, and should be avoided if possible. A clear recognition of this, and an explicit statement to this effect should be the starting point for any D&R policy or law.

Where displacement seems unavoidable, it ought not to be forced displacement, but should be voluntary. The principle of "free, informed prior consent" put forward by those who propose to initiate development projects. If consent is to be "informed", the necessary information must be provided. The people likely to be affected must be taken into confidence and provided with the fullest information about the contemplated project from the earliest stages, so that they can satisfy themselves about the desirability of the project, the non-availability of alternatives, and the rationale of the proposed displacement. Land Acquisition Act (even the latest
version) should only be effectively applied for acquiring land for strictly public purposes.

There is a need to change other legal structures and provisions along with a new displacement and rehabilitation policy. Various provisions of the Forest Conservation Act and other related acts, and even the provisions in the constitution, need to be changed in the direction of the fundamental rights of the tribals, dalits, backwards and peasants. The people’s struggles all over the country have provided a framework for a just resettlement and rehabilitation policy. Some prominent aspects of this framework include the following:

(a) Community resettlement with improved standard of life for the displaced ones; full and just resettlement would be the pre-condition for displacement; the complete master plan of the resettlement along with the project plan should entail meaningful participation of the people.

(b) The affected persons must be the first to be benefited from the project. They should have share in the benefits from the project - in irrigation, in decision-making, in the profits of an industry and in the remaining resources in the vicinity of the project, viz, the fisheries, the forest and land.

(c) Though the people's struggles do not reject totally any sort of possibility of displacement and resettlement, all the ongoing and future displacement should be considered in the light of the displacement and experiences of resettlement hitherto. The major criterion regarding resettlement should be the public purpose of the development project and the accompanying displacement. The other criteria must be the manageability of the displacement. The people’s organizations have a responsibility to launch an effective, collective campaign on some of the pertinent, immediate issues.

(d) Demand the abrogation of the existing land acquisition act and other laws related with the displacement and resettlement and evolve a new, comprehensive policy on development, displacement and resettlement. The draft policy on development, displacement and resettlement drawn in 1988 by
a concerned group of representatives of organizations and experts can provide a starting point for such an endeavor.

Explore the ways for resource mapping, alternatives to the present day destructive and large projects, and emphasize on small-scale, sustainable, eco-friendly projects which give more power in the hands of community.

Summary

The dominant model of economic development in India includes big development projects that entail mass displacement of people, especially the tribals, dalits and other marginalized sections of the population. Some of these development projects that cause displacement of people include water supply-dams, reservoirs, irrigation; urban infrastructure; energy-mining, power projects, oil exploration and extraction; agricultural expansion; transportation – roads, railways, highways, canals; and parks, sanctuaries, and forest reserves. The process of land acquisition in India for these development projects has been strongly critiqued as it lacks voices of the displaced people who face many challenges post-displacement such as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness and marginalization. Many people’s movements have emerged in India against different development projects who question the idea of development that induces displacement. Moreover, they advocate for a resettlement and rehabilitation policy of already displaced people that is socially just and secures the basic human rights of the people.