

Discourse On Development, Displacement and Livelihood Impact on Fisherwomen at International Deepwater Multipurpose Sea Port

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Abstract: In the context of post-modern changes and developmental projects in society, the paper seeks to scrutinize the displacement, resettlement & rehabilitation process and its gender dimensions of women in fishing community, experiencing a development trauma with the construction of Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Sea Port (VIDMSP) at Vizhinjam, Kerala, India. The socio-political assertion of bringing large scale development for the entire society in general and fishing community living in the proposed area in particular, the commencement of port poses an unbearable threat of displacement among fishermen community. Displacement is a depressing outcome of development which affected the entire community who inhabited in the project site; the most affected members are women. Moreover in the case of fishing community, the role of women is secondary with their job nature, as the fishing is a masculine gamble and the women have only the supportive role; which adds the risk of displacement among women. With this backdrop, the paper seeks to examine the relationship between development, displacement and its gender dimensions based on the qualitative data. The paper focuses on three main themes; as the upshot of gendered displacement, the resettlement and rehabilitation policies and the impacts on women's livelihood by displacement. This study looks upon a sociological journeying on this development discourse on the background of the construction of Port in Kerala and the outcome of this development upon the home-grown fishing community at Vizhinjam.

Keywords: Development, Displacement, Gender, Fishing community

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I. INTRODUCTION

Development by saying it is positive, progressive and provides upliftment to the common people. But most of the developmental activities and programs do not cater about its negative aspects, down sidedness and the outcomes created by the projects. Displacement is one such outcome of development which swept our society very rapidly. The problem of displacement and rehabilitation due to execution of development projects has been receiving constant attention in the recent past. A conservative estimate revealed that a population of about 160 lakhs was displaced and many more were affected indirectly due to implementation of various kinds of development projects (Hinal, 2004). It has been blown up the entire community and people who inhabited in the development site, women are the worst affected among them. In the parlance of sociological research; development, displacement and gender dimensions are not as much of deliberation in the current context of development projects. The problem of development induced displacement is less mentioning about its impacts on women, the so called vulnerable group. In the case of fishing community living in the coastal areas of Vizhinjam and suburbs, majority of them are engaged in fishing and its related works for their livelihood. Men are doing fishing and women are doing its associated works of marketing and selling fish in the local market. Now with the commencement of the port, the fishermen in this area are restricted to go for fishing. This affected the small scale fishermen than the big boat owners.

Around 20,000 people in 11 villages in the suburbs of Vizhinjam are doing direct fishing through Kambavala, in-board boats and out-board boats. In some families, all the members are doing fishing and its associated works. There are so many fishing associated works like carrying fish from the port to the local market, shore seine workers, lobster collectors, selling kerosene to the fishermen, auctioning of fish from the sea shore, marketing of fish etc.; most of these works are done by the womenfolk. The most pertinent aspect here is that, they are traditionally doing fishing and its associated works and they do not know any other works for their livelihood.

In this context, the Government of Kerala announced a resettlement & rehabilitation package for the fishermen those who lost their livelihood due to the construction of port. Around, 18,800 applications are submitted for the rehabilitation package from different categories of people. But this is not yet been materialized even after the commencement of the port. Men are going for other kinds of works but women are the worst sufferers, who did not know any other works. So the paper explores the gendered impacts of displacement on fishing community, the rehabilitation and resettlement packages offered by the government of Kerala and the impacts on livelihoods of womenfolk in fishing community from a gender perspective.

II. AREA OF STUDY

Vizhinjam, a minor fishing harbor located at the Southern tip of India in the State of Kerala and is almost 20 km south of the Capital City of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, constitutes the area of present study. The construction of the Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Sea Port (VIDMSP) at Vizhinjam is an ambitious project by the Government of Kerala with a public-private partnership (PPP) to the concessionaire viz. Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. with the intention for promoting world class sea-port for economic upliftment to the nation as a whole. It is the prime initiative of constructing a Sea Port with PPP model, which caters to the public interests as well as private assistance for the developmental project.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with an explanatory analysis of the developmental endeavors, its outcomes of displacement of native fishing people with a gender perspective. With an aim to congregate a comprehensive data, qualitative methods of data collection was adopted as the primary method for the study. This is helpful for getting diverse view points from the displaced people, especially from the women folk to understand about their concerns of displacement, the problems they are facing due to the development of the port and the issues related to displacement. The face-to-face in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions had conducted to gather qualitative data from the people and these are transcribed and analyzed with QSRNVivo software, which is used for analyzing qualitative data.

IV. GENDERED DEVELOPMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Though considering the benefits of developmental projects, it needs to look upon the negative impacts created by it like displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation. Most of the studies in the area of development and displacement, focused on the general problem of displacement only from the perspectives of dislocation of people brought about by development projects. Also there are only fewer studies and research related to the gender dimension in displacement and relocation and the problems of livelihood and security of women. The development of Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Sea Port (VIDMSP) at Vizhinjam is one such initiative, which also poses the problems of displacement of people and impoverishment in the livelihoods of people, especially women.

Though it is least studied about development and the problem of displacement from its gender dimension, it carries a broad analysis of issues related to women. Development project as such is aiming to bring progress and improvement of the lives of people who are inhabited in the particular project site as well as to the entire society. Here, development is multi-dimensional; as it is look forward to the international, national, state and regional echelon of development. It is intended to heighten the international sea export and import and high level profits to the entire society in India. As such it has to anticipate that, the huge sum of fishing community lives in the area of Vizhinjam will also benefit a lot with the commencement of the port.

The opinion of people about the developmental project and the advancement of the area, are welcoming in the context of VIDMSP Project. But at the same time, they are much concerned about the displacement from their houses, land and also from their employment. The people in Vizhinjam, both men and women are supporting the instigation of the port with the intention of bringing development to the area. They are looking forward that, 'the port will bring prosperity and development not only here but also to the nation as a whole'-reveals their broadmindedness of developmental dreams even they are irresolute with their future livelihood opportunities with the backdrop of displacement. They sturdily asserted that 'we want development'. But how they could achieve development and bring prosperity to their lives with the wake of displacement and unemployment- is a pertinent question here.

In the case of VIDMSP project, majority of the people belongs to the fishermen community and they are skilled with the occupation of fishing and its related works. The displacement of women from their land and employment has been seen through a different angle in the fishing community as the women are doing independent work and they earned for their livelihood. But construction of port poses a problem regarding their employment. The denial of access to work alienates them from their self-identity and independence for their livelihood. Even if the male members earned from fishing, the female have a decisive role in the making of family through their own contributions.

V. APPREHENSIONS

The women in particular have concerns regarding the construction of the port. They have opined that “before the starting of the works, we have freedom to go to the sea shore and selling fish in the market. But now we cannot go to the areas in which the construction is going on. That was our major area of local fish selling market”. But still now, some women are selling fish in the old harbor and the local market there. This has to be changed after the commencement of the port and the women cannot go to the old harbor and selling fish there.

The people have different opinions regarding the employment options of fishing community there. Some people opined that, the women cannot go for selling fish in the market after the opening of the new port. But some have of the opinion that, the Government of Kerala and Adani Ports Company will be providing facilities for them to sell fish in the market itself. The women are not clear about their future of livelihood as “we did not sure about whether we can go for employment or not. But the real thing is that, the Adani Ports Company and the Government of Kerala did not say anything related to the fishermen people here. They did not disclose anything now. So we are confused about the project. We will know something only after the functioning of the port”.

They are also concerned about the displacement from their land and house. The displaced families are given a rehabilitation package with 5 cent land and cash compensation for their houses. But even then they asserted that, “If the fishermen families are displaced to distant areas from here, they have difficulty to come here for fishing. Even if the authorities give land and cash for house, we have difficulty to go for work”.

They added that “authorities didn’t say anything related to our employment and fishing, our functioning of the old harbor or any issues related to the fishermen community. All these are some assumptions of the people. We actually do not know, whether it will be true or not. They keep all the things in their mind. Before the starting of the work they said that, they will not acquire any land from the fishing community and say ‘we do not have to construct port by displacing you from your land. We will expropriate land from the sea itself’. Now they are saying that, they need land from the people because taking construction area from sea is a huge loss for them”.

Another anxiety of the women who are living near the construction site is that, the dredging and piling works in the construction site is caused damage to the nearby houses. The walls of the houses are having scratches and it is shaking sometimes. The unbearable sound of the machines caused disturbance to the old age people and the women who are in the house most of the day. The complaints to the authorities got interesting reply as “what can we do for that?” This situation is leading them to a grave problem of ‘displacement by themselves’ from the corners of the construction site.

VI. DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Displacement is a problem when it is affected the normal lives of the people, whether it is relocation, loss of livelihood, loss of social bonds, lack of houses, food insecurity etc. Lot of issues is associated with the displacement of a group of people from their natural habitat. Rehabilitation and resettlement are the options for managing the risks caused by displacement. ‘Resettlement is a one-time physical relocation with or without other social and economic support; rehabilitation involves rebuilding economic resources, cultural systems, social structures and community support mechanisms that the DPs/ PAPs have lost. It allows conceiving upon the theoretical dimensions of rehabilitation, in fact its theory and praxis’. (Lancy, 2009).

“The problem of displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation has been carried out on the basis of certain issues relating to displacement. These issues may be related to problem of resettlement, compensation, recovery of economic and social status, women status, employment and income or livelihood, health and sanitation, environment. Further, it is difficult to have an absolute classification of all such issues due to its interrelationship nature” (Narendra Kumar, 2011). So it is clear that the issues and problems have close proximity to each other and it is intertwined with one another. The developmental projects and its various negative outcomes are not a new phenomenon.

The differences in the life spaces of both men and women through the ascribed gender roles also aggravated the displacement issue. Displacement leads to poverty and exploitation that is shared by both men and women but there exists some kind of disparities. “In the involuntary displacement, women suffer more than their male counterparts” (Sudder and Colsen, 1982). The women are vulnerable than men and face social, political, economic and cultural discrimination on the basis of gender.

In the case of VIDMSP Project also, the rehabilitation package offered by the government is aimed to men, not to women. The men are the heads of the families and the land and money given to them as rehabilitation is owned by men itself. The women have no right or authority to possess that money. This has worsened the situation of women, who lost their job and completely dependent on men. So joblessness is a serious problem affected by women and they are unskilled with other kind of wage labors. This situation deteriorated the social and economic status of women.

The rehabilitation package provided to the people who lost land is based on an assessment of land value and construction expenses. The Package outlined:

“Minimum 5 cents of land to be given in lieu of land having residential building, being surrendered for the purpose of resettlement. The balance extent above 5 cents will be compensated as the basis of purchase price of land with reference to the market rates. For the structures being surrendered, valuation may be made at enhanced PWD rates. An additional increase of percentage (50%) may be given over and above the PWD schedule of rates. Minimum value of structures will be Rs.3 Lakhs” (GO,2010)

Also the package is providing to the people who will lost their livelihoods due to the construction of port as:

“In order to compensate for loss of income as livelihood, transition period rent etc. to tide over in rehabilitation phase, a consolidated hardship allowance equal to 6 months rents payable will be given”.(GO,2010)

The current rehabilitation package clearly lacks the rehabilitation of women who are employed in the fishing sector. The men get cash compensation for the loss of their livelihood based on their nature of work. But the women are also affecting the same problem of loss of livelihood, is not being addressed in the rehabilitation package. Another issue is the increased alcoholism and spending of money to other things by the men, the economic burden of the women also rises. This has created tension among women to search for options for food, other necessities etc. The attitude of me towards women’s work is narrated as:

“Earlier, the women in poor families are going for work. But now, even if they have financial background, they are going for job with the increasing expenses for daily life. In some houses, the husbands did not send their wives for job, even if they are having minimal wages from their employment. They have a dominant attitude that the women have to live only with their (Men’s) earnings. Without the permission from their husband, the women cannot go for job and earn money. In some families, the husbands have given money to their wives and they (women) are doing everything for the family. But in some houses, the husbands did not give cash and even basic household items for daily life. They have to expend money for alcoholism and drugs. This is also a major problem here”.

“The rehabilitation policy is yet to accord displaced women a status equal to their male counterpart and the women have lesser participation in the present model of development”(Thukral, E.G. 1996). Thus, Displacement causes the feminization of poverty and increases the vulnerability and marginalization of women. This greater vulnerability of women due to displacement reflects the negative impact of ‘development induced displacement’. In the current situation, the loss of livelihood is seriously affected the fisherwomen and the adequate rehabilitation for them is an inevitability in the case of VIDMSP Project.

VII.DISCUSSION

Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Sea Port (VIDMSP) Project is a dream project by the Government of Kerala with PPP model, which give the impression of being facilitated the globalization of trade and development of the economy as a whole. This is a novel venture of the Government of Kerala through its special purpose government company (SPV) – Vizhinjam International Seaport Ltd (VISL), is developing a Deepwater Multipurpose Greenfield Port at Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram, capital city of Kerala, India, fully owned by the Government. It is premeditated as a PPP model with design, build, finance, operate and transfer (DBFOT) basis according to the terms and conditions of the concession agreement between Government of Kerala and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. The concession term is fixed for 40 years and after that the concessionaire shall be transferred the port assets back to the Government of Kerala/VISL (Feasibility report, GoK/VISL, 2015). This is a multidimensional project with double sided effects of bringing economic development to the society along with a section of people, who contributes a big part of benefits to the economy; the fishermen community has to be vulnerable with their loss of livelihood.

The development, displacement, rehabilitation & resettlement are paradoxical in the globalized economic scenario especially with the ongoing VIDMSP Project. These aspects are having a paradigmatic framework with the new economic and social development. The ingredients of this framework illustrate the development, displacement and rehabilitation process in the backdrop of VIDMSP Project. Initially, indistinctness of the project among the fishing community inhabited in the project site. Indistinctness – about the construction, implementation, loss of livelihood, displacement, rehabilitation, and future job opportunities etc., related to the project is a matter of great concern in this context. The uncertainty regarding the daily lives, employment, house and land is viewed here as a human rights issue among the people. The fishing community is considered as marginalized and excluded from the mainstream society, is further impoverished with this fuzziness of their livelihood. The women in Vizhinjam area are expressed their concerns as ‘we do not know anything related to the project’. The chance to redundancy, a foremost concern among the fishing community, is prevailing for a long time, even now with the ambiguity regarding the assurance of their employment, which they are skilled and following through generations. Fishing is traditionally transferred among the people, constitutes a part of their cultural imprints and psychological necessity. Even if they are getting rehabilitation for

the loss of employment as a mere relaxation for the present trauma, the long term livelihood is in a risk among the fishing community. In gender dimension, the women are more affected due to the redundancy than men, due to the social construction of gender in production process. Existing male domination and subordination of women in employment is adding impoverishment among the women in fishing community. The commencement of the port is leading to redundancy among women, but there is not even a rehabilitation package for them yet.

Another aspect of the framework is the dislodgment of people from their habitat and resettlement to another place. In the context of Vizhinjam, the displacement is also an indispensable one. Displacement and resettlement is not a new phenomenon in the developmental projects in the wake of globalization. The displacement of fishing community, especially women is posing an imperative issue of dislodgment from their houses, land as well as from their societal ties. This is crucially affecting with their livelihood opportunities and means of earning from the original place.

A dimension of social tribulations is also constitutes a major part in the context of VIDMSP Project. With the drastic development of the area, the social structure of the society is changing. The large influx of migrant workers and mechanized tools for construction, the chance to social tribulations is also a major concern. The women are seriously disturbed with the flow of migrant workers and the consequent issues like alcoholism, ganga (drug) use, distribution of drugs to the children, gender abuse etc. They are enjoyed freedom to go and sell fish in the sea shore and local market but with the commencement of the port, they cannot go and do their job. One woman anxiously responded about an incident happened to her co-worker regarding the abuse from a migrant worker who came here for work. Another problem is increased alcoholism and drug abuse among men, especially after they get a portion of rehabilitation package for those who lost their job as part of the project. With the lack of awareness and indications regarding the investment of money, they are spending money for alcohol and drug consumption without keeping money for household necessities. This situation adds the risk of impoverishment among women who suffered more with the lack of basic facilities in their houses. So the social tribulations created out of the development projects in Vizhinjam are evident with these episodes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The paper analyzes the developmental project at Vizhinjam and its consequent changes among the people who inhabited in the project site and the society as a whole. Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Port (VIDMSP) Project is an attempt to bring development in the economy of the state as well as to the people who are directly involved in fishing and related activities. Along with the development, there arise some pertinent issues which are deliberated in the paper like displacement, loss of livelihood and rehabilitation packages to the project affected people. This paper attempts to formulate a framework with the paradigmatic tribulations arising out of this development project. The paper also elucidate the gender dimension in development, displacement and rehabilitation process, the triangle which enlighten the issues of the subordinated gender with the backdrop of social and economic development in the globalized era.

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