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Rehabilitation of the Population Displaced due to Warana Irrigation Project

Dr. Nejkar D.G.

Associate Professor Dept. of Social Work
Karmaveer Hire Arts, Science, Commerce and Education College Gargoti, Kolhapur (Dist)

Abstract:

As already stated (3.10 ante), in the case of Warana Project, the total land acquired from 18 villages and 9 settlements for the dam's masonry work, reservoir and housing colonies admeasures 4,772 hectares, thereby displacing a total of 7,026 persons (1469 families), out of which 2274 persons (663 families) are in Kolhapur district and

Introduction:

Rehabilitation of the Population Displaced due to Warana Irrigation Project

The 663 families displaced in Kolhapur district hailed from six villages, namely, Amboli, Durgewadi, Karade, Sonarli, Tambawe and Wadi Hudumb, with their collective area of 1,544.57 hectares falling within the submergence zone of Warana reservoir, and have been relocated in 22 villages elsewhere in the district (14 settlements downstream of the river Warana and only 8 settlements in the hinterland), by creating special rehabilitation settlements for them (refer Map 4.2 on the next page). These families also had to be provided with monetary compensation, cultivable land near their settlements and civic facilities and amenities within the settlements.

Table 4.2 (one page after) provides a glimpse into the civic amenities available in the displaced villages as well as in the villages and settlements where the displaced population has been resettled.

The Table also makes it clear that only the primary school, temple of a village deity, Bhajani Mandal, village Talathi, village Patil and common threshing grounds were available in all the six displaced villages; a Gram Sevak was available in five villages; four villages had a common pasture (grazing ground) and cremation grounds; three villages had a provision store and a flour mill, two villages had a common well, a fair price shop, a Samaj Mandir, availability of agricultural extension workers and veterinary workers, while 1 each village a Paan shop and youth circle. All other amenities detailed in the Table were missing from these villages. Thus, it is obvious that these villages were very poorly placed as regards the availability of commonest of the civic amenities.

Turning to the post-displacement scenario, Table 4.3 (on the next page) makes it clear that all the 22 rehabilitation villages and settlements have a primary school with playground, domestic/agricultural power supply, provision stores, state transport bus stop and availability of wiremen; 21 villages have milk cooperatives, flour mills and pucca approach roads; 20 villages have a private clinic/dispensary/maternity hospitals, street lights and availability of veterinary workers; 19 villages have a Balwadi/Anganwadi, lift irrigation scheme, availability of village Talathi and Gram Sevak; 18 villages have a fair price shop, Paan shop, Samaj Mandir, Gaon Chavadi, availability of village Patil and health workers; 17 villages have a tapwater scheme; 16 villages have a higher secondary school, temple of a village deity, and youth club/circle; 15 villages have a secondary school, medical shop, post office and fertilizers retail outlet; 14 villages

Title: Rehabilitation of Population Displaced due to Warana Irrigation Project Source: Review of Research [2249-894X]
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have a veterinary clinic and credit cooperatives; 13 villages have pucca internal roads, pucca Gram Panchayat building and common pasture (cattle grazing ground); 12 villages have a Bhajani Mandal, separate Gram Panchayat and availability of agricultural extension workers; 11 villages hold weekly Bazaars; 10 villages have open built-up gutters, availability of cleaning workers, social forestry plantation and cremation grounds; 9 villages have a primary health centre, bank branch and newspaper stall; 8 villages have a community television set, public latrines and a community gymnasium (Talim); 7 villages have a common well, percolation tank, agricultural input centre and firewood depot; 6 villages have a public library, 5 villages have a sports club/circle, public kitty (Bhishi), 4 villages have adult an adult education centre, 2 villages have common threshing grounds and only 1 village has a Policy Chowky.

Thus, it may be observed that despite the Government's earnestness in satisfactorily rehabilitating the displaced population, nearly half the villages are lacking in mandatory amenities such as pucca internal roads, common grazing grounds, open built-up gutters, cremation/burial grounds, public latrines, a common well and common threshing ground, the basic amenities that make rural life somewhat easier.

Number of Civic Amenities available in the Rehabilitation Villages

| Sr. No. | Amenities | No of. Villages | Sr. No. | Amenities | No of. Villages |
|---------|--|-----------------|---------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Primary School with | 22 | 31. | Credit Cooperative | 14 |
| 2. | Domestic/Agri.Power Suply | 22 | 32. | Pucca Internal Roads | 13 |
| 3. | Provision Stores | 22 | 33. | Pucca Building of G.Panchayat | 13 |
| 4. | S.T.Bus Stop | 22 | 34. | Common Pasture (Gai-ran) | 13 |
| 5. | Availability of Electrical | 22 | 35. | Bhajani Mandal | 12 |
| 6. | Milk Cooperative | 21 | 36. | Separate Gram Panchayat | 12 |
| 7. | Flour Mill | 21 | 37. | Availability of Agricultural | 12 |
| 8. | Pucca Approach Road | 21 | | Extension Workers | |
| 9. | Private Clinic/Dispensary/ Maternity Hospital | 20 | 38. | Weekly Bazaar | 11 |
| 10. | Street Lights | 20 | 39. | Open Built-up Cutters | 10 |
| 11. | Availability of Veterinary | 20 | 40. | Mahila Mandal | 10 |
| 12. | Balwadi/Anganwadi | 19 | 41. | Availability of Cleaning | 10 |
| 13. | Lift Irrigation Scheme | 19 | 42. | Social Forestry Plantation | 10 |
| 14. | Availability of Village Talathi | 19 | 43. | Cremation/Burial Grounds | 10 |
| 15. | Availability of Gram Sevak | 19 | 44. | Primary Health Centre | 9 |
| 16. | Fair Price Shop | 18 | 45. | Bank Branch | 9 |
| 17. | Paan Shop | 18 | 46. | Newspaper Stall | 9 |
| 18. | Samaj Mandir | 18 | 47. | Community TV Set | 8 |
| 19. | Gaon Chavadi | 18 | 48. | Public Latrines | 8 |
| 20. | Availability of Village Patil | 18 | 49. | Gymnasium (Talim) | 8 |
| 21. | Availability of Health | 18 | 50. | Common Well | 7 |
| 22. | Tapwater Scheme | 17 | 51. | Percolation Tank | 7 |
| 23. | Higher Secondary Schoo | 16 | 52. | Agri.Input Centre | 7 |
| 24. | Temple of Village Deity | 16 | 53. | Firewood Depot | 7 |
| 25. | Youth Club/Circle | 16 | 54. | Public Library | 6 |
| 26. | Secondary School | 15 | 55. | Sports Club/Circle | 5 |
| 27. | Medical Shop | 15 | 56. | Public Kitty (Bhishi) | 5 |
| 28. | Post Office | 15 | 57. | Adult Education Centre | 4 |
| 29. | Fertilizers Retail Outlet | 15 | 58. | Common Threshing Ground | 2 |
| 30. | Veterinary Clinic and Cattle Stand | 14 | 59. | Police Chowky | 1 |

Struggle of Warana Irrigation Project-affected Population for Development-oriented Rehabilitation

Ever since the Warana Irrigation Project was announced in mid-1970s and eviction notices served on the people in the affected villages, they have been fighting a valiant and running battle with the Government bureaucracy. In the process, they have brought forth a few voluntary and informal associations; in some instances, political parties and alliances also have taken up cudgels on their behalf.

The account of the genesis of the first-ever association of the project-affected people, as was narrated to the present researcher by an elderly eye witness, is really heart-rending. After such a long time, the narrator, of course, could not remember the exact date, but his memory as regards the location and other circumstances was quite sound.

According to him, it was nearly the end of summer and raging thunder storms often poured down copious quantities of rainwater. One torrid late morning, the Government officials picked up a group of people from Sonarli village in the submergence area of Warana reservoir, packed them off, like sardines in a tin can, in a hired truck and dumped them about 75 km away on a God-forsaken strip of land near Vadgaon town and left them to fend for themselves. A menacing-looking bank of black storm clouds was looming on the eastern horizon - the sure sign of a gathering thunderstorm. As the afternoon wore on, the displaceds were busy erecting makeshift bamboo shelters to atleast get through the ensuing night. However, their choice of that particular site, near a shrivelled up Nallah, was star-crossed. By late-afternoon, a thunderstorm of gale force magnitude hit them squarely and the torrential downpour drenched hapless young and old men and women, children and infants alike, right to the bones. An unfortunate full-term expectant mother picked this moment to go into labour. As the rapidity of her spasms increased, nobody noticed the rising water level in the nearby Nallah. She delivered a boy child to the accompaniment of a roaring thunder, screams of wind and beats of hails on the rooftop. Because of the heavy downpour upstream, the nearby Nallah went into a flash flood and a wall of water hit the temporary shelter erected around the new arrival and his mother. They both were pulled into the roaring rapids. Somehow, the mother was rescued but the infant, who had not taken even the first fifty breaths of his life, vanished for ever into the swirling, foaming mass of water, right before the eyes of the stunned witnesses. The next day, half in spite, half in melancholy, the bewildered villagers formed an informal association named 'Warana Dharangrasta Sangram Sanghatana' (Warana Dam-affected People's Association) [45].

Since then, numerous such associations, variously named as 'Warana Dharangrasta Shetkari Sanghatana', 'Maharashtra Rajya Dharan va Prakalpa-grasta Shetkari Parishad', etc., have come up and are struggling on behalf of the project-affected people. In 1986, Maharashtra Rajya Dharan va Prakalpagrasta Shetkari Parishad presented a charter of demand to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, whereupon the Chief Minister convened a meeting with the representatives of the association. It was attended by the Chief Minister, Minister and Minister of State (Rehabilitation), Secretaries of Rehabilitation and Forest Departments and Joint Secretaries of Irrigation Department on the Government's behalf and by S/Shri.Baba Adhav, Datta Deshmukh, Yashawant Chavan, Nana Shetye, Jeevanrao S a want, Smt.Godavari Parulekar and MLAs Lahanu Kom, Anna Zole, Moolchand Gothi and others on the association's behalf. The demands and the Government's response to them are being described below briefly:

1.Demand no. 1 : The Rehabilitation Act may be made applicable to all dams and projects without exception.

Response : The Act is applied to the dams and projects whose affected area is more than 100 hectares and where the Goanthans (residential areas) too are affected.

2.Demand no.2 : Rehabilitation plan be prepared alongwith the project plan and the rehabilitation cost may be included in the project cost.

Response : The present Government policy concurs with the demand. In future, for all projects, rehabilitation plan shall be prepared alongwith the project cost and the rehabilitation cost shall be included in the project cost.

3.Demand no. 3 : The term 'Rehabilitation' in the Act may be replaced with the term

'Development-oriented Rehabilitation'.

Response : The legal terms need to be fully explained. If the Government is made aware as to what is expected in the term 'development-oriented rehabilitation', necessary amendments could be made in the Act.

4.Demand no. 4 : The Government should create a reserve pool of allocable land by acquiring 20% of lands in the project's command area and allocate appropriate shares to the affected persons.

Response: The Government is agreeable to this demand, in principle. But it has been observed that at the new location, many affected persons prefer to buy the land of their choice out of the compensation being received by them. Hence, their wishes are of primary importance. However, if any affected persons are interested in the allocation of Government-acquired lands, it would be appropriate to acquire the needed hectareage plus say 25% more. The idea of a reserve pool of allocable lands is agreeable to the Government, but putting it into a legal framework would require further thinking.

5.Demand no.5 : The Government should not burden the affected persons with loans on the land being allocated to them. It should also bear the difference in the land prices in the affected and command areas.

Response : For this purpose, it has to be agreed, in principle, that the relative productivity of the lands in the affected and the command areas is similar. Putting this idea also into a legal framework would require further consideration.

6.Demand no. 6 : Rehabilitation of Adivasis be undertaken with respect to their special problems.

Response : The Government fully concurs with this demand. The suggestion of creating a special lift irrigation schemes for the benefit of the Adivasi farmers would receive Government's sympathetic consideration.

7.Demand no.7 : A special Rehabilitation Authority be created in the State to tackle all the issues relating to the rehabilitation.

Response : The Government does not feel the need of such an Authority. Instead, the Government officials entrusted with the rehabilitation work should be adequately empowered and a sense of responsibility inculcated among them.

8.Demand no.8 : A Rehabilitation Committee be constituted for each project and there should be adequate representation of all stratas of displaced people on it.

Response : District level committees for each project already exist, comprising of Members of Legislative Assembly in the district, chairman of the Panchayat Samiti and three representatives of the project-affected population. The Government may consider the co-opting the representatives of the project-affected people's associations thereon.

9.Demand no. 9 : There should be assured recruitment of atleast one member of project-affected families in the Government and Semi-Government undertakings. Displacement certificate be issued as soon as the project is finalized. There should be special facilities for providing technical education to displaced people.

Response : The Government has initiated necessary steps in this behalf. It will also explore the feasibility of issuing displacement certificate before issuing a notification under the Land Acquisition Act.

10.Demand no. 10 : All the hilly lands near the submergence area be acquired by the Government after paying due compensation.

Response : The Government may consider such acquisition if it is required for a particular project.

11.Demand no. 11 : The villages rendered inaccessible due to the project maybe included in the submergence area of the project.

Response : The Government shall comparatively evaluate the cost of providing new access roads and rehabilitating the villages and if it is found that the cost of rehabilitation is less than that of the roads, such rehabilitation shall be considered as a special matter. [46]

The Government thereafter prepared a new Bill for the rehabilitation of the project-affected people, but according to the leaders of the agitationists, the Bill contained several lacunae and hence, was unacceptable to them. Since then till date, they have continued their agitation

through Morchas, Gheraos, public fasts and other means. Sometimes, the agitators become violent and disrupt the functioning of the project offices, collectorates and even State Secretariat. But effective and satisfactory solutions of their diverse problems are not in sight till date and they continue to wallow in their misery.

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