

DAM, LAND DISTANCE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE IMPACTED FAMILIES: A CONTEXTUAL INVESTIGATION OF KARBI LANGPI HYDROELECTRIC DAM VENTURE

Rajendra Kumar

Ph.D Scholar of Assam University, Silchar

ABSTRACT

Land is an asset of occupation, particularly for the ancestral local area. As a matter of fact, land isn't just a method for business of the ancestral, yet additionally has a cozy connection with their way of life and custom. It's obviously true that grounds have been wildly procured for the development of Karbi Langpi Hydroelectric Dam Undertaking that denied ancestral from their territory. Dam is built to give water system, route and power. Nonetheless, it additionally has adverse consequences particularly on the people who rely upon land for vocation. Hence, the aftereffects of land estrangement are monetary, social and social uncertainty and it further prompts mental instability. Impoverishment is the consequence of advancement actuated dislodging and it further prompts minimization of the impacted individuals. Other than this, it has additionally assimilated the predominant upsides of ladies and ruin the eventual fate of the youngsters as well. In this way, it is relevant to feature what land distance means for the social, social and monetary existence of the ancestral local area. Also, it is essential to feature that land estrangement lead to the impoverishment and minimization of the impacted individuals.

KEYWORDS: Dam, Land Alienation, Tribal, Livelihood and Internalize Women Status

INTRODUCTION

The government of Assam is constructing the Lower Kapili Hydroelectric Dam Project (LKHDP) in order to fulfill the requirement of electricity and irrigation. The fundamental purpose for the construction of this dam is to provide electricity and irrigation. The Lower Kapili Hydroelectric Dam Project (LKHDP) is a multi-purpose dam that is being constructed in the Kopili river valley. The proposed LKHDP will be generated 110 MW power. It is designed as a storage reservoir scheme. The project is located in Longku area that fall under two Autonomous Districts namely- Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. The project started in June 2008 and is planned to be completed within December 2024. It submerged sixteen villages. *Karbi* and *Dimasa* tribes inhabit these affected areas. Majority of them are Christian and some are Hindus. Though they follow these two major religions, they also practice "animism" which is their traditional practice. The tribal of Longku area have faced rampant loss of their land due to the construction of this dam. The repercussion of this development project is displacement, loss of livelihood, joblessness, social and cultural insecurity, food insecurity, marginalization, impoverishment, psychological insecurity and vulnerability of tribal communities. It is a fact that most of the tribal are dependent on land for their livelihood. Moreover, land is closely related with their tradition and culture. In the tribal tradition and culture, the community owns the land. Meanwhile, the modern land laws are based on the individual ownership and do not recognize the community owned land. Therefore, the land acquisition legislation has been used as a tool to acquire land from the people. The government has made some reforms in the land laws in order to provide adequate compensation, resettlement and rehabilitation to the displaced persons. However, it fails to do so. It is important to explore the impacts of Lower Kapili Hydroelectric Dam project on the livelihood, social, culture and psychological aspects of the affected tribal. Moreover, the project has had a significant impact on women more than the men counterparts. For the study of impacts of the LKHDP on the tribal, primary and secondary data have been collected.

CONSTRUCTION OF LKHDP AND TRIBAL LAND ALIENATION

The construction of dam is considered as development initiative because it yields power, irrigation and other water related resources. But it has a big impact on the affected people. It is a fact that large dams have significantly transformed many of the river basins of the world. It has had various impacts on the socio-economic aspects and 'livelihood' of millions of masses.¹ Lower Kapili Hydroelectric Dam Project has been constructed in the Longku area. This dam deprived many tribal from their livelihood because a number of lands have been rampantly acquired for it, which are the main source of tribal livelihood. Table 1 shows the name of villages that have been affected by the

project from both districts. The land areas that have been acquired for the project are shown in the Table 2 and Table 3 shows the number of affected households.

Table 1: Name of Affected Villages of Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong

District	Block	Village
Dima Hasao	Diyongbra	Degremdea
		Borolangklam
		Dimalengku
		Sokpura
		Torte langsu
		Borolangku
		KrungmingLangso
		Rongkhelam
		Chotolangpher
		Chotolangku
		Lorulangso
		Desabra
		Mungele
Haperdisa		
KarbiAnglong	Socheng	Cherimthepi
		Langsomept

Source: Assam Power Generation Company Limited, 2018²

Table 2: Land Area Acquired for the Project from the both Districts

District	Forest Land (hectares)	Revenue Land (hectares)	Total (hectares)
Dima Hasao	478	909	1,387
KarbiAnglong	45	145	190
Total	523	1,054	1,577

Source: Ibid, 2018³

Table 3: Number of Affected Households/Families

District	Economically Displaced Households	Physically Displaced Households	Total
Dima Hasao	1,582	18	1,600
KarbiAnglong	231	00	231
	1,813	18	1,831

Source: Ibid, 2018⁴

A field study was conducted for the understanding of reality. It has been found that land area acquired for this project is more than 1,577 hectares and affected household also more 1,831.

IMPACT ON SOCIAL, CULTURE AND ECONOMY OF THE PROJECT AFFECTED TRIBAL

The policy makers ignore the fact that most of the displaced people in the Longku area are CPR dependent. Besides this, the tribes render services to their villages as a member of the community for their sustenance (Fernandes 1994: 32).⁵ It is a known fact that most of the tribes are based on community land holding system, but the formal laws recognized only individual land holding. The formal laws are based on the conception of land as an 'eminent domain' of the State

that means only state has exclusive rights to use it. In this viewpoint, land is only a commodity for construction and cultivation (NCHSE 1986: 2).⁶ On

the other end, land is considered as an ecosystem for the tribal. Moreover, according to the tribal customary law forest and land resources are renewable resources. The economy and culture of the tribal rely on the sustainable use of it (Iyer 1996: 375).⁷ The tribal community consists mostly of cultivators. They lack the knowledge about the concept of individual land ownership because in their tradition, land is owned merely by the community. They only possess usufruct right over their community land. During the *jhum* season, they can use as much land for cultivation according to their requirement. After it, they have to give that land back to their community. However, some changes could be visible in the tribal land use due to imposition of formal land laws on them (Fernandes and Bharali 2002: 7-8).⁸ While making a study and observation in the Longku area where LKHDP has been constructed, it is found that they have not encountered with the modern concept of individual land holding as they were unfamiliar with the formal land laws and lack of modern education, and also because of living in geographically remote areas. Moreover, they are not allowed to hold individual land by their tradition. If they hold individual land, it would be regarded as against their tradition. In fact, they have strictly followed their tradition and exclusively abided by the traditional norms. It is the fact that the *Gaonbura* (Village Headman) has exclusive rights to determine over land distribution. In above mentioned affected villages, each household occupy land informally with prior recognition from their village headman. It is very shocking that they do not know how much land they own.

The tribal economy is based on informal economy. The informal economy is based on the concept of land and its resources as sustenance and its management comes exclusively under the community. This resource is used according to their present needs and sustains it for future. The cultural, social and economic system of the tribes is based on their management system of natural resources. Forest is very significant to their economy and for future use. The utilization of species was managed by their social control mechanisms in order to ensure equality and sustainability (Fernandes, Menon and Viegas 1988: 159).⁹ The formal economy is relied on the perception of written words, the individual and property. Profit is the movable economy. While, the tribes are based on the informal system which is relied on land or forest resource, mouth's word and use of resources under the purview of the community. The livelihood of the tribes is based on the collectively earned resources and is then shared equally amongst the members of the community. That is the foundation of their resource management (Sharma 1978: 8).¹⁰ During the field study, it was found that the affected tribal of LKHDP (Longku Area) are familiar with informal economy, which has prevailed among them since time immemorial till present. Albeit, at present they use formal economy to purchase modern goods, but there still prevails informal economy i.e. barter system. The exchange of goods and rendering other services is based on barter system, even for the diagnosis and get the cure from any kinds of illness, they bestow goods to the traditional healers. The monetary economy has rarely been used but used only to purchase cloths and exclusively significant things. The modern land legislation enumerated only cash compensation (Formal Economy) for the DPs/PAPs (Displaced Person/ Project Affected Persons) which is very unfamiliar to them and the government ignores their informal economy system, tradition, culture and CPRs. The outsiders are attracted due to the construction of dam and come seeking for jobs as wage laborers and technical staff. The transaction between the indigenous people and the outsiders are based on cash only. As such, they lived in a transitional stage between traditionalism and modernization that makes them impoverished and marginalized. As such, the installation of LKHDP has not only displaced tribal from their land, it also has effects on culture, tradition, economy and social system of the tribal community.

LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD AND COMPENSATION

Prior to installation of any project, it is crucial to determine compensation. It is a fact that in most cases of land acquisition, market value is used as a norm to determine compensation. In India, there have been various instances where it is evident that the criterion of market value always affects the weaker sections, especially in the "backward" regions where market value of land is very low and are exclusively dependent on land. The repercussion of getting low compensation is penury (Fernandes 1993).¹¹ Apart from it, monetary solatium is not compensation in true sense; on the contrary, it leads to food insecurity and homelessness of the affected people (Cernea 1995).¹² The dam has affected the land and forest resource on one hand and CPRs on the other which is the main sustenance of the displaced people. The tribal are mainly dependent on CPR and are artistry cultivators. They apply traditional ways of irrigation to the agricultural land from the hill streams. They still assume traditional methods of cultivation and they believe that utilization of any muck except cowdung and burnt weeds can decline the fertility of the land. They also adopt multi-cropping and use many

traditional methods to enhance land prolificacy. Therefore, most of the tribes are self-sufficient in cultivation and amass their other essential things from the CPRs. They continue to rely on cultivation with minor changes. Another source of sustenance of the tribes is animal husbandry. They have an instinct propensity to bring up animals such as cows, pigs, bullocks, goats etc. Cows and bullocks are used for ploughing. Moreover, another source of income is fishing, mainly done by women. Women get majority of their livelihood from the river. They sell vegetables and other yield that are grown in their home to the local market. They also amass medicinal plants and herbs from the jungle. Another profession of women is weaving. The tribes have natural propensity of rearing silkworm, spinning and weaving silk clothes. Besides, the income generated by doing this, these works also give some autonomy in terms of economic to the women and get high social status. Alienation of tribal land led to the deprivation of their entire sustenance because majority of them depend on natural resources and informal economy. Agriculture is the main occupation for them. They also practice both settled and jhum cultivation. Moreover, they also rely on the non-timber forest product like edible flowers, leaves, medicinal herbs and fruits. They also collect firewood and small timber from the jungle. Thus, development affect their forest resources and agricultural land that is their primary source of sustenance. The development process enforces them to move from an informal to a formal economy. They are bound to adopt a new environment without any preparation in advance. They had relied on forest resource and agricultural land that has been lost to the project. They are compensated in the monetary form with which most of them are unfamiliar because their economy is based on the informal economy. It is the fact that in most cases the CPRs dependents are not compensated. Further solatium for individual own land is very low. Apart from this, when land is provided to them as resettled, they are not arable. Some take up job compensation but they are not competent for the skill job in the project because they lacked the skills required for the job and hence, are ignored them. If it is so happened with individual land, the situation of the CPR dependents was much worse (Bharali, Gita 2006).¹³ The compensation that is given to the LKHDP affected person is very low. In the field study, it was found that the estimation of land price given to them is around 2000 rupees per *bigha* (3 *bigha*= 1 acre). Moreover, there is no market value of land because these lands were neither sold nor purchased. It is a fact that they don't have the practice of buying and selling of land. Before giving compensation, it is required that the recipients should be prepared in advance for the changes because the tribal were not familiar with the formal economy.

RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Before understanding the psychological aspect, it is necessary to understand what the DPs/PAPs should get and the principles of determining it. The basic issue is total rehabilitation of them that can make their life style better after alienation, because they lose their entire livelihood to the dam project. Therefore, rehabilitation is a right of the DPS/PAPs that is not a welfare scheme provided by the project authorities. However, many said that the affected families should have equal share in all the benefits yielded from the project. Apart from it, the State must provide rehabilitation and compensation. Rehabilitation is a fundamental right of the project-affected families. It cannot be considered as subsidy from the development project because they pay the price for the development project. Thus, rehabilitation of the affected people has to be a legal matter for the project authorities. No one should be displaced without rehabilitation. Moreover, the cost of rehabilitation should be incorporated in the project budget. In many cases, rehabilitation packages were made merely after the people resisted or because the financier made a condition for it. In fact, the policy makers ignore that most affected people are illiterate, and are unfamiliar to the formal economy. They are forced to transition from informal economy to a competitive economy, without preparing in advance for it psychologically. Moreover, it is a fact that they cannot encounter with the dominant forces. No doubt, resettlement is a onetime program, while rehabilitation is a long process. It incorporates the cultural, social, psychological, and economic fields. It encompasses substitution of the CPRs and rebuilding of their social systems, as an initiative to help the affected persons to get over from their pauperization and marginalization (Fernandes, Walter 1996).¹⁴ In the field study, it was found that LKHEDP's affected families are neither provided resettlement nor rehabilitation packages.

IMPOVERISHMENT AND MARGINALIZATION

The repercussion of such rampant land alienation is impoverishment and marginalization. Because, land is tribe's sustenance and their culture and tradition have a very close relation with it. But the project authority did not provide them adequate compensation, resettlement and rehabilitation packages. The tribal are often fish and quarry workers who depend on marine and other resources for livelihood. It is established that the resettlement and rehabilitation is

very weak in Northeast India. The tribal become impoverished due to landlessness. Also, the arable land comes down. Therefore, big cultivators turn into medium, medium cultivators turn into small and marginal, small and marginal cultivators turn into landless. In fact, those who hold land merely have a home land. Beside this, they also have some support mechanisms such as poultry, ponds, cattle, wells and draft animals that addition agricultural income decrees. The first reason of impoverishment is landlessness and second, joblessness. At first, they were declined access to work after land alienation. The land that the tribes lose to the project rendered work, food, emotional security and other material needs. In most cases, the project authority provides resettlement to very few person and fewer jobs to them. It is a fact that no one got permanent job, only got temporary jobs. Beside this, many people become jobless, even those people who had land, encountered with downward occupational mobility. The tribes suffer more than other communities do because of the overnight change to another environment because they were not prepared for it in advance. Entering into a new society requires an advance preparation in order to tackle with the new situation. Land alienation propels them to enter into a new economy and culture from their community-based economy and culture without getting ready for changeover. Therefore, entry into the formal society and economy is not only material change but it is also an encounter with a new worldview over land and economy. In the formal economy, the tribal regards livelihood only as a commodity that can be bought and sold. The land law does not recognize CPRs. The State can alienate their land without giving compensation, resettlement and rehabilitation to them. This is an attack on tribal culture and livelihood (Walter, Fernandes 2014: 245-264).¹⁵ The result of it is the impoverishment of the affected families. Impoverishment does not necessarily mean the state of poverty. Here it indicates, the results coming from land alienation for the development project. Besides this, the number of daily wage laborers, domestic and other manual workers rise up proportionately. Moreover, after land alienation, unemployment cases are high among them (Fernandes, Walter &Bharali, Gita 2006).¹⁶ Because of all these facts, the tribal became impoverished which further led to marginalization due to their land alienation.

IMPACT ON WOMEN AND CHILD

All the affected people have faced the impact of development-related displacement but women and children have suffered more than the others. Due to the land alienation, they suffer from greater malnutrition, higher joblessness and deterioration in their social status. The first impact of development project is that children are declined to go to schools because most of the affected people belong to poor families. It is the fact that they live in the administratively “backward” areas. Therefore, they have very low access to education. It decreases further after alienation. The child labor increases among them because land and forest are their livelihood that has been lost to the project. No doubt, the parents are forced to involve their children to work full time to earn for the family due to the impoverishment. Impoverishment does not mean the state of poverty or the relative economic deprivation where many of them resided before displacement. It is a “new poverty” that is created by the deprivation of their livelihood. As mentioned above, it starts with landlessness that slowly leads into loss of income, joblessness, lack of access to education and health care and other types of deprivation. Thus, the parents are bound to take their children out from the school. The children suffer more in comparison to adults mainly because mothers are unable to perform their duties as the family caretaker. As mentioned above, the working places of the tribal women declined after land alienation which was their foundation of relatively high status. While access to work declines for the whole family, women has got its impact more in comparison to that of men. Moreover, if the project authority provided jobs to the affected families, except in women headed families, it would go too exclusively to men because they are considered as head of families. If they provide rehabilitation and resettlement, land will be assigned to men. Therefore, domestic power goes exclusively to the man and after him, the son becomes the owner of it. As a repercussion of land alienation, joblessness is higher among women in comparison to that of men. If women want to work, then they have to be satisfied with menial daily earn labor. It comes down to women status and they are bound to rely on the income of men. But men use some per cent of their income on alcohol. Moreover, the dominant ideology of women internalizes as a coping mechanism. For instance, in the tribal culture, when enough food is not available the women have food at last that means after feeding the elders, men, boys and girls in that sequence. In case of scarcity of food, girls and women are bound to be satisfied with gruel. Internalization of dominant status of women has been seen mainly in the case of menial work. As mentioned above, most of the tribal women are bound to depend on unskilled daily work because there are no other alternatives. Moreover, those men who got job to the project do not like their wives to involve in domestic or other menial daily wage because it is regarded by them as against dignity of an office worker. Many women reduced their status to the kitchen and they do not have education enough for doing skilled work. Therefore, the dominant ideology

of women internalizes. The resources that made the tribal women belong to relatively higher status were deprived from them due to land acquisition for the project and it resulted to a downward economic and social mobility for them. Traditionally, it is the responsibility of women to ensure that water, food and other needs of the family are met and the resources that provided this assurance were deprived from them by the project. Land alienation is a traumatic situation. To deal with this situation, they tend to resort to consuming alcohol and the results of it is increase in domestic violence. Both domestic violence and drinking existed prior to their land alienation but it rose up enormously after deprivation and even many women started indulging in such activities. Beside it, many of them wage their time in drinking and gossiping due to no work available. A second dealing mechanism with the situation is to be consumerist. The consumerist values influenced them that enter to their township with the outsiders. Men utilize large portion of their money on entertainment and cloths. Hence, even those people whose income is higher than the past give very less money to the women to manage their family (Fernandes, Walter 2007).¹⁷ Besides, the economy of the villages has been changed drastically by the project. In the tribal villages, barter system is prevalent in which women have an important role. Now they have to compete with the job holders to purchase commodities in the market. Joblessness, landlessness and unfamiliarity to the market economy declines their access to food. Already prior to deprivation, women did not possess full rights over the resources of land and forests. However, as long as land and forest belong to community, they would have some rights over it. Land alienation deprives them from these resources. The consequence of land alienation is malnutrition (Bhanumathi 2002: 20-24).¹⁸ Moreover, the whole family together involves in the work prior to displacement. After displacement, they have no work especially women.

CONCLUSION

Tribals of Longku area have faced rampant loss of land to the construction of LKHEDP. They have gained nothing for their loss of land. They are deprived from their sustenance. The project authority did not provide them neither adequate compensation nor resettlement and rehabilitation. They are left with traumatic condition of land alienation. Land alienation results in economic, social and cultural insecurity. Moreover, land alienation leads to impoverishment because of which they are rendered jobless and thus, end up turning into daily wage laborers. The result of it is marginalization of the tribal people. Their impoverishment can be seen in terms of taking their children out of school. It is the fact that women suffer more than their male counterparts do. In the tribal society, women have equal rights and privilege. They earned livelihood for their families. But after the land alienation, they cannot perform this function.

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