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Impact of Displacement by Development Projects on Women in India

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An examination of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) experience of people displaced by development projects clearly shows that no special provisions were made for vulnerable groups such as the landless, tribals and harijans. Constitutional safeguards for the harijans and tribals never found place in resettlement plans. Only those who had formal access to resources were recognised as project affected and compensated. The landless who depend on the land and landed for livelihood never received compensation or rehabilitation provisions to facilitate them to rearrange their access to livelihood. Similar problems exist for women. They form an inseparable part of vulnerable groups among the displaced who were excluded from specific R&R provision. The objective of this paper is to examine the impact of displacement on the social and economic condition of women. Data for this paper is drawn from evaluation studies on the resettlement and rehabilitation of people displaced by six development projects. The R&R outcome for people displaced by the following projects were evaluated: Bolani Iron Ore mines (Parasuraman, 1990a), Durgapur Steel Plant (Parasuraman, 1990b), Jawaharlal Nehru Port (Parasuraman and Segupta, 1992), Maharashtra II Irrigation (Parasuraman, 1991a), Upper Krishna Irrigation (Parasuraman, 1991b) and Sardar Sarovar dam (TISS, 1992).

Women were never identified as a priority group for intervention measures in development projects (Schenk-Sandbergen, 1991). Similarly, project authorities failed to acknowledge women as a group that deserved specific attention in the resettlement and rehabilitation process. In the planning, execution and management of R&R activities, women rarely found place as decision-makers. The government's R&R machinery too seldom had women officials responsible for decision-making or programme implementation<sup>1</sup>. The people's action groups until recently concentrated mostly on demands related to higher cash compensation for lands lost or employment for men (Fernandes, 1992; Thukral, 1992). Thus they too failed to mobilise women into active force to look after women's interests. Development projects and R&R plans revolved around men and the landed<sup>2</sup> and women normally had no role in determining the course of resettlement. In the process they lost out on many of the advantages they enjoyed in their original place of residence.

Most women in rural and tribal areas shoulder a tremendous burden in collecting fuel, fodder and water, and thus contributing to household income. Thus their apprehension about the situation in new environment is acute. The displacement and resettlement process can be extremely unsettling for them because of the uncertainties involved. While displacement was unsettling for the entire household and community, women rarely articulate their felt needs and problems. At the same time, they may not find advocacy groups to articulate demands on their behalf.<sup>3</sup> Women suffer along with rest of the household if the resettlement plan failed to adequately compensate losses. In this

situation, women's interests are bound up with the collective interests of the household (Kabeer, 1990). They can become poorer if displacement break up the household and kin group that provided them economic and social support. Project administrators may not attempt to modify the forces that undermine the social and economic welfare of women even if their problems become apparent because specific control mechanisms are not built in at the project planning stage to deal with them. Some of the major aspects that undergo change and affect the life condition of women in the resettlement process are discussed below.

#### 1. <u>Breakdown in Social Support Network</u>

Most displaced people particularly women prefer to move as part of a preexisting community, neighbourhood or kinship group for a variety of reasons. Women are less mobile than men; the breakdown of village and social units thus affects them much more severely (Thukral, 1992; TISS, 1992). For women in rural and tribal areas, kin relationships still constitute the prime avenues of access to scarce resources such as information, economic assistance and other social support (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Much of the support provisions flow from close networks: child care, assistance during sickness, access to information, economic assistance and a variety of other support. Resettlement that takes women far away from their natal home might seriously affect their welfare, as support in times of crisis that might have come from parents and brothers may not be forthcoming due to loss of frequent contact. If socially cohesive units, from the point of view of women were not resettled together it would seriously affect the welfare of women and children.

#### 2. Access to Services

Displacement may significantly alter access to services and provisions such as ration shop, health care, child welfare, schooling and mid-day meals for children, grinding mill (local mills for grinding flour), toilets, water and firewood. The change can be positive or negative depending upon the nature of R&R policy provisions and their implementation. Displacement and resettlement that forced women to engage in seasonal migration deprived them and their children from access welfare services. Any change that negatively alters access to basic provisions affect women and children seriously. Availability and access to water, firewood and grinding mill determine the work load and welfare of women.

#### 3. Access to Resources

Access to land, forest, river, sea and cattle and grassland hold different meanings for men and women. For women, access to all these resources means a diversity of livelihood strategies providing greater security against risk of poverty. In conditions of access to a multiplicity of resources, women's labour is normally used to produce for the household and they usually have some control over the nature and intensity of labour provided. They may also have some control over what is produced for household consumption. Displacement normally alters access to most of these resources and R&R provisions rarely enable households to reclaim multiple sources of livelihood. The resource replacement may focus only on men. Loss of access to traditional resources of livelihood tends to casualise women's labour. Further, loss of production capabilities tends to undermine the nutritional status of women and children.

## 4. Process of Economic and Social Changes among Project Affected Women

Two aspects of women's welfare are considered here: changes in economic activities including changes in labour force participation rate, gainful employment and income contribution to household economy; and changes in welfare of women, i.e. nature and intensity of change in household work, access to provisions such as education, health care, water, fuel and physical mobility.

In a complex socioeconomic and political context there are a number of factors acting as forces of change. However, in development projects displacement and R&R processes add powerful dimensions to change that can significantly alter women's life conditions (Perera, 1992; TISS, 1992). Among women, the nature of change is not uniform across all groups. Women belonging to all social and economic categories may experience disadvantages relative to men of their respective class; but not all women are absolutely deprived in terms of their access to a basic minimum livelihood (Standing, 1985). For instance, women from landless and small and marginal land owning households may experience greater economic and social deprivation in case of displacement. Young, adult and aged may be affected differently and their perception about change may be different. In certain situations, determined by the nature of the project, R&R provision and implementation process, and sociopolitical environment of the area where the project is located, women may hold on to their economic position. In other situations their economic value and contribution may improve or deteriorate. Given the economic and social differentiation that exist among women, they may lack the capacity to organise themselves to modify the outcome of the project to enhance their position (Schenk-Sandbergen, 1992; Perera, 1992; Majumdar, 1991; Fernandes, 1991). The following section

examines the impact of displacement on the condition of women.

#### 5. Outcome of Industry Induced Complete Displacement

#### 5.1 Mechanisms of change in women's work

Location of industries, ports and mines in a rural setting can have disastrous consequences for women. Establishment of an industry or mine in rural areas means that a number of villages are completely displaced and resettled elsewhere, normally around the industry and township. It also means that landed and landless households from completely affected villages lose all connection with agriculture and shift to industry related employment. In the event of industry's lack of capacity to absorb the dispossessed, people suffer serious economic deprivation.

- Loss of employment in agriculture: For women, agriculture is an important source of employment. In rural India about 32 per cent of the women were in labour force in 1887-88 and around 85 per cent were found in agriculture. In 1983, the proportion of female workers engaged in agricultural activities ranged from a minimum of 73.1% in Kerala to a maximum of 97% in Himachal Pradesh (Unni, 1989). All India data for rural areas reveals that for women, compared to men, agriculture continues to be the most important source of employment (Chandrasekar, 1993; Visaria and Minhas, 1991; Banerji, 1989). Due to social prestige, as perceived by men, high caste women normally worked on own land and refrained from wage labour. On the other hand, women from landless and lower caste households engaged in own cultivation if they owned land or possessed share-crop land and also worked as casual wage labourers in agriculture. Thus, loss of all cultivable land for industry and emergence of employment centering around industry meant that women from landed and landless households lost most avenues of employment.
- (ii) Industry jobs to men: When jobs were given in industries, mines and ports they invariably went to men. The project authorities and the people perceived men as providers of livelihood, and only their claim to industrial employment was accepted. Industries that provide mostly unskilled and arduous tasks to project affected people prefer men for such tasks. Women thus lose out though they may perform such tasks in wage labour outside industry. For example, those women who had entitlement to a job by virtue of losing land but were refused by public sector (Central and State Government owned) mines, worked in hand mining as casual workers in private mines (Parasuraman, 1990a; Fernandes, 1992; Viegas, 1992). Women as cheap labourers were in great demand in small

private mines. Often the societal values too act against women. Jobs may not go to girls even in situations where suitable men were not available in the household. For example, a household may get a ghar-jawai (boy who upon marriage changes residence to his wife's father's house) to take the job and support the household. In many projects, households facilitated ghar-jawais but not the girl from the household to obtain industry employment (Parasuraman, 1990a). In industries that provided jobs to a member of the retiring employee's kin, when there were no men available from the household, such replacement employment was often traded as dowry. A girl's employment and earnings would be accepted as dowry only when the boy had better employment and that too, only in certain social environments. In most cultural regions in India dowry in the real sense meant direct transfer of resources to the boy or men from his household but not through the girl. Increasingly, replacement jobs are being traded as one element of a dowry package.

Men from landed households that lost land were normally absorbed in industries. Men from landless households and those landed but unable to find employment with industry competed with women for casual and contractor related wage labour.

Work opportunities for women: In case of industry related displacement where agriculture as a source of livelihood ceased to exist, women from low caste and economically disparate households competed with migrant women for work in the low-paying, supply-driven informal sector. An ever increasing number of migrant workers willing to do any work in a new social environment unrelated to their village placed women from resettled villages at a disadvantaged position. High caste households kept women out of informal sector non-agricultural wage labour on account of prestige and potential ritual pollution from manual work (Bardhan, 1984; Betellie, 1983). Other caste households that were experiencing economic and social upward mobility with industry employment withdrew women from informal sector employment. In the process, women from high caste households experienced total withdrawal from the labour force.

### 5.2 The Case of Durgapur Steel Plant and Jawaharlal Nehru Port

The experience women from displaced households in Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) in West Bengal and Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNP) near Bombay are examined in this section.

In Durgapur women from 'Sresettled households'S from all caste and economic groups suffered tremendous damage to their economic participation. Work participation rates among women in rural West Bengal were much lower compared to the rest of rural India. Though the work participation level in Durgapur was always low among high caste women in West Bengal, abrupt

transfer from agriculture to industry completely removed them from the labour force. Women from previously landless and poor households who had higher participation rates in the labour force, were seriously affected by the loss of land. In DSP displaced villages at least about 20 per cent of the landless and marginal landowning households cultivated share-crop land, besides being engaged in wage labour. Women from such households completely lost the opportunity for work in agriculture. In the resettled villages located closer to their original villages on which the industry and township now stand, women's chances of employment in the non-agricultural sector were affected by heavy influx of migrants. In 1990, 2.3, 2.4 and 33 per cent of women respectively in 15-59 age group from high, middle and lower caste households were engaged in paid work. A large proportion of women from lower caste households who reported working were underemployed. Most of them were working as domestic servants in the company township. Many informal sector industry and service activities that were in women's domain were taken away by migrant men.

In JNP affected villages women worked as fish traders, salt makers, cultivators and agricultural wage labourers. While fishing was a completely male activity women shouldered the entire task of retailing. About 60 per cent of all activities related to salt making and rice cultivation were done by women. Because of their involvement in fish sales, they had greater access to money and independence in allocation of monies. Women belonging to the Agri and Koli castes, together accounting for 90 per cent of the households affected by the port, had greater autonomy and access to economic resources. The port acquired all agricultural and salt pan land and closed access to the sea. With that, women lost access to all sources of work and in the post-port period and no viable employment alternatives emerged. The booming, but extremely exploitative construction industry in New Bombay and Panvel (about 10 km from the affected villages) provided alternative employment but women from displaced households were not used to such work. A few women from desperately poor households have taken up work as petty traders, construction workers and casual labourers. All these activities were in no way comparable to their status as fish traders, rice cultivators and salt makers. In a way, the Port is a symbol of the complete marginalisation of women from income providing work. Traditional sources of livelihood owned by the household, and the enduring support of the sea facilitated women's work, honour and dignity. Now men have become the exclusive contributors to household income through their permanent employment with port or other forms of industry related employment in the area. Most women considered their current position as humiliating, as until recently they were proud self-employed, economically strong and contended individuals (Parasuraman and Sengupta, 1992).

In DSP and JNP affected villages agriculture formed a well defined domain of women's activity unlike in industries, power plants and ports where women had no defined role. Men were

better placed to get the relatively scarce organised factory employment created by industrial growth. Employers and trade unions preferred men even when women with required qualification were available. This pattern has lead to a greater degree of pauperisation of displaced women and has also increasingly confined of women to the margins of the labour market. In Durgapur women from completely displaced villages have not found work in the last three decades. Industrial stagnation and continued influx of migrants has rendered entry of women into regular paid employment very difficult. These women also felt that conditions for their educated and uneducated daughters-in-law had also worsened. The labour force participation rate for women has steadily deteriorated in Durgapur since 1971.

#### 6. Outcome of Industry Induced Partial Displacement

Land loss due to development projects was partial in some villages around projects with easy access to industry and township. These villages present a second scenario for employment opportunities to women. They provide a lesson that any diversification in avenues of employment, keeping at least part of the land base intact, leads to increased employment for women. That was when industry and agriculture acted as facilitators of economic growth indirectly leading to employment of women.

In many projects, about 60 per cent of the affected villages lost only part of their land often retaining over 40 per cent of all agricultural land available in the village. The process of improvement in employment opportunity for women in these partially affected villages was unique in the case of Durgapur. DSP gave employment to all those households that lost land and presented them with an excellent opportunity for investment in agriculture. Thus people who had some land left-out after acquisition, invested the compensation money and income from industrial employment to improve land quality. Many bought new land from neighbouring villages. In the process, all sections of the project affected population gained. Women who wanted to work found work in agriculture. The fundamental element that facilitated work for women was land availability. Employment and income loss due to partial land loss, as in Durgapur villages, were compensated by land improvement and creation of irrigation facilitated by compensation money and industrial employment. If land purchase was not possible, non-farm self-employment opportunities were possible from income from agriculture and industrial employment.

Meanwhile labour supply declined in these partially affected villages for various reasons:

(i) Men from landed households who were originally involved in cultivation shifted to industry jobs.

(ii) A significant proportion of men from originally landless and share-cropper households shifted to better paying contractor and other industry related informal sector employment in Durgapur. (iii) High

and middle caste households, with industry employment withdrew women from whatever agricultural work they were performing. All these factors increased the demand for labour all through the year. Women from landless, poor and lower caste households took advantage of this increase in demand for wage labour and resultant rise in wages. Women living in encroached settlements in Durgapur town could have competed for wage labour in agriculture in the surrounding villages but distance and lack of transportation to the villages kept them away.

Experience from the partially affected villages of Durgapur brought out two other points. First, women from middle and high caste households with industrial employment withdrew from the labour force. Transition of men from agriculture to permanent industrial work eliminated the need for women's work. This led to a dip in labour force participation of women from such households to almost negligible levels. Second, women from landless and lower caste households could avail of agricultural employment created by their men who took up better paying industrial employment in the unorganised sector in Durgapur. Men were eager to break away from the traditional caste linked bondage imposed by agricultural work and escape from the dominance of higher caste men. Women could not escape from such a situation though the dominance of high caste households significantly weakened due to industrialisation in Durgapur.

In the absence of a land base industrial development did not help women. In the case of JNP in the partially affected villages all agricultural, common and government lands covering 343.7 sq km area were acquired for the New Bombay project. In Durgapur, the outer periphery constituted the partially affected villages and they had some land left with them. But in the case of JNP the outer periphery villages also lost all land. Since the loss of agricultural and salt pan land and access to sea was totally denied even in partially affected villages, the marginalisation of women from the labour force was comprehensive.

#### 6.1 The Case of Bolani Iron Ore Mines

The mining activities in Bolani mines in Orissa affected the life of women in four ways: casualisation of labour; increased social problems due to breakdown of social control; problems of drinking water; and problems related to firewood collection.

(i) <u>Casualisation of labour</u>: The nature of work in which women were engaged has undergone significant changes in the post-mine period. Women who were earlier mostly engaged in cultivation, forest produce collection and other household activities were increasingly engaged in non-agricultural wage labour. None of the woman belonging to the original village households found permanent jobs

in the mines or with the government. Though the government mines did not employ tribal women there were a large number of small private mines in the area that employed them as daily wage labourers. Women from all villages worked as casual labourers in stone quarrying and mica mining in the area. Most of these activities were difficult, strenuous and paid low wages - Rs 9 per day in 1990. Further, collection of wood and firewood for sale has become one of the sources of livelihood for tribal households that could not find gainful employment in other sectors. In Bolani, in at least 10 per cent of the households women were engaged in wood collection for sale in the mine township or other towns in the area.

In spite of large scale mining operations in and around Bolani and the expansion of modern infrastructure in Bolani township, tribal women from original villages did not benefit. Their villages remain isolated and deprived of basic amenities. Mining operations, population growth, depletion of resources from forest and river have seriously affected women.

(ii) Pollution of Drinking Water: In mining operations water from Karo river and nallas (tributaries of Karo river) is used for dust suppression and beneficiation (washing dust particles). Normally, the polluted water is treated at the tail end dam however, but it becomes unusable for drinking and irrigation. A study on the iron ore mine in Bailadilla in Madhya Pradesh concluded that water pollution was the most serious of the mine's environmental impacts: "the screening and washing plants of the iron ore mines are located at the very source of Sankhani river, which is the principal source of water for people of the valley. The tribals who used to fetch water from the river no longer use it, not even the animals frequent the place. It has been found that such polluted water is no longer useful for irrigation purposes. This has created serious problems in 23 villages" (BHPE-KINHILL, 1991). The situation in Bolani was not different from Bailadilla. It is, if anything, worse, given the extent of mining by State and private enterprises. Pollution of Karo river water has increased the work load of women in fetching water.

The problem of water is serious among the villages downstream because neither the mines nor the government have made any attempt to create alternative water sources. The government has relinquished all responsibility for providing basic services, including water, to the public mines. When the mines failed to provide such services, people located downstream suffered a great deal.

(iii) <u>Problems of Firewood Collection</u>: Forest conditions have changed significantly in the mining areas. Since mines were concentrated in specific areas and located close to each other, the impact of mining operations has seriously affected the forest cover. Removal of forest cover was effected for mining, township, roads, rails, electricity lines and other purposes. Forest cover has also been

destroyed by pollution from mining operations. Deforestation has become a serious problem because of increased demand for firewood. Growing numbers of people depend on sale of firewood and timber for a livelihood, and forest land for agriculture and settlement. All households covering a population of 19544 were completely depended on wood as fuel. As the number of people collecting firewood has increased, women's labour to collect wood for household use has increased. If the household collected wood for sale, the distance travelled and time spent for the purpose imposed serious strain on the life of the women and children. The fear of action by forest personnel further aggravated the tension.

(iv) <u>Social Problems</u>: While the economy and ecology of tribal areas has changed drastically due to outside intervention, social and cultural aspects of life have not kept pace with this change. When people had access to rice and <u>mahua</u> flowers liquor was brewed at home and served at all social occasions. Loss of land deprived people of rice and destruction of the forest eliminated access to <u>mahua</u> flowers. Contractors have taken over the liquor business. Alcoholism among the men has become a serious problem fostered largely by liquor contractors, who were also private mine owners and traders and have effectively enslaved tribal men to submission and extracted labour. As the contribution of men to household income declined due to alcoholism the pressure on women has increased.

#### 7. Outcome of River Valley Projects on Women

Irrigation projects displace and affect larger numbers of people compared to industrial projects. Like industrial projects, irrigation projects can improve or completely marginalise women from employment and income generating activities. People who lose land are normally given cash compensation. The displaced may also receive agricultural land in lieu of compensation money paid for lost land. Economic opportunities for women depend on two aspects:

(i) whether households got to replace the land lost with land, and whether other household too had land replaced with land? In certain projects, government may facilitate the eligible households to obtain land. Affected households may buy land using the compensation money and other resources on their own efforts. (ii) to what extent has labour supply been curtailed due to out-migration of men and women from project affected households?

#### 7.1 The case Maharashtra II irrigation project

The experience of MII is characterised by partial replacement of land, increased male migration, investment in land and improved economic position of women.

Satara in Maharashtra State has been traditionally a male selective out-migration prone district. To facilitate male out-migration a majority of the households (62 per cent) remained extended or joint. The remaining 38 per cent households were nuclear. All groups — landed and landless, high caste and low caste — experienced male out-migration. Among the landed households migration was basically facilitated by joint or extended households. The living arrangements of the landed had three objectives: cultivation of land owned in the village; increasing savings to expand the resource base in the village by living alone in the city; and providing security and undisrupted life to women and children left behind in the village. Women along with the aged men managed the household's economic and social affairs. Landless households too experienced migration though at a lower level. About 76 per cent of the households among the landless were nuclear. Among the landed and landless households, women enjoyed greater autonomy and were involved in decision -making on matters of short-term importance.

In the pre-project stage all women irrespective of caste and landholding were involved in agricultural activities. Women from Maratha and other high caste households in Maharashtra had no social pretensions of refraining from manual labour. The labour force participation rate was high, about 65 per cent among women aged 15-59 years. About 55-60 per cent of the households had at least one male working in Bombay or other places. Absence of young and/or adult men demanded labour contribution from women for cultivation and as agricultural wage labourer. As men moved on to better paid regular employment in industry and non-agricultural activities, women filled the gap left by men in agriculture. Displacement from land increased out-flow of men changing the work contribution of women significantly.

(i) <u>Increase in labour participation of women</u>: Among the <u>resettled households</u>, 32 per cent of the land owned in the original village was replaced. Fresh male out-migration after displacement removed a certain proportion of labour — about 18 per cent — who would have otherwise depended on agriculture. People were resettled in the command area of the project. Most of the land allotted to resettled households has received canal irrigation, which prompted intensification of cultivation. The status 'displaced' provided easy access to credit and agricultural input which helped to improve productivity. Remittances from the migrants assisted land improvements and a few bought land.<sup>4</sup>

People who preferred to settle around the rim of the reservoir in 'rim villages' belonged to

lower caste and landless households from the original village. These households cultivated land located above the reservoir which were not acquired by the government. Due to such arrangements the proportion of landless households decreased from 87.9 per cent in the pre-project period to 18.9 per cent in the post-project period. The availability of land coupled with limited fresh out-migration of men and increased wage labour availability in villages around the reservoir enhanced the work participation of women in the rim villages.

(ii) Extent of labour provided by women: In the resettled villages about 68 per cent of the agricultural work in landed households was done by women. There was increased dependence on hired labour due to the out-migration of men and intensification of agriculture. In households with more than one hectare land, 47 per cent of the agricultural work was done with hired labour. Households with less land depended mostly on their own labour, hiring labour only for limited purposes. All households hired tractors for ploughing. In all, 66 per cent of the women aged 15-59 years in resettled villages were engaged in agricultural activities.

In the rim villages, 59 per cent of the agricultural work was done by women. Much of the land possessed by rim village households was located on slopes. Ploughing and land preparation were done by men. Thereafter, women shouldered much of the agricultural work, with men moving to command area villages for agricultural and non-agricultural wage labour. In the rim villages 71 per cent of the adult (aged 15-59 years) women were engaged in agricultural activities.

Resettlement in the command area helped to increase wage labour opportunities for women from landless households. The irrigation intensified cultivation prompted a shift to cash crops such as sugarcane, groundnut and pulses; thus has increased labour requirements benefiting women from landless and small land owning households. An adult woman engaged in agricultural wage labour received Rs 14 per day as wages.

Almost all households displaced by MII selected options that provided better chances of enhancing their economic strength. These were: residence in the rural area for the main household, joint or extended family structure, a firm ground agriculture or wage labour, and the migration of men to Bombay or other industrial cities. Women remained in the village irrespective of inconvenience caused by absence of men. Women exercised considerable influence on the household economy, the up-bringing of children and decision- making. They learned to live with family dislocation with men visiting the village several times in a year.

The social background and persuasive powers of the displaced people brought school, integrated child development services (ICDS), water, sanitation, ration shop and other basic services to the resettled villages. Since the villages were well connected to Satara city, access to medical

services became easy. The rim villages could not get the provisions that resettled villages received primarily because of their location and the limited number of households settled in each location.

## 7.2 The case of Upper Krishna Irrigation Project

The Upper Krishna irrigation project (UKP) in Karnataka is characterised by: inability to replace land, haphazard resettlement, social and economic marginalisation of women.

The change in position of women in irrigation project affected households can be negative, if the policies of the government and alternatives offered to them do not facilitate economic and social recovery. UKP marginalised women from the economy and reduced them to a socially powerless group. First, people lost land for meagre cash compensation. The government made no attempt to provide replacement land or other income providing assets. The proportion of landless households was high (>30 per cent) in the pre-project stage, and displacement pushed all marginal, small medium landowning farmers to the category of landless labourers. Second, the government did not try to find resettlement sites in the command area where people would have had an opportunity to buy land due to the decision to resettle them in the land depleted submergence area. This has lead to disintegration of households into a number of loose formations in their effort to find a livelihood.

After land acquisition about 25 per cent of the land was available for cultivation. In the land depleted submergence area there was no scope for acquiring land. A few households bought land in other villages but that did not add to the employment opportunity of displaced people. In the process 76 per cent households were landless left to earn a livelihood from less than 25 per cent of the land in the village. Displacement broke the joint households into nuclear units. The situation created by displacement was countered with increased out-migration. About 30 per cent of the landless households responded with seasonal out-migration of the whole unit. In another 22 per cent households men moved out for employment leaving women to take over whatever wage labour was available in and around the village.

(i) Outcome of family Migration: Women along with their men and children from about 30 per cent households migrated to Goa, Ratnagiri and Bombay for employment in manganese mines, agriculture and construction, respectively.<sup>5</sup> The nature of migration and the living conditions that go with this type of work, made life uncertain and significantly affected the welfare of women and children. Migration of families to work as construction labour in places like Bombay under hard living conditions had disastrous consequences on women and children. Most of the child and women related services, like health, ICDS, preschool, ration shops, 6 schools and other important basic

services are fixed to specific places. On the other hand, construction work involved constant moves from site to site. During monsoon months the families normally returned to the villages to work as agricultural labourers in the sowing season only to move out again in September. The whole process deprived women and children from services meant for them. Displacement that pushed families to engage in repetitive, unrewarding seasonal migration for construction and other temporary work, marginalised not just them but subsequent generations too (Laxmi, 1992). People living in encroached areas, pavements, construction sites and seasonal migrants are automatically eliminated from such services (Parasuraman, 1992). Poor and landless, <u>harijans</u> and tribals living in nuclear families and female headed households suffered most.

- (ii) <u>Uncertain opportunities and reduced wages</u>: Women from landless and dispossessed households depended on agricultural wage labour available in and around the village. Wages paid were very low, Rs 7 for men and Rs 4 for women, less than half of the minimum wages fixed by the Karnataka Government. Growth in female agricultural labour has taken place mostly among the low caste and nomadic tribes (<u>Banjaras</u>). Women in this group make up the most impoverished and disadvantaged group among the displaced. This group represented about 20 per cent of the displaced households. Majority of the children belonging to this group of households were out of school and had poor access to health care services. Men from this group migrated to command villages and towns in Northern Karnataka for employment.
- (iii) <u>Muslim women and intensification of Purdah</u>: Women from Muslim households were not engaged in agricultural activities in the village, earlier. Men were involved in trade related activities. Most of the Muslim households moved out of the original villages and settled in towns in Northern Karnataka namely, Gulbarga, Raichur and Dharwad. Migration to the city intensified the practice of <u>purdah</u> which greatly restricted their mobility.
- (iv) <u>Marginalisation of women from fishermen and shepherd households</u>: In <u>Jalgar</u> households engaged in fishing, women worked as retail fish traders. With the loss of fishing in the river and inability of <u>Jalgar</u> men to get into reservoir fishing for want of motor boats, women lost trading activities and access to money. Most of the <u>Jalgar</u> households slipped into poverty conditions. A few took up unirrigated land for share-cropping from nearby villages. In shepherd households the land use pattern altered by the dam resulted in migration of men with their herds to the command area leaving women to mind household affairs.

In the post-displacement period, although women's contribution to household income was significant, it was rarely acknowledged. The uncertainty of availability of wage labour and low wages paid to women masks their contribution. Irrespective of caste, religion and economic status, women from all households experienced social and economic deprivation. In the post-displacement situation women as cohesive group do not exist.

## 7.3 The case of Sardar Sarovar Project and Impact on Women

Sardar Sarovar project is different from all other projects examined earlier for a number of reasons. The project involved displacement in three States, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. About 60 per cent of the displaced are tribals spread over all three States. The resettlement and rehabilitation policy for the people displaced by the project in all three States are different making the whole process complicated. Displaced people from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh who are faced with an adverse R&R package in their own States compared to Gujarat have the option of resettling in Gujarat. But such a move divests them of their cultural links. Even as people are engaged in a fight against the dam to avoid displacement, eviction of people from 19 villages in Gujarat and one village in Maharashtra has been largely completed. The R&R experience of women from one Maharashtra village, namely Manibeli, is examined in this paper.

(i) Transformation of women's role in Parveta: The people of Manibeli in Maharashtra were resettled in Parveta village in Gujarat. In Manibeli village all households except those of cattle grazer's had access to land. Average amount of land owned was 2.6 ha. All households except cattle grazer's had cows, bullocks, goats and chicken. Access to forest and river produce supplemented the household's consumption capabilities. The resettlement of Manibeli people in Parveta was facilitated by provision of a minimum of 2 ha land to all households and major sons aged 18 years and above as of January 1, 1987. Resettlement witnessed temporary reorganisation of related nuclear households into joint families to facilitate labour, continue cultivation of Manibeli land for some more time and clearance and cultivation of Parveta land.

All women — young and old — worked on agriculture. As in Manibeli, in Parveta too agriculture is the primary occupation. The nature and intensity of work performed by men and women are undergoing significant changes. Women, on the whole now work for a longer period on cultivation than they did in Manibeli due to intensive winter cropping. However, the intensity of the work has changed. All own bullocks, cart and plough. Many hire tractors for ploughing. Thus the labour involved in preparation of land for cultivation, weeding and carrying loads has reduced. In

Manibeli the nature of terrain and technology used made agricultural work laborious.

In Manibeli women never went out of the village for wage labour, but in Parveta a growing number of them are involved in agricultural and non-agricultural wage labour within and outside the village. Young women are moving out of Parveta for wage labour in sugar plantations. It is generally conceded in Parveta that increased involvement of women in agricultural and non-agricultural wage labour involving seasonal out-migration is inevitable due to the growing need for cash.

Findings: Besides involvement in own cultivation, women's participation in wage labour was seen to be: 59 per cent households in which women are not engaged in wage labour; 25 per cent households where women contributed less than 50 per cent of the total wages earned; and 16 per cent households where women contributed to more than 50% of the total wage income earned.

Parveta women received training in certain traditional trades such as spinning and tailoring. Eighty women had started training on Amber Charkha (spinning machine) and 20 completed. On completion of training these women were given the machine by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). In January 1992 only two machines were in working condition. Usually, it is possible to spin 20 to 25 bundles yielding Rs.15-20 per day. Women found time in the afternoons and evenings to work on the Charkha, but problems related to the machine and irregular supplies from KVIC has made this activity redundant. Interestingly, men are demanding that they should also be trained as they find more free time compared to women and girls. Twenty women were given training in tailoring. All those who completed training were given sewing machines on 100 per cent subsidy. Parveta is a small village and can generate work for not more than two or three tailors.

- Outcome of Positive R&R provisions for Women: Collection of water and grinding flour were the most difficult and time consuming tasks performed by women in Manibeli. The situation has changed in recent years in Parveta. After the initial exasperating years, the water position has improved considerably. Water for drinking, washing and cattle is now available quite close to homes. Drudgery of grinding flour has been replaced by flour mills. Gobar gas (coking gas generated out of cow dung) is handy to few women from households generating sufficient gobar. Eighteen out of 166 households had received money for gobar gas plants; six were operational in January 1992. Over a period of time gobar gas is expected to relieve at least 40 per cent of women from the task of firewood collection. These changes to have released considerable time from women's daily routines which they feel can effectively be used on income generating activities.
- (iii) Women's Perception of Resettlement in Parveta: Most of the Tadvi men in Manibeli

traditionally married women from Gujarat. By shifting to Parveta all women found themselves located closer to their natal homes. From the women's point of view getting land was the most important concern. About 60 per cent of the women were happy with the land received. The rest with poor land quality had to engage in wage labour in and out of Parveta and had fears of being poverty stricken.

The health and mortality situation in Parveta has been a serious cause of concern for most women. After shifting to Parveta they felt that the incidence of sickness among men and children had increased significantly. There was broad agreement that the health condition of most people had deteriorated in Parveta due to the changes in water and environment. A very high proportion (about 30 per cent) of those who gave birth during 1986 to 1990 lost their children. At least five women lost all children born to them during the six years. The situation has not stabilised. The higher incidence of cattle death is also attributed to water quality and lack of green fodder.

There is a growing realisation among the women of the increasing need for cash for their families. They are concerned about the increasing dependence on cash crops and agricultural inputs. A large proportion of households could not repay loans taken from banks and private sources for purchase of agricultural inputs with earnings from the 1991-92 harvest. This has affected the investment capacity of most households to procure agricultural inputs following the 1992 monsoon.

The level and diversity of consumption has become another aspect of concern for women. The cropping pattern in Parveta has affected the capacity of household consumption of vegetables and pulses. Lack of vegetable (ambadi and bhendi) cultivation in Parveta has seriously affected its consumption. Meanwhile increased demand for cash for other purposes has undermined the capacity of households to buy vegetables and pulses.

Resettlement in Parveta in the midst of villages inhabited by caste Hindus, has intensified 'Hinduisation' and high caste social practices. <u>Tadvis</u> have stopped taking or paying bride-price, instead they are moving towards <u>dowry</u>; <u>purdah</u> has become common; and male children receive preferential treatment in schooling and parents demand reduced labour inputs from them. Two factors have contributed to this change.

First, the R&R programme through its emphasis on males for all provisions has enhanced the value of sons. Land provision, subsistence allowance payment, government jobs were all meant only for males and major sons. Unless women had land on their name, they were not eligible for any provisions. Fierce competition to get hold of R&R provisions that may be available over and above common entitlements has placed female headed households at a distinct disadvantage. Second, women's labour was indispensable in Manibeli. But in Parveta this has changed. The resettlement package has enabled men to possess all forms modern agricultural implements: bullocks, cart, iron

ploughs, dusters, sprayers and other items. Tractors can be easily hired. Because of the presence of caste Hindu villages all around Parveta, landless labourers are available at cheap rates and can be hired at short notice. Thus women's labour has become dispensable.

#### 8. Conclusion

- 1. All the case studies have one aspect in common, that is, any loss of access to traditional sources of livelihood land, forest, sea, river, pasture, cattle and salt pan land marginalises women in the labour force. It is only when land and other sources are replaced that women at least partially regain their economic status.
- 2. Due to the loss of access to traditional sources of livelihood and the inability of the household to replace these sources, women get pushed into work in the most exploitative sectors. They end up working as construction, mining and stone workers, domestic servants, and agricultural labourers in markets flooded with dispossessed men and women.
- Industries, mines, irrigation and power projects have failed to assist women with skill training and facilitate entry into self-employment activities. All projects examined in this study, except Sardar Sarovar, made no attempt at enabling women to gain access to non-farm employment opportunities. Often, however, women and children seem to have paid a very heavy price for displacement in a large proportion of households affected by UKP, BIOM and JNP women not only suffered in terms of poor health and malnutrition, they also lost the capacity to provide a secure future for their children. By engaging in seasonal migration in the absence of other alternatives they have denied access to their children to school, health, child welfare, preschool and other welfare services.
- 4. Women found work as agricultural labourers in projects only when men moved out to take employment in non-agricultural sector. Women from the partially affected villages of DSP and completely affected villages of UKP fit into this category. Women from partially affected villages in Durgapur found work that occupied them for most part of the year primarily because men moved to non-agricultural activities in Durgapur. In Upper Krishna Project women found work as agricultural labourers because men moved out to work as agricultural labourers in the command area, or migrated to Bombay and Goa for non-agricultural work. In Durgapur and UKP area, women basically filled the slots vacated by men. But one fact separated and determined the welfare of women in these two places. In Durgapur, women provided labour in conditions of high level of labour demand in

agriculture, which was revitalised due to input from compensation money received and income from industrial employment. The daily wage rate was very high, about Rs 14-18 in 1990, depending on the nature of work. Earnings of men from non-agricultural activities, and women's earnings from agriculture enhanced the income level of most households that were landless or engaged in cultivation as share-croppers prior to land loss. In UKP affected villages, women competed for scarce wage employment in agriculture in reservoir depleted land base, where the wages paid were too low (Rs 4 to 5 per day in 1991). Most of the households that were landless prior to land acquisition, and those small and marginal farmers who were rendered landless due to land loss to the project, could not escape poverty, irrespective of the involvement of men and women as casual labourers in agricultural and non-agricultural sector.

- 5. When the land loss was compensated with land, women regained their status as workers on own land. In the case of Maharashtra II Irrigation and Sardar Sarovar Project the labour force participation rate after resettlement of women aged 15-59 remained as high or increased after resettlement. Women from most households affected by M II managed to survive displacement with dignity, partly because of the government's R&R policy and to a large extent due to their own efforts. women in Satara district were socialised to live with permanent disturbance. The following aspects worked in favour of women: joint or extended family at the place of origin, male selective out-migration, maintenance of effective social network in Bombay that assisted new migrants to gain suitable employment, and emphasis on the education of children. R&R policy assisted them to the extent of facilitating resettlement in the command area.
- 6. Displacement from the original land base and loss of diversified sources of livelihood in SSP and Bolani meant that women joined men in taking up wage labour in and outside the village. The proportion of women engaged in agricultural and non-agricultural wage labour increased steadily after resettlement. Casualisation of women's labour is having serious impact on their status. Bolani women are now engaged in wage labour in stone quarries, private mines and contract work.
- Displacement and resettlement also benefited women to some extent. In the case of Sardar Sarovar project resettlement in a plain area and provision of water taps closer to homes, installation of flour mills, and provision of bullocks, cart, agricultural implements generally reduced the hard labour involved in water fetching, flour grinding and agricultural work which brought significant relief to women in the resettled villages. The time released from these operations has enabled women in resettled villages to involve themselves income earning activities such as wage labour, spinning and

tailoring.

- 8. Relief from hard labour in certain fundamental tasks came at a cost to women. The <u>Tadvis</u>, who are relatively more Hinduised among the <u>Bhil</u> tribal groups in Narmada region, have made significant changes in their social life that in essence meant reduced importance of women as contributors to household economy. The <u>Tadvis</u> who normally paid bride-price in marriage transactions have either stopped paying bride-price or demand dowry. The adoption of high caste Hindu values have undermined the status of women. The intensity of <u>purdah</u> has also increased.
- \* This paper was written as part of the author's work at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague as Senior Research Fellow. Comments on the paper by Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Jeemol Unni and Bridget O'Laughlin are gratefully acknowledged.

#### Notes

- 1. The author encountered no women officials in the government dealing with R&R at the state, district and tehsil level or in the project villages. There were two top women bureaucrats at Central Government in New Delhi who were associated with resettlement for a short period but they never cared to play any positive role in addressing to women related issues. The World Bank missions rarely had women officials appraising or evaluating issues central to women. Even in a high profile project such as the Narmada Irrigation project there was no clear policy on specific needs of women though at the implementation stage some attention was given to improving the self-employment potential of women. In the absence of a clear policy framework much of the effort has remained patchy and unsustainable.
- According to Section 45 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 and Amendment Act, 1984, if an eviction and compensation notice is served on a woman, it is not legal. It is strange to find so antiquated and retrograde a provision in the laws of a country whose constitution guarantees that no discrimination by the State on the grounds of sex (MARG, 1990). The government was urged to remove this clause from the Act when it was amended in 1984. This clause however remained intact.
- 3. Activists working with the project affected people are young women who either oppose the project or demand better R&R provisions. Their articulated demands incorporate women's needs and interests such as special training and income generating measures. However they take care not to antagonize men and thus play down women related aspects.
- 4. It is rather difficult to buy land in the command area as most of the villages around resettled villages have received canal irrigation. By the end of 1993 the remaining command area will receive water. Arrival of irrigation has completely removed the possibility of buying land due to its income generating potential for the owner.
- Wages paid in Northern Karnataka were very low forcing many young men and women to move out for 'better' wage work. Given the fact that availability of work and number of days of work were limited to a maximum of about 150 days, most of the households depending on wage labour were not in a position to satisfy their consumption needs.
- 6. The bottom 20 per cent of the households in rural areas account for 98 per cent of the rural poor. These households get less than 15 per cent of their total purchase of grain from the Public Distribution System. PDS's role in supplementing the consumption level of the poor seems to be very limited in rural and urban areas (IDBI, 1992).



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