

Poverty, Health and Malnutrition: A Study on Dam Displaced Families of Jammu Region, Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Background: Involuntary displacement may create psychological depression among affected people and result in sickness, grief, and death. People are forcibly displaced and are bound to live in new atmosphere, new place with new people, and changed norms and values which leads to the change in the entire socio-economic life of displaced people.

Research Methods: The study was carried out among displaced families in Pul Doda area of Jammu region (June, 2022). In the study purposive and snowball techniques were used with the help of semi-structured interview schedule, focus group discussions and case study. The sample comprised of 60 displaced families in Pul Doda region.

Result: The study found that over the period of time poverty, health and issue of malnutrition among the displaced families had tremendously increased due to the lack of proper rehabilitation and resettlement plan.

Conclusion: It was clearly seen that majority of the displaced families are facing poverty, health and malnutrition issues. They are forced to live under miserable conditions due to low economic status.

Keywords: Dam, Displacement, People, Health, and Issues

Background

After the 1950s, first-generation leaders considered hydropower projects as 'the temples of modern India'. For national interest, a large number of development projects were constructed in different parts of the country. The first and second Five-Year Plans mainly focused on industrialization, irrigation, and dam projects, and the displaced people were neglected under such planning⁴. The temple of modern India has become temples of doom for the displaced people³. People are forcibly displaced and

are bound to live in a new environment, a new place with new people, and with changing norms and values, which lead to a change in the entire socio-economic life of the displaced people⁴.

Poverty forces many of them to fill the urban slums from which they are evicted to keep the city beautiful. During the last few years' evictions have taken place in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Mumbai, and other cities. Traditionally 65% of the slum dwellers in the major cities used to be Dalit's. But today also many of the tribal have moved towards the slums

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because of impoverishment by deforestation and displacement and they are among the groups that are evicted². Women faced health, psychological problems, and family conflict that emerged about personal expenses¹.

Statement of the problem

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, development-induced dam displacement has emerged as a major challenge due to the lack of proper rehabilitation and resettlement policy. Displacement, poverty and health issues have become invisible problems for the policy makers as well as the state government since last 13 years. Displaced families have been given only monetary compensation and left at the mercy of god. Majority of the displaced families are forced to live in an unhealthy environment without any resettlement plans. What happened to their socio-economic life after displacement? Were they properly rehabilitated? Such questions remain unanswered.

Research Methodology and Objectives

The present study was empirical in nature and it was based on both the primary and secondary sources. For conducting the study, sampling method was used particularly snowball technique to collect relevant data with the help of semistructure interview schedule, focus group discussions and case studies. The study was conducted in Pul Doda area of Jammu region where the people have been forcibly displaced due to Baglihar dam project. In the study, there were 60 displaced families who were easily approachable and thus were interviewed. The main objectives for

conducting the study was to understand how the displaced families face socio-economic issues such as poverty, health and problems of malnutrition since last 13th years of displacement. Study further wants to examine how the displaced families were forced to live under below poverty line and what was its impact on their social life.

Finding and Discussions of the Study

Issue of Poverty among Displaced Families

Poverty is one of the biggest social issue in Indian society. But when people are forcibly displaced from their ancestral home land due to developmental projects they become more vulnerable group and are forced to live under impoverishment conditions. It was observed that for the policy makers' poverty is an insignificant issue and they only focus on monetary compensation and ignore other social issues which are the result of dam displacement. The study highlighted various economic issues which the displaced families are facing since last 13 years of the displacement and how they are living in poor conditions due to the loss of family business and regular sources of income.

Income and Occupation

Income and occupation are two important sources through which an individual can earn his social status into the society, and the standard of living is measured based on income and occupation of the family

Table 1. Occupation and Income of the Respondents

Before Displacement			After Displacement		
Occupation	Income	Respondents	Occupation	Income	Respondents
Big Business (wholesale Shops)	60,000- 70,000	10(16.66)	small Business	20000-25,000	10 (16.66)
Dairy forming and daily wagers	18,000- 22,000	12 (20.00)	Petty Business	8000-10,000	31 (51.67)
Small business	30,000- 35,000	31 (51.67)	Daily wagers	4000-7000	12 (20.00)
Government Jobs	30,000- 40,000	07 (11.67)	Government Jobs	50000-60,000	07 (11.67)
Total		60 (100)%			60 (100)%

- Note: (i) Daily wager refers to working in big shops, crusher worker, carpenter, mason, etc.
- (ii) The figure in parentheses shows the percentage.
- (III) Small Business refers to krayana shops, readymade garments, clothes shops, chicken and meat shops, medical shops, etc.

Source: Field Work.

From the table 1. The study highlighted that how the family occupation and income has changed before and after displacement and how it affects the economic status of the family. From the study it was found that before the displacement there were 10 respondents (16.66 per cent) families who were working as a big businessmen (wholesalers) and they earned monthly income between 60,000-70000 rupees. But after the displacement, they earned 20,000-25000 rupees per month at the new place. It was observed that the wholesalers turned in to small businessmen due to the loss of social network and change in business location. Most of the families reported that the family income has tremendously decreased and this has resulted in low economic status of the family. There were 12 respondents (20 percent) families who were working as a dairy farmers and daily wagers and earned 18,000-22,000 rupees per month. But after displacement same families were forced to work as a daily wagers and they are earning 4000-7000 rupees per month. Due to the loss of land, home, and business the displaced families were forced to sell their livestock (cow and buffalo’s). Now at the new place they are living in rented houses and earn their livelihood through daily wages.

The study has further seen that before the

displacement there were 31 respondents (51.67 per cent) families who were working as small businessmen and earned between 30,000-35,000 rupees per month. They mostly ran Kirana (grocery) store, medical store, chicken and meat shop, garments and clothes shops etc. But after the displacement same number of families turned in to petty businessmen and they are earning 8,000-10,000 rupees per month.

It was also found that there were only 07 respondents (11.67 per cent) families who were working in government sector before and after displacement and their family income had not been affected due to displacement. Before displacement they earned 30,000-40,000 and now their family income is 50,000-60,000 rupees per month.

It was also observed that after the displacement majority of the displaced families are living in rented houses in different location since last 13 years. The state government is unable to rehabilitate them properly due to which the displaced families are living in poor conditions. It was also observed that declining economic status among displaced families has a direct impact on their social life, such as health, education of children, and way of living.

Health Issues

It was observed that the health issues emerged as a major problem among displaced families after the displacement. After the displacement majority of the displaced families focused their attention on getting compensation, resettlement, and rehabilitation process. They ignored their health issues which later on emerged as a major problem among displaced families. The study highlighted the various health issues faced by men, women, elderly and children of the displaced families.

Table 2: Health Issues among Displaced Men and Women after Displacement

Men		Women	
Health Issues	Respondents	Health problem	Respondents
Issue of Blood Pressure	12 (30.00)	Diabetes, weakness and Blood Pressure typhoid	08 (40.00)
Thyroid, Diabetes	09 (22.50)	Psychological Depression and regular headache	12 (60.00)
Psychological Depression	19 (47.50)		
Total	40 (100)		20 (100)

Note: The figure in parentheses shows the percentage.

Source: Field Work

Table 3 highlighted the health issues which the displaced families are facing after the displacement. In the study both the men and women have been taken in to consideration and tries to examine the different kind of health problems which they are facing at the new places.

It was found that 12 (30.00 per cent) respondents reported that they are suffering from blood pressure after the displacement. There were 09 (22.50 percent) displaced men who reported that they are suffering from thyroid and diabetes since last nine years. It was further observed that there were significant number of displaced men 19 (47.50 per cent) respondents who reported that they are suffering from psychological depression last 10 years due to the loss of the regular source of income, ancestral property, and low socio-economic status.

As far as displaced women are concerned, the study found that there were 08 (40.00 per cent) displaced women who are regularly suffering from diabetes, weakness and blood pressure and typhoid after being forcibly displaced from their native place. They further stated that since last one decade they are facing the above health problems which has directly put on economic burden on their family. It was further seen that there were 12 (60.00 per cent) displaced women who are suffering from psychological depression and regular headache since last 10 years. Most of the displaced families reported that they are suffering from depression since the last decade as they are living in rented houses and do not have their own house. It was also observed that those displaced families who are living near river Chenab also suffer from typhoid, and malaria due to an unhealthy environment and polluted water.

Socio-economic condition of displaced women



After the displacement socio-economic condition of displaced women has become worse. It was observed that the above family is living near river Chenab since last 12 years without basic facilities. They are living in unhealthy environment which has greatly deteriorated their health. The women in the family reported that her husband is doing petty business in the nearby area and as such they cannot afford to live in a better place. She further said that there is no safe drinking water available her place and she has to travel about 6 km up and down every day to get spring water which is safe for drinking. It was also found that their economic condition is also not good due to which they are unable to send their children to school. The education of their children is suffering and they are helpless. Due to the unhygienic environment, the health of their family is deteriorating day by day. She further stated that since last 10 years, she is living under depression, anxiety and many times she and her children have suffered from typhoid and malaria disease. In the rainy season they are forced to drink polluted river water which has tremendously effected their health. She further stated that they are unable to provide good nutritional food to their children due to low economic status. As such their children are facing nutritional deficiency and suffering from various deficiency diseases.

Nutritional deficiency among lactating and pregnant women

After the displacement new kind of problem emerged among displaced families especially women due to low economic status of the family. To highlight the issue, the study conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) among lactating and pregnant women. Because in front of the family members the women respondents did not give positive response. Therefore, the FGD was separately conducted to get proper response from the respondents. In the FGD, there were 12 displaced women (7 were lactating and 5 were pregnant women) who participated and shared their problems and experiences.

In the FGD, it was observed that most of the displaced women revealed that due to poverty with in the family, they are unable to consume good nutritional diet which is essential for the growth of the child. As a result, the children who are born suffer from malnutrition. They further reported that the

new born children are under weight and suffer from various growth related diseases. The mother also has nutritional deficiency due to the lack of good balance diet. In the FGD, most of the lactating mother revealed that since they are unable to consume good diet, thus they are not able to properly breast feed their children. Thus they are dependent on formula milk which is an additional economic burden on the family.

As far as the pregnant women are concerned they also face similar kind of problems such as deficiency of protein, calcium, multivitamin and low hemoglobin and BP issues. Since their families are unable to provide them proper balanced diet. This all affects their health and causes many complications during delivery time.

In the FGD, one of the displaced women stated that in her neighborhood one pregnant women died after giving birth to a baby due to low hemoglobin levels. She also said that there were many cases among displaced families where the new born babies died after birth due to nutritional deficiencies. In the FGD it was observed that most of the displaced women suffered from malnutrition and various deficiency diseases due to low economic condition of the family.

Health Issues among Displaced children

Displaced children become the most vulnerable group at the time of forced displacement. It has been observed that both the policy makers as well as displaced families particularly focus on compensation process and ignore the issue of displaced children.

To highlight the issue, the study conducted a focus group discussion among displaced children. There were 20 children who participated in the focus group discussion and shared their experiences. The age group of the children was between 11-17 years.

In the focus group discussion, most of the children reported that after the displacement, they are the ones who are facing health issue such as depression, anxiety typhoid and malaria. Some of the displaced children also revealed they are living near river Chenab with their families without basic facilities such as drinking water, road, school and health facilities since last 12 years.

The study also found that displaced children are indulged in child labor to contribute to the family

income. Most of the children reported that due to the low income of the family, they are forced to work in different places and have thus left their education to support family income. The study also found that due to child labor, the displaced children were suffering from many diseases such as regular back pain and weakness, malnutrition due to lack of proper food. They were forced to work for long hours in different places such as Kirana shops, sand collection from the river Chenab, working in the crusher, etc. The health conditions of these children deteriorated further day by day. Most of the displaced children are suffering from malnutrition because of a lack of a well-balanced diet. Their families are poor and, as such, are not in a position to provide proper food to their children.

For the better understating of problems among displaced children the study conducted a case study of one of the displaced family.



The mother of the child reported that due to unhealthy environment her son is suffering from intestinal disease and water borne diseases since last 10 years. She further stated that she spent most of her compensation money for his treatment but still he is not well. Every year her children are suffering from typhoid and malaria disease which has resulted in more economic burden on them. She also said that since last 11 years her family is living near river Chenab after the displacement. There is no rehabilitation and resettlement plan from the state government since last 12 years which forced them to live in poor condition.

Conclusion

Forced displacement is the biggest threat to human lives as it produces poverty among the displaced families. The state government and the policy makers only focus on monetary compensation

and ignore the other social problems child labor, education problems, unemployment which the displaced families face after displacement. From the above finding it was clearly seen that due to the lack of proper rehabilitation and resettlement plan, majority of the displaced families are facing poverty, health and malnutrition issues. They are forced to live under miserable conditions. The empathetic attitude of the government authorities towards displaced families led them to live under poor conditions. The displaced families were left helpless, hopeless, and homeless. It was also observed that it is not only the displaced families who are facing poverty issues but their coming generations also face serious socio- and economic problems.

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