**BABED 2 SEM**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**UNIT – 4**

**ALKA ASATI**

**Resettlement and Rehabilitation of People: Problems and Concerns!**

It is a well-known fact that both natural and human made disasters force peo­ple to move out of their land. For example. Tsunami in South Asia in December 2004, Latur and Gujarat earthquake, the Orissa super-cyclone and scores of floods and droughts in other parts of our country have rendered thousands of people homeless and jobless. Disasters, like the Bhopal gas tragedy in Union carbide factory, derailment of trains, are examples of human made disaster.

Strategies for rehabilitation of thus displaced people are in the first place by way of preventive action. For instance, care is taken to build earthquake proof houses, gather advance information about cyclones and arrange for timely evacu­ation, build appropriate bunds in flood prone areas, maintain bridges that take regular up and down passing of trains/ road transport vehicles on them in order to avert likely disasters.

Secondly, advance preparation on the part of administration and local commu­nities are made to face the consequences of sudden calamities. For both these remedial steps, the primary necessity is that of building awareness among the people in general and among administrative personnel in particular.

The scope for advance planning in the cases of natural and human made calamities is however quite limited and in comparison, we can certainly plan better in the cases of development projects which are planned in advance.

Development projects come into existence after a fairly long period of planning and awareness of displacement caused by such projects already exists among those who initiate the projects. The tragedy is that despite this prior knowledge of the extent of displacement, those in-charge of development projects pay little attention to the processes of resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced peo­ple.

Development projects instead focus on economic efficiency and not on those who stand to lose all that they have, their land, means of livelihood and stable patterns of social and cultural life. Those who give up substantial portions of their assets for the sake of development projects need to be recognized as stakeholders in development projects. They too need to be a part of develop­ment.

The strategies formulated for resettlement and rehabilitation of those displaced by development projects can of course be equally applied to those displaced by natural and human made calamities. As far as our country’s preparation for coping with the impact of natural and human made calamities is concerned, we have begun to feel a little aware of negative impacts of such events because they are now occurring at frequent intervals.

As a result, there are some institu­tional measure have been taken by the government by way of constituting com­mittees at various levels. They exist on paper and their immediate response to the actual events is yet to come in any significant manner.

But we can say that a beginning has been made and we need to further consolidate the initiatives already taken so that such measure can bring some relief to disaster victims by way of their resettlement and rehabilitation. At present, we find that ad hoc relief measures are adopted to cope with the gravity of problems caused by such disasters.

Rehabilitation of human settlements is one of the important environmental impacts which always attracts controversy while planning major projects. Discuss the measures suggested for mitigation of this impact while proposing major developmental projects.

 To implement major projects, vast land is necessary, sometimes demanding rehabilitation of human settlement. Rehabilitation, especially in country like India where people develop emotional attachment with the land, is very difficult task. Cabinet has approved the National Policy on Rehabilitation and Resettlement, 2007, to replace the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation for Project Affected Families, 2003. Government has promoted policy of non-displacement or least displacing alternatives of human settlement. It also aims at ensuring adequate rehabilitation package and expeditious implementation of the rehabilitation process. The policy aims at striking a balance between the need for land for developmental activities and, at the same time, protecting the interests of the land owners, and others, such as the tenants, the landless, the agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, artisans, and others whose livelihood depends on the land involved. The benefits under the new Policy shall be available to all affected persons and families whose land, property or livelihood is adversely affected by land acquisition or by involuntary displacement of a permanent nature due to any other reason, such as natural calamities, etc. The Policy will be applicable to all these cases irrespective of the number of people involved. Right to fair compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill 2015 provides if private company acquires or purchases more than 50 acres of land in urban areas or 100 acres of land in rural areas, it will be required to rehabilitate and resettle affected families.

Doomed by Displacement-A Short Film on the displaced affected by Hirakud Dam

Dams for irrigation and hydropower are a major cause of such forced displacement. World over “approximately fifteen million people each year are forced to leave their homes following big development projects.” [Bogumil Terminski, Environmentally Induced Displacement. Theoretical Frameworks and Current Challenges, Liege, 2012].

The poorest and most marginalized people are generally hit the hardest by displacement, most often without adequate compensation. Many displaced families have been displaced three or four times. “In India, 50 million people have been displaced in the last 50 years in the name of ‘national’ interest “. [Parshuram Ray, Development Induced Displacement in India, SARWATCH Vol. 2 No. 1 July 2000).

Official figures of the number of displaced people are just underestimates. This is usually done to present a good cost benefit ratio to project clearance agencies and funders. The World Bank has put the number of people displaced by the Farakka Super Thermal Power plant in West Bengal as 63325 while Indian government figures suggest that no one was displaced. [Walter Fernandes, Displacement - What is all the fuss about? Humans cape, November 1999]. In the case of the Bargi dam, the number of villages submerged increased from the initial figure of 101 to 162. Likewise, in the case of various other large dams in the country, the number of submerged villages has increased and estimates of displaced villages have failed, which lead to unplanned displacement.

**Rehabilitation and resettlement: Policy framework**

Massive land acquisition has taken place in India since the 1950s to build large projects for irrigation, power, steel and heavy industries. Yet we did not have proper laws to address the rehabilitation and resettlement issues of the displaced. After a long struggle by people’s organisations and environmental groups, the protest against displacement grew violent and the need for a policy and legal framework came into existence in 2007 when the Government of India formulated a national policy for rehabilitation and resettlement by replacing the earlier policy of 2003.

Till date, there is no policy which suggests alternatives for displacement.

In August 2013, the Government of India came up with a comprehensive Land Acquisition and Resettlement and Rehabilitation (LARR) Act, 2013. The Act provides for rehabilitation & resettlement and combines it with land acquisition so the former does not get neglected. The ‘public purpose’ for which land can be acquired by the government is defined.

As per the above legislation, a comprehensive rehabilitation and resettlement package is provided for those who lost their livelihood support which includes the landless and tenants. The Act also provides for schools and playgrounds, health centers, roads and electric connections and assured sources of safe drinking water for each family. The role of the gram sabha has been clearly stressed and the government has to consult them. The Government has to also comply with other laws like Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996; the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; and Land Transfer Regulations in Schedule V (Tribal) Areas.

**Damning the dam: Case of Narmada Bachao Andolan**

Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), a struggle against several major dams across the Narmada river in the states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh is a leading anti-dam movement in the world. The government went ahead with the decision of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT) in 1979 to construct some 30 major, 135 medium and 3000 small dams. The locals opposed the construction of the large dams as the government had not only flouted environmental norms, but also did not have a rehabilitation policy in place then. The dams were displacing large numbers of poor (dalits and tribals). The main flash point of the movement was on the question of raising the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat.

A Narmada Diary: Documentary by Anand Patwardhan

The dam proponents were pushing it because it would generate water (for irrigation and drinking water) and much needed power for development purposes. Activists like Medha Patkar who set up NBA in 1989, provided a strong critique to the project by the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA). They questioned the project’s cost-benefit analysis, it’s hydrologic and seismicity- related assumptions and felt that it was iniquitous and did not give fair compensation to the displaced. The World Bank was forced to do an independent review (also known as the Morse Commission) of the project in 1991. The Commission gave an adverse report following which the Government of India pulled out of the loan agreement with the World Bank. The Supreme Court’s decision of 2000 on raising the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam gave a stimulus to the construction of the dam in ‘national interest’. The drought-prone areas of Gujarat like Kutch and Saurashtra are yet to get water from the project.

**Alternative solutions**

There are various cheap and effective solutions available as an alternate to dams. These alternative models, which include reviving traditional systems of water harvesting in various parts of Rajasthan and other parts of India, has changed the economy of farmers and also addressed drinking water problems in the region. There is enough scope for applying rainwater harvesting models and building small check dams for storing water to bring a significant amount of in the lives of millions.