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## UNIT 9 TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION\*

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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- develop a broad understanding on the concepts of development, displacement and rehabilitation;
- learn about the impact of displacement on tribal communities; and
- understand the various social-cultural impacts, economic impacts, health impacts, psychological impacts and environmental impacts caused by development projects.

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## 9.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the course of evolution, the concept of development has assumed a definitive meaning. In the current usage of the word 'development' means: improvement of the economic

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status of the society, widening of the individual's life opportunities and betterment of the quality of life. Development is globally defined in terms of industrial and technological growth, the means which become the goal. It is just another form of social change; it cannot be understood in isolation. The analysis of development actions and of popular reactions to these actions should not be isolated from the study of local dynamics, of endogenous processes, of 'informal' processes of change. Hence development cannot be dissociated from social change.

Economic development does not always bring positive impacts on human societies. The multidimensional nature of development interventions, affect socio-cultural, economic, health and environmental aspects of human societies.

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## 9.1 DISPLACEMENT

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Displacement is a process that uproots or forces to uproot the communities and individuals out of their homelands. Due to many development activities such as mining, creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon testing grounds, railways, road developments, sanctuaries, and construction of dams and so on, human beings are forced to migrate and resettle at other sites against their wishes. This is called involuntary resettlement because people have no choice other than to move or migrate.

Development induced displacement means forcing the communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purpose of economic development. Displacement is deemed to be a necessary price to pay for development by those to whom development means only economic growth.

There are two types of displacement:

- Displacement affected by natural disasters in the form of draughts, floods, earthquakes and cyclone;
- Displacement due to developmental projects like dams, mines, thermal power plants, industries, rail-ways, roads, ports and others.

Among these two, former one is not subject to human control but the latter is purely a human made phenomena and this type of displacement is pre-planned or forced displacement. In both the types of displacement, the victims are poor and weaker sections of the society who do not either have economic stability or educational accomplishments to migrate to safer areas. The worst sufferers by displacement are indigenous tribal communities.

The effects of the displacement spill over generations in many ways, such as loss of traditional means of employment (livelihood), change of environment disrupted community life and relationship marginalisation, a profound psychological trauma. It destroys the existing modes of production, affects kinship, brings about impoverishment, and threatens cultural identity of tribal and ethnic minorities. In addition forced resettlement tends to be associated with increased socio-cultural and psychological stresses and higher morbidity and mortality rates. Population displacement, therefore disrupts economic and socio cultural structures.

**Check Your Progress**

1) What is displacement and explain the causes for displacement?

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**9.2 TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT**

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Development projects every year involuntarily displace one million people in the developing countries from their land and homes. Development and displacement have direct link with Scheduled Tribe population. The question becomes more relevant when it concerns the tribals because they often adversely affect the environment making the life of the tribals more difficult and responsible for tribal migration. Even the health, food and nutrition of the tribals are also adversely affected.

Development projects, particularly dams, have always generated serious controversy in India as they are the major source of tribal displacement. Estimates of national resettlement forced by development projects shows that during 1950-90 the number of people affected were 18.5 million. According to the Central Water Commission, over 3,300 dams have been built since independence and some 1,000 more are under construction. In order to achieve rapid economic growth, India has invested in industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities. According to the data of Indian Social Institute, government acquired massive land and subsequently displaced 21.3 million people.

The Sardar Sarovar dam across the Narmada River in Gujarat State displaced more than 41,000 families (over 200,000 people) in the three states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. Over 56 per cent of the people affected by the Sardar Sarovar dam are tribals. The indigenous tribal communities displaced by in the 1950s and 1960s by the Hirakud dam in Odisha, Bhakhra dam in Himachal Pradesh and other projects still struggle to get the paltry compensation promised to them at that time.

The development process pushes tribals from an informal to a formal economy that is new to them without any preparation. They had depended on agricultural land and forests, both of which they lose to the development projects. When they receive compensation it is monetary with which most tribal communities living in the informal economy are not familiar and in most cases the Common Property Resources (CPRs) are not compensated.

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**9.3 RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION**

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Resettlement refers to the process of settling again in a new area. Rehabilitation means restoration to the former state. Rehabilitation involves identification of a person’s problems and needs, relating the problems to relevant factors of the person and the environment, defining rehabilitation goals, planning and implementing the measures, and assessing the effects. Displacement mainly hits tribal people who usually do not figure in the priority list of any political authorities or parties. When tribals are resettled

in a new area, basic infrastructure and amenities are not provided in that area. Very often, temporary camps become permanent settlements. It is also a major problem of displacement or resettlement that people have to face. Resettlement disrupts the entire life of the people. They are unable to bear the shocks of emptiness and purposelessness created in their life. Payment of compensation to the head of the family often lead to bitter quarrels over sharing of compensation amount within the family, leading to stress and even withering of family life.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013) regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India. The Act has provisions to provide fair compensation to those whose land is taken away, brings transparency to the process of acquisition of land to set up factories or buildings, infrastructural projects and assures rehabilitation of those affected. The Act establishes regulations for land acquisition as a part of India’s massive industrialisation drive driven by public-private partnership. RFCTLARR Act, 2013 replaced the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, a nearly 120-year-old law enacted during British rule.

RFCTLARR Act, 2013 exempts five categories of projects namely (i) defence, (ii) rural infrastructure, (iii) affordable housing, (iv) industrial corridors, and (v) infrastructure including PPPs where the government owns the land from the requirements of social impact assessment, restrictions on acquisition of multi-cropped land, and consent for private projects and public private partnerships (PPPs). **There is lack of clarity in defining five types of exempted projects while acquiring land in the act which may go against the tribals.**

**Check Your Progress**

- 2) Discuss the significance of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013)?

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## 9.4 IMPACTS OF DISPLACEMENT ON TRIBALS

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The impacts of displacement can be mainly divided into two broad categories namely positive and negative.

- i) **The positive impacts of displacement**, however, affect only a minuscule section of the affected community and comprise of impacts such as:
  - A few persons may experience improvement in their status by way of increase in the size of landholdings.
  - A rise in income may occur in certain cases by the employment opportunities created by the Project.
  - A break in some oppressive social hierarchies may also result.

ii) **Negative impacts of displacement:** However, majority of the displaced people undergo a process of dispossession and disempowerment. As an outcome of the processes of development, displacement has the potential to dismantle and destroy villages as well as socio-economic and cultural structures of the inhabitants. When people are forcibly removed from their habitat, the following situations are likely to occur:

- Production systems get dismantled.
- Productive assets and income sources get lost.
- People get relocated to environments where their productive skills may be less applicable and the competition for resources greater.
- Long established residential groups get disorganised.
- Kinship groups get scattered.
- Informal social networks and safety nets are broken.

Thus, by its very nature, displacement in general and involuntary displacement in particular, is a disruptive and painful process. Economically and culturally, it creates high risks of chronic types of impoverishment among the displaced people. According to Cernea (1995), the essence of the displacement/resettlement nexus is the development-induced impoverishment of some population segments. If proper counteractive action is not taken well in time, these potential risks as listed below can convert into actual impoverishment disasters:

- Landlessness
- Joblessness
- Homelessness
- Loss of common property
- Marginalisation
- Food insecurity
- Mortality
- Social disarticulation

Development activities are the main cause of involuntary resettlement. Among these activities, dams have been considered as one of the major causes for displacement and relocation. The multifaceted effect of coercive displacement and relocation can be observed on the affected population. Resettlement of population causes some economic and social repercussions such as extreme disruption of lives of individuals, family and communities. Resettlement is often experienced as enormously stressful, and results in anger, bitterness, loss of confidence and other problems more specifically in tribal regions.

The affected population faces not only social, economic and environmental problems, but also political and demographic problems that arise in the places of resettlement sites. The situation further deteriorates if the affected people are unemployed, uneducated and unskilled that exacerbates the conditions of unemployment overcrowded housing

facilities and public amenities and therefore has long-term consequences. Perpetual tension surfaces for resource sharing between immigrants displaced and the earlier settled population and may reach a point of intolerance.

**Activity**

Try to observe the negative and positive impacts of displacement, if you happen to visit any Rehabilitation colony or displaced villages.

**9.4.1 Social-Cultural Impacts**

Social impacts are the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions-that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes in the norms, values, and beliefs that guide and rationalise their cognition of themselves and their society.

Displacement leads to dispossession in the social, cultural and political spheres. It takes various forms such as social disorganisation, low self-esteem, loss of identity, loss of culture and of political institutions. All this leads to the marginalisation of the displaced tribals. Studies conducted by Prasad (1972), Kothari and Bhartari (1984), Viegas and Menon (1985), Gandhi and Ajit Kumar (1986) reveal the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of the lives of the oustees under consideration while planning rehabilitation measures.

**Check Your Progress**

3) What do you understand by the term social impact?

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**9.4.1.1 Social Disorganisation**

Social disorganisation takes place with the type of changes that are brought about by the displacement process. These forces lead to major changes in the social structure of the communities in general and especially of tribal societies. Their family life may be disrupted. The traditional social control mechanisms may be weakened and even lost. Consequently, social tensions may increase. Also social support networks tend to disintegrate and that has far reaching consequences for the community. Social networks often help people cope with poverty through personalised strategies such as informal loans, exchange of food, clothing, durable goods, and mutual help with farming, building houses and caring for children. Loss of such multifunctional, yet virtually invisible social networks through displacement, acts as a hidden but serious cause of impoverishment through displacement. Such loss is higher in projects that relocate people in a dispersed manner rather than in social groups and units. In such cases, it is very difficult for the oustees to reconstitute similar social structures and networks.

Lifestyle impacts like the way people behave and relate to family, friends and cohorts on a day-to-day basis will not get prominence. Shared customs, obligations, values,

language, religious belief and other elements which make a social or ethnic group distinct will slowly dilute. Community infrastructure, services, voluntary organisations, activity networks and cohesion will disappear in resettlement colonies. The issues of quality of life like one sense of place, aesthetics and heritage, perception of belonging, security and liveability, and aspirations for the future were not seen.

#### **9.4.1.2 Loss of Self-esteem and Identity**

Often the development project oustees, experience loss of self-esteem as individuals and as communities, when confronted with development and modernisation. The loss of the moral worth and dignity of a village community can be substantial and as well as socially crippling. Various studies have shown that tribals, who have strong community leadership ties and have yet to get into the mainstream market economy, feel threatened by the government power hierarchy. After relocation, they are further fragmented, weakened and inherently unable to organise themselves. The disappearing community ties caused by geographical dispersal and the threat of commercial forces squeeze their spirits further. (Areparampil and Fernandes and Raj, 1992)

#### **9.4.1.3 Loss of Culture and Religion**

Due to displacement, the oustees also face the risk of losing their culture and religious practices. They lose their cultural autonomy and in the process, their very identity is put at stake. Consequently, every area of their life from language to marriage customs and religion comes under attack. There is a gradual collapse of the religious ethos that is closely linked to their environment and socio-agrarian systems. The community festivals, which held tremendous importance in the lives of the people, lose their meaning.

#### **9.4.1.4 Loss of Political Institutions**

In the political sphere, dispossession takes place through the process of political integration in the so-called national polity. This gradually leads to the traditional political systems and institutions' redundancy. The displaced people are incorporated into the state and have to conform to and become integrated with the so called mainstream political system.

### **9.4.2 Psychological Impacts**

Research has shown that displacement and dislocation causes special cultural, economic and technical problems. Studies have shown that a feeling of alienation, helplessness and powerlessness is instilled in those uprooted. Social cohesion is weakened and increased psychological stress diminishes the initiative and capacity for collective action of those affected. Displacement may also lead to social anomie and emotional disorders. Many indicators of social anomie such as alcoholism, crime, suicides, prostitution, delinquency and despair may go up. (Vidyarthi 1970; Sengupta 1979; Fernandes and Thukral 1989; Pandey et al 1996).

### **9.4.3 Economic Impacts**

The impact of development induced displacement can also be seen in the economic spheres of tribal community. The various problems faced by the displaced tribal people are landlessness and disruptive change in the land-holding pattern, problem of joblessness and occupational shifts and homelessness. The other ill effects of displacement are loss of access to Common Property Resources (CPRs), loss of livelihood, impoverishment and food insecurity.

### **9.4.3.1 Landlessness and Change in Land-holding Pattern**

Loss of land and change in the land-holding pattern is one of the principal forms of dispossession that results from rural displacement. Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihoods are constructed. In other words, loss of land results in people losing their agricultural and homestead land that provides food and economic security to a large number of people in India. If these livelihood systems are not rebuilt elsewhere or replaced with steady income generating employment then landlessness sets in leading to impoverishment. The various types of people, social groups and villages experience the risk of landlessness differently. The tribal communities could not overcome the problem of change in the land-holding pattern and became landless.

### **9.4.3.2 Joblessness and Occupational Shifts**

Loss of wage employment and shift in the occupational pattern is yet another form of economic dispossession that the displaced people undergo. In tribal regions joblessness and occupational shifts, loss of wage employment and shift in the occupational pattern is yet another form of economic dispossession that the displaced people undergo. It occurs both in urban and rural displacement. Different categories of people are involved in the process of joblessness and occupational shifts. Firstly, there are the farmers who are deprived of their farming capacity with the loss of land leading to joblessness and resultant impoverishment if not provided with alternate livelihood systems. In tribal areas large tracts of land were taken over by the big industries for their activities. It meant loss of livelihood and jobs for both the landowners and the landless. However, since no one was losing his or her homestead, the company's rehabilitation and resettlement package for jobs to be given to one person per family losing both land and homestead, was totally inappropriate. Thus in such areas, nobody was entitled to a job. Consequently, the number of jobless people was very high amongst the displaced people. However, in the process of displacement, those without assets and land are the most vulnerable. This is because neither the State policies nor the R&R (Rewards & Recognition) programs make any clear-cut provisions for these categories. More often than not, they are not considered oustees. Even the few jobs that some oustees get in a project after displacement are of very low status and usually temporary in nature.

### **9.4.3.3 Homelessness**

Homelessness is another form of economic dispossession. Though the loss of housing and shelter is temporary for most displaced persons, this phase can be very long and traumatic by nature. In the early 1970s, no provision of construction of housing for displaced people was made by the Project authorities. Instead, those displaced were provided with homestead plots on which the people were expected to build their own houses. This created a state of homelessness of the displaced people. Again, after displacement, the displaced people often have to live in poor quality houses, which make their life very difficult.

### **9.4.3.4 Loss of Access to Common Property Resources (CPRs)**

Loss of common property resources (CPRs) results in economic, social and cultural dispossession and impoverishment for the oustees, especially the CPR dependants. For poor households in rural India, particularly the landless tribal and other asset-less communities, including women, the CPRs have always been a critical source of basic



livelihood. Minor forest produce (MFP) like fruits and edible forest produce, firewood, common grazing areas, use of public quarries, and medicinal herbs account for a significant share of a poor household's resources. Thus, the loss of the CPRs results in major income loss or livelihood deterioration particularly for the poor groups. CPRs are also of crucial importance for the future of tribal oustees particularly in terms of their indigenous knowledge, which has a close relation with the natural resources. For instance, the tribal groups are dependent upon the natural resources for manufacturing of medicine and a variety of food crops, organic pesticides and manure, herbicides, beverages etc. One of the threats related to displacement has been that this rich indigenous knowledge system may be lost due to disappearing resources, degradation of environment and the loss of those who possess generation's traditional knowledge.

#### **9.4.3.5 Loss of Livelihood and Impoverishment**

Impoverishment is a process of decline in the economic position of the oustees due to loss of basic sources of livelihood. Landlessness, joblessness and homelessness are all indications of this process of marginalisation. It is an indication that the loss of land, the loss of productive assets, and the loss of livelihood have resulted in downward mobility. It occurs when families cannot fully restore their lost economic strength. In this process, middle income farm households do not become landless, but become small holders. Families that were earlier precariously balanced above the poverty line fall below it and never recover totally even though they may not become landless. In the case of farming families, partial but significant loss of family land to roads or canal may make some farms economically non-viable. High productivity farmers on fertile soil, although they may be given some land, also may face the risk of economic non-viability. After having lost their land and common property, tribals fell into the typical cycle of increasing debt bondage, coupled with increasing destitution and intermittent employment as contract labourers in coal mines and elsewhere. In addition, over time, most were simply thrown out of their jobs and were left with nothing to fend for themselves (see Jain 1995 and Mathur and Mardsen 1998).

#### **9.4.3.6 Impacts of Displacement on Women**

Women in the tribal areas have an important role to play in the subsistence economy based on shifting cultivation, settled agriculture and access to non-timber produce. With displacement and loss of land, women lose the economic autonomy they once enjoyed and become totally subjugated to male domination. Women from rural and tribal communities are often dependent on kin relationships and community networks, which form the primary avenues of their access to scarce resources. These include access to information, assistance during health problems or sickness, child care, economic assistance along with several other social support systems. Given this, the hardships of displacement exacerbate the gendered burden of morbidities and mortality on the tribal women.

### **9.4.4 Health Impacts**

Displacement adversely affects the health status of the community, which is a sensitive indicator of development. It has also been seen that people forced to relocate have a higher degree of exposure to illness and to comparatively more severe illness, than those who are not. Adverse health effects of displacement result particularly when projects do not incorporate preventive epidemiological measures. The direct and secondary effects of involuntary dislocation without preventive health measures rank

from diseases of poor hygiene, such as diarrhoea and dysentery, to outbreaks of parasitic and vector-borne diseases such as malaria and schistosomiasis caused by unsafe, insufficient water supplies and inadequate sanitary waste systems. Studies on displacement have shown that development of large water bodies results in the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, amoebiasis, hepatitis, gastroenteritis, giardiasis, scabies, and worm infections.

**Activity**

Try to interact with displaced families and make a list of health problems they are undergoing due to displacement.

**9.4.5 Environmental Impacts**

Displacement caused by developmental reasons gives rise to numerous problems in the spheres of environment. The setting up of large industries may result in accompanying air and noise pollution.

The mega industries of mining and quarrying emits pollutants into the air, release of effluents into water, and dumping of solid wastes on open grounds, causing many hazards to the lives of people, animals and plants. A major problem of soil erosion, associated with strip mining and wind erosion has been noticed in many tribal regions. In addition, open-cast mining also generates dust during digging, stock filling, loading and dying operations. Air pollution from exhaust fumes during heavy vehicular movements and noise pollution aggravate the breathing problems in tribal areas. All this lead to major discomforts and spread of diseases to crop, people, and animals among tribal communities.

**Check Your Progress**

- 4) State the environmental impacts caused by the development induced displacement?

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**9.5 SUMMARY**

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Displacement has both positive and negative impacts. However, the negative ones generally overshadow the positive impacts. It is mainly because majorities of the displaced people experience a process of dispossession and disempowerment. In other words, the oustees face major impoverishment and dispossession risks. Not only the economic hazards of displacement but also the social, cultural, political, psychological and environmental impacts mark the risks that the oustees face. We have also seen that different types of people experience the displacement process differently. The most vulnerable groups like the asset-less rural and urban poor, the tribals, women and children are the worst affected. There are cases of complete loss of their source of livelihood. To avoid the adverse effects of displacement, the resettlement practitioner must help the oustees by organising resettlement in such a way as to restore their capital in all its forms. These points to the need for a fairly extensive socio-economic

impact evaluation to be conducted before the starting of a project and consequently a complex preventive and recovery programme in the resettlement process.

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## 9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) Displacement is a process that uproots or forces to uproot the communities and individuals out of their homelands. The causes for displacement are development

activities such as mining, creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon testing grounds, railways, road developments, sanctuaries, and construction of dams and so on. Refer to section 9.1.

- 2) RFCTLARR Act, 2013 regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India. The Act has provisions to provide fair compensation to those whose land is taken away, brings transparency to the process of acquisition of land to set up factories or buildings, infrastructural projects and assures rehabilitation of those affected. The Act establishes regulations for land acquisition as a part of India's massive industrialisation drive driven by public-private partnership. Refer to Section 9.3.
- 3) Social impacts are the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society. Refer to Sub-section 9.4.1.
- 4) Environmental impacts comprises noise pollution along with the mega industries of mining and quarrying emits pollutants into the air, release of effluents into water, and dumping of solid wastes on open grounds, caused many hazards to the lives of people, animals and plants. Refer to Sub-section 9.4.5.

