

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The concept of ‘development’ is one of the most debated concepts in the history of social science, because approaches to look at development have been changed from time to time. Today, development has become a multi-dimensional concept. Now-a-days, the social scientists associate development with economic growth, social justice, environmental protection, gender equity, human development, freedom, capability to choice and so on and so forth. The World Commission on Environment and Development came up with a report entitled ‘*Our Common Future*’ in 1987 to reconcile the goals of economic development and environmental protection. The World Development Report (1991) asserted that development is defined as “a sustainable increase in living standard that encompasses material consumption, education, health and environmental protection. Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen has interpreted development as a “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been publishing a Human Development Report (HDR) annually since 1990. Each and every HDR provides a new indicator towards development like Human Development Index (HDI), Inequality-adjusted Development Index, and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and so on and so forth. Realizing the significance of gender discourse, four World Conferences on Women were held at Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). The various conferences of UN like UN Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm (1972), the UN Conference on Environment and Development, informally known as the earth summit held in Rio-de-Janeiro (1992), Kyoto Protocol

(1997), etc widely discussed climate change and global warming as burning threats to ‘development’.

Here arises a very basic question- why the development induced displacement has remained paramount till today in spite of analyzing development discourse from multiple angles. Why the policy makers and project designers fail to prevent or minimize development induced displacement even in the 21st century-the research study has tried to find out some reasons in this regard.

- ***Technical concern:*** The project designers and planners put emphasis on technical or mechanical sides of the dam. They don’t show their concern for humanistic side. They do not feel any necessity to interact with the potential displacees. Their voices are not taken into consideration.
- ***‘Corrupt practice’ of public hearing:*** The recorded public hearings are fraudulent in nature. The dates of the public hearings are fixed in the files but in most cases they are not transparent in nature. They never inform the public about the mandatory nature of the hearing.
- ***Manipulation of Environment Impact Assessment’s Report:*** An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory before starting of any project but NHPC and NEEPCO always conduct such EIA when the project is either under construction or in nearing completion. In order to get favourable reports, the dam authorities always conduct such survey with 7 km downstream, whereas according to the law, such survey needs to be conducted within minimum 100 km downstream.
- ***Gender biased rehabilitation & resettlement action plan:*** The very definition of ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘resettlement’ is used in narrow senses in the National

Policies on Rehabilitation and Resettlement. Compensations are given in the names of male head of the household. Hence, unmarried women or single women become worst victims of the displacement. Again, no compensation is given for the loss of Common Property Resources (CPR).

- ***Corruption in the construction of model houses:*** The construction of the model houses for the displaced people encompasses widespread corruption. Usually, the implementing agencies allot a standard amount of money for each model house which has been occupied by the middle men.
- ***Breakdown of community structures:*** The age long community life style has come to an end as a result of scattered resettlement of the displaced people. Again in some cases, the displaced people were relocated in one place and the cultivable land allotted elsewhere but there is no mention of providing transportation costs involved in agricultural activities in the National Policies on Rehabilitation and Resettlement.

After find out the above mentioned reasons for failure of minimizing displacement the researcher would like to give some workable suggestions to tackle the problem of displacement-

- ***Democratic measure:*** Whether the project is major, medium or minor, the voices of the project affected people should be taken into consideration at the very beginning.
- ***Gender neutral:*** The policies must be gender neutral. Development cannot occur by keeping one section of the population in the state of negligence and ignorance.

- ***More funds for rehabilitation:*** According to a survey conducted by the CSE, only as little as 1 per cent of the total cost of the dam project in India has gone towards rehabilitating the displaced people.
- ***Desire to take responsibility:*** The project authorities should take the responsibility of resettlement as their ‘own’ instead of dumping the job on local authorities. The local authorities have generally lacked professional capacity to cope with such challenges.
- ***Inter-state tribunal:*** There is a need to set up inter-state tribunal if the project involves more than one state because, though each state wants to maximize benefits of the proposed project, no one wants to share the responsibility of rehabilitating the people consequently displaced.
- ***Separation of authority:*** There should be a strict separation of authority between project implementation and rehabilitating the oustees, because, since the main interest of the project authorities is in the speedy and successful implementation of the project, they cannot help but see the resettlement of the oustees as a secondary task and hence do not pay sufficient attention to it.

The non-applicability of Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction Model especially in the development projects of Assam in general and Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project in particular is major drawback for developmental policies in the region. There may be three reasons for non-applicability of IRR model in the developmental policies, which can be stated as follows-

- The model is comparatively a new one in the literatures on displacement.
- The practical application of the model in rehabilitation and resettlement operations is not quite clear to many planners and resettlement managers.

Guidelines on its use for planning and implementation purposes do not exist as yet.

- There is lack of political will to adopt IRR model in the rehabilitation and resettlement action plan. Their main interest is speedy and successful implementation of the project rather than dealing with the impoverishment risks of the project affected people.

In this respect the study has tried to put forward some guidelines so that the IRR model can be included in the development policies especially in the northeast. We know that the northeast India is basically a tribal dominated area. The area where Lower Subansiri Dam is located is also a tribal dominated area. The provisions of IRR model is very much sympathetic to the tribal masses as the model promotes safeguard mechanisms to restoring common property resources as well as age long cultures, beliefs and value system. Hence, the model is suitable in addressing the displacement discourse of the tribal dominated regions like India's north east.

The following requirements should be fulfilled in order to have a sound rehabilitation and resettlement action plan based on the IRR model-

- I. The impoverishment risks should be analyzed at the identification stages of the project. Much misery resulted to the project-affected people in the past on account of not assessing the likely risks on time.
- II. Once the risks have been identified, the project designers should make plan in details to meet the situation well in advance, for example- how much land and jobs would be needed; what could be done to create them; etc.
- III. A baseline socio economic survey should be carried out to obtain detailed information of crucial importance to resettlement planning, such as information

on the population affected and its entitlement to R&R assistance. The survey has necessarily to be a comprehensive exercise, conducted from door to door counting people, houses, lands, cattle, trees, wells, etc.

- IV. The information gained from risk analysis should be used as a monitoring tool for rehabilitation and resettlement action plan at the project site.
- V. The institutional capacity must be strengthened by associating anthropologists and social scientists along with engineers and technical experts.
- VI. Since risk analysis is a new tool for most rehabilitation and resettlement units staff, some training could help to prepare them for the task, especially on what information to look for, how to go about obtaining it and what to do to use the findings for planning and management purposes.

No doubt we need electricity, industry, irrigation, navigation and many more but we do not want development of a section of elite minority at the cost of downtrodden ethnic majority. We need to change lifestyles and occupational patterns. We may have to learn to be more frugal in our consumption and ensure more efficient use of our existing resources. Changes in occupational patterns will mean the acquisition of new skills. Even the oustees are beginning to realize that the scarce natural resources are not going to be able to sustain them, let alone future generations, for long. They realize that they will have to acquire new skills that would better equip them to face the future. Our resettlement plans will have to be formulated and executed accordingly. Our policy makers and project designers should frame the policies by adopting humanistic approach. Policies should be gender neutral. Instead of mega hydroelectric dams, government should give emphasis on building small dams which promote least number of displacements so that they can be resettled and rehabilitated quickly and properly.

It is time that serious attention is devoted to translating the theoretical construct into a form that those involved in rehabilitation and resettlement operations find usable. Any resettlement agency that ignores risk analysis incurs the risk of perpetuating the impoverishment process which otherwise can well be halted.
