Involuntary displacement: An analysis of the role and contribution of non-government organizations to the Narmada Project affected communities in Western India

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The major objective of the present article is to examine the various activities of the NGOs for the upliftment of the affected tribal people in the context of the resettlement programs in Gujarat state, western India. In order to collect data, the interview schedule was adopted. The primary data were collected through the interview schedule, and formal and informal interactions with respondents and personal observations. The data presented demonstrates the role and contribution of NGOs in the implementation of the government schemes. In order to obtain responses, various representatives of NGOs, academics and think tanks were contacted and questioned in informal meetings with the help of the interview schedule. This paper provides a brief overview of the roles that NGOs currently play in improving internally displaced persons (IDPs) development and protecting human rights. The functions of NGOs in the development activities for affected communities are described. The contribution of NGOs in Gujarat state is focused on the views from the survey conducted in the Vadodara district highlights.

Key words: NGOs, displacement, India, Narmada Dam, internally displaced persons (IDPs).

INTRODUCTION

The analysis presented in this paper is based on fieldwork and the interviews conducted with a total of eight NGOs in Vadodara District of Gujarat State which were engaged in the evacuation process of the Narmada affected internally displaced persons (IDPs) and were also involved in the development of their resettlement colonies. The representatives of the NGOs provided information on their roles and contributions in the rehabilitation and resettlement process and issues they work with, their location and how they feel now about the situations of IDPs after resettlement in their areas. This paper will analyze the qualitative data from the responses to the open ended questions in the questionnaire. In this context, the need to analyze how far the NGOs are effective in rural development, what their roles are, components of their development work, their consequences etc was evident. This analysis tries to address the one important question: what is the impact of participation of NGOs in development activities during the resettlement process of IDPs and in the relocation sites to improve the standard of living of IDPs?

This part of the work describes the contribution of NGOs towards development of the IDP community of the Narmada Project. Today NGOs have a key role to play in the lives and livelihoods of the indigenous and socially deprived communities of India. It attempts to understand how the information and support from the NGOs helped the indigenous community to improve their livelihoods.

The participation of NGOs in the resettlement process of the Narmada Project has been distinctive in two ways. Firstly, various NGOs have been strongly criticizing infrastructure development projects which displaced people. They are active in resettling IDPs whilst recognizing their deprivations due to massive
development projects in the country. These NGOs have effectively led the protest movement against juggernaut development projects, with the help of media, human rights activists, and other individual groups.

Secondly, their role has been remarkable in uplifting the IDPs’ livelihoods and in dealing with those who happen to lose from the development practice. Also, NGOs work with the government in the planning, monitoring and implementing of resettlement processes. Their main aim is to ensure that the livelihoods of IDPs are improved as much as possible (Mathur, 2000, p. 1).

Rehabilitation and resettlement is still an ongoing issue. NGOs in India are very powerful and oppose many development projects, which often raise issues of resettlement of IDPs in the country. They observe that there is not much need of going on with this massive destructive process under the banner of development. In the NGOs view, governments and funding agencies which help them in their development programs are also responsible for massive dislocation of the indigene affected by the projects. On the other hand, not all NGOs respond to the resettlement issues due to development projects in a similar manner. There is another side of the coin too, some NGOs are in favor of improving the livelihoods of the displaced persons and altogether in favor of the development projects. They believe that without development, the government cannot provide better standards of living. What they certainly want, however, is that the earlier approach to abandonment of IDPs should be replaced with policies and programmes that guarantee them a future better than their past, not just promise them a return merely to their ‘good old days’ (Mathur, 2000, p. 2).

In truth, NGOs are not a homogenous group, all united in the way they view the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R & R) issue and the manner in which they want to deal with it. It was observed that some NGOs are very helpful to the IDPs and in the R & R scheme.

The success of community development for IDPs depends upon the active involvement of IDPs through NGOs. In the first phase of IDPs evacuation in 1989-90, due to the Narmada Project, several NGOs’ involvement started in the resettlement program in Gujarat. Gujarat State has had a long custom of voluntary work. Today NGOs or voluntary agencies are involved actively in current social issues such as environmental protection, legal aid to the poor, human rights, child development, and indigenous development. Also, numbers of NGOs are actively participating in the day-to-day implementation of Rehabilitation and Resettlement schemes at various relocation sites in Gujarat. NGOs and Voluntary Agencies have been working in this area for several decades. NGOs have fought for proper rehabilitation of IDPs and have come to a stage where they find a comprehensive R & R policy in place. NGOs are being supported to take up initiatives for improving the quality and standards of life of IDPs. Apart from adopting a ‘cluster’ of relocation sites, they undertake a number of activities such as: (a) training for non-farm income generating activities; (b) training for self-employment and self-dependence activities; (c) provision of nutritional supplements; (d) organization of health camps to benefit people from villages and residential camps; (e) training for women for self-reliance; and (f) Counseling children and youth to refrain from the use of drugs and bad habits. Most of the NGOs play a crucial role of providing development inputs.

The Sardar Sarovar Punarvasvat (resettlement) Agency (SSPA)1 in Gujarat has involved several NGOs in the mission and their efforts have produced positive results in Gujarat. Almost all the new resettlement sites, approximately 200, have been adopted by the NGOs under various development schemes2. Major rural development programmes of the NGOs include health programmes, human resource development programmes, women’s empowerment, education and training and community resettlement.

The activities of NGOs can be observed in many spheres in this country. First, policy-makers in India had developed a tradition of consulting civil society and individual groups. The Commissioner of Planning was appointed to secure opinions from various groups in society, and their views were solicited in formulating major policies at the national level, even as a centrally planned model of development was adopted.

Second, NGO involvement was invited not only in formulating policies, but their assistance was also sought in implementing schemes. The Planning Commission itself had realized at the beginning that the task of development was so large and so complex that the State alone would not be able to complete it. Accordingly, the policy documents came to appeal to NGOs to become involved in the task of community development, mainly by implementing policy. Appropriate financial provisions were also made for them.

Finally, government support has also played a significant role. In the 1989, the policy implementation scheme for the resettled of Narmada Project IDPs began to change. The Government started to focus their attention on NGOs to facilitate the restoration of IDP’s livelihoods. They began to channel large amounts of developmental assistance to NGOs who worked directly for the IDPs.

The main objective of taking interviews with the individuals is to counter check the responses and views of those affected in the field. A range of individuals were chosen for the interviews such as representatives of NGOs, researchers, an urban planner, a policy planner, academics and others who were engaged in the rehabilitation and resettlement process or who took part in the evacuation process of the displaced indigenous

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1In 1992, the Sardar Sarovar Punarvasvat Agency (SSPA) was constituted for implementing the Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) activities for the Sardar Sarovar Project Affected Families (PAFs) in Gujarat. The headquarters is located in Vadodara, Gujarat.

2Based on an interview conducted with one of the NGO member on 12/12/2011. Name withheld on request.
peoples in the selected district. A total of eight NGOs were visited in Vadodara district.

Methodological consideration

This article analyzes the qualitative data collected from the open ended questions of schedule ‘B’ of the questionnaire. Schedule ‘B’ of the questionnaire asked the respondents about their perceptions regarding the issue of human rights and the policy issues associated with the displacement. A total of nineteen open ended questions asked the respondents about the related issues of governance and the performance of the project authorities. The survey was conducted in February 2011. All eight NGOs are mostly engaged in IDPs development activities. The randomized sampling frame for the NGOs was based on the list of NGOs provided by the office of the project authority, Government of Gujarat.

Vadodara district was chosen because the leading NGOs engaged in the process of rehabilitation and resettlement is found within this region. Representatives of NGOs, think-tanks, government officials, political leaders and persons from the project authority were interviewed within the same locations and beyond these locations; representatives of NGOs and concerned authorities were contacted through email and telephone, to invite them to participate in the proposed research.

These NGOs were engaged in the rehabilitation and resettlement process and had taken part in the evacuation process of the displaced indigenous people in the chosen district. There are several NGOs working for indigenous development in Gujarat. The researcher has studied eight major NGOs from the research area engaged in the indigenous displaced development activities. These NGOs undertake development related issues and their ideological orientation differs widely. There are some NGOs who’s goal is demonstration and there are some who are engaged in both construction and demonstration work. In the present study, the aims and objectives, project area, target group, views of NGOs on problems of tribal communities, and their suggestions have been studied. The work of NGOs has been evaluated on the basis of the nature of work, their views on policy and implementation process. Their views on tribal development after relocation and the need for all NGOs to work under one banner also have been sought. This paper thus evaluates the role of NGOs working with displaced tribal people, their strengths and weaknesses.

In the process of IDP community development, the NGOs had to be involved in different phases and activities in Gujarat. NGOs have been actively involved in transforming the lives of the indigenous displaced persons by the Narmada Project. The responses provided in the Gujarati language are translated to English by the author and marked by ‘tslid’ at the end of each response to identify it as a translation.

Functions of NGOs and IDPs development

This section discusses the functions of the NGOs and their involvement in community development for IDPs in the state. Specifically, the discussion is of the roles related to engagement in community development activities such as the provision of basic amenities with required facilities. The approach of NGOs to IDPs was better appreciated than that of the government. The functions of NGOs and their role at the resettlement colony have been very well established. It also emerged in the field that most of the work done by NGOs was with the collaboration of the government. The study has established a successful approach of a government and non-government partnership in the resettlement process.

The analysis showed the comprehensive and high quality activities conducted at the resettlement sites by the NGOs which supported the development of the IDP colony. The development activities adopted by NGOs in the resettlement colony were as follows:

Figure 1 summarizes the relationship between NGO’s roles and empowerment, and sustainable community development for IDPs. From this perspective, NGOs functions in relocation sites are assisting the indigenous people in providing training and increasing skills for self-employment, income generation, and facilitating development provided amenities, encouraging IDPs in community development activities, and acting as a nodal agency between IDPs and the government. NGO involvement leads them forward from their earlier standards of living, which is the outcome of the IDP’s development. In the long term, the outcome would be sustainable community development for IDPs in the state.

(a) Skill based training for IDPs

After the shifting of IDPs during 1989, many NGOs became involved in the relocation sites. Many NGOs were engaged to provide skill based training to IDPs such as fire safety training for the youths; knitting and making jams, jellies, chutneys and pickles for women; self-help group training for income generation and so on. It was a good strategy to improve the access to the government welfare schemes announced for the IDPs, serving affected indigenous people. A self-help group (SHG) and finance scheme served affected people helping them to generate their income after resettlement. This typical finance scheme provides small loans for farmers for cultivation, for buying farming equipment, and for buying fertilizer. Self-help group activities in rural areas also gave opportunities for saving money. The NGOs strategy for IDPs development also involved training programs to build confidence in tribal women.

These income generation schemes help these tribal women by putting money in their hands and allowing them to earn an independent income and contribute
financially to their households. It was observed during the
survey, that income generating schemes increased
confidence and self-esteem in indigenous women. In
addition, in order to gain economic stability, NGOs helped
the youth by providing security guard training, fire safety
training and some organic farming training.

(b) Development of basic amenities and rehabilitation

In this study, it was observed that NGOs had done
superior work in relocation sites in developing basic
amenities. For instance, as discussed with NGO
members, it was found that: “some of the villagers were
not ready to move from their original villages due to
dissatisfaction of the government packages and the
government efforts. NGOs jumped to help the displaced
people and took over the case into their hands. NGOs
played a role as bridge or nodal agency between the
government and the displaced people as government
was not listening to displaced people’s voice directly.
Therefore, NGOs knew and studied the reality of the
displaced people and put forward their requirements to
the government. Government agreed and released the
desirable package for the displaced people. This was the
case of Koliyari village in Sankheda taluka (village) of
Vadodara district. Now the villagers are happy and
settled well and appreciated the NGOs efforts”

In 1996-97 NGOs surveyed the resettled villages and
identified an enormous irrigation and drinking water
issue. This provision was in the policy but government did
not provide adequate water facilities as they promised in
the relocation sites. Displaced people were really
disappointed and protested to the government. Displaced
people were not allowed to petition and question the
government officials in the villages. The government
realized that they cannot resolve such issue so stepped
back from direct involvement. Afterwards, government
asked for help from the NGOs. With the help and support
of displaced people, NGOs were able to resolve the
water issue by laying pipelines and hand pumps at the
relocation sites.

A distinct pattern was also observed in the field when
IDPs were asked a question about the attitude towards
government and NGOs.

As seen from the Figure 2, 56% of respondents were
satisfied with the NGOs assistance while 39% appreciated
the government’s assistance. All kinds of activities towards socio-economic improvement of IDPs
were conducted in the area. A number of NGOs were
engaged in the community development activities (Table
1). To develop basic facilities in the relocation sites is
another strategy of NGOs to help the IDPs. Almost all the
new habitats, approximately 200, have been adopted by
the NGOs under various development schemes.

Accordingly, the programs listed below are carried out:

In the study area, it was noticed that NGOs are more
successful than the government in resettling the IDPs in
the state. The Study of the Role of NGOs in community
development for IDPs in the context of the Narmada
Project has assumed greater significance. At the initial
stage of evacuation of IDPs, the NGOs and State
Government were struggling hard to organize the
released people through R&R process.

The study reveals that almost all NGOs in this area
were engaged to develop infrastructure facilities. The

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3 Based on telephonic conversation with the member of NGO on 12/12/2010.

4 This testimony is based on the interview with the member of NGO 7/01/2011.
The state was not entirely successful in improving the status of IDPs; the NGOs’ efforts to settle the IDPs in the new area from the grass-root level were initiated. The assessment of NGOs for this study by the investigator revealed that the issues of IDPs such as land alienation were resolved by the involvement of NGOs. In fact the NGOs role was crucial in this regard.

The project officials took a very sympathetic stand on their problems and helped people to visit alternative sites by arranging special bus transport and giving them ample time to arrive at decisions. The project authority considered all the three options suggested by the victims, and duly respecting them, carried out the resettlement process as per the wishes of the people.

The contribution of NGOs

The function of NGOs in monitoring, planning and implementation of R&R is now being recognized. Morse and Berger (1992) consider the admirable role performed by NGOs in resettlement sites of the Narmada Project in Gujarat State. In their view without Arch-Vahini and Anand Niketan the R&R process would not have been successful. In addition, the Narmada Project experience has evidently established the crucial role NGOs played in forcing the government and project authorities to integrate the human dimensions into infrastructure development projects in the country.

It was noticed in the field, that the help of NGOs in the Narmada Project has made the indigenous people affected by this project more vocal in claiming their rights. The following NGOs were visited and have played a significant role in the development of communities for IDPs.

Divya Sewa Trust (DST) was committed to improving the IDPs livelihoods especially displaced women and youth by giving them the training required. The people displaced by the Narmada Project were assisted by the NGOs to resolve their issues. DST adopted nearly 65 rehabilitation sites in Vadodara district for their development. The functions of DST in rural areas involved a facilitation role working with IDPs. For instance, DST trained 300 youths as security guards and as fire safety officers for getting jobs in the government sector. In this way, DST promoted a participatory approach in their sustainable community development activities. Some other training involved knitting, jam-jelly making, pickle and embroidery works. All are supported by a micro-finance scheme. DST was successful in these rural development activities.

Mangal Bharati Sewa Trust has an assignment to conduct extensive participatory development processes in the IDPs colony through giving educational training to

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1Divya Sewa Trust is working in the areas of training, development, and extension work mainly focusing on health, education, Income – supplementation, Child Health Care, Agriculture, Organic Farming, water conservation, Women’s Empowerment, Displacement, for intervention and assistance. The organization has through Community Development Project, implemented in villages of Vadodara District.
the IDPs. Its objectives include: education and providing a rural health program, improving the status of indigenous women, increasing involvement in local self-government and developing women’s capacity to make money. In Mangal Bharati Sewa Trust, they opened a school of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Bhartiya Agro Industries Foundation) for the rural poor. More than 30 women received a certificate from this school and they are now working both in the government sector and the independent sector. Mangal Bharati Krishi Vigyan includes organic farming, social forestry, adult literacy programmes and improving skill in women. Also, it provides small scale industry to the rural poor in IDP camps.

Arch-Vahini- is one of the NGOs in Gujarat; has been actively involved since 1995 and it is now mainly involved in the administration activities of the government in handling the rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs specially from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Arch-Vahini was focused on the tribal development process. Whatever conditions displaced people now enjoy are only due to the involvement of Arch-Vahini. Arch-Vahini fought for indigenous rights and against the alienation of their land. Arch took a very clear stand to uplift the displaced indigenous peoples. Arch Vahini played a vital role in the shaping and Implementation of R&R. They have been contributing very significantly towards various development schemes, they implemented R&R programmes often reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable sections of the IDP community and helping the socio-economic development of the IDPs.

The cash reimbursement they were given was not adequate for indigenous IDPs to restore their livelihoods. Arch-Vahini in Gujarat and Maharashtra states has often negotiated with the government and the project officials for greater cash compensation. In this way NGOs have assisted the IDPs in relocation sites.

Outlook of NGOs

Perception on rehabilitation and resettlement policy

This part of the work describes the views of NGOs and individuals visited. Officials and NGOs, who are actually talking from a policy perspective, are concerned to maintain their survival amid the increasing level of condemnation from rights based groups outside of India. As discussed with academics who are actually criticizing by the whole R&R policy and believe that “the perspective presented by the officials was subjective and told me that the policy on displacement- does not have the advantage of the displaced people, including the culture and environmental issues that they continue to face (tssld)”.

As a result of this, the displaced people interviewed for this research were asked to examine the policy in two ways. Some, especially higher ups would prefer a people-centric approach. They are faced by their experiences in relation to their present conditions as internally displaced people, on one hand, and on the other the government’s economic arguments for the necessity of having the dam. Contrary to this perspective, ordinary members especially the women in the relocation sites, on condition of anonymity told me that this displacement policy does not allow for variety of agencies to work among the displaced people. They see the policy as a one-size-fits-all model that has the effect of making them accept their status.

The respondents believe that: “providing facilities for education for all school attending children is the sole responsibility of the government. Many registered NGOs in Gujarat are working for project affected families and women’s empowerment”.

According to one individual respondent: “our experience is such that where displacement has occurred because of political insecurity, you will find that the State will always try to protect some of the things that are taking place; they do not want these things to come to the attention of the international community […] I am sure you are aware that in northern India we have over 200 camps where there are over 1 million people who have been displaced due to Tehari and Ukai dams in south Gujarat and north India. I think it is the biggest human rights crisis in India and it is absolutely necessary that the engagement of the UN be established through a monitoring and evaluation team (tssld)”. In line with this same perspective, another person interviewed in a different group within Gujarat said: “With regard to information mentioned with reference to the aforementioned statements, we can see that the only alternative for these people is to rely on themselves and if there would be any major pressure on the government it would, as far as I was made to understand by those who speak to me, it has to come from outside of Gujarat. Because some believed the whole process, as managed by the NGOs, has been politicized in ways that made these NGOs to walk with them on political conditions, and social systems (tssld)”. According to an academic, “the evolution of resettlement and rehabilitation policy speaks about the role all these agencies have played over the period of the last 15 years. All these NGOs have formed their federation named ‘Sampoorna Punarvasan’- meaning ‘Complete Resettlement ‘(tssld)”.

Problems faced by the NGOs during implementation of the Scheme

In the Narmada Project in Gujarat where NGOs were engaged with IDPs’ community development activities, NGOs’ experience with the state government has not been very happy. NGOs have faced some difficulties in monitoring and implementation of R&R. In order to

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6 Conversation with one of the Professors, Department of Architecture, M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat. 8/01/11.
understand the various issues faced by the NGOs during the resettlement process, as we talked to the NGO representatives about the difficulties they may have faced during implementing R&R, responses were recorded as follows:

(i) Leaders of host villages did not cooperate and they discouraged our efforts.
(ii) Some political hurdles.
(iii) Tribal women did not cooperate due to the fear of their husbands and feeling shy to come forward.

They further explained that, “while NGOs were assisting in preparing the R&R plans; a similar kind of power was not provided during the implementation of R&R in the field”[7]. This frequently led in some conflicts between NGOs and the government. In surveyed villages, it seems that due to these clashes, one could observe some excessive delays of implementation of resettlement. The essential support and cooperation from the authorities was missing and this had significant consequences.

On many occasions, NGOs fought with the local government to protect the rights of displaced people. The Mangal Bharati Trust fought for a long time to ensure the rights of tribal people. In his interview, a local president of Mangal Bharati Trust said “we fought a very long battle with the supreme court for the tribal rights and finally we won against government”. He further stated: “now most of the issues have been resolved but still there are some issues related to land, but I think that all issues will remain unresolved (tsld)”. However, without any doubt it is evident that the involvement of NGOs improved the process significantly.

On the other hand, another academic had a different standpoint regarding this perspective. The academic stated that “the government should ensure the rights of displaced people well before now. Displaced people should get all rights whatever enjoyed by individuals. Government should not treat them badly like abandoning them”. According to many academicians, the magnitude of the displacement in the country and the weakness of the indigenous civilization to deal with these kinds of problem will affect and have encouraged environmental as well as human rights groups to focus on the issue of displacement.

**NGO and Government Relationship**

Clashes between contracted NGOs and the government connected to the implementation process are very common. During the survey, some NGOs stated that “due to some clashes between NGOs and officials, sometimes governments are suspending their contracts, and we (NGO) reacting will withdraw from the implementation process leaving it in the lurch”. As we asked about the dissatisfaction and disagreement then they said: “we have much dissatisfaction with the government”. Sometimes NGOs do not go and visit the IDPs sites and do not properly implement the resettlement plan due to lack of financial assistance granted by the government for NGOs or due to some internal conflicts with NGOs and host populations.

It was observed that the prospects for government-NGO teamwork in relocation sites are massive. The teamwork has not progressed smoothly, but both NGOs and government are learning the way to improve their proficiency, and to systematize their schemes. It was noticed that the involvement of NGOs in the IDPs relocation sites to improve their standards and their community seems very helpful.

After the shifting of displaced people to the relocation sites, there were many unresolved issues, these included a lack of drinking water, lack of irrigation water, infertile land and insufficient house plots. IDPs mainly faced land issues and questions of access to irrigation water facilities because the main canal of the dam is passing through their relocation sites although the affected people cannot access this water, so this is really pathetic. NGO representatives and policy planners shared their views that at the initial stage of evacuation there were very many issues such as land settlement issues, and access to basic amenities and employment. But with the help of NGOs, gradually many issues have been resolved. The project authority has displaced a huge number of people therefore the government cannot handle all these issues single handed, so the Gujarat Government has to seek NGOs assistance to complete the R&R efficiently in the state. NGOs have fulfilled the basic requirements of Project Affected Families (PAFs) at the new sites.

On the other hand, the academic’s point of view on the dissatisfaction among the displaced people against government was that Gujarat’s plan gave five acres of land to every displaced person, (mostly male members) 18 years of age or above at the time of Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal (NWDT) Award announcement in 1979; women were given no land rights by the state. Practically every step of the R&R process has suffered from poor planning, political corruption and the government’s lack of competency, according to the government officials, human rights activists and affected indigenous groups.

As we interviewed staff from the women based NGO Sahiyar, they said that, “gender inequalities in reimbursement for involuntary displacement and resettlement resulting from land acquisition in the country may have negative impacts on family well-being. As land titles are mostly held by men, cash compensation for land or other assets is usually given to the male head of household who may not share it equitably with other family members. Women and others with use rights to land may not be compensated for loss of livelihood”.

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[7] Face-to-face interview with an NGO member on 10/01/11. Name withheld on request. Here all respondents names are withheld due to security and some were also withheld on request.
Opinion on government responsibilities

Mixed responses were received from many individuals. Members of NGOs shared their views on the government’s functions in systematic R&R, by saying: “we cannot apportion blame to anyone because it is a part of national progress and development”. However, academics opined that for the present condition of IDPs from the Narmada Project after shifting - “only the government is responsible. They dumped them in to hell from heaven. Government is not performing their duties genuinely” (tsld)9. They further suggested that “the government should have planned the resettlement process before evacuation of the IDPs of Narmada Project and the failure of resettlement planning is the government’s blunder”. But gradually government learnt from the trial and error experience. At the initial stage, the government had decided to handle this R&R and evacuation process alone but it is a huge program, then subsequently as lessons were learned, the government decided to involve the NGOs in this matter for smooth processing, which improved the situation.

Views on the current socio-economic condition of IDPs

Members of NGOs believed that the condition of IDPs seems better than it was during the first phase of evacuation in 1989. However, this is only due to the involvement of NGOs and to their initiatives. On the contrary, officials of the project authority argue that the majority of the affected tribal communities are better off at present sites under Gujarat’s comprehensive relocation plan because the government has given them enough land even for those who did not have land before. These include the “encroachers”-those who had no legal titles to their land or ‘owned’ no land but used government forest land for grazing, firewood and building their homes; these people were also eligible for getting the land under the scheme6.

Similarly, an academic said that the government was taking care of the policy while NGOs were implanting the policy in the field. Project affected peoples’ conditions are good enough here only if they provide better compensation and a suitable environment, which is their basic need10.

Views on R&R policy and it’s violations

Resettlement is a human right issue. As we posed this question to respondents,11 the majority of the respondents were shocked by the question12. First of all they became speechless and even aggressive then they said diplomatically: “we cannot say exactly, but their basic rights were violated at the initial stage in the 1980s but with the help of NGOs and those concerned in government it has been resolved, so no further talk on this” (tsld). They refused to discuss human rights saying that: “Although, there are some loopholes in the policy but now after 20 years of the project, everything is going smoothly so no need to talk much on human rights and any issues related to Narmada Project”.

An academic13 advised: “You have to be very careful to talk and raise the issue of human rights in the case of Narmada Project. I think you will not find any human rights violation case in this regard. To justify human rights is not that easy (tsld)”. However, during interviews one of the representatives of an NGO and one senior lecturer came to join the discussion and they shared their views. They told me that: “You should look at all parameters of development also. You should not look only at the negative impacts of displacement. This is a matter of national progress (tsld)14,15.

Furthermore, academics and social scientists15 shared their views thus: “mental stress and physical violence is a part of human rights but in the case of the Narmada Project no physical violence occurred. There was mental stress or mental trauma faced by the IDPs during evacuation process (tsld)”. In addition, a senior research assistant of the research institute advised that: “I think if government looks at this R&R policy sensitively and makes some modifications regarding the right of displaced people it would be good for the victims because victims are the part of our society and they are giving the sacrifice of their livelihood. So they should get the benefit from the government scheme”.

Surprisingly, they refused to comment. They suggested to me that I should be careful to write about human rights in my research report otherwise it will be problematic for me if it was misinterpreted. They pressured me not to write on human rights issues at all in this case. Some respondents were constantly calling me and suggesting that I not misinterpret their talk/ views in my research report. Otherwise they were afraid they be in trouble, as well as me too. I have also observed that some respondents were not sharing their views because of some political threats or pressure or some hidden frights. So I could not obtain desired information as I had anticipated.

In Gujarat State, a very huge movement was built to fight on human rights issues raised by the Narmada Project in the initial stages and as a result the image of Gujarat state was spoiled at the international level. International media and international scholars criticized the Gujarat government over the poorly planned resettlement for Narmada Project’s IDPs. So none of those I interviewed were eager to talk about human rights issues. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement), an NGO formed by human rights activist groups in India raised several human rights violation issues in the Narmada Project and this is still going on. For this reason, officials and individual members were not willing to discuss this particular issue.

11 I have observed during interviewing individuals that they do not want to discuss anything about violations of the human rights of indigenous people.

2 This was later verbally confirmed by a NGO member.
9 During survey it was noticed that with the help of NGOs, some tribal people received a land grant.
10 This reaction received a general consent from other respondents—both politician and academics/researchers.
11 I have observed during interviewing individuals that they do not want to discuss anything about violations of the human rights of indigenous people.
There are various suggestions on policy as well as implementation processes which were also received from the respondents. The academics believed that the government should employ a people centric approach. The IDP’s participation is necessary to formulate the policy. Actually IDPs know their needs better than the officials. Hence, if government and policy planners would modify the present policy then IDPs can receive better treatment. This whole process should be done in a sensitive manner.

The NGOs reaction was somewhat different. They suggested that the following three steps should be kept in mind while formulating policy for the rehabilitation process. The three aspects are: (1) Future prospects of the IDPs (2) Humanitarian aspects; and (3) Meeting IDPs basic needs.

Personal observation and problems

I experienced the following unanticipated problems during my field work

(i) Individuals were not ready to discuss the human rights issues. They did not want to open their mouth against the government may be due to fear or some direct pressure.
(ii) They also suggested to me I ought not to write on human right issues and say anything against government especially as I am doing this research from overseas.
(iii) Academics seemed concerned about this issue but they considered this human rights issue as very sensitive. Whilst they had sympathy for the victims they seem helpless against government power and local influence.
(iv) Respondents were not ready to record their interviews because they had fears and felt insecurity that information may be misused overseas or may be misinterpreted by the investigator. So it was very difficult to memorize and to note down a whole 30 to 40 min of any talk at one time.
(v) After giving an interview, a majority of the respondents were feeling insecure and also feared to discuss further with the investigator, as I was from overseas. After completing the interview, respondents were calling the investigator constantly and telling her to take care of their talk/views and not to misinterpret them at the international level. They were afraid.
(vi) Due to some pressure from the officials, the researcher here analyses some views in a neutral way and could not obtain desired critical results as anticipated. These results may have been a little different if the author and respondents were not pressurized. But whatever is presented here is from the author’s own observation and represents factual data.

CONCLUSIONS

By considering the responses in their entirety, it is important to draw the conclusion that the NGOs under study have made massive attempts to resettle the IDPs and have conducted various activities to restore the IDPs earlier poor status. Based on the results of the present study, there can be no doubt that the assistance of NGOS in the process of rehabilitation and resettlement of affected IDPs has helped a great deal in restoring livelihoods, resolving tribal issues and resettling tribal peoples in the newly settled areas.

Individual respondent’s views on the issue of resettlement of the displaced people are described in three aspects here. A first opinion is that, at the initial stage of evacuation and resettlement of the displaced people (1989-90), the resettlement programme was not carried out properly and it was not satisfactory. A second opinion, received from the academics, was that, it is possible to resettle and restore the livelihoods of the displaced people if proper efforts are made by the government and the project authority. A third opinion received from the members of NGOs is that: we should be afraid about the plight of displaced tribal people and their situations and their upliftment rather than seek to acknowledge only the dam or national development. I uphold the second and third opinions as I have seen the miserable conditions of the displaced people taking place in the name of development.

It was plainly visible that the IDPs were quite happy with the help of NGOs as they solved many legal issues for the indigenous people. IDPs coordination with NGOs was noticeably the best of various elements that necessarily intervene and intersect across the areas of operation. These include human elements –location of the resettlement sites, and natural surrounding conditions. Also, NGOs make a significant contribution to the human security of those displaced and are generally interested in engaging with questions of human security for all IDPs in the state. It was found that though NGOs are doing excellent work in the displacement resettlement sites, their role as ‘watchdogs’ is being played less successfully than the government’s counter moves to neutralize them.

The research findings suggest that in addition to the involvement of the NGOs, there is a need for prospective IDPs to be associated with the government agency as well to make more effective implementation of the R&R as a basic means to achieve the desired goals for development of the marginalized in Gujarat, including indigenous people, and in the country as a whole.

Overall, the analysis of NGOs confirms that the issue of R&R and land alienation in the Gujarat state remains the same within the displaced communities after a decade. The government is willing to take the necessary action to resolve this issue permanently, but due to some political hurdles it still remains. Apart from the many factors that contribute to the growing issues with displaced communities in the state, the lack of comprehensive R&R policy and systematic laws in the country, lack of coordination between internally displaced people and the government, the lack of project authority to fulfill their
duties and implement the policy for betterment and to reduce the impoverishment of the displaced indigenous, all seem to be the main issues in the state. It was observed that opinion of the affected people, functionaries, representatives of NGOs, project and government officials, social scientists, and others vary on the questions of success and failure of the rehabilitation and resettlement programmes. However, is it quite apparent that given the existing policy, rehabilitation could have been better if the project authorities had drawn up programmes backed up by efficient planning.

Finally, the activities of NGOs were more sensitive than the government towards those IDPs in pursuing the R&R.

REFERENCES