Impact of Development- Induced Displacement on Rural Poor and Farmers: A Case Study of Mangalore in Karnataka, India

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I. INTRODUCTION

Schumacher (1973), in his book titled ‘Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered’, opined that “Among material resources, the greatest, unquestionably, is the land. Study how a society uses its land, and you can come to pretty reliable conclusions as to what its future will be.” More than ever before, the humankind has realized that its very survival depends on the natural resources. ‘Land’, it has been realized, is not just a collection of soil and rock, but comprises priceless resources such as agro-biodiverse farmland, mangrove belts, wetlands, forest patches, and thus, forming a unique ecosystem. What’s more, even the so-called ‘Waste Land’ supports the resource needs of the marginalized and poor who are denied land and water rights in the lop-sided development process pursued even the modern ‘democratic’, ‘welfare’ states. In such a context, the present paper analyses the impact of development-induced displacement on the livelihood issues of the rural poor with special reference to Mangalore Taluk in Karnataka, India.

Need of the Study:

The major aim of the present study is to explore the mutual influence between the activism of the social activists and the conceptualization as well as implementation of the ‘development’ projects that cause displacements of rural poor and farmers of society.

Conceptual Frame Work:

For the sake of the present paper the term ‘displacement’ is understood as forcible dislocation of people from a place/environment to another one. In other words, it is a kind of ‘forced migration’. It involves more than just a change of physical environment-deals with factors such as coping mechanisms and power relations in the new setting.

Two categories of the displaced could be generally identified i) the Displaced Persons (DPs) and ii) “indirect DPs” who move out “voluntarily” because of the deterioration of their livelihood or environmental degradation. It can be observed that while the Project Affected Persons (PAPs) have received at least meager compensation for patta land those affected by Coastal Protection Regulation, 2011 have not received any compensation. A cursory glance at the so-called ‘development’ is invariably understood to be a necessary corollary of ‘development’. Seen in another way, ‘development’ for the elite is ‘terrorism’ for the poor in India.

II. THE CONTEXT OF ‘DEVELOPMENT’ AND ‘DISPLACEMENT’

We cannot understand the dynamics of development as well as displacement unless we locate it in the context of ‘neo-liberal capitalism’. In such a context, only large-scale industrialization, irrigation, urbanization and economic growth are thought of as ‘development’ oriented. When we try to trace the history of such a process of ‘development’ in Mangalore we can find that the city has been commercially active since 9th century AD. In Dakshina Kannada district within which Mangalore Taluk is located, eviction of tenants and land transactions were rampant even before tenancy legislation was implemented. Subsequently, there was a phenomenal increase in the absorption of agricultural labour into household industry such as business, hotel, garage, weaving, coir-manufacturing, sugar, jiggery, toddy drawing, etc. (Budhya, 2001b).

The Gazetteer for Social Kanara District (1973) lists forest wealth, heavy and reliable rainfall, vast extents of paddy fields, coconut, areca nut, and cashew gardens, good sea-borne trade, good transport system, well-developed educational and trading facilities, many small scale and cottage industries, best developed banking system, and entrepreneurial spirit or the people as the most important resources of this region (Budhya, 2001b).

However, the recent past has seen step increase in the urban population. The positioning of the Taluk between Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea makes the region ecologically sensitive. The city corporation has failed...
to appreciate and implement many innovative ideas proposed in the ‘Environmental Management Plan for Dakshina Kannada District’ which was the brain child of Danida-DFEE Study. On the other hand, the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and KIAD Act of 1966 have been extensively used to acquire land and displace people in the name of paving the way for the development of the region. As a ray of hope, the region has occasionally witnessed to some waves of activism since 1987 around the slogan ‘Save Western Ghats’. However, the efforts of activists have, for various reasons, failed to either arrest or reduce the negative fallouts of development-induced displacement in the region.

III. ISSUES CAUSED BY DISPLACEMENT

There are many issues caused by the development-induced displacement in the region. The following are some of the general issues caused by displacement in Managalore Taluk:

Firstly, there is the break down in the traditional social structure-family, community and power relations as displacement has caused forced migration from the ancestral land as well as traditional occupations; Also, rise in tourism and commercial attitude has also led to the impoverishment of women and girls; There is also increase in the vulnerability of Dalits as although they rarely owned agricultural land their livelihood depended heavily on the agrarian economy which the development projects have weakened; There is also loss of common property, property such as grazing ground which supplemented the village economy; Overcrowding in the place of rehabilitation has resulted in the strain on resources; There is also mushrooming of slums in the towns and cities of Mangalore Taluk; In order to meet the Water requirements of the industries there are plans for vented dams to Gurupur and Nethravathi rivers which are expected to adversely affect the rights of people over water (The Hindu, Jan 20, 2006); Loss of skills of traditional craftsmen is another matter of concern; There is also deterioration in social status and psychological attitudes of the project-affected communities; One can also observe internalization of the experience of ‘helplessness’ that provides the base for their exploitation and ongoing dependence; We also find that, as a rule, all the companies do not report accidents or causalities; and Finally, every time a new project is proposed, activists have been asking for health survey. However, there is no proper response.

Apart from the generic issues listed so far, we can also observe some specific issues pertaining to the local industry.

Mangalore Chemical and Fertilizers Limited (MCF): MCF claims that there are no effluents; activists understand that their so called treated effluents are being discharged near NMPT. However, their new plant inside MCF has got away without any public hearing which is mandatory now. Their ammonia storage tank, almost on the high way itself is high risk hazard. Finally, MCF conducts mock emergency drill every year stopping all the traffic for two hours.

New Mangalore Port Trust (NMPT): NMPT has provided jobs for many displaced. However, the rehabilitation colony for fishermen is pathetic to say the least. Even patta is not provided for the 10 cents land given, even after so many years. Also there are no public toilets made available. Displaced fishermen were promised that in recognition of their sacrifice of land, houses and their livelihood provider- the sea- a fishing jetty would be provided within NMPT. For few years jetty was part of the model of NMPT displayed at the entrance. But no jetty is in sight even after 40 years.

NMPT is a major source of sea pollution with oil spill, spillage of hazardous chemicals during transport, coal import. Most or the precautionary procedures are ignored. Export of iron ore has caused both air and water pollution-the impact on health is not yet ascertained. Due to the water pollution, there is gradual bio accumulation of heavy metals like cadmium, mercury, lead etc in certain species of fish-real impact on those who eat these fishes would be known only in the long term, but that might be too late to go back.

Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL):

This saw the historic agitation by the fisher folk, against the discharge of effluent. The then Deve Gowda government passed a Government Order that no effluent would be discharged after December 1997; by then MRPL was supposed to have incorporated latest technology to treat the effluent to the agriculture water quality level and partially use it in house and the balance for agriculture. Later the Government Order was withdrawn after MRPL went to court. MRPL has increased its capacity by three times, and the effluents continue to pollute the sea. Same Government Order talked about providing one job per displaced family (later MRPL promised 3 lacs in lieu of jobs-some got jobs, some neither got job, nor money.), watch dog committee (not constituted yet), a carrying capacity study of the district to be conducted before sanctioning new industries.

MRPL is guilty of spoiling standing crop and the farm and by its oil leakage, causing health hazard by its emissions, discharging effluents through broken pipeline away from the designated spot, refusing to give property tax to the Bala panchayat, buying people’s opinion through CSR. While the PCB officials look the other way, paid consultants like fisheries college, NITK and CMFRI, who are supposed to monitor the effluents and make quarterly reports say that everything is fine.
Pandubidri (Mangalore) Power Project by Nagarjuna Power Corpn. Ltd.: This company, initially, wanted 1200 acres and 980 families were to be displaced, but later came down to 600 acres. A 300mw coal-based thermal plant was granted to the Jayaprabhash industries for its steel plant in Bykampady. This project was bought by Nagarjuna, which abandoned steel plant due to low demand but manipulated its records and managed to shift the power plant location to Pandubidri (near Mangalore is what the permission says) and also increase the capacity to 1015 mw. It has started production, but the problems that activists had warned us about have become a reality-fly ash and pollution. During the agitation against Nagarjuna, the Karnataka Government had sent a delegation of 100 fishermen, journalists to Simhadri power plant in Andhra. The report submitted to Sri . Kumaraswamy, the then CM, has not surfaced so far. Govt. records show that 40 lacs were spent for the trip.

Suzlon Energy Limited:
Having acquired over 1000 acres Suzlon may sell off the land, making huge profits, as it is not doing well. Mangalore Special Economic Zone (MSEZ) : Initially Canara Chamber of Commerce came out with idea of a non-polluting, agro-based, and apparels units in light of the plight of limping beedi and tile industry. The activists of the region agreed with the idea but had apprehension of agricultural land acquisition, no admission to the public inside SEZ. But MSEZ latter was promoted with the MRPL and Karnataka government coming together as promoters. For phase I-1800 acres. Phase II and petrochemical complex – 2035 acres. Public hearing conducted by the authorities too proved to be a farce. The consultants (NEERI) who did E.I.A. used old base line data and in some cases wrong data. And interestingly NEERI conducted studies immediately after monsoon, when the pollution level is the minimum.

Issues of Major Concern:
From the observations made so far regarding the development-induced displacement and industries in the region we can identify the following issues of major concern:
As a rule, all the companies do not report accidents or causalities; Roads are broadened and worsened leading to loss of assets and lives; The recent study by CPCB says Mangalore is the most polluted city in Karnataka; The state agencies like the civil servants and police are used to suppress opposition; The contractors are given the responsibility of ensuring ‘voluntary’ displacement; Issues in displacement;
There is no guidance to ensure that the meager compensation given is properly invested; Resettlement and Rehabilitation is seen only as a mechanical activity; The loss of social resources is not taken into account; Social and cultural violence is rampant; Education leads to ‘confirmation’ right to a life with dignity enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution – a cause for the callous attitude; Lack of realization that development –induced displacements are ‘planned’, hence their impoverishment and marginalization are ‘avoidable’; and The private sector goes where roads, railways and the rest of the infrastructure is built, not where employment generation and alleviation of poverty is most needed.

Overall observations/Finding:
From the findings presented in this paper regarding development –induced –displacement issues in the region we may list out the following observations:
Mostly powerless and voiceless people are displaced without their consent and ignored; There is a nexus between the corporations and state agencies for ‘development’ – underworld elements and surrogate –intellectuals are seen as easy corollaries; Development necessarily involves ‘vulgar consumerism’ and ‘tourism’ to remain attractive to capitalists; Traditional democratic protests do not always work; The capitalist is as vigilant as the activist, if not more; ‘Educated’ people are easy to be ‘bought’ but hard to be ‘taught’; Communal forces will only be strengthened; and Gender and caste violence on the rise.

Limitation of the study:
This study particularly assesses the economic and social problems of the rural poor and farmers it may not lighten the scientific effects of industrialization. Scientific study includes health hazards on people, ill health aspects, and adverse effects of industrialization on land and water resources.

Directions for Future Research:
Create awareness in society people of the region need to wake up to the challenges of ‘social democracy’ – to address the issues of ‘displacement’ and further ‘development.

Sources of Funding of the Study:
This pilot study conducted by the researcher because of fulfillment of the doctoral research, hence this study was self financed by the authors.

IV.CONCLUSION
It is a tragedy that Mangalore- a region with high human development index, decent infrastructure, and social capital-had to be dumped with very hazardous large-scale industries. It is akin to a talented, educated,
beautiful lad falling prey to the snares of an underworld goon, attracted by his wealth and power. At least now the concerned authorities need to realize that rehabilitation involves rebuilding their cultural, economic, psychological and social systems. Development has to be based on the resources and societies of the region. Also, there is a need for a multi-disciplinary approach between technical and social scientists and the people’s communities. The social activists who wish to ensure sustainable development in the region need to be ready for ‘unlearning’ and ‘relearning’ in order to understand the value of land and democracy. At least now the people of the region need to wake up to the challenges of ‘social democracy’—to address the issues of ‘displacement’ and further ‘development’.  

V. REFERENCES