



DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT: BALANCING PROGRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

S.N. TRIPATHY*

**Former Professor of Economics, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics,
Pune, currently at Berhampur, Odisha*

Abstract: Historically, displacement due to development projects leads to marginalization, but abandoning projects entirely isn't feasible. Considering social, economic, and environmental impacts is crucial while evaluating project viability. Cost-benefit analyses often overlook socio-economic costs and ecological damage, neglecting environmental clearances. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 only mandates cash compensation if land titles are proven, leaving many tribals uncompensated and further impoverishing communities dependent on natural resources. Displacement disrupts lives, alienates rights, and reduces quality of life. Existing definitions of project-affected people exclude many affected groups, particularly women who face significant health and economic challenges. True rehabilitation requires restoring lost conditions and prioritizing community needs over project interests. Persistent land alienation exacerbates tribal poverty, revealing systemic flaws in protective measures and credit programs. Efforts to resolve displacement must resolve these systemic issues to ensure holistic rehabilitation.

Keywords: Marginalization, Land Acquisition, Environmental Impact, Rehabilitation, Tribal Poverty, Gender Issues.

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Background

Historically, displacement due to development projects has led to marginalization. Abandoning all projects to avoid displacement is not feasible, given the population's growing needs. However, it is imperative to consider the social, economic, and environmental implications of displacement while assessing a project's viability. Cost-benefit analyses are conducted before

implementing projects, but the methods and procedures for evaluating socio-economic costs often need to be revised. Thorough scrutiny of expenses related to biodiversity loss or ecological damage is rarely undertaken, and environmental clearances are often neglected.

The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 stipulates that the government must only provide cash compensation if displaced persons can prove their land title. Unfortunately, many tribals cannot produce such evidence, depriving them of compensation. This leads to a significant impoverishment of natural resources and communities dependent on them for sustenance. Baviskar (1995) describes this alienation as a loss of material livelihood and a profound loss of cultural autonomy, knowledge, and power.

Displacement, a recurring issue in projects like Tehri, Narmada, Singrauli, and Koel Karo, is not just about the loss of physical assets. It's about the loss of livelihoods, traditional lands, homes, and social networks. It's about the severing of connections to ecosystems that once sustained communities, leading to a profound sense of powerlessness and insecurity. Displacement reduces the 'quality of life' to subhuman conditions, stripping away legal and customary rights, and disrupting social and economic organization.

The existing definition of project-affected people (PAP) is narrow, excluding landless individuals, seasonal farmers, fishermen, boatmen, artisans, small shopkeepers, and those affected by secondary projects. This definition is class-biased and overlooks those who suffer due to displacement. Ideally, those negatively impacted by projects should be consulted and informed to help them rebuild their lives, but this rarely happens. Instead, from the planning stages through displacement and resettlement, confusion and disarray prevail among the displaced.

Women suffer significantly during displacement. They face health and nutritional issues and lose the ability to secure a future for their children. Seasonal migration disrupts their children's access to education, healthcare, and welfare services. Policies also discriminate against widows, deserted women, and unmarried adult daughters by denying them separate rehabilitation packages. For instance, Uttar Pradesh policy considers a couple with separate property holdings as one unit, granting only one package, usually to the male head of the family.

Resettling displaced persons is not a matter of simply allocating land or constructing temporary camps. It's about true 'rehabilitation', a process that involves restoring emotional, cultural, social, political, and economic conditions that were lost due to displacement. This restoration should be prioritized over

the project itself, which caused the impoverishment, emphasizing the urgency and importance of this issue.

Development projects often proceed without completing resettlement and rehabilitation programs. The abrupt closure of flood gates at Rihand Dam, which left over 50,000 people missing, and the forced eviction of residents in the Maan irrigation project of Narmada Valley are stark examples. These instances reveal a persistent pattern where the rights and needs of displaced communities are overlooked, and projects are pushed forward without adequate measures to mitigate the adverse impacts.

Tribal or Scheduled Tribe communities make up 8.6% of India's population but account for around 40% of those displaced by 'development' projects. A new report highlights the paradox of development versus displacement for India's indigenous Adivasi people, revealing significant issues of land alienation and forced migration. According to the Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India, around 25% of tribals face displacement at least once due to their resource-rich regions. Earlier, an Expert Group estimated that 47% of those displaced by development projects were tribals (Government of India, 2008).

Tribal land alienation is a significant cause of the pauperization of tribal people, who are highly vulnerable. Tribes' access to forests for their livelihoods has diminished due to the shrinking of forests and regulatory restrictions on collecting and processing non-timber forest produce. Shifting cultivation has also been severely restricted. The primary livelihood option for tribals today is settled agriculture. However, tribes are systematically deprived of their cultivable holdings by non-tribals and even by the government, reducing them to asset-less destitution.

In 1997-98, the Department of Rural Development, Government of India, commissioned state-specific studies on this issue, receiving reports from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. These studies revealed that land transfers from tribal landowners to non-tribals continued despite various laws aimed at preventing them. Officials often neglected vital issues such as alternative livelihoods for the tribes, viability of remaining land, fair pricing, and the motivation behind land sales, such as repaying usurious loans. Legal transfers also occurred through actions for debt recovery, court decrees, and misuse of occupancy tenant provisions. Persistent indebtedness among tribes, driven by weak enforcement of protective measures and lack of adequate credit programs, exacerbates their poverty and vulnerability.

Review of Literature

A review of scholarly articles about the theme of our study illuminates several dimensions of the subject matter and serves as a valuable foundation for our current research. Considering this, we have chosen to highlight several crucial studies below that explore the importance and relevance of our current work.

Research studies, to mention a few significant themes, predominantly address issues connected to 'tribal development' (Tripathy, 2000), studies on 'tribal livelihood' (Tripathy, 2012c, 2018, 2019), 'migrations of tribes' (Tripathy, 2009, 2012a, 2016, 2023), and 'project induced displacement' (Tripathy, 2012b, 2014, 2020), are accessible for investigation.

Thukral's (1996) article "Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation: Locating Gender," published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, focuses on the gendered impacts of development-induced displacement and rehabilitation efforts in India. Thukral argues that displacement and rehabilitation processes are often gender-blind and fail to account for the differential effects on women and men. The article draws on case studies from different parts of India to illustrate these gendered impacts. It highlights the need for greater attention to gender in development planning and rehabilitation efforts.

Thukral advocates integrating gender analysis into all development planning and implementation aspects, including needs assessments, project design, and evaluation.

Balgovind Baboo (1996) examines the experiences of communities affected by the Hirakud Dam project in India, which involved the displacement of thousands of people from their homes and lands. Baboo analyzes the policies and practices of the state and the responses of affected communities to the project, drawing lessons for future development projects.

Satyanarayan (1999) highlights the detrimental impacts of displacement, including loss of livelihoods, cultural displacement, social dislocation, and psychological trauma. The study also examines the rehabilitation policies and programs in India and assesses their effectiveness in addressing the needs of those affected by displacement.

Mathur (2000) examines the role of voluntary organizations in addressing the challenges of involuntary resettlement in India. He highlights the importance of participatory approaches that involve affected communities in the planning and implementation of resettlement efforts and emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between government agencies, voluntary organizations, and other stakeholders in the resettlement process.

Rew Alan *et al.* (2000) discuss the challenges associated with development-induced displacement and resettlement projects, which involve the forced relocation of communities due to large-scale development projects such as dams, mines, and highways. The paper highlights the policy constraints contributing to these failures, including inadequate legal frameworks, weak institutional capacities, and insufficient community participation.

Cemea (2000) presents a conceptual framework for analyzing the risks of impoverishment associated with population displacement and resettlement, particularly in large-scale development projects. Cemea argues that the risks of impoverishment are often underestimated or overlooked in resettlement planning, leading to negative social and economic impacts for affected communities. The author highlights the importance of engaging affected communities in decision-making processes related to resettlement and the need for effective coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, development organizations, and civil society groups.

Patabardhan (2000) examines the impact of large dams on tribal communities in India, which are often among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the country. He argues that the construction of large dams in India has had significant social, economic, and environmental impacts on these communities, including loss of land, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

Koenig (2001) examines the issue of development-induced displacement and resettlement and how it can lead to impoverishment and social dislocation for affected communities. Koenig argues that more than traditional approaches to resettlement, which focus on providing compensation and physical relocation, are needed to resolve the complex social and economic challenges displaced communities face. The paper proposes an alternative approach to resettlement, emphasizing the importance of promoting local development and mitigating the impacts of displacement on affected communities.

Akhil B. Ota (2001) examines the challenges faced by families displaced by development projects and the factors contributing to the failure of efforts to reconstruct their livelihoods. Ota argues that the failure to address the needs and concerns of displaced families can lead to long-term social, economic, and environmental impacts on affected communities. The author proposes policy recommendations to address these issues and promote more effective livelihood reconstruction efforts, including the need for greater community participation in project planning and decision-making, improved compensation and resettlement policies, and adequate resources and services to support the livelihoods of displaced families.

McDowell (2002) argues that involuntary resettlement can significantly negatively impact the livelihoods of affected communities, particularly when it is not properly planned or implemented. She highlights the importance of a sustainable livelihoods approach in addressing these challenges, which involves supporting affected communities in rebuilding their livelihoods after resettlement.

W. Courtland Robinson (2003) discusses the issue of development-induced displacement, which refers to the forced relocation of communities due to large-scale development projects such as dams, mines, and highways. Robinson argues that such projects often result in negative social, economic, and environmental impacts on affected communities, including loss of land, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

Satpathy *et al.* (2002) examine the role of women in the struggles against development-induced displacement in the Indian states of Odisha and Jharkhand. They argue that women are often disproportionately affected by displacement, as they are usually responsible for household and agricultural work, which may be disrupted or lost due to displacement. The paper draws on case studies of specific struggles against displacement. It highlights the active role of women in these struggles, including their leadership in protests and their contributions to organizing and mobilizing communities.

Mishra (2010) focuses on the Hirakud dam project, which displaced thousands of tribal people from their homes and lands. The article provides a detailed analysis of the impact of displacement on the affected communities, including the loss of livelihoods, traditional practices, and cultural identity. The study argues that the government's top-down approach to development and rehabilitation failed to consider the needs and aspirations of the tribal communities, leading to their marginalization and impoverishment.

Justification of the Present Study

It is inferred from the review of various pieces of literature that displacement is not a one-time incident but a problem that leads to a series of interconnected consequences affecting different aspects of the lives of the affected individuals and communities. Displacement has significant impacts on the economic, social, cultural, psychological, and political spheres of life. It is a complex issue that needs to be resolved with sensitivity and care. In brief, the literature review highlights the multifaceted nature of displacement, its severe impact on different aspects of life, and the need for comprehensive and sensitive planning and implementation of resettlement measures.

Objective of the Study

To comprehensively analyze the historical and contemporary implications of development-induced displacement on tribal communities in India, with a focus on understanding the socio-economic, ecological, and cultural ramifications, as well as evaluating the adequacy of policy responses and mitigation measures in resolving the challenges faced by displaced population.

Methodology

The extensive use of secondary sources of data accumulated through literature, facts from official records, books and journals etc. has been adhered to in this paper for making a comprehensive analysis of the problem under review.

Displacement and Deprivation

Since 1950, it is estimated that around 50 million people have been displaced in India due to various development projects, with more than 40% of them being tribes. These projects include large irrigation dams, hydroelectric projects, open cast and underground coal mines, super thermal power plants, and mineral-based industrial units. Under the guise of development, tribes are displaced from their traditional habitats and livelihoods with little or no rehabilitation, leaving them destitute and pauperized. This displacement leads to increasing asset lessness, unemployment, debt bondage, and hunger due to the loss of access to traditional sources of livelihood such as land, forests, rivers, pastures, and cattle.

In large development projects, tribes lose their land not only to project authorities but also to non-tribal outsiders who flock to these areas and seize both the land and new economic opportunities in commerce and petty industry. The magnitude of displacement and its human cost are staggering. There has been no systematic estimation of the number of people affected by development-induced displacement, both internationally and nationally.

Estimates in India from dam projects alone range from 21 million to 40 million, according to Taneja and Thakkar (2000). The World Commission on Dams Report (2000) estimates that 30-40 million people have been displaced by 4,500 large dams in India. Walter Fernandes *et al.* estimate that 30 million people were affected by these projects until 1994, a figure echoed by Arundhati Roy in her essay "The Greater Common Good: The Human Cost of Big Dams."

For the period from 1947 to 2000, it is estimated that more than 60 million people were displaced or impoverished without physical relocation (Fernandes 2007). Researchers like Prof. M. Cernea and Walter Fernandes have attempted

to develop a database for the displaced people of different projects in India. It is estimated that 75% of the 20 million people displaced since the advent of planning in India have been impoverished due to development projects (Downing 2005). During the last two decades of the previous century, the magnitude of forced displacement induced by development programs was approximately 10 million people each year, or around 200 million people globally during that period (Cernea 2000).

Cernea notes, "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 decapitalization and pauperization for most rural and many urban displaces, who lose both natural and manmade capital this way" (Cernea 1999). The draft National Tribal Policy (NTP) 2006 acknowledges that tribal land alienation is the single most important cause of the pauperization of tribes.

McCully (1998) highlights the ecological impact of large dams, noting the permanent inundation of forests, wetlands, and wildlife as one of the most obvious effects. Reservoirs have flooded at least 40,000 square kilometers worldwide, impacting diverse ecosystems in river and floodplain habitats. He argues that to prevent massive ecological destruction or social disintegration, mega-dam projects should not be planned in the future.

Beyond the loss of land, displacement causes traumatic psychological and socio-cultural consequences, making life more miserable and impoverished for those affected (Mohanty 2005). Ironically, social, and human consequences of displacement have often been accepted as legitimate and inevitable costs of development. Pandit Nehru, while laying the foundation stone for the Hirakud dam in 1948, told those facing displacement: "If you have to suffer, you should do so in the interest of the country" (Roy 1999).

The Bargi Project on the Narmada is a notable example of displacement's dire consequences. Initially, 70,000 villagers from 101 villages were informed of their impending displacement. However, when the reservoir was filled without warning, 162 villages were submerged, displacing 114,000 people (Roy 1999; Desai 1993).

McCully's research (2001) and the World Commission on Dams (WCD) report (2000) provide comprehensive overviews of the impacts of large dam projects, including direct displacement and resettlement. They also highlight indirect displacement due to the inundation of valuable farmland and animal habitats, sediment capture leading to downstream erosion and soil degradation, the endangerment of freshwater habitats, reservoir-induced seismicity,

the spread of diseases by insects thriving in stagnant reservoir water, and environmental destruction and human casualties due to dam failures.

Since the advent of the 20th century, industrialization in India has significantly impacted tribal communities. Major projects like the Tata Iron and Steel Company in Jamshedpur, the Bokaro Steel Plant, and the Rourkela Steel Plant in Odisha have led to land alienation, displacement, and deprivation of these already impoverished communities. Development activities in Odisha, which began in the 1950s, displaced about 8,117 families from 1,446 villages between 1950 and 1993. The UNDP estimates that over one lakh people in Odisha have been displaced to date, while 20 lakhs have been affected by development projects. Industrial projects like the Rourkela Steel Plant, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), and National Aluminium Company (NALCO) have primarily displaced tribal populations (Fernandes, 1994; Tripathy, 2003).

Table 1: A Conservative Estimate of Displaced Persons by various categories of Projects India (1951-1990)

Sl. No.	Type of Project	Number of Displaced	Number of Rehabilitated	Back log
1.	Dams	1,64,00,000	41,00,000	1,23,00,000
2.	Mines	25,50,000	6,30,000	19,20,000
3.	Industries	12,50,000	3,75,000	8,75,000
4.	Sanctuaries	6,00,000	1,25,500	4,75,000
5.	Others	5,00,000	1,50,000	3,50,000
	Total	2,13,00,000	53,80,000	1,59,20,000

Source: Fernandez and *et al* 1998, p 251

Between 1951 and 1990, various projects in India displaced approximately 21.3 million people, with dams causing the largest displacement at 16.4 million. However, only about 5.38 million of these individuals were rehabilitated, leaving a backlog of 15.92 million people. This data highlights a significant gap in rehabilitation efforts, particularly for those displaced by dams and mining projects (Table 1).

Table 2 reflects that several dam projects across India have led to significant displacement, with tribal communities disproportionately affected. For instance, the Karjan project in Gujarat displaced 11,600 people, all of whom were tribal. The Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh displaced 150,000 people, with 52.9% being tribal. Notably, in Bihar, the Koel Karo project displaced 66,000 individuals, 88% of whom were tribal. These figures highlight the

Table 2: Dams and the displacement of tribal people

<i>Name of Project</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Population facing displacement</i>	<i>Tribal people as percentage of displaced</i>
Karjan	Gujarat	11,600	100
Sardar Sarovar	Gujarat	200,000	57.6
Maheshwar	Madhya Pradesh	20,000	60
Bodhghat	Madhya Pradesh	12,700	73.91
Icha	Bihar	30,800	80
Chandil	Bihar	37,600	87.92
Koel Karo	Bihar	66,000	88
Mahi Bajaj Sagar	Rajasthan	38,400	76.28
Polavaram	Andhra Pradesh	150,000	52.90
Maithon & Panchet	Bihar	93,874	56.46
Upper Indravati	Orissa	18,500	89.20
Pong	Himanchal Pradesh	80,000	56.25
Inchampalli	Andhra Pradesh– Maharashtra	38,100	76.28
Tultuli	Maharashtra	13,600	51.61
Daman Ganga	Gujarat	8,700	48.70
Bhakra	Himanchal Pradesh	36,000	34.76
Masan Reservoir	Bihar	3,700	31.00

Source: Satyajit Singh, *Taming the Waters*, OUP, 1997, and Government figures

severe impact of development projects on tribal populations, often constituting a majority of the displaced.

The Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh threatens to displace over 175,000 people, primarily adivasis, and submerge 300 villages. These adivasis, in their current habitat—the scheduled areas—enjoy unique constitutional rights and privileges that will be lost upon displacement. This project, designed to impound water from the Godavari River, aims to irrigate coastal districts and divert stored water to the Krishna River.

Table 3 compares different irrigation projects in India, highlighting their benefit areas, submergence areas, irrigation benefits per hectare of submergence, and the percentage of the area submerged to the area irrigated. Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat stands out with the highest benefit area of 1,903,800 hectares and the lowest percentage of submergence at 1.97%. In contrast, Hirakud in Orissa, despite irrigating 251,150 hectares, has a high submergence percentage of 29.42%. Nagarjunsagar and Bhakra projects offer substantial irrigation benefits per hectare of submergence at 31.40 and 40.24 respectively, indicating efficient water use. Overall, the projects exhibit a range of efficiencies and environmental impacts across different states.

Table 3: Different projects and the extent of benefits as well as submergence

Sr. No.	Name of Project	State	Benefit Area (in Ha)	Submergence Area (in ha)	Irrigation benefit per ha. Submergence	Percentage of area submerged to area irrigated
1.	Hirakud	Orissa	251150	73892	3.40	29.42
2.	Shriramsagar	Andhra Pradesh	230679	44517	5.24	19.14
3.	Gandhisagar	Madhya Pradesh	503200	66186	7.60	13.15
4.	Paithan	Maharashtra	278000	35000	7.94	15.29
5.	Tungbhadra	Karnataka	372000	37814	9.84	10.16
6.	Pench	Maharashtra	94000	7750	12.13	8.24
7.	Nagarjunsagar	Andhra Pradesh	895000	28500	31.40	3.18
8.	Bhakhra	Himachal Pradesh	676000	16800	40.24	2.48
9.	Sardar Sarovar	Gujarat	1903800	37533	50.17	1.97

Source: Data compiled from various sources

Concluding Remarks

The post-independence development paradigm has disproportionately benefited dominant sections while imposing significant costs on marginalized communities, particularly tribes whose social organization, cultural identity, and resource base have been destroyed, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Displacement deprives tribal people of vital sustenance, with long-term sustainability endangered (GoI, 2008).

Thus, it can be inferred that despite a favourable political, institutional, and financial commitment to tribal development, there is presently a large-scale displacement and biological decline of tribal communities, a growing loss of genetic and cultural diversity and destruction of a rich resource base leading to rising trends of dwindling forests, crumbling fisheries, increasing unemployment, hunger, and conflicts (Tripathy, 2019)

It has been observed that the non-recognition of tribes over resources and restrictions on their use, alienation of tribes from the means of production, denial of due entitlement of labour, distressed payment of wages, and misappropriation of development funds have kept the tribes in the web of misery and starvation. In tribal-dominated states in India, the life support system of the local tribes has been snatched away by non-tribes and state institutions through the imposition of restrictions on the use of forests. As a result, the tribal movement originated in the fierce struggle for their rights (Tripathy, 2019).

The benefits of this development paradigm have been disproportionately cornered by the dominant sections at the expense of low-income people, who have borne most of the costs. Development, which is insensitive to the needs of these communities, has invariably caused displacement and reduced them to a sub-human existence. In the case of tribes, it has destroyed their social organization, cultural identity, and resource base and generated multiple conflicts, undermining their communal solidarity, which cumulatively makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation.

The Need for a National Policy on Internal Displacements

Internally displaced people (IDPs) often lose their civil rights in the absence of a comprehensive rehabilitation policy. The recent 2024 “Global Report on Internal Displacement” by the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) underscores the urgent need for a national policy on internal displacements. The report meticulously documents the number of IDPs and the frequency of internal displacements within their home countries. The findings reveal a concerning increase in the number of IDPs worldwide, highlighting the critical need for systematic policies to address their plight.

The IDMC defines internally displaced people as individuals forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, or disasters without crossing internationally recognized borders. According to the 2024 report, 75.9 million people were living in internal displacement by the end of 2023, a rise from 71.1 million in 2022. It recorded 20.5 million internal displacements caused by conflict and violence and 26.4 million due to disasters. The number of IDPs is higher than the number of internal displacements as it includes those displaced in previous years who are still living in displacement. Moreover, a significant number of IDPs remain uncounted as they reside outside official records and camps.

The report categorizes internal displacement into conflict-induced and disaster-induced displacement. In 2023, 68.3 million displacements were due to conflict, while 7.7 million resulted from disasters. The countries with the highest conflict-induced displacements were Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Myanmar, and Ethiopia. Conversely, China, Türkiye, the Philippines, Somalia, and Bangladesh reported the highest disaster-induced displacements. Notably, the report indicates overlaps between these categories, such as earthquakes in Syria and Afghanistan and floods in Yemen and Sudan, exacerbating the plight of those already displaced by conflict.

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced the highest number of IDPs in 2023, with 34.8 million, up from 31.7 million in 2022, constituting 46% of the global total.

Prolonged conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, coupled with natural disasters like drought in Somalia and floods in Ethiopia, contributed to this surge. Sudan faced a dual challenge with conflict and disaster-induced displacements. Most hospitals in conflict zones were inoperable, leading to a cholera outbreak, while floods during the rainy season further devastated areas already hosting displaced people.

West Asia and North Africa followed with 15.3 million IDPs in 2023, up from 12.8 million in 2022, with Palestine reporting the highest displacements. The war in Gaza resulted in 83% of its population becoming internally displaced within three months. Despite evacuation orders, the Israeli military bombarded previously designated safe areas, increasing civilian casualties and internal displacements.

South Asia reported 8.2 million IDPs in 2023, slightly down from 8.7 million in 2022. The countries most affected were Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Manipur, India, alone accounted for 67,000 of the 69,000 internal displacements in the region. Over 75% of these displacements occurred within Manipur, with the rest moving to neighboring states.

Experts in India emphasize the need for a national policy and legislation to address conflict, disaster, and development-induced displacements. Maintaining accurate data and monitoring protocols to protect and assist IDPs is nearly impossible without such a policy. The absence of a comprehensive policy often results in arbitrary and inconsistent government responses, threatening the civil and constitutional rights of IDPs.

The Communal Violence (Prevention *et al.* of Victims) Bill, 2005, aimed to address displacement due to communal and ethnic violence but was never passed and was withdrawn in 2014. Similarly, the Rehabilitation and Relocation of Persons Displaced due to Climate Change Bill, 2022, introduced in the Lok Sabha, remains pending without urgency for ratification.

The IDMC report and the severe conflict- and disaster-induced displacements recorded in the past year highlight the need for a national policy on internal displacements in India. Such a policy must be sensitive to regional differences while ensuring the protection of IDPs' civil and constitutional rights without arbitrary political interference. In the context of rehabilitation of displaced people, in India in general and in tribal regions of Odisha, it has been observed that on the part of the government and its agents of development, cash compensation seems to be the only panacea for the problems induced by displacement and only policy for rehabilitation. In contrast, it is the most inadequate means for rehabilitation in practice.

No procedure and principles are laid down to estimate the costs, showing the arbitrariness of compensation. Apart from the loss of land, the villager suffers loss from common property resources, forest produce, village grazing land, community centre, social security, etc. The situation of the tribal people is all thornier since the compensation is paid based on land owned; the tribes who are not inclined to own land but use it as a common property fail to claim compensation based on the most common land. It is difficult to estimate how land, natural resources, means of livelihood and social and cultural loss resulting from displacement can be quantified and compensated in monetary terms. Moreover, the non-quantifiable nature of numerous human and ecological costs needs to be quantified and acknowledged.

Suggestions

Given the skewed distribution of income and wealth in society and the concentration of poverty, we need to provide a suitable rehabilitation strategy for the benefit of tribes, which can ensure a strategy for their livelihood. As such, we need to rethink and reformulate our policy to percolate the benefits of our resources on a sustainable basis for the public's greater interest, especially for employment and income generating through linkage effect on industry and other service sectors.

Overexploitation of natural resources like land, forests, water, etc., has often been held responsible for environmental degradation. Scientific management of forest resources is imperative to reduce the exploitation of natural forests, and it would require plantations of mixed species and the recycling of forest products.

Displacement due to development projects leads to profound socio-economic and cultural disruptions for those affected. It breaks up living patterns, dismantles modes of production, disrupts social networks, and causes impoverishment, threatening cultural identity and increasing health risks. Tribal communities, heavily dependent on natural and shared resources, are particularly affected, with their ethos and lifestyle dismantled for developmental projects.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has initiated action concerning the displacement predicament faced by tribals, particularly Scheduled Tribes, allegedly uprooted from Chhattisgarh due to the Salwa Judum movement. Human rights lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy, representing the affected tribals, filed a petition with the NHRC, highlighting that these displaced individuals are deprived of essential social welfare benefits.

The Salwa Judum, a tribal group mobilized against the outlawed armed CPI (Maoist), garnered both governmental support and criticism in Chhattisgarh. Consequently, a substantial number of tribals have resided in forest areas across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha for over two decades without access to vital social welfare schemes, including job cards, ration cards, health insurance cards, and potable drinking water.

In response, the NHRC has directed the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and six State governments to furnish detailed information on the victims of Salwa Judum and their current conditions. This measure aims to alleviate the plight of the displaced tribals and ensure they receive their entitled benefits and support.

Simultaneously, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has issued a notice to the government concerning the dire situation of lakhs of scheduled tribe people displaced by various projects in different districts of Odisha. Advocate Tripathy emphasized issues related to the displacement of tribals in almost every district of the state due to dam, irrigation, and industrial projects.

The NCST requested a comprehensive report from the Chief Secretary within a month, seeking details on the displacement of tribals, especially in the undivided Koraput district, where tribal displacement comprises 58% of the total population. Similar challenges are observed in other districts, with significant percentages of scheduled tribe families being displaced due to various development projects, such as major irrigation projects and dam constructions.

Advocate Tripathy emphasized that these projects have not benefited the tribals, and the problems faced by the displaced individuals are often disregarded. He urged the NCST to establish a separate commission to address the grievances of the displaced people. He suggested forming a committee to study the situation and make recommendations for effective government resolution. The NHRC recently sought Action Taken Reports from the Superintendents of Police of Jharsuguda district and Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh regarding a boat capsizing incident, ensuring a thorough investigation and appropriate actions against errant officials.

Sustainable development must emerge from the bottom, with the third tier of governance playing a crucial role, as outlined by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and various State Panchayat Acts. Functional grassroots democracy and people's participation in decision-making can harmonize interests, prevent cost escalations, and minimize the suffering of

the affected. Development should prioritize local needs like essential services over urban luxuries, considering social and ecological diversity to benefit tribes facing unemployment and poverty. A national policy should ensure that communities facing displacement do not become poorer, recognize their traditional rights, and provide total compensation and prior consent. Proper rehabilitation requires restoring lost conditions and prioritizing community needs over project interests. Persistent land alienation exacerbates tribal poverty, revealing systemic flaws in protective measures and credit programs. Efforts to resolve displacement must resolve these systemic issues to ensure holistic rehabilitation.

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