

“OUSTED FROM ONE’S LAND: IMPOSED DISPLACEMENT IN AN INDUSTRIALISED ERA”

WITH REFERENCE TO PLIGHT OF DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN ASSAM.

Furzee Kashyap, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, India.

Email: furzeekashyap@gmail.com

Minakshi Bujarbaruah, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, India.

Email: minakshibbaruah@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Walter Fernandes, Former Director, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, India

INTRODUCTION

“Nothing can be holier to us than this land. Every particle of dust, everything living or non-living, every stock and stone, tree and rivulet of this land is holy to us. Never, never has our land been dead inanimate matter, but always the living divine mother to all her children-the lowliest and the greatest.”



‘LAND’ comprising all naturally occurring resources whose supply is inherently fixed is considered one of the three factors of production along with capital, and labor. Land was sometimes defined in classical and neoclassical economics as the "original and indestructible powers of the soil." As a tangible asset land is represented as a fixed asset or a capital asset.

The current age is the age of globalization- an age where boundaries merge, identities converge and the world becomes a homogenous hub. The globalization of production, markets, finance, commerce and the labor force has now made sure that industrial location is no longer linked to one specific country and there is integration of markets, goods, services, labor and capital. It is now perhaps commonplace to argue that ‘displacement’ issues are crucial for understanding processes of global reintegration and economic change in the twenty first century. Discourses about increasing development in the *LPG era* (*Liberalization Privatization Globalization era*) reflect an interest in displacement in conceptualizations of modernity and territorialisation and in understanding modes of economic, political and social formations and interventions. Not surprisingly, the global world with more advancement in technology, infrastructure building, project planning has made *displacement* quite a central issue giving

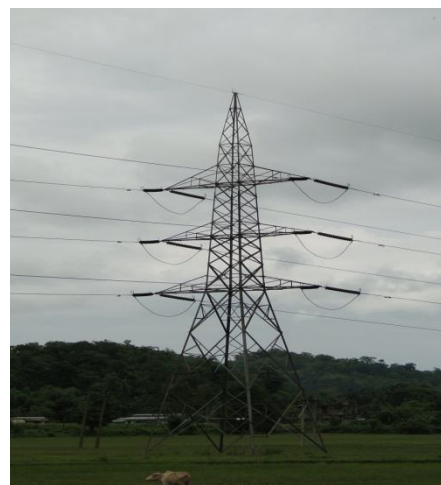
new meanings to questions of identity, citizenship, rights, belongingness etc.

With some notable exceptions, only recently has the subject of displacement been given due theoretical importance, which means that it was earlier deployed more a rather descriptive than an analytical concept. Social science is now not only awakening to issues of settlement and movement, but also to imposed place, forced resettlement and involuntary migration. Cultural anthropologists have identified new theoretical terrain to unsettle the static notion of location and rethink relationships between people and nation, state and identity. Geographers and urban scholars have drawn attention to new configurations of communities and use the meaning of space and place, also questioning the aspects of sustaining networks with places of origin and constructing new links with new place of residence.



Development-induced displacement is the forcing of communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purposes of economic development. It is a subset of forced migration. It has been

historically associated with the construction of dams for hydroelectric power and irrigation purposes but also appears due to many other activities, such as mining and the creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon testing grounds, railways, road developments, urbanization, conservation projects, forestry, etc. Development-induced displacement is a social problem affecting multiple levels of human organization, from tribal and village communities to well-developed urban areas. Such displacement or the forced migration in the name of development is affecting more and more people as countries move from developing to developed nations. People who face such migration are often helpless, suppressed by the power and laws of nations.



Each year, millions of persons are forcibly displaced by development projects, power plants, hydro projects, dams, roads, reservoirs, or oil, gas and mining projects. While such projects can bring enormous benefits to society, they also impose costs, which are often borne by its poorest and

most marginalized members. For millions of people around the world, development has cost them their homes, their livelihoods, their health, and even their very lives. *Impoverishment* and *disempowerment* often become their lot, with particularly harsh consequences for women and children. It is thus important to better understand the plight of those displaced by development projects and the relationship of displacement to international human rights and humanitarian frameworks for dealing with internally displaced persons.

Most large forced dislocations of people occur in conditions of everyday evictions to make way for development projects. Being forcibly ousted from one's land and habitat by a dam, reservoir or highway is not only immediately disruptive and painful, it is also fraught with serious long-term risks of becoming poorer than before displacement, more vulnerable economically, and disintegrated socially, as in most cases the people dislocated so often turn out to be from ethnic and racial minority communities who are also economically at a lower position.

The word development is quite ambiguous in many ways. While there are some who perceive it as a one sided positive phenomenon, there are others who critically see the other side of it. Given the fact that connotations are many, uneven development is a bad thing while sustainable development is a good thing but for the major part of it, development does not benefit everyone equally. Roughly 10 million people worldwide have been displaced involuntarily by infrastructural development projects. In

India alone, during the last 50 years, an estimated 25 million have been displaced by development projects.

As a multi-year study of development-induced displacement by the World Commission on Dams concluded, "impoverishment and disempowerment have been the rule rather than the exception with respect to resettled people around the world." The impact has been felt most heavily by marginalized and vulnerable populations. Evidence suggests that for a vast majority of the indigenous/tribal peoples displaced by big projects, the experience has been extremely negative in cultural, economic, and health terms. The outcomes have included assetlessness, unemployment, debt-bondage, hunger, and cultural disintegration. Coming from politically marginalized and disadvantaged strata of society, these groups often end up neglected and impoverished. In India, the Adivasi or tribal people, although only representing eight percent of the total population, make up 40-50 percent of the displaced. In 1994 the government of India admitted that 10 million people displaced by dams, mines, deforestation and other development projects were still '*awaiting rehabilitation*', a figure regarded as very conservative by most independent researchers. For both indigenous and non-indigenous communities, studies show that displacement has disproportionately impacted on *women and children*.



OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In an effort to better understand the plight of displaced people in Assam, emphasizing more on women and children, a study was undertaken using both secondary as well as primary data. In the age of globalisation, displacement has become quite a recurring phenomenon, although the type may vary. New technology and developmental inputs, mechanization, economic growth, have forced the rural poor masses to move out of their habitat.

Displacement can be *forced or voluntary, project or processed induced, direct or indirect*. Speaking of *voluntary displacement* people move voluntarily for reasons ranging from better economic opportunities to a safer social or natural environment, which could be either internal or external because of social or economic pressure. Ironically, this kind of displacement can be only partially called voluntary because their decision of moving out would not have been so had there been the possibility of self improvement and better opportunities in their own land. For example many poor peasants migrate to other parts of the country for economic improvement, the push factor being the feudal system and poverty in the reason. *Involuntary displacement* is caused by a

wide range of factors such as natural disaster, ethnic religious or political conflicts and development projects. For example the Gujarat earthquake, the Kuki-Naga conflict in Manipur forced many families from Gujarat and Manipur respectively to flee from their own homes. *Process induced displacement* is not forced in the strict sense of the term, since overtly they move out on their own. In reality, acts over which they have no control living in a traditional economy compel them to move out. For example in the 1970's, the fishing trawlers in coastal India deprived hundreds and thousands of fish workers of their livelihood. (*Kurien 1980:117*).

The study deals with a specific type of involuntary displacement caused by development projects, dams, industries, mines, power, transport and others. Land is people's livelihood and basic need but development projects and industrialisation treats it only as *a commodity*. Industries and the state in the name of "national development", uproot the marginalised section without compensating them for it. In the north east except some areas that come under the customary laws or the 6th Schedule, land that does not have an individual title is considered state property. In rural areas many people do not own land but sustain themselves on the land of others by rendering their services to the village as a community in the form of agricultural labourers, barbers, potters etc. By this it can be certainly said that land becomes their livelihood. Sadly, the big scale industrial projects while acquiring such land do not consider the natives as land losers because they do not have an individual title to it

according to the present legal system. The laws ignore the fact that land in the rural setup is not only a place of agriculture or building, not simply a commodity, but is the livelihood of its legal owners and all other dependents. Thus, because of the impoverishment that results from it, *land acquisition displacements* have come to be considered as a *Human Rights issue*. The heart of the problem is that people displaced by development are generally seen as a necessary sacrifice on the road to development. The dominant perspective is thus that the positive aspects of development projects, the public interest, outweigh the negative ones, the displacement or sacrifice of a few.



When the lives of so many people are disrupted, a need arises to remove the deafening silence surrounding development induced displacement. The study tries to throw light on the after effects of displacement on women and children. The situation has deteriorated with liberalisation. With profit motive as its main motor, the corporate sector in general and private sector in particular require more land. Large scale mechanisation is integral to it and this has implications for the workers in general and women and children in particular.

DEVELOPMENT INDUCED DISPLACEMENT SCENARIO IN INDIA

Like all other places in the world, India too has felt the impact of the globalization phenomenon. Estimating the exact number of development projects and the number of displaced population is quite a tricky affair. The data keeps varying with time and space. Development studies in India have been mostly undertaken post 1951 across states and development projects were launched with the five year plans since then. India sought to achieve rapid industrial growth post independence under the successive five year plans and large scale investments were made in the name of industrial growth, irrigation, power plants, city building etc; the pre requisite of which was *land* (Fernandes, Walter and Bharali, Gita, 2011, "Uprooted for whose benefit? Development induced displacement in Assam"). An initial estimate was 21.3 million person's displaced(DP's)/deprived of livelihood without physical relocation(PAP's) 1951-1995, but studies of all displacement 1951-1995 in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Goa and West Bengal 1947-2000 make one believe that their number 1947 through 2000 is much closer to 60 million. As already mentioned above, most DP/PAP's are from the powerless rural poor classes. 20 percent of the DP/PAP's all over India are Dalits, another 20 percent belong to other marginalized classes like the fish and quarry workers (Fernandes 2008:94). Globalization has today made the northeast in general and Assam in particular a destination for investment because of its rich natural and mineral resources, a reality

which will make for more land acquisition and displacement.



Along with displacement, comes the consequence of resettlement, *impoverishment*, *marginalization*, *rehabilitation* etc. *Resettlement* is a protracted process which begins long before displacement or deprivation and lasts for several years after land loss or physical relocation. *Impoverishment* again is the immediate effect of loss of livelihood without replacement resulting from livelihood loss. It is the change in people's economic status after loss of their source of food, work and sustenance. *Marginalization* on the other hand goes beyond impoverishment and it is the deterioration of their social and cultural status. Deprivation and displacement leads to a low economic status and to the loss of people's social and psychological infrastructure, in other words to impoverishment and marginalization. *Rehabilitation* involves rebuilding the economic resources, cultural systems, social structures and community support mechanisms that the DP/PAP's lose as a result of alienation of their sustenance. It is important to mention that in practice very few are rehabilitated even when resettled.



Impoverishment and marginalization is expressed in landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, poor food security, malnutrition, higher exposure to diseases, morbidity and mortality. The quality of resettlement is poor and rarely leads to rehabilitation. Displacement in India has been high and resettlement poor. Policies speak of the need to minimize displacement without specifying the modes of doing it. Displaced people are poor and are less exposed to the formal sector than other citizens. They are pushed into a new society with no situation for the interface. Even if resettled they are unable to deal with the new kind of society and economy. Most are resettled without any of the facilities that they have lost to the project; misery being the consequence of such deprivation. Development projects ignore impact such as people's trauma, marginalization and attack on culture, public and community properties, assets and infrastructure, particularly roads, public transport, drainage, sanitation, sources of drinking water, sources of water for cattle, community ponds, grazing land, plantation, public utilities such as post offices in the new place of settlement.

At the central level the process of policy formulation began with the T.N. Singh Formula, 1967 which stipulated that public

sector mines and industries give a job per displaced family. The formula had many shortcomings but it was a major step in the right direction. National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NPRR) 2003 applies to projects that displace 500 or more families in the plains or 250 or more in the hills or scheduled areas. It asserts that land will be given to land losers depending on the availability of government waste and revenue land in the district. Several policies, bills and laws speak of the problem of displacement, hardly ever specifying the means of controlling it.

METHODOLOGY:

As no study would be complete without a backup of literature and secondary data this study too is no exception. Although field study method was employed, books, electoral rolls, published articles, newspaper clippings, journals were a major source of the study; "Uprooted for whose benefit? Development induced displacement in Assam" by Dr Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali being the backbone of the study as secondary data.

Secondary Data for social sciences generally includes censuses, surveys, organizational records and data collected through qualitative methodologies or quantitative research. Primary Data by contrast are collected by the investigator conducting the research. This study is broadly qualitative in nature rather than quantitative. Qualitative research aims to gather an in-depth data of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. It investigates the questions

of why and how of decision making. It is a method of enquiry used in different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences. On the other hand quantitative method is used to seek empirical support for research hypothesis, testing and for generalizing beyond the particular cases studied.



The study was conducted over a span of one month in the Lalmati area under Basistha Chariali. Data was collected mainly through interviews with the people of the community and for this an Interview Schedule was used. The interviews were kept open ended and were unstructured in nature i.e. no strict order was followed while questioning. All categories of people were interviewed; age, sex, caste, religion, economic status being no barrier. A total of around 40 households were interviewed, where the family was the unit and women were the particular cases. The respondents were mainly in the age group from 20-50years and they ranged from housewives to elderly people. A wide variety of questions were asked varying from traditional family structure to permanency of stay. The length of one interview extended from 20 to 30 minutes. While some respondents were very brief in their answers, others were quite elaborate and enjoyed the interview. The medium of

communication was mainly Assamese and Hindi. In some cases it was interesting to note that people were a bit reluctant to answer and give information, but on gaining confidence after learning that the information was completely for academic purpose and wouldn't be published they were quite co-operating. Some sessions were videotaped so that it could be coded later. Seeking out locals of the area we ended up spending time with a group and being part of the group. This was intended in getting a true valid picture of the place by intermingling with the members of these local groups.



We started as observers, and tried to gain their confidence by being very sober and warm in our approach. The locals were quite anxious about what this whole affair was and in the light of a burning incident (June 22nd, 2011 Akhil Gogoi movement for Land Patta) that took place just a day before we started the fieldwork, the whole atmosphere was quite volatile. This cautioned us to handle every question and data given by the locals very delicately. The fieldwork encountered us with a wide range of people, some who were extremely co-operating and helpful and another bunch that acted as the local goons and wouldn't let us collect any data and were quite curious when we were talking with their womenfolk. Largely speaking, the masses were agitated and their

very tone and manner of answering revealed this. There were quite a lot, in fact a majority who thought that we were employees of some nongovernmental organization who had come to lend their support and aid, and were thus expectant. On learning that this was completely an academic research oriented work and no money or help in any form would be offered, there were many who got furious and backed out. From time to time it was noted that the anger in them deliberately forced them to use vulgar slang language to abuse the government and the private companies, and women too were no exception in this case. The result of the fieldwork helped us get a real living picture of the serious problem of development induced displacement and revealed a wide range of problems that they were facing and the coping mechanisms. Trauma, pain, loss, debt, insecurity, you name it, and they are the victims of all. The matter is quite complex and is not just a one sided affair; middle parties, politicians, brokers, government, industrialists, local goons, media, all playing a pivotal role and a multilayered politics, blame game, fraud involved victimizing the innocent poor masses. The final result of the fieldwork has been a scientific analysis of the whole issue taking into consideration different aspects of caste, community, class strata, gender, family structure, occupation, family size, income, facilities, basic amenities, nearby schools, hospitals, relationship with locals, network maintenance, ties with kith and kin, rituals and festivals observed, sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene, compensation, rehabilitation, government aid, role played

by politics, media, and the community as a whole.

The ***INTERVIEW SCHEDULE*** included the following questions:

1. NAME-
2. AGE- 3. SEX-
4. BIRTHPLACE-
5. COMMUNITY-
6. OCCUPATION-
7. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION-
8. WHEN WERE YOU DISPLACED-
9. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF YOUR DISPLACEMENT?
10. WHAT KIND OF LOSS DID YOU HAVE WHEN YOU WERE DISPLACED?
11. IN WHAT WAY HAS YOUR MODE OF LIVELIHOOD CHANGED ONCE YOU WERE DISPLACED?
12. DOES YOUR CURRENT INCOME SUFFICE FOR YOUR FAMILY?
13. WHAT IS YOUR MONTHLY EXPENDITURE?
14. DO YOU HAVE A BANK ACCOUNT AND ANY SAVINGS?
15. HOW MANY MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY WERE DISPLACED ALONG WITH YOU?
16. FAMILY SIZE AT PRESENT-
14. WAS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF YOUR AREA DISPLACED?

15. TRADITIONALLY WHAT KIND OF A FAMILY STRUCTURE DO YOU BELONG TO?

16. HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY CHANGE IN TERMS OF HOUSEHOLD PATTERN, NORMS ETC. ONCE YOU WERE DISPLACED? OR, WHAT KIND OF A HOUSE DO YOU LIVE IN NOW AS COMPARED TO EARLIER?

17. WHO HEADS THE HOUSEHOLD AND WHO HOLDS POWER IN DECISION MAKING

18. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

19. DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSE RELATIVE LIVING IN THIS AREA?

20. YOUR NETWORK OF INTERACTION INCLUDES?

21. IN TIMES OF AN EMERGENCY WHOM DO YOU TURN TO?

22. OTHER THAN BIOLOGICALLY RELATED KINS, ARE YOU CLOSE TO ANYONE IN THIS AREA WHO IS NOT RELATED TO YOU BY BLOOD?

23. DO YOU OBSERVE AND CELEBRATE YOUR TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS AND OTHER RITUALS?

24. DO YOU HAVE ANY ASSOCIATION WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY WHO HAS BEEN DISPLACED? ARE YOU A MEMBER?

25. DO YOU HAVE PROPER FACILITIES FOR WATER AND ELECTRICITY?

26. DO YOU HAVE A RATION CARD AND VOTER'S ID?

27. WHAT ARE YOUR SOURCES OF ENTERTAINMENT?

28. WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU SHARE WITH THE LOCALS OF THE AREA?

29. DO YOU HAVE A COMMUNITY SCHOOL/HOSPITAL? HOW FAR IS IT?

30. WERE YOU COMPENSATED FULLY WHEN DISPLACED?

31. WHAT WERE YOUR COPING MECHANISMS? DID YOU GET ADDICTED TO ANY ALCOHOLIC SUBSTANCE OR INVOLVE YOURSELF IN GAMBLING ETC?

32. DO YOU THINK DEVELOPMENT IS GOOD?

33. DO YOU THINK THERE CAN BE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT VICTIMISING THE POOR MASSES?

34. WHO DO YOU THINK IS TO BE BLAMED FOR THIS WHOLE AFFAIR? WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THIS REGARD?

35. HOW DO YOU FORESEE YOUR FUTURE?

(Questions for women)

36. AS A WOMAN, DO YOU FACE ANY PROBLEM THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM MEN?

37. WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF PROBLEMS YOU FACE?

38. DO YOU GET PROPER AID DURING PREGNANCY AND AFTER CHILDBIRTH (VACCINES, MEDICINES ETC)?

37. DO YOU HAVE PROPER BATHING AND SANITATION FACILITIES?

38. DO YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN FEEL SAFE WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY?

39. DO YOU MOSTLY WORK INSIDE THE HOUSE OR ENGAGE YOURSELVES IN OUTDOOR WORK AS WELL? ARE THE MENFOLK SUPPORTIVE?

40. HOW DO YOU FORESEE YOUR FUTURE?



FINDINGS:

The modern industrialization of a country is a slow but a continuing process. *Jana*

Hambrock and *Sebastian Hauptmann* argue that the main objective of economic development includes a faster growth of national income, alleviation of poverty and reduction of inequalities. The experience of industrial economies shows a close association between development and industrial expansion. Under colonial rule India as with most other developing nations followed a non industrial model, but many Indians believed that progress was retarded by this. It was believed that true economic progress lay in industrialization. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru saw industrialization as the key to alleviating poverty. Industrialization not only promised self sufficiency for the nation but also offered external economy accruing from technical progress. The Indian system of state planning went far beyond the usual inward looking industrialization policies that most developing countries pursued after World War II. But what lies beneath the glitzy exterior of "development" is another different world altogether. In achieving average growth rates, India has caused much excitement as the economic success story that promises to alleviate poverty. With the aim of increasing national income and maintaining high growth rates India has expanded its service sector and pursued industrialization, pushing large scale projects and setting up *Special Economic Zones*. These, it is hoped is expected to accelerate development and industrialize India's hinterland. However, India's path to industrialization is not straightforward, and alleging that this growth story has excluded India's poor. With land acquisition being essential to building large dams, steel plants

or economic zones, India's rural poor are being unfairly displaced, while benefits of the project bypass them. The strongest opposition in recent times has been to SEZ, in particular to the Tata Nano project in Singur which lead to violent protest by farmers across the nation refusing to part with their land. Nearly 200 projects including factories, rail roads and highways are being held back by similar struggles.

The problem will worsen as industrialization deepens. Land records are woefully inadequate and fail to list people who have cultivated land for decades. Callous and corrupt officials refuse to disburse compensation without bribes. Payments can be incomplete and highly delayed. When entire villages are displaced, villagers lose access to local forest, streams and grazing land. They get no compensation for this. The makeshift settlement into which are herded often lacks basic amenities or job opportunities within walking distance. Even when compensation is paid, the sum is often frittered away by families that have never handled large sums. They are transformed from owners to refugees. Often what happens is that the land acquired cheaply by the government is often resold at stratospheric prices to industrialists.



Land acquisition drive for promoting the industrial projects is at present a crucial and controversial public issue. The govt has been criticised for their casual approach to industrialisation which displaces thousands of people. There is indication that for small and marginal people, land is no longer even viable and the sizeable number of peasants having pattas sells their land in the hope of getting a handsome compensation. Several issues crop up in relation to this. No calculation is made by the govt and private companies about the net employment to be created through its proposed industries. The govt talks about d linkage effect of industrialisation but is silent about d loss of agriculture related occupations. There are limits of cash compensation to farmers because loss of land implies loss of source of livelihood and property and makes live vulnerable. Theoretical literature on development economics has largely ignored the problem of land acquisition for industrialization. Views of the people who lose their land and livelihood is not given due recognition in the land acquisition policy of the government (*Development dialogues on land acquisition and industrialisation*).

Tension arises between those displaced and the state or the population benefitted that leads to great acrimonies and violence. Despite its remarkable progress in the industrial and service sector, India remains an agricultural economy where 65 to 75% of its population is dependent on its land , clearly indicating that fertile and irrigated land , forest, should not be acquired are destroyed as this would also accelerate climate change.

Addressing the displacement issue requires that the affected population is enabled to acquire a lifestyle which is not inferior to, and is conceivably superior to what they had before. Further the environment must be restored to either what obtained earlier or better then what existed. A need arises for a sound compensation policy in case of land acquisition keeping in mind d complexities of land tenure.

As already mentioned this study will try to throw light on the plight of *displaced women and children in Assam*. Assam, one of the seven sisters of the north east is divided into two distinct natural regions- the Brahmaputra Valley with 71.486sq.km and 24 district and the Barak Valley with 6862sq.km and 3 districts.

In Assam, agriculture and agricultural laborers' together account for 64% of the total working population. The industrial sector in the state was earlier centralized around some particular sectors like tea, petroleum, jute, coal and forest. Industries in Assam can be broadly classified under 4 heads-

- Agro based industry including tea, sugar, oil, rice, textile etc.
- Mineral based industry including engineering industry, steel industry, cement industry, natural gas, railway workshop, etc.
- Forest based industry including plywood, paper, leather, match etc
- Other industries including power industry, fertilizer plants, brick and tiles industry, chemical industry etc.



Over the past few years persistent efforts has been made for increasing and improving barriers, infrastructural facilities which are paving the way for gradual industrialization in the state.

AIDC-Assam Industrial Development Corporation was established on 21st April 1965, the main objective of it being to accelerate the pace of industrial development in Assam by taking various steps for the promotion and development of large and medium scaled industries in the state. It identifies implements and promotes the industrial projects in the state both of state public sector and joint sector.

Assam is 87.15% rural. Rural land is subdivided into forest barren and uncultivable land area put to on agricultural use, cultivable waste, permanent pastures and grazing and under miscellaneous use trees and groves, fallow, other than current fallow and net area sown. The urban area includes land under municipalities, town committees and other such bodies(*Gopalkrishnan,2000:9*).

Urbanization in Assam is not uniform across the state, the lowest in Nalbari district, followed by Morigaon, Darrang, Kokrajhar and the highest in Kamrup followed by NC Hills, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Cachar and Jorhat. Both the pace of urbanization and of rural urban migration was insignificant in the past but the trend has grown over the

past few decades. The development projects of Assam have had its impact felt differentially across the state. Along with the rest of India, Assam too began planned development in 1951 in order to achieve economic growth and progressive reduction in inequalities, poverty and regional disparities. The state has undertaken various development projects to achieve the goal and has made much progress. But to see how these projects have had its impact environmentally, culturally, socially, economically and whether its benefits have reached all strata's of society is a big question, and this is what this study tries to analyze.

In 2003, Assam had seven major irrigation dams, 21 major industries and 97 medium industries. By 2003 the length of the railway lines had reached 2517.23kms, 2044km of national highway, 2928km of highways, 30351 km of PWD roads etc; and for all this, land is the pre requisite. Records show that in reality more than 14 lakh acres of land have been acquired for different projects, most of which would be common property resources (CPR's) that are the livelihood of the tribal and other rural poor communities. Land acquisition and displacement have accelerated after liberalization and the question that arises is whether the projects have replaced the jobs lost and created new ones and if it has benefitted all sections of society equally.

This study helped us in knowing the complexities within this grave issue of development induced displacement in Assam. Time being a major constraint, this study is more of a qualitative nature, as

already mentioned, for it is indeed difficult to collect statistics and analyze such data within a span of one month. An attempt has been made to focus and attend to one specific area/region, Assam in general and Guwahati in particular, in this case, keeping in mind the broader and generalized understanding of the complete process. As a field sample, the Lalmati area, under Basistha Chariali, has been taken and an in depth analysis has been made. Several other examples from the state, for instance Bogibeel bridge project, Namrup Fertiliser plant, Lilabari Airport, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, Dispur Capital Complex etc have been referred to. Assam holds a record of 310,142 DP's and 1,605,943 PAP's or a total of 1,916,085.

The DP's of the Bogibeel bridge on the south bank are mainly non tribal's and on the north bank they are the Mising tribal's.

The Namrup fertilizer plant in Dibrugarh district, effected more than 200 families mostly tribal's and only the patta holders were paid 10,000 to 12,000 as lump sum compensation, those depending on the tea estate got nothing.

The Lilabari airport displaced 92 families and deprived 300 others of their livelihood without displacing them. Most of its DP's/PAP's were Adivasi's, many of them working in the tea gardens or cultivating land in the bastis nearby. The people claim that they are yet to get the compensation.

Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, displaced some 35,000 persons (*Hussain 2002:289*), around 60% of them Bodo and the rest Ahom, Rabha, Muslims etc. They

lost their main livelihood of fishing and collection of forest produce since IIT destroyed the forests and beels.

The construction of the Dispur Capital Complex began after Assam shifted its capital from Shillong to Guwahati in 1972. Around 1000 families affected by this were tenant sharecroppers whose livelihood was agriculture, and except for the landowners no one was compensated. The land was acquired through negotiations between the landowners and the government and not with the tenants or through the acquisition procedure.

Rehabilitation in Assam tends to be poor. In spite of a large number of development projects every year, the state fails to have a proper rehabilitation policy. Patta holders get compensation but the CPR dependents are ignored and are not counted among the DP/PAP's since they do not have written documents of individual ownership. Having said that, a parallel can be drawn with the current scene at Lalmati area, although it is difficult to get the correct picture here at first glance, since a complex politics and blame game continues to fuel the heated scene in the region.

Lalmati area under Basistha Chariali, falls right behind the Games village located on the National Highway 37. One is bound to be appalled by the view of two completely different worlds in the same area- one, that of the modern styled multistoreyed buildings at the Games Village and the other that of the pathetic living condition of the people living at Lalmati right behind the Games Village.

Being students of Sociology and at a very premature stage of research related work, field work is something that really excited us, for unlike in Social Work where field work is the backbone of a study, Sociology is limited even at the Masters level when it comes to field work. But we were unknown to the fact that this would indeed be a taxing job. Rapport formation was the first requisite as far as our experience was concerned, for the respondents being from mostly an uneducated section of society, it was beyond their understanding the purpose of this fieldwork. The curiosity in them and at times the ogling eyes of a few alerted us. A major problem during the field visits was commutation to the village from the highway as the village was really uphill and there was no proper road and this made us tread our path through the forests with the help of locals.

The situation in Lalmati is not as simple as it seems. The community is a diverse mixture of tribal's, Assamese, Naga, Muslims etc and they are in the process of getting displaced, eviction already having started. What they claim is a completely different picture from the government's version of the story. The locals claim that they have been staying in that area for several years yet haven't received land patta from the government. On the other hand the government views that that these are migrated people from different places of Assam, North-east and neighboring Bangladesh and have illegally encroached upon government land. The outcome of this has been a serious ongoing debate between the people, peasant leaders, the landowners, the government, policy makers,

intelligentsia and others. In the politics between the government and the dwellers, a third role playing agent is a middle party of the local landowners and the brokers who play their part behind the scenes. These cunning and money minded landowners have befooled the poor masses that have mostly migrated in the hope of living in a dream city called 'Guwahati'. By claiming that they are the owners of the forest land(which is actually government property), they have sold it to the poor migrated masses at some throwaway price which actually amounts to be a huge sum for the poor marginalized section and thus for this very reason they claim that they are the real owners. The outcome of this is that the landowners illegally by fooling the poor are having this easy way of money making and the poor continue becoming paupers. No party involved can be sympathized as it is not the fault of any one single side. The encroachers are definitely at fault, and so are the fraud landowners and the government that has been lending a deaf ear to the problem of forest land, encroachment, displacement and definite policies all this while. There is an urgent need of a land policy and stringent laws that govern upon forest land reserves, illegal encroachment, displacement as a result of development projects, compensation and rehabilitation etc.

The condition of roads is immensely poor and there is no proper facility for schooling, hospitals and even sanitation. Electricity and water is not round the clock and one well is used by around 90 households. The Electoral Rolls 2011 of the Lalmati area revealed that these people did not enjoy

voting rights and except for the land owning people of the area, the others who dwelled on the hilltops did not have their names mentioned in the rolls, as per the latest election roll. These people also did not own any ration card. An elderly Ahom lady in her late 50's expressed.. *“Sorkaar ki hoi ami buji napau, jikhon sorkare electionor agot haazarta protisruti diye, xeye sorkare amak iman bosore maatir paata dibo nuarile. Maatir paata duror kotha, pani, bijuli ekure xubidha nai amar.”* (“we don't know what government means. A government that makes a thousand promises before elections, has failed to give us land pattas for all these years. Leave apart pattas, we donot even have proper electricity, water and bathing facilities.”)

The relationship among kith and kin is not as strong as the relationship within the community members. In times of any emergency one always falls upon the members of the community. The collective conscience plays a stronger role than the individual conscience, that is, the collectivity outnumbers the individuality in these societies. In times of their traditional festivals, the members come together and show a sense of unity and solidarity by celebrating and performing different rituals etc. Sometimes clusters of relatives live near each other, easily available to the give and take of kinship obligations. Even where relatives do not live in close proximity, they typically maintain bonds of kinship and attempt to provide each other with emotional support and other help and favors in times of need. But more than blood ties, they are embedded within networks of people who are not related to them by blood, but are

socially close. *“Ami baare-boroniyo. Nana thaair pora aha luk ami, aru ami sokoluwe eta poriyalor dore thaku.”* (“We are a diverse, yet we live like one whole family.”)...expressed Manju, a Boro widow, and a mother of three children.

The families were basically of two types. The first included nuclear families of parents and their unmarried children, and the second type of families where two or three brothers stayed with their wives and children. But broadly the families were nuclear in nature. The reason of migration was primarily in search of better opportunities and to lead a city life and their occupation ranged from trekker drivers, daily wage laborers, small pan shop owners etc. The income level was more or less the same across families and it was around Rs2000-3000 a month and most of them were school drop outs.

The women work mostly in the domestic realm and take care of their children, barring some others who work as domestic helps, roadside hotel helps etc in the vicinity. The children donot attend school regularly, distance being a major factor and on rainy days the percentage of absenteeism is high. As a source of entertainment, most families have a radio set except a few who own television sets. There are one or two organizations that the people have formed themselves, like the Lalmati Mahila Samiti etc but donot function very actively. But what could be gathered from the interviews was that the womenfolk seemed to be more aware and active in all matters as compared to their male counterparts who were very casual and lazy in their attitude. At dusk most men would resort to gambling and

drinking and this annoyed the women in the house.



The media also plays an important role in this regard. The people strongly pointed out that the media often presented a wrong picture of their story by moulding it altogether and did not depict the reality. They openly showed their anger towards some local news channels of the state. *“We were made the scapegoats in yesterday’s incident (Dispur incident, June 22nd 2011), by these money making TV channels that show rubbish in the name of news. We, the poor janta, who are nothing but helpless, are made to pay for everything in this nation of corruption. And that is how we lost Ruhul(a 9yr old boy) in yesterday’s hungama.”*....viewed Amina, a middle aged lady.

There is neither any body nor the government that has come to their aid in order to find out a way of tackling this issue of land encroachment, displacement and something that could be done in this regard so that everyone is benefitted equally. It is the need of the hour and the call of the day that everyone plays their needful part for the betterment of the society and to remove such tension.

WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN??

The impact of the consequent impoverishment as a result of displacement is faced by women and children more than others. The lower the social stratum they belong to, the greater the impact. It takes the form of higher joblessness, greater malnutrition and deterioration in their social status. Its first impact is seen in children’s lower access to schools since most DP/PAPs are subalterns. Since most DP/PAPs are from the administratively neglected “backward” areas their access to education is low. It declines further after displacement and child labour grows among them because of the “new poverty” resulting from loss of land and forests that are their sustenance. For example a researcher who studied the National Aluminium Plant (NALCO) at Damanjodi in the tribal majority Koraput district of Orissa claims that the literacy rate in the area had gone from 22.63% before the project to 34% after it (Kar 1991: 5). He does not mention that the rise is in the project township. Among the displaced tribals it was 18% male and 3% female and many children had been pulled out of school (Fernandes and Raj 1992: 58-59).

In most cases impoverishment itself forces the parents to put their children to work full time to maintain the family. It forces parents to pull school going children out of it. For example, 49% of the displaced or deprived families in West Bengal (Fernandes et al. 2006: 140-141) and 56% in Assam (Fernandes and Bharali 2006: 125-126) have pulled their children out of

school in order to turn them into child labourers. Such negative impact continues in other aspects too, health being one of them. Studies show an enormous rise in water borne, malnutrition and environmental degradation related diseases among the DP/PAPs. While all suffer from it, the incidence of such diseases is greater among children. One can continue with other aspects such as malnutrition and the cultural impact but there is a gradation of impacts and children suffer more than adults do.



Apart from this, one also sees a gender differential in the negative impact both among children and adults. It is visible in children's access to school, health status and even sex ratio. Such feminisation of poverty exists in other sectors too. For example, among former tea garden workers of Assam, the sex ratio in the 10-19 age-group is a low 739 because poverty forces teenage girls to leave their homes for domestic work in the urban middle class families in Assam and outside (*Fernandes, Barbora and Bharali 2003: 5*). One notices a similar situation among the DP/PAPs.

Higher land acquisition has serious implications for *women* since this is the resource that she requires more than men do. One is not certain that the rehabilitation policies that some States have introduced

will improve their status. Most speak of a job per family or self-employment. One does not have to repeat that jobs are given mainly to men. Besides one job per family is not an alternative because after land alienation the remaining members do not have resources for self-employment. So women from the families that are excluded are bound to be doubly marginalized. Most women are involved in self-employment and production but do not control the market. So they may end up as cheap labour without much income and in a majority of cases women are confined only their houses. Many women find themselves alone with their children to look after single-handedly as the men are mostly occupied outdoors. Displaced women often have to travel long distances to find water, food and other essentials. In so doing, they put themselves at great risk of sexual violence. Women have to shoulder all the daily responsibilities for ensuring their own survival and that of their families, which many do by drawing on their resourcefulness and courage. Displaced women often have to travel long distances to find water, food, firewood, medicines and other essentials. In so doing, they put themselves at great risk of sexual violence, abuse and injury, and other dangers. The burden of family responsibility, coupled with the anguish and trauma of sudden loss, also takes a huge toll on the women's health. Lack of resources may lead to situations where, by virtue of their sex, women are relegated to last place in terms of access to food or water, meaning, they eat less and last. There is also a real danger of their resorting to exchanging sexual favors for food or other essentials. Lack of safety and

privacy in camps may expose women to health problems, for instance by increasing the risk of sexual violence. The trauma of their experience, conflict-related injury, sexual violence and unplanned pregnancy inevitably increases women's need for health care. Displacement can hinder their access to quality health care at a time when they need it most.

Perhaps, among the many ways by which women have been affected by displacement, it is the impact on their health and well-being that must be emphasized since this is the most basic and has implications for the lives of their children and other family members. The poor living and sanitary conditions in evacuation or relocation areas have generally been the cause of illnesses and diseases of women and children. And, it should also be stressed, that these women who are expected to take care of their children and other family members, have also been severely traumatized by the conflict that caused their displacement. Thus, how women have been affected physically and psychologically must be addressed.

In every category, particularly among marginalized groups, women are the worst hit and pay the highest price of development. A study carried out by the *National Commission for Women in India (NCW)* on the impact of displacement on women reveals that violence against women has increased. An increase in alcoholism due to displacement has led to a marked rise in domestic violence in India.

The following *table* shows the overall impact of displacement on women as compared to men (in percentage).

IMPACT	MALE	FEMALE
NO. OF JOBS OUTSIDE HOME	35	36
NOT ENOUGH FIREWOOD	46	41
LACK OF TOILET FACILITIES	7	3
DRINKING WATER PROBLEM	12	18
LESS FOOD FOR WOMEN	0	1
HAVE TO WORK OUTSIDE	0.3	0
NA	2	8
NP	8	14

Clearly, women and children are the worst hit by the process of development induced displaced. The dominant male attitudes, their lower educational level and low exposure to the world outside prevent them beginning life anew. The projects donot attend to their needs. The decision of spending the compensation is by and large taken by the men who tend to ignore women specific needs. They have to run the household with the meagre amount that is given by the men and somehow make both

ends meet. In most cases women do not even receive a single penny. Their health deteriorates and along with them the children too fall prey and are made to face the brunt of all these. In the light of all this, the paradigm of development, industrialisation and urbanisation needs to be rethought seeking certain alternatives.

CONCLUSION

Michael Cernea, a sociologist, who has researched *development-induced displacement and resettlement* for the World Bank, points out that being forcibly ousted from one's land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before displacement, since a significant portion of people displaced do not receive compensation for their lost assets, and effective assistance to re-establish themselves productively. Cernea has identified eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement. 1. *Landlessness*: Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people's productive systems, commercial activities, and livelihoods are constructed. 2. *Joblessness*: The risk of losing wage employment is very high both in urban and rural displacements for those employed in enterprises, services or agriculture. 3. *Homelessness*: Loss of shelter tends to be only temporary for many people being resettled; but, for some, homelessness remains a lingering condition. 4. *Marginalisation*: Occurs when families lose economic power and spiral on a "downward mobility" path. Economic marginalisation is often accompanied by social and psychological marginalisation. 5.

Food Insecurity: Forced uprooting increases the risk that people will fall into temporary or chronic undernourishment, defined as calorie-protein intake levels below the minimum necessary for normal growth and work. 6. *Increased Morbidity and Mortality*: Displacement results in social stress and psychological trauma, the use of unsafe water supply and improvised sewage systems, increase vulnerability to epidemics and chronic diarrhea, dysentery, or particularly parasitic and vector-borne diseases such as malaria etc thereby increasing the mortality rate. 7. *Loss of Access to Common Property*: For poor people, loss of access to the common property assets that belonged to relocated communities (pastures, forest lands, water bodies, burial grounds, quarries and so on) result in significant deterioration in income and livelihood levels. 8. *Social Disintegration*: Displacement causes a profound unraveling of existing patterns of social organization and networks.

This study has clearly proved the potential risks intrinsic to displacement as argued by Cernea. We have found that development is not just a one sided coin that brings only betterment for the society, but also has another face to it. Development is undoubtedly inevitable in today's world but the glitzy attractive part of it is actually the sacrifice of the unheard unrecognized voices. Development today is at the cost of human life and their loss and marginalized conditions. One needs to ponder upon whether an alternative to the system that displaces people without their consent is possible. Ways need to be found that the DP/PAP's do not end up getting

impoverished, instead become the beneficiaries of the project even if they are resettled at some other location.

In 1986, the UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration on the Right to Development, which states that "*every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.*" During the last decade the UN has gradually paid more attention to conflict-induced displacement, belatedly recognizing that industrial development projects are just as vulnerable as refugees and by far outnumber those who have fled across a border. What is now required is to direct the international community's attention to the development-induced-displaced. How long will the masses remain silent victims of government and corporate neglect? This study has thus tried to draw attention to forced displacement as a violation of human rights, looking both at how development projects cause displacement and the widespread neglect of displaced populations in need of resettlement and restitution of livelihoods, focusing majorly on women and children and how they are the worst hit by the projects.

Assam has achieved the target of development in some aspects barring others where it has failed. But the fact remains that the state has not formulated a rehabilitation policy till now. One has to study the different facets of the problem and see whether all DP/PAP's have been neglected as this can give an idea whether

marginalization and impoverishment are real in Assam.

The outcome of all this is a contradiction between the social and economic components of development. The projects may result in economic growth but the human factor is sacrificed to it. Law becomes an important body. The DP/PAP's have to be accorded legal protection. The laws need to be strong to recognize the rights of the CPR dependants over their livelihood and the right of the DP/PAP's to rehabilitation. These changes should come in the form of an enforceable policy that ensures that displacement is minimized and when it is inevitable, the project benefits reach the DP/PAP's. The main issue here is not financial allocation or technology but an alternative paradigm that combines the social, environmental and economic components into one, keeping in mind the technical, legal, social and environmental gains and costs of the whole process. The matter is not simple and needs serious analysis and an in depth understanding within its multidimensionalities, for a better and progressive world.

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