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THE ANTI-NARMADA PROJECT MOVEMENT IN INDIA: Can the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy Gains be Translated into a National Policy

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WORKING PAPERS

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THE ANTI-NARMADA PROJECT MOVEMENT IN INDIA: CAN RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION POLICY GAINS BE TRANSLATED INTO A NATIONAL POLICY

Millions of people have been displaced by development projects in India since the year 1950. However, less than 25 per cent of the displaced people have been resettled and rehabilitated (Fernandes, 1992). Regardless of the magnitude of the population displaced and absence of rehabilitation measures, neither the Central Government nor the State Governments have enacted effective legislations to amend the situation. Inherent social and economic inequalities embedded in the Indian society, alongside the type of laws for land acquisition and compensation payment have curtailed the capacity of the displaced to organise themselves and demand better rehabilitation provisions. However, of late, people affected by the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) and the activists spearheading the Narmada Movement seem to have sown the seeds of protest and have thus challenged the government effectively. The movement has brought the issue of rights of the displaced people to the forefront, generating a national debate. The Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) policy provisions which are now available for SSP displaced people are considered to be a package which carries the promise of development opportunity to the dispossessed, for the first time in the country.

This paper is an attempt to answer one pertinent question: Can the R&R policy which has evolved over a period of time for the SSP affected people in Gujarat be translated into a national policy on R&R? In order to answer this question, we may first analyse the rationale behind the R&R strategies devised by the government in projects executed before SSP. Further, we will present the historical context and trace the process in which the Narmada Movement was located, to provide us with an understanding of the forces that shaped R&R policy. An elaboration of the elements of the R&R package for the SSP displaced in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh is followed by a discussion on its scope for implementation. Finally, we turn to answer our central question. Sources of data for this paper are given in Appendix 1.

1. GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO R&R IN IRRIGATION PROJECTS

All irrigation projects in India have typically followed the incremental approach (pari pasu) to resettlement of displaced people, in that people were shifted and resettled according to the construction and submergence schedule. In this approach, a clear demarcation of the level and area

of submergence, identification and enumeration of affected households, survey and acquisition of land in the submergence area were undertaken in phases, in accordance with the tentative submergence schedule. The Government defended the incremental approach by stating that "in large irrigation projects, R&R process that continues over a long period of time has to be carried out in steps and not in one go. Lands under submergence cannot be kept frozen for the purpose of acquisition over years, to the detriment of the displaced. The entire process is a time stream of actions and has to be judged from how far the scheduled R&R targets are in keeping with the main physical works of the projects and how best they have been met with" (Rao, 1990; TISS, 1991; Chitale, 1992). This argument reinforces the belief that the R&R approach is solely dictated by the progress of main project work. It considers the displacement of people and environmental destruction induced by the projects as residual elements and deals with them as and when they become problematic in the project cycle. Further, the Government's argument for delaying land acquisition for the benefit of the displaced does not have much meaning because, once an area has been identified for submergence, its value as property for sale and collateral for loan drops and, in effect the incentive for improvement vanishes automatically. In many projects where the waiting time for acquisition of land was prolonged due to project delays, farmers witnessed greater difficulties in getting credit and access to agricultural improvement programmes. In the Indian context, the moment the government identifies an area for submergence, provision of all forms of development assistance to that area comes to a halt.

1.1 Drawbacks of Incremental Policy for Resettlement

The incremental approach has a number of disadvantages which greatly undermine the prospects of achieving satisfactory R&R of project displaced people. Examples of these are as follows:

The approach pursued by the Government demanded no planning of some aspects which are fundamental to satisfactory execution of R&R, especially survey of submergence area; identification and enumeration of affected people; estimate of the number of people affected by reservoir, canals and other irrigation structures; and an assessment of the nature and extent of resources and institutional mechanisms required for resettlement. Absence of a data base and an estimate of the number of people displaced by individual irrigation and power projects resulted from the approach adopted by the Government (Partridge, 1985; CSS, 1987; Fernandes and Thukral, 1989; Thukral, 1992).

Shifting of people to resettlement sites normally occurs at the last minute. People and R&R staff are

subjected to immense pressure to shift within a period of 6 months prior to the expected submergence. This creates a situation wherein people do not have any other alternative but to shift. Shifting has to be done irrespective of whether they have received compensation, land and other benefits, and whether R&R sites are prepared with all provisions in place. Thus, once people are shifted, they automatically lose their bargaining power (Parasuraman, 1991b; Viegas, 1992).

Resettlement and rehabilitation is a protracted process. Successful rehabilitation demands the involvement of project personnel for a long period (Cernia, 1991; Scudder, 1991). In an incremental strategy, the involvement of personnel to implement R&R provisions is always brief and ends immediately after shifting, while the resettled require a considerable amount of time to establish a decent livelihood and restructure their social organisation in the new setting (Baxi, 1989). In an incremental strategy, the emphasis is on relocation and not rehabilitation, which requires considerably longer periods of involvement of R&R machinery.

According to this strategy, agricultural land, resettlement sites, manpower for R&R work has to be identified on a year-to-year basis. Money for R&R work has to be also located in the same way. This process is beset with a number of problems. For instance, when land for resettlement has to be acquired from individual farmers, its availability and its price is subject to drastic changes. Failure to acquire an adequate resettlement land would put the displaced in a precarious position. Since irrigation projects tend to displace a large number of people and, the number of families to be resettled also tends to fluctuate considerably, making R&R provision on a year-to-year basis has not met the R&R needs effectively in any project. Serious dislocation and hardship to the people have been the obvious consequences (Partridge, 1985; TISS, 1988; Thukral, 1992). Furthermore, displacement due to unexpected flooding adds to the number of people displaced. The backlog of displaced people gets accumulated and the Government's R&R system does not have the mechanism and the capacity to absorb the backlog.

Where droughts and floods have become a regular phenomenon, allocation of funds for R&R work cannot be taken for granted. In the Indian context, dam construction and irrigation infrastructure development work are very often financed by the World Bank or other loan providing agencies.¹ Thus, disbursement of funds is linked to the construction schedule and construction activity can continue even during years disturbed by droughts and floods. However, R&R activities are financed purely through the State budget. In the event of a drought, availability of money for resettlement work either becomes very difficult to obtain or gets substantially reduced. In effect, people get displaced

and scattered without having been sufficiently rehabilitated. A prolonged construction schedule and successive division of people through differentiated resettlement entitlements undermines the capacity of the affected people and outside activists (government incorporated and independent NGOs) to engage in organized action. Thus, a large number of people who are slated for resettlement at a later point in the project cycle invariably end up as losers. For example, in the Upper Krishna Irrigation Project, the R&R machinery got disorganized after having created some of the R&R infrastructure. In many instances, villages lying on the peripheral areas were left unattended (see Parasuraman 1991b).

Apart from the disadvantages that the incremental approach has, there are several R&R problems which are typical, regardless of whether the approach is incremental or not. In States like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, at any given point of time, a large number of people are displaced by a number of projects and awaiting resettlement and rehabilitation. Displacement due to drought, flood and natural calamities which have become a regular phenomenon in India requires the urgent attention of the Governments. Thus, the Government's commitment to resettle project displaced people depends on various factors. For instance, the perception and political compulsions of the administrators, political leaders regarding rehabilitation needs of the people displaced by different projects may be an important factor. This in itself could determine the priority groups warranting urgent R&R as in the case of disaster affected families. Economic difficulties created by external factors like balance of payment can also adversely affect the Government's commitment to resettle and rehabilitate certain groups (Parasuraman, 1991a and 1991b).

Political forces have distorted the planning process by initiating projects even before clearance is given by the Planning Commission and the Government of India. Often the process of project appraisal that includes R&R and environmental aspects has been subverted. Projects that are economically unsound, because of the large amounts of money spent prior to clearance are not abandoned because of political expediencies (Singh, Kothari and Amin, 1992). As more and more projects are formulated and initiated to satisfy political needs, the project priorities and the attention to be paid to people for R&R also change as do administrators and political leaders. Proliferation of projects which are under construction in the various States has not only resulted in a thin spread of financial, managerial and technical resources but also resulted in unnecessary displacement and unmanageable R&R problems. In fact, the incremental strategy is being seen as a well calculated administrative and political instrument to enable people in power to escape accountability. New projects are initiated and additional people are displaced simply because the number of people already

displaced and awaiting resettlement were neither clearly defined nor targeted and budgeted for resettlement. As already noted earlier, less than 25 per cent of those displaced by development projects have been rehabilitated. Even this 25 per cent were rehabilitated to a very limited extent while others were left to fend for themselves (Fernandes, 1992).

1.2 Constraints to Collective Action

Inequalities based on caste, tribe and economic status, which are inherent in the Indian society, not only undermine the economic and political capabilities of certain groups of affected people but also divide them and create obstacles to the forging of an unified front to demand better R&R provisions. Absent is strong public action to confront the government and to protect the rights of the affected people.

Action and participation emerge in response to individual or group perception of a loss. The problem invariably centers around land loss and inadequate compensation. The universally applicable Land Acquisition Act, 1894 and R&R provisions focus purely on those who owned land. Thus, R&R primarily concentrates on those who are the landed. Large and medium landowners and the merchant groups perceive the loss to be serious and react spontaneously. For these groups, loss of land would mean loss of social, economic and political power they wield. Small and marginal farmers are threatened with complete marginalisation but on its own this group lacks political and economic power. The socially and economically marginalised but numerically strong low caste, landless groups never get an opportunity to perceive their stake in the whole process and are forced to remain as silent spectators. The government on its part has used a variety of methods to enlist the support of the large landowners. When R&R provisions are accepted by this group, all other groups tend to effectively fall in line. The government's strategy to deal with dissent has involved coercion, bribery, dividing the people and sheer neglect (see for example Parasuraman 1990; 1991 a and b).

On the basis of their experience with people displaced by other projects in the country, social activists and social workers have viewed the Sardar Sarovar Project with scepticism and fear. Given the magnitude of displacement and the predominance of tribals among the displaced in SSP, they feared serious dislocation to the social and economic life of the people. Since the early 1980s, a few activists have acted as facilitators to demand the resettlement and rehabilitation of the SSP displaced with honour. By the year 1988, their activities had given rise to a mass movement on various issues pertaining to the dam. The general perception of the people and especially the project affected, about

displacement and resettlement in the country had changed. In the following section, certain design aspects of the SSP will be discussed in detail.

2. SARDAR SAROVAR PROJECT: EVOLUTION OF ANTI-PROJECT MOVEMENT

The Sardar Sarovar Dam is being constructed across River Narmada in Bharuch district of Gujarat state. The dam is designed to provide irrigation to 1.8 million hectares and drinking water to 4720 villages and 131 towns in Gujarat. The SSP is expected to generate 1450 MW of electricity upon its completion. The height of the dam was fixed at 455 feet creating a reservoir that will submerge about 37000 hectare of land in three States: Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The dam is designed to divert 9.5 million acre feet of water from Narmada River into canal and irrigation systems aggregating 75,000 km and submerge 80,000 hectares of land (NCA Documents, 1991).

The dam is built in a mountainous region. This region is primarily inhabited by tribal people in contiguous areas of all three States. All people displaced in Gujarat and Maharashtra are tribals. In Madhya Pradesh, 40 per cent of the affected people are tribals. In all the three States, the tribals are engaged in a mixed economy; cultivating land, owning cattle, collecting forest produce and fishing. The remainder of the submergence area in Madhya Pradesh extends upstream to include the caste villages, where irrigated arable agriculture forms the mainstay of the economy (Joshi, 1989; HSGU, 1991; TISS, 1989). The land in these villages is very fertile. In all, 297 villages are to be submerged by the reservoir: 19, 33 and 245 villages in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Though accurate estimates of the number of people displaced are not yet available, a minimum of 23500 people in Gujarat, 20000 in Maharashtra and 1,20000 in Madhya Pradesh are expected to be displaced by the reservoir (Independent Review 1992; NBA 1992).

The tribal people of Satpuda ranges are known for their resistance to outsiders who may undermine their resource base and independence. There are numerous instances in the history of the Bhils to show how they had successfully defended their territory and independence (Rao, 1992). However, their position was significantly weakened after subjugation of the Mehwas territories by the British and the continued neglect of their area by the State Government after Independence (TISS, 1992). Although aware of the consequences of displacement due to the dam, they gave no indication in the early 1980s that they were prepared to fight for better resettlement. In fact, out of fear that the government would fail to provide alternative land, as a preemptive move, many households in the first

phase submergence villages in Maharashtra and Gujarat started clearing land in the upper reaches of the Satpuda mountains for occupation if and when their land and house were to get submerged (Parasuraman, 1989). The tribal villages of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are physically isolated. When the activists arrived in the valley in 1985, none of the Governmental infrastructure and other social and economic provisions that should have been provided several years earlier, were in place. The difficult terrain and absence of mechanized transportation prevented the school teachers, health care personnel and other service providers from reaching the villages.

A tenuous and uneasy relationship between the Government, people and the activists started in 1980. The nature of that relationship kept changing from 1980 to 1993. This can be categorised into four distinct phases: confusion, tension, confrontation and accomplishment.

2.1 Period of Confusion - early 1980s

2.1.1 Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy Position in the Early 1980s

The years 1981-85 constituted a period of tremendous confusion for both, the people as well as the Government. The confusion at the government level throughout the first half of the 1980s affected the people and their lives significantly and shaped future relationships. The Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT) gave its verdict in 1979. With the Award, the Government of Gujarat (GOG) started preparations for the initiation of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP), even before the Government of India and Planning Commission gave permission to start the work.

By early 1980, the R&R process was set in motion in 19 villages of Gujarat and 33 villages of Maharashtra. Since the first of the Madhya Pradesh villages were to experience flooding only in the second and later phases of submergence, the R&R process in that State was delayed. People from 10 villages of Gujarat and two villages of Maharashtra were placed in the relocation mode in this period. However, neither the Government officials nor the people were aware of the R&R provisions and entitlements. Displacement was however effected and people started being shifted. The R & R policy scene represented by various parties of SSP in early 1980s was as follows:

(i) The tribunal's Award set out the benefits and procedures of resettlement of those persons in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra to be displaced by submergence in the reservoir area and apportioned the cost of their resettlement to the Government of Gujarat. The NWDT Award declared

that persons to be dispossessed were to receive benefits that amounted to an opportunity for economic and social progress.

(ii) Project affected people of the submergence zone were to be given land to replace land they were losing, house sites and short-term financial protection. Thus, besides providing cash compensation for the property lost, the Award also made provision for resettlement grants and grant in aid, civic amenities in new or existing villages where the displaced were to relocate, and provided houseplots for new houses. Most important of all, the Award mandated the states to provide agricultural land of equal size for all displaced families losing more than 25 per cent of holdings, subject to land ceiling laws, with a minimum of two hectares of land. Further, the Award provided that 'major sons' would also receive compensation benefits in their own right (NICMAR, 1991).

(iii) The Award did not make provisions for encroachers, who, as a matter of fact, had customary rights to the land they were cultivating, and also the landless. The Award did not mention the status of those whose land were to become an island (tapu) rather than being submerged. In 1979, the NWDT Award was considered as progressive principally because it broke away from the earlier practice of giving 'money only' compensation, and added 'land along with money' as compensation to those losing land.

In the early 1980s, in all three States, neither the number of people to be displaced was known nor were the plans to resettle them instituted. The State Governments were to identify and enumerate all project affected families, evolve R&R policies keeping NWDT Award prescription as the main guideline, prepare comprehensive plans for execution of R&R and submit them to the Government of India for approval. All three States had their own Government Resolutions on Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) provisions, which differed from each other considerably (CSS, 1991). For instance, the Government of Gujarat (GOG) accepted the NWDT Award's R&R suggestions for effecting resettlement of people displaced by the project, i.e. those persons losing land were to be given two hectares of irrigated/irrigable land. The landless, persons with encroached land, persons whose land became island but not submerged, and major sons of all households were not eligible for land. Whereas, the Government of Maharashtra (GOM) enacted a R&R legislation in 1976, and the people displaced by SSP were to be compensated according its provisions. The legislation stipulated that if the project affected households deposited 75 per cent of the money received as compensation for the land lost, a minimum of one hectare of irrigated land would be given to them. The landless households that were fully depended on agricultural wage labour for livelihood decided to move with

"India's past record of reservoir related relocation did not meet World Bank standards, the reason being: absence of a national policy and presence of an inappropriate legal instrument for property acquisition and compensation (the Land Acquisition Act, 1894); an inadequate institutional framework in each of the three states - they lacked the means and skills to implement resettlement; bureaucratic insensitivity and apathy towards social and communal aspects of displacement and relocation; and rigid orientation towards compensation to individuals rather than resettlement of whole communities.

"The Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal's 1979 provisions, though representing a major advance in India, did not meet the requirements of the World Bank policy guidelines on involuntary resettlement. There were serious shortcomings, for example, with regard to landless people and forest cultivators.

"The state governments were not serious about honouring the provisions of NWDT Award. Their plans and cost estimates were inadequate and unreliable (as cited in the Independent Review, 1992).

There were also advocacy groups that had taken interest in the R&R in early 1980. Two such voluntary organisations located close to the project area in Gujarat had started working with the affected people: Arch-Vahini based in Mangrol, and Rajpipla Social Service Society (RSSS) based in Rajpipla. Arch-Vahini was already interacting with Gujarat PAPs, Gujarat Government and the World Bank for better resettlement provisions. Medha Patkar an activist who later spearheaded the anti-dam movement, started working with Arch-Vahini around 1985. The RSSS was helping people on land related matters through court action. Though the successes of Arch-Vahini and RSSS were limited at that time, they had pioneered a people's movement.

2.2 Period of Tension: 1985-1988

The second phase was a period of immense tension between the government and the affected people. This period witnessed the emergence of a strong people's movement which questioned the whole approach of the government towards R&R of the project displaced.

In 1980, the Government of India amended the Indian Forest Act of 1927 to prohibit the State Governments from declaring any reserved forest as non-reserved without prior approval of the Central authorities (Rosencranz, Divan and Noble, 1991). A separate Ministry of Environment (MOE) was created in 1980. SSP was to submerge a large tract of protected forest and displace over 100000 tribal people who enjoyed constitutional protection against land alienation. Thus, in order to get clearance

the landed, and if land was available, they were to be given one acre of land (GOM, 1976). The Government of Madhya Pradesh (GOMP) however, did not have an R&R Act, but its resolutions promised cash compensation for land lost (NICMAR, 1991).

In the early 1980s the World Bank was appraising the SSP the for loan applied for by the Government of India (GOI). By 1980, the World Bank had a well defined policy on resettlement of people affected by the projects it had funded (Cernia, 1988). The major elements of the policy were as follows:

1. All involuntary resettlements should be conceived and executed as development programmes with resettlers provided with sufficient investment resources and opportunities to share in project benefits. Displaced persons should be: compensated for their losses at full replacement cost prior to the move; assisted with the move and supported during transition period in the resettlement site; and assisted in their efforts to improve their former living standards, income earning capacity, and production levels, or at least to restore them. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the poorest groups to be resettled.
2. Community participation in planning and implementing resettlement should be encouraged.
3. Resettlers should be incorporated socially and economically into host communities so that adverse impact on host communities is minimised.
4. Land, housing, infrastructure, and other compensation should be provided to the adversely affected population, indigenous groups and ethnic minorities who may have customary rights to the land or other resources taken for the project. The absence of legal title to land by such groups should not be a bar to compensation (World Bank, 1990).

Irrespective of having a R&R policy, the Bank neither appraised the R&R component nor motivated the States to evolve R&R policies in tune with NWDT and its policy prescriptions. It was only after the completion of negotiations with the GOI for a loan, that the World Bank realised that R&R aspects had not been appraised at all. Thus, Dr Scudder, an expert on resettlement issues was deputed by the Bank to analyse the situation related to the nature and extent of displacement and the R&R measures adopted by the State Governments. After reviewing the R&R scene in 1983 and 1984, Dr Scudder wrote:

from the MOE for the project, the State Government were to place a detailed appraisal of the extent of displacement and its negative effects on the environment and forests and a plan of action to deal with them. The final clearance from the GOI was conditional in that the clearance had to be received from the MOE. The State Governments were nowhere close to submitting a work plan on environment and resettlement. Instead, they requested time for preparing the plans but demanded clearance to initiate dam construction.

In early 1987, the Chief Ministers of the four states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and the Prime Minister, beleaguered by repeated defeats in the bye-elections in the States decided that "the project (SSP) is for national development, and thus it must be given clearance". The MOE and later the Planning Commission under protest, agreed to give conditional clearance for the project. The State Governments agreed that critical studies and plans to justify the dam, like command area development, catchment area treatment, carrying capacity, seismicity, impact on R&R would be completed by the end of 1989. The go-ahead signal given to the project was purely a political decision, even though it was clear to both the Central and State Governments, as well as the World Bank that SSP was in fact not ready for initiation. The reasons why political expediency dominated developmental considerations have been elaborated in a later section of this paper.

However, even before GOI gave conditional clearance to initiate the project in 1987, about 2000 families from Gujarat and 90 families from Maharashtra were already displaced and shifted to the resettlement sites.

2.2.1 Access to Information

The people facing eviction and loss of livelihood due to SSP in all three States were neither informed nor consulted by the authorities. The tribal people of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were not even informed about the imminent eviction before serving notice under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. Given the manner in which governments characteristically deal with the tribal people in general, there was no question that the State Government would have ever consulted them (SC & ST Commission, 1990). All available evidence relating to SSP reveals that the people had little or no information about the project that was going to entirely disrupt and change their lives. It was only after the activists arrived in the valley that some consciousness was generated in this regard (MARG, 1987 a,b and c; TISS, 1989).

The Government's inaction was also related to its belief that the tribals did not understand the issues involved even if such information was given to them. Arguably, the Government is so often out of touch with reality that it devises measures that are often inappropriate to the situation.² It refuses to accept that there are appropriate methods to provide information to the illiterate, for instance, group discussions and individual to individual personalized contacts.

2.2.2 Mobilisation of People to Demand Satisfactory R&R

There was considerable resentment among the people in that they were asked to shift even before they were given all compensation provisions. At this point in 1985, Medha Patkar arrived at the Maharashtra's project affected villages. Under her leadership, the affected people began to organise themselves as Narmada Dharangrasta Samiti. In due course, the tribal villages of Madhya Pradesh also joined the movement along with the Maharashtra tribals. In 1987, an organisation called the Narmada Ghati Navnirman Samiti was revitalised in Nimad region of Madhya Pradesh. This organisation mobilised the non-tribal people displaced by SSP. In the meantime in Gujarat, Narmada Asargrasta Sangharsha Samiti started its work among the people of six villages displaced to make way for the project and residential colony. These villagers were not given adequate compensation. Arch-Vahini was already demanding adequate life renewal resettlement for the Gujarat people. By 1987, a few other activists came to the valley from Bombay, Delhi and Ahmedabad. These activists learned the local dialects (Bhilori and Pauri) and Gujarati and travelled the valley extensively. Their urban background, intelligence, very high levels of academic qualification and the intense rapport that they were able to establish with the people, impressed the top bureaucrats in the State capital who were willing to work with them in the initial stages.

The activists brought the issue of non-existence of basic facilities in the villages to the notice of authorities at the highest level in the government. For the first time, the government became aware of the urgency to provide basic facilities. The activists set up village committees for R&R work, imparted functional literacy to the committee members, initiated adult education programmes, motivated the government to appoint teachers for the non-functioning schools and at the same time motivated the teachers to live in the villages where they were posted. In fact, in a few villages in Maharashtra, people constructed schools during the lean agricultural season in 1986-87, using their own resources. Local dais (midwife) and medicine men were trained to practice modern medicine along with their traditional expertise. The Government established a few primary health care sub-centres and trained the local young men and women as community health volunteers. The activists

highlighted the prevalence of sickle-cell anemia in the villages and urged the government to initiate intensive treatment and research programmes. The Government established a few ashram (residential) schools, in 1987, to facilitate children living in distant hamlets to attend school.

Young men and women were in the forefront of the emerging movement to demand better compensation. A new set of leadership of young people was emerging under the initiative of the activists. They composed songs on health care, education, self-sufficiency, self-respect, tribal independence and assertiveness. The activists gave detailed information on NWDT Award, the SSP dam, submergence level, the project beneficiaries, the extent of forest loss, number of villages and people facing dislocation, R&R provisions set out by the Award and those proposed by the State Governments and, other basic information. By early 1987, about two years after the activists had entered the villages, people started questioning the officials and persuaded them to come to their villages to talk about the project and R&R issues.

The village committees prepared comprehensive household data on land possessed, location and extent of submergence; type and number of cattle and trees owned; quantum of produce from land, forest and river; size of house and the amount and type of wood and bamboo used. The data collection included births, deaths and migration and other vital aspects. The data was carefully prepared by the villagers and activists with the aim of helping the government to include complete details while calculating compensation and R&R entitlements. As long as the people were submissive and demanded better resettlement, the government used the data in updating its own data base. In a few villages, the government and the people conducted joint land surveys and prepared lists of project affected people. Once the government found itself being unable to answer the people and improve R&R package or performance, it stopped accepting the data provided by the people. Interestingly, the same data is now being used to fight court cases (TISS M&E files, 1987-93). The activists and the people deliberately decided to keep away from party politics.

2.2.3 Resettlement and Rehabilitation Demands of the People

With the activists on their side the people demanded the following:

1. Right to information on all technical aspects of the dam, extent and schedule of submergence, basis for estimating cost-benefit of SSP, method of assessing the value of land, house and trees acquired from them.

2. Acceptance of NWDT Award provisions by all three states, acquisition and compensation for 'tapu land' (island), fresh land survey to include those excluded by earlier surveys, and compensation for the people with 'encroached' land since they had customary right to use the land for agricultural, grazing and other purposes.

3. A comprehensive plan of resettlement which gave details of R&R provisions, compensatory land availability including place, amount and legal status of the land selected for compensation, schedule of shifting, and creation of basic infrastructure in the relocation sites.

4. Right of displaced people to resettle within their own State, closer to their original area, with all R&R provisions they might have got if they were to be resettled in Gujarat.

5. Extension of R&R benefits to those affected by colony, canal, sanctuary and compensatory afforestation programmes.

In response to the demands of the people, officials argued that the tribals being illiterate were not expected to understand the project planning process and the technical issues such as cost-benefits related to the project or the way land was valued for compensation. When the activists came forward to act as facilitators, the government declared that providing information to the activists would amount to a 'security threat'.

The GOM and GOMP had problems in accepting even the basic NWDT provision that all landed displaced should be given two hectares of land. Given this stand, there was no way that the GOM and GOMP would be willing to give land to encroachers and landless, though such households possessed land and claimed customary right to such land.

The GOG claimed that it had sufficient land to give to the displaced from all three States. However, once the activists and the people demanded identification of such land, it became clear that there was no readily available land (TISS, 1989). After this revelation, the GOG resorted to market purchase of land from the public.³ However, lands were purchased in pieces spread over a large area. It became difficult to get large pieces of land sufficient to accommodate at least 25-30 families together in one place. The decision to opt for market purchase meant that people from one village would have to be resettled in many places and thus a viable social unit could not be maintained. Since infrastructure creation meant that there must be a minimum of 100 families to qualify for most

provisions, it was becoming clear that people might get land but the families and lineages would be broken and basic services would also not be readily provided.

The GOM initially wanted all its people to resettle in Gujarat, so that it would not have to take the trouble of finding land and then of resettling and rehabilitating them. However, when the people demanded that they be resettled within the district, the Government started looking out for land. The NWDT Award stated that the people could claim resettlement in their own State. The R&R law of GOM permitted it to acquire land in the command area of other dams to resettle people displaced by dams. Thus, GOM started identifying land in the command area within Dhulia district. Once such a move was initiated, the political parties in Dhulia organised the farmers in the command area and pressurised the government to drop the plan. The District Collector who initiated the plan was transferred and the plan dropped for good. In the meantime, the people demanded that they may be resettled in the forest area of the district. People also set a condition that they would not agree to resettlement in forest areas given to them by displacing people who were already cultivating or using the land for other purposes. By June 1988, GOM had declared that it had no land to resettle people within the district. Though GOM knew that GOI could not release forest land for resettlement, it appealed for release of 2700 hectares of forest land in Dhulia district.⁴ With that GOM's land search came to a complete halt.

Madhya Pradesh, which was to benefit the least from the project, yet suffer great loss in terms of number of people displaced and amount of forest and agricultural land lost, was not enthusiastic about R&R work (Patel, 1990). It neither conducted any survey of the number of people displaced nor identified any land to resettle people. It did not adopt NWDT Award provisions either.

Thus the period between 1985 and 1988 did not see change in R&R policies of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Though the R&R policy of Gujarat showed some improvement during this period, non-availability of land and the decision to buy land from the public created serious implementation problems. Major conclusions emerging from the experience during this period were: (i) By mid 1988 it was becoming clear to the people and the activists that the State Governments did not have a clear idea about the extent and the gravity of displacement, as they neither had baseline data nor had they made any serious attempt to develop any such data. (ii) The State Governments made no attempt to put a coherent policy in place. Issues such as compensation to people with access to common property resources, recognition of customary rights and compensating people with 'encroached land' and 'tapu land' remained unresolved. (iv) Availability of land to resettle people became uncertain. The

Governments had little credibility left vis-a-vis policy changes regarding willingness to resettle people properly. (iv) The evidence from resettled villages pointed to increasing misery and prolonged deprivation of basic facilities like water, ration shops, school, health care, roads, transport and others (CSS, 1991; TISS, 1990, 1991, 1992). The problem of grazing land created more insecurity. The tension persisted and no solutions were forthcoming. The unchanging attitude of the government on R&R forced the people to modify their stand towards the dam itself.

2.2.4 Decision to Oppose the Dam

In August 1988, all local organisations working with the project affected villages held rallies in tehsil towns of Akkalkuwa, Akrani, Alirajpur and Nimad and declared their total opposition to SSP. They vowed to work towards halting SSP to save the environment and the economic and social base of the people slated for displacement, and work for sustainable development alternatives. Local organisations joined together and formed a new group called the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement).⁵ A large number of influential organisations working for the welfare of tribals, slum dwellers, small and marginal farmers and environmental groups from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and other parts of the country came together in solidarity to oppose the SSP. As a prelude to paving the way for alternative forms of development, a loose federation of the NGOs from all over the country decided to wage a determined struggle to halt the SSP. The central group waging the struggle in the valley and the 'federation' agreed in principle to 'keep away' from political parties and leaders.

In the meantime, Arch-Vahini, which was the first NGO to work with the affected people, decided to support GOG to resettle the displaced people of Gujarat. A number of NGOs sprang up in Gujarat to counter the anti-dam strategy of Narmada Bachao Andolan.⁶ Their objective was to ensure that SSP would be completed and to engage in constructive cooperation with GOG in resettling the displaced.

2.3 Period of Confrontation: 1988-1992

When the people decided to oppose the dam itself, tensions gave way to open confrontation between the Government and the people. This stage began in June 1988 and continued up to October 1992. The nature and intensity of agitation during this period forced the government to effect comprehensive changes in R&R policies.

The objective of confrontation was to force the GOI to order a complete review of the SSP: technical and cost-benefit related to dam construction, social and environmental cost of the project and proof of governments' capacity to mitigate displacement and environmental problems. The activists argued that if the technical feasibility and benefits are proved inappropriate, the government should make way for alternative development strategies. On the other hand GOG the major beneficiary of the project, decided to avert a review of SSP and accelerate dam construction work in such a way that the project would reach a stage of irreversibility. Thus began a bitter confrontation in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. GOG knew for sure that if the people refused to move from their villages in these two States, the construction work beyond a certain level could not continue unless it decided to evict people using force or threatening them with imminent submergence.

Towards the end of 1988, the activists supported by a growing number of organisations and people from 297 affected villages in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were on one side. At this stage Baba Amte, one of the most respected social workers in the country, moved out of his ashram at Anandwan (in Wardha District of Maharashtra), housing thousands of lepers, to the banks of the Narmada in Madhya Pradesh. He came to Narmada with a vow to stop SSP to save River Narmada. If he failed in his mission, he declared he would drown in the rising waters of the reservoir. People made a hut for Baba Amte on the banks of the Narmada from where he did not move out. The urban elites, high profile print media, the international environmental and green groups supported the movement.

The opposition was led by the GOG with GOM, GOMP and the Central Government forced to comply with its wishes. The rich community of Gujarat - the business and the landed - from within and outside Gujarat State, powerful government media and the police force were on the government side (Mukta, 1990). The landless and the poor within Gujarat were incorporated into the pro-dam movement. The Government launched a powerful campaign/publicity blitz describing SSP as the lifeline of Gujarat and those who opposed the dam as traitors of Gujarat's interests.⁷ GOG also resolved that it would never negotiate with the forces that opposed the dam.

The World Bank found itself in a difficult situation. It was aware that the State Governments were neither willing nor capable of resettling people by giving at least as much provision as suggested by the NWDT Award. It was caught between the demands of the people and the strong opposition that had evolved on one side, and honouring the loan contract with the Government on the other. However, regardless of the government's non-performance, it continued to support the project. The activists and the people perceived the World Bank as the greatest obstacle that stood between them

and their government. The government also perceived the World Bank as a serious threat to its independence and believed that the Bank held the key for change. Much of the activities of the activists were initially directed towards the State Governments.

2.3.1 Phase of Peaceful Agitation Against the Government

In this period, the people and the activists devoted a major part of their efforts to meetings, marches, demonstrations, petitions, strikes, public confrontations with authorities, and similar forms of action. The authorities reacted to the action with intimidation, arrests, prohibition of gatherings around the dam site. Prolonged agitation during 1988-90 in Madhya Pradesh brought assurances from the Chief Minister that he would place the demand for a comprehensive review of SSP before the Central Government. Similar action in Maharashtra prompted its Chief Minister to promise that not an inch of Maharashtra's land would be submerged unless comprehensive resettlement plan acceptable to the people was put in place. Later in 1990, hundreds of people agitated in front of the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi. After four days of action, an assurance for a thorough review was given by the then Prime Minister (SSP Monitoring Files, TISS, 1988-93).

Nothing came of the assurances of the Chief Ministers and Prime Minister. The Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and the Prime Minister succumbed to the pressure mounted by the Gujarat Chief Minister and the powerful bureaucrat-contractor lobby supporting SSP. The minority government of the then Prime Minister depended on the support of Gujarat's Members of Parliament. Successive governments were also silent on SSP for fear of losing the support of Gujarat. In effect SSP has become the lifeline of Gujarat politicians and as of now no bargaining seems possible.

Having failed to enforce a review, even after getting assurances from the Chief Ministers and Prime Minister, the activists prepared for direct confrontation with the Gujarat Government. In early December 1990, Baba Amte and Medha Patkar, along with 20,000 people, started a long march from Madhya Pradesh, from where Narmada originates, to the dam site in Gujarat to halt the construction work. After crossing Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, they were stopped by the police at the Maharashtra - Gujarat border and were prevented from entering Gujarat. In the meantime, Gujarat politicians and farmers, led by the wife of the Chief Minister collected around 10000 people and moved to the Maharashtra border. The stand off continued for 21 days with both groups holding ground and police standing between them. Seven activists went on hunger strike for 21 days (Mathew, 1989). No political initiative for talks was forthcoming because the Gujarat Government successfully

pitted pro-dam people against anti-dam people thereby marginalising the activists' capacity to bargain. The condition of the hunger strikers only deteriorated and Baba Amte returned the Padma Bhusan and Padma Vibhusan honours, the most prestigious civilian Awards given by GOI for his social work.

2.3.2 Non-Cooperation Movement

Embittered by their experience with the Gujarat Government, the activists and people returned to the villages. However, before that they took a vow that they would not leave their villages come what may and resorted to hamara gaon hamara raj (our rule in our village). Thus beginning January 1991, the people did not allow anyone connected with SSP work to enter their villages. The prohibition was complete. It was non-cooperation of a peaceful type and it completely deterred government officials, World Bank personnel and consultants and all others connected with SSP work from entering the villages. All World Bank missions in 1991 and 1992 could not reach Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In early 1992, the Narmada Control Authority classified access of government personnel to villages as follows: Gujarat: no resistance, free access to all work; Maharashtra: no access to all 33 villages; Madhya Pradesh: hard core resistance, no access: 34 villages, moderate resistance, but access difficult: 99 villages, no resistance: 60 villages (NCA, April 1992).

2.3.3 Threat of 'Jal Samadhi'

The movement entered a critical stage when the first village of Maharashtra faced submergence in the monsoon of 1991. Faced with possible flooding and submergence of Manibeli, 50 families of Manibeli that had refused to move to R&R villages, activists and affected people from other villages waited to take 'jal samadhi' (drown in the rising water of the reservoir) in the village. This was in response to the government's challenge that it would go ahead with the construction of the dam and make it a fait accompli to people's opposition. Peoples' response was to stop construction until major issues are settled or drown themselves, if the government insisted on continuing with construction. When the people waited in Manibeli on the Maharashtra side of the river for the water level to rise, a large contingent of police personnel waited on the Gujarat side of the river. The police could not cross over to Maharashtra because of the constant vigil kept by the people. Due to poor rainfall, the flooding of Manibeli was not serious enough to drown the agitators (TISS, 1992).

The Government of Gujarat simply moved on a one point formula — not to halt the project work. To ensure that (i) it has completely modified its R&R policy to accommodate all initial demands of the

affected people. Further, it motivated GOM and GOMP to alter their policies to conform to its new policy, though in vain. It promised to resettle all PAPs from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh with full benefits arising out of its new policy. (ii) It advocated a policy of marginalising the activists and divide people by inducing the vulnerable to move out, with some success. (iii) To mobilise people from the state to support the project, it argued that in order to solve the drinking water problem of millions of people, a few thousands could be moved to other places. The Government used the arguments such as provision of water to thousands of villages affected by recurring drought helped to bring people to counter the anti-Narmada activists. Above all, the Government adopted a "wait and see" policy, with the dam work continuing unaffected.

The internationalisation of the Narmada project complicated things for the World Bank. The anti-Narmada movement was honoured with two prestigious Awards in 1991: Ramon Megassay and The Right to Livelihood Awards. The recognition accorded by these two Awards, along with many others, increased the prestige and intensity of the Narmada movement. The stand off in Manibeli and virtual halt of all R&R work due to non-cooperation movement of the villagers, has unnerved the Bank. The consequences of the stand-off, if allowed to continue, might prove damaging to the World Bank given the strength of the anti-Narmada campaign and support to the affected people from NGOs in Western Europe, Japan and America. Thus, in June 1991 the World Bank ordered a review of SSP for its internal purposes. The Government of India made best efforts to halt the review. When the Bank persisted, the government agreed to cooperate with the review saying that the findings of the committee would not have any bearing on its decision to execute SSP work. The terms of reference of the review included: "an assessment of the implementation of the ongoing Sardar Sarovar Project, as regards: (a) the resettlement and rehabilitation of the population displaced/affected by the construction of the SSP infrastructure and by the storage reservoir; and the amelioration of environmental impact of all aspects of project." (Independent Review 1992).

A commission appointed by the World Bank President, called the Independent Review, conducted its enquiry from October 1991 to May 1992 and submitted its report in June 1992. The review concluded as follows:

...environmental and social tradeoffs have been made and continue to be made in SSP, without the full understanding of the consequences. As a result, (financial) benefits (of the dam) tend to be overstated, while the social and environmental costs are frequently understated. Further, rehabilitation of all displaced is impossible under present circumstances.

The review advised the Bank to "step aside from the projects and consider them afresh".

If the Bank persisted on its way, the only way the dam could proceed was by "unacceptable means".

Thus, the review in 1992, basically corroborated what Dr Scudder had said in 1984, and the activists had concluded in August 1988. Faced with intense criticism from the international media and NGOs, the World Bank initiated a number of measures to reduce the damage done by the Independent Review. In June-July 1992, the World Bank mounted another review mission, this time made up of its own internal staff and consultants.⁸ The World Bank justified the mission by saying that the Independent Review recommended to step aside from SSP, while it wanted the new mission to suggest ways to deal with R&R and environment deficiencies in SSP, in case it decided to continue funding. As expected, the mission concluded that SSP is viable on all aspects and made series of recommendations to deal with R&R and environmental problems.

In October 1992, the World Bank Board agreed to continue funding the project on the condition that the Indian government agreed to complete six tasks related to five R&R provisions specified below, along with issues related to environmental rehabilitation, during October 1992 and April 1993. A high powered World Bank mission was to assess the implementation of R&R conditions and report to the Bank Board to decide on further funding in April 1993 (World Bank, 1992).

1. Satisfactory improvement of the data describing the number of Project Affected People (PAPs) in the reservoir area, including an analysis of affected tribal people. Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were expected to agree on the interpretation of eligibility criteria applying to various PAPs, including landless agricultural labourers and major sons.
2. Preparation of satisfactory R&R plans for all three states.
3. Adaptation of strengthened institutional arrangements for implementation of R&R, including appropriate role for local non- governmental organisations.
4. Satisfactory demonstration of improved consultation practices.
5. Satisfactory demonstration of the feasibility of getting land of the required scale in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.
6. Development of a satisfactory policy package for canal affected families (CAFs) and adequate

assistance for those already displaced.

In fact, the benchmark tasks suggested by the World Bank are similar to the issues people raised in 1988. All these tasks should have been completed even before the project work was initiated in 1987.

The execution of a benchmark was a collaborative venture between the government and the Bank. However, by mid-March 1993, it was clear that none of the tasks could be accomplished. The government acknowledged that the political compulsions and institutional arrangements did not permit it to accomplish most of the tasks. GOM and GOMP refused to alter their R&R policies to make them conform to the provisions of GOG, though both the governments had made some concessions.

As the resistance to eviction continues to be strong, consultation with PAPs was not possible in most villages in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Consultations are possible when there is mutual trust and confidence between the affected people and government. Prolonged confrontation has injected intense bitterness between the parties. Further, people perceive the government's efforts as a patchy 'consultation process' conducted only because of the conditions laid by the Bank. In fact, officials engaged in the 'consultative process' clearly indicated that they had been forced into the futile task by the Bank (TISS, 1992).

Additional land was not forthcoming in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. GOM did not try to acquire land from command areas within the State using the Land Acquisition Act or Land Ceiling Act. Instead it asked the GOI to release 1,500 hectares of forest land in addition to 2,700 hectares released in 1989. Additional land was required to provide for additional PAPs who emerged due to changes in R&R policy. On the other hand, Madhya Pradesh did not make any attempt to acquire land for resettlement due to two reasons: lack of interest in making any more land available for work related to SSP; and no elected government to make a decision on land acquisition. Further, there was no political will to acquire land.

Comprehensive studies, data and plans that should have been completed and submitted to the Government of India by the end of 1989, as agreed when conditional clearance for the project was given 1987, were delayed wilfully until 1992. There was no way that such studies could have been commissioned and completed within a six month period. In fact, the Government made no serious effort to commission any comprehensive studies between October 1992 and April 1993.

By March 1993, the Government of India had realised that it was not possible to fulfill the minimum preconditions it had accepted in October 1992. Rather than having the World Bank monitor the implementation of the conditions, and face subsequent defamation and withdrawal from the project, the government decided to avoid the embarrassment by asking the Bank to withdraw from SSP. The World Bank withdrew from SSP in March 1993.

3. GAINS OF ANTI-NARMADA MOVEMENT: R&R POLICY FOR SSP DISPLACED

The Narmada movement is unique in terms of its achievements. It brought the question of adverse impact of displacement and the need to resettle people with full development provisions to the forefront. The R&R package of Gujarat has improved considerably over a period of time mainly due to the pressure exerted by the movement. Provision of land to originally landed and landless, and development assistance to establish a meaningful livelihood is progressive in the Indian context. The movement has helped to improve the R&R implementation process significantly. It is widely acknowledged by governments and aid agencies that the R&R gains were primarily due to the movement and its opposition to SSP. The policy of each of the States as it was existing in the early 1993 are specified below.

3.1 R&R Policies of Gujarat Government

1. As of January 1993, heads of landed and landless households and those with encroached land were eligible for two hectares of irrigable land. Further, all men aged 18 and above on January 1, 1987 were eligible to receive two hectares irrigable land, irrespective of their earlier land ownership position. 'Tapu' and encroached lands were to be acquired and compensation paid.
2. Provide subsistence allowance - Rs 15 per day for 20 days a month - for a year after shifting to each family receiving land; financial and transportation assistance to shift to resettlement sites.
3. Facilitate the families to acquire income generating assets on loan and subsidy. Assist men and women to acquire skills and facilitate them to get loans for initiating self-employment ventures.
4. Give preference to PAPs and their children in lower category government jobs (NCA, 1992).

3.2 R&R Policies of Maharashtra Government

If the displaced people from Maharashtra wanted to resettle in the State, land owners and joined holders were to get two hectares of irrigable land. The landless and those with encroached land, major sons and unmarried major daughters of landed and landless households were eligible to receive one hectare land. January 1, 1987 was the cut-off date to decide major sons and daughters (NCA, 1992; GRs 1992).

3.3 R&R Policies of Madhya Pradesh Government

The landed were to receive a minimum of two hectare of land. Those who had encroached land before April 4, 1987, were eligible for a minimum of one hectare and a maximum of 2 hectares of land. Landless, major sons from all families, and those with land encroached after April 4, 1987 did not qualify to receive land (Government of Madhya Pradesh, 1992).

All State Governments were to provide houseplots for making new houses, tin-sheds for temporary accommodation, water, electricity, school, medical, road, transportation and other infrastructure.

The GOM and GOMP have refused to alter their policies substantially to conform to those of GOG. The provisions extended to SSP displaced people in these States were relatively better compared to the provisions emerging from legislated R&R policies in these two States. Thus, the policies available to people displaced by SSP in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, if they decided to resettle in their own States were better off than people displaced by other irrigation projects.

4. POSSIBILITY OF TRANSLATING GUJARAT'S R&R POLICY FOR SSP DISPLACED INTO A NATIONAL POLICY

The possibility of translating the R&R policy of Gujarat into a national R&R policy can be examined on the following lines. First, the implementability of Gujarat's policy is examined. Policy on paper does not mean anything. It has to be translated into action and implemented till all displaced people are rehabilitated. Second, the implications of policy differences among three the participating States is examined to provide clues to the acceptability of policies similar to the one put forward by Gujarat.

4.1 Problems in Implementation of Gujarat's Policy

If the policies existing in current form have to be translated into action, and implemented until all displaced are resettled, GOG has to consider one major factor: a significant proportion of Maharashtra and most of Madhya Pradesh displaced are expected to opt for resettlement in Gujarat due to R&R policy deficiencies in their States (TISS, 1992). The R&R provisions of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh do not provide adequate support for people to regain livelihood. GOMP in all certainty will not resettle the displaced from the State by providing the R&R provisions under its policy. Since 1987, GOMP has not even completed enumeration of PAPs and no move was made to locate land within the State (HSGU, 1992; NCA, 1992). On the other hand, Maharashtra has got only 2700 hectares of forest land, while it requires over 6000 hectares of agricultural land (TISS, 1992). Thus most of the displaced from Madhya Pradesh and over 50 per cent of the displaced from Maharashtra will have no alternative except to move to Gujarat.

If the people from these States decide to resettle in Gujarat, availability of land is going to pose difficulties because of the magnitude of people displaced in Madhya Pradesh. In Gujarat, land is now bought in the open market in small bits and pieces. Thus, land of adequate size to resettle 30 to 40 families in one place may be difficult to obtain. The resettlement experience of Gujarat villages is already available as evidence: families from 19 villages are resettled in over 150 locations (NCA, 1992; CSS M&E Reports). One group of families still remains in original village, waiting to be moved (CSS M&E Reports).

The R&R policies of GOG in order to be operationalised must take into account the unwillingness of people of different language and cultural characteristics (from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh) to settle in Gujarat. Non-availability of suitable and adequate land, delays development of basic infrastructure and unwillingness of people to move to unknown areas may give rise to coercion.

The Government is using a policy of 'divide and shift' in all villages of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh with devastating effects on the welfare and community life of the originally cohesive groups. In the process, the original villages are divided into unviable social units and moved. Further, the government is attempting to resettle people by marginalising the advocacy groups spearheading the anti-Narmada movement. In the absence of advocacy groups, the government may not be under any pressure to resettle people with full provisions and provide opportunity for development.

The World Bank had some role in motivating the government to improve R&R policies and implementation. With independent agencies monitoring and evaluating (M&E) resettlement and rehabilitation activities, the Bank, the Supreme Court of India and all concerned parties have access to R&R activities and progress. The departure of the World Bank has also signalled the termination of M&E work by independent agencies. The government apparently has a free hand to carry out implementation as it deems fit. Even if the Government were to continue entrusting the M&E work to independent agencies, the work and the conclusions reached may not have the desirable effect on the implementation of R&R. In the absence of a third party like the World Bank, objective in M&E work may be curtailed to a large extent.

The SSP is complicated because of its interstate and highly political nature. The origin of SSP at the present form had its basis in the power yielded by Gujarat in influencing the tribunal. Gujarat has been politically and economically powerful and it could successfully manoeuvre the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal to get the maximum advantage for itself. Gujarat which has got only 10 per cent rights over Narmada river, was granted 33 per cent of waters and 16 per cent of power generated (Patel, 1990). A State that had fought for the dam for 40 years was ready to offer generous R&R provisions only when threatened with the possibility of losing SSP due to the anti-dam movement. The policy changes were not based on any objective evaluation of its capacity to resettle over 35,000 families with land and other provisions. The policy changes were basically aimed at weakening the anti-dam movement.

4.2 Problems in Converting Gujarat's R&R Policy into a National Policy

The answer to whether the Gujarat R&R policy for SSP displaced people can be translated into a national policy comes from two basic issues: (i) The special Sardar Sarovar R&R package is applied differently to three states. Though people in all three States are displaced by SSP, there are vast differences in R&R provisions and neither the Narmada movement nor pressure from the World Bank could change the decision of GOM and GOMP. (ii) The special SSP package is not available for people displaced by other irrigation projects in respective states. In other words, the governments felt that SSP is not a normal case and special provisions were created because of the people's agitation. People displaced by other projects in three States are compensated according to R&R legislations in that State which are inferior as compared to SSP package. As long as governments define R&R entitlements on the basis of intensity of protest, unity among and bargaining power of the displaced, there can no common minimum needs package. Any gains displaced may hope to get would depend

on how strongly they are willing to challenge the government and dominant groups. Thus it may not be easy to translate Gujarat's R&R package for the SSP displaced into a national policy.

Further, even if such a policy come into existence, its implementation may not be possible. The experience of all three States recounted in earlier sections clearly reveals that land for cultivation and resettlement cannot be acquired easily. None of the governments has shown the political will to acquire land for resettlement using legislative measures such as the Land Acquisition Act, Land Reform Act and Land Ceiling Act. Governments that did not hesitate to acquire land for projects failed to use the same Act to acquire land to resettle displaced people. The 1984 Amendment to the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 provides for land take over to resettle people. As an escape route, however, the GOM choose to resettle people in forest area and the GOG resorted to purchase of land in the open market. The GOMP has remained passive. Forest land cannot be a source of agricultural land for the resettled, given the magnitude of displacement caused and depleted forests reserve. At the same time, private purchase of land cannot permit large scale resettlement due to its limited availability. Since the market purchase yields small parcels of land scattered over a large area it cannot permit resettlement of a group of households representing a cohesive social unit.

For most of the displaced people, caste, religion, language and kinship continue to play a dominant role in determining their economic and social security. Education and formal sector employment alone provide people with the capacity to break away from the ties of social attributes, but only a small minority come under this category. Provision of land and resettling the cohesive social units together can be the only R&R solution in case of SSP displaced.

SSP has shown very clearly that large scale displacement of people from land can not be sustained. It may be easy to provide a good R&R policy framework like the policies State and Central Governments have evolved for the social and economic development of tribals, harijans and other weaker sections. However, the problem rest with the willingness and capacity of the State to implement them. The time has come to look for alternatives to large dams, in order to minimise submergence of land and displacement of people. High population density on land means large displacement. When the area of submergence is large, then the problem of displacement assumes serious dimensions.

Divisive policies of the government will trigger off serious social and political consequences in society. At present the government is engaged in pitting the presumed (main project) beneficiaries

against the affected, and one group of affected against another in order to continue with SSP execution. A large majority of the 'projected' beneficiaries will never receive the benefits such as drinking water and irrigation from SSP (Paranjpe, 1990; Independent Review, 1992; NBA, 1992). It is necessary to look for quick solutions to the grave drought situation in backward regions rather than pumping all available financial resources into SSP. Similarly, as displacement progresses and dissatisfaction increases, the affected people will regroup to challenge the government. This process is gaining momentum. The Narmada Movement has sown the seeds of assertiveness and it has taken firm root in the minds of the affected people. The activists view themselves as facilitators to enable the people to remain alert and to decide and act for themselves.

CONCLUSION: RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION POLICY FOR THE FUTURE

The Narmada experience has clearly shown that in the long run, the R&R policy prescription as well as the nature of development projects implemented in India is bound to change. Within the country, the Narmada movement has helped to consolidate unity among various advocacy groups. Unity among the advocacy groups has immense promise to carry the struggle forward. Thus far, the advocacy groups have held themselves together firmly for the past eight years. Any gains from the Narmada movement are expected to spread to other States. Eventually, the Government as well as the dominant groups will concede greater concessions in terms of R&R policy when they face the prospect of losing projects that serve their interests.

As a national policy, attempt should be made to replicate Gujarat's policy for SSP displaced. Policies that provide development opportunities for the displaced and large scale displacement can not go hand in hand. Development projects in the future should aim to keep the magnitude of displacement at the lowest possible level. Satisfactory R&R can not be carried by an ad-hoc machinery. The Government should have appropriate R&R machinery to carry out the task on a long term basis. Participation of affected people at each stage of R&R is fundamental for the success of any developmental project. The currently adopted incremental approach to R&R needs to be abandoned. A thorough appraisal of displacement and comprehensive plan for R&R should be completed at the project appraisal stage itself. Extent of displacement, R&R policies, financial resources required to effect R&R, institutional arrangement for execution of rehabilitation and other basic issues should be incorporated into the main project appraisal. Loans for the main project should include R&R component.

In essence, an appropriate R&R policy may have the following elements:

Policies of Gujarat envisage livelihood provision in terms of giving irrigated/irrigable agricultural land, adequate support measures during transition period and other assistance to settle at the resettlement site. Further, the policy also provide for resettlement in command areas which will eventually have the potential for wage labour and self-employment. Well defined resettlement programmes with clearly designed human development initiatives could facilitate second generation of resettlers to move to non- agricultural pursuits. On paper, the R&R package put forward by the Government of Gujarat for SSP displaced does have such promise. Besides the R&R provisions, by mandating the displaced to be treated as 'families below poverty line' all anti-poverty measures could be made available to them. Such measures can be effectively used to clear and improve land, construction of houses, creation of infrastructure in the resettled village, training of men and women for self-employment, loans for initiating self-employment and other income generating activities. There are a number of projects that have tried such measures with great success. The Maharashtra II Irrigation Project facilitated the resettled people to make use of Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Jawahar Rojhar Yojna (JRY) to clear land, create irrigation structures and construction of sewerage and other sanitation facilities (Parasuraman, 1991 a). All groups including the harijans and women have benefited from the project initiatives. Government's programmes that facilitate new house construction through grants and loans should be made available to all, specifically to tribals, harjans, and female headed households.

Above all, the role of NGOs in planning and implementation of developmental projects and R&R programmes in particular has to be fully acknowledged. The SSP experience has clearly demonstrated how critical it is to appreciate the role of NGOs in forcing the government and funding agencies to incorporate the human and environmental dimension in developmental projects. The time is ripe for all forces engaged in developmental endeavours in India to recognize the need for enlisting peoples' participation and take serious steps towards realizing this goal.

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Appendix 1

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) as an independent agency, has monitored and evaluated the resettlement and rehabilitation process since the year 1987. All events and activities by the affected people, activists and organisations, State and Central Governments, Narmada Control Authority and the World Bank were monitored and recorded by TISS project personnel, as participant and non-participant observers.

Notes

1. In recent years the World Bank has altered its policy. It no longer insist that the amount allotted to R&R and environmental measures should not exceed 5% of the total project cost. It is also possible now to incorporate money required for R&R measures into the loan requested.
2. For example, in early 1992, in order to educate people in Maharashtra about the project and to wean them away from the activists, the top policy makers at the NCA level decided to implement the following strategies: press releases and press conferences, press tours, pamphlets and brochures giving brief description of the benefits to be distributed. Cultural troupes to perform in various project affected villages, and exhibitions put up highlighting the benefits of the project. Messages pertaining to the dam were also to be broadcast over the radio (NCA, 1992: pp. 3-6). The target group was the tribals in inaccessible villages where the highest education ever achieved by any person in any village was 3rd standard. A few children who were put in ashram school reached 3rd standard in 1992. No adult members in the villages can read. None of the information providing strategies would have worked among the tribal people in Narmada valley. However, none of the strategies were implemented by the Government.
3. The absentee landlords residing within and outside Gujarat and India sold land at very high prices to the government. This process created problems to tenants who were cultivating land. The absentee landlords of Gujarat give such land on lease to landless and marginal farmers. Due to market purchase a large number of tenants were evicted from land, having serious consequences on their livelihood.
4. At one stage in 1989, it looked as if the people and the activists would be motivated to accept the resettlement option of suitable forest land. The Government of India, according to the 1980 Forest Protection Act cannot release forest land for resettlement purposes. However, overlooking the Act, GOI signed an SSP loan contract with the World Bank, which included a clause that stated, 'forest land will be made available for resettlement, if no other suitable land was available'. Thus, when GOM declared that it did not have suitable land to resettle the displaced, the activists resorted to 'no dam' movement. The World Bank asked the GOI to honour its agreement by releasing the forest land for resettlement. Cornered by the agitation of people and legitimate demand of the Bank, GOI committed an illegitimate act of releasing 2700 hectare of forest land in Taloda.
5. Local organisations such as Narmada Dharangrasta Samiti, Maharashtra Ghati Navnirman Samiti, Narmada Asargrasta Sangharsha Samiti and a few others merged together to form the Narmada Bachao Andolan.
6. A number of voluntary groups sprang up in Gujarat in order to counter Anti-Narmada movement. They were: Narmada Lok Sangharsh and Sahakar Samiti initiated by Shri. Harivallabhbbhai Patel, as part of his Rangpur Ashram activities; Narmada Sahakar Sangh, initiated by Urmilaben Patel, wife of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. These two organisations on their own as well as in collaboration with Arch-Vahini are engaged in delivery of R&R provisions, motivation of people to move and information campaign.
7. For example, Mallika Sarabhai, an eminent personality from Gujarat, joined other eminent members in the country and signed a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister requesting a review of the project. However, Ms.Sarabhai was forced to withdraw her

signature within 24 hours.

8. In contrast with intensive tours of Narmada valley, project affected villages, command area and detailed discussions with the people by the Independent review, the mission concentrated on official documents, discussions with officials and tour of Gujarat villages, to which it had access. The Review spent eight months, whereas the mission completed its work in six weeks. Thus the differences in conclusions reached by the mission and the review was due to their approach and intensity of investigation.

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