

Forced Displacement

A Gendered Analysis of the Tehri Dam Project

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Development-induced displacement has brought about a profound economic and sociocultural disruption to the victims of displaced communities. While forced displacement affects both men and women, women experience displacement and relocation in a particularly gendered way. This differential impact on women occurs due to the gendered division of labour that has arisen from socio-historical processes of men's traditional incorporation in the wage-earning and labour-oriented tasks while women remain on the land jobs and its management on a daily basis. Resettlement and rehabilitation policies expose the male biases inherent in the insensitivity of the governments towards needs of women. This paper examines the lived experiences of displaced women based on the empirical findings of research that looks at women displaced by the construction of the Tehri Dam and their relocation elsewhere.

The process of modern development in post-independent India was related to the role of the state as a primary agent for advancing the agenda of development. Development was marked by large-scale, capital-intensive projects, and an international system of aid for infrastructure projects to increases in agricultural productivity and livestock management. Development categories included large dams, irrigation projects, urban infrastructure, transportation, power plants, etc. While these categories are considered beneficial in the broad development paradigm, it has resulted in fostering social and economic inequalities serving the interests of narrow elite, destroying the environment, displacing and impoverishing people dependent on land.

Vandana Shiva (1994) calls the traditional model of development as an indicator of "maldevelopment". Arturo Escobar (1995) argues that development has to be seen as a strategy produced in the first world about the "underdevelopment" of the third world. However, there is no denying the fact that over the years a space has arisen for ironing out social inequalities and opening up alternative voice claims to represent marginalised groups. In post-Independence India, movements like the Narmada Bachao Andolan against the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti (the Anti-Tehri Dam Struggle Committee) have brought into focus serious issues regarding the planning of development projects and the paradigm of development itself. It has exposed the violence and suppression perpetrated in the name of "public purpose" and "national interest" while indicating with similar movements – the alternative path of humane, just and sustainable governance rooted in a truly democratic polity.

A large number of scholars and activists have questioned development projects that displace, marginalise and impoverish thousands of poor people (Fernandez and Thukral 1989; Kothari 1996; Thukral 1992). A consensus seems to have emerged that development-induced displacement causes considerable social, economic and cultural disruption and losses to both individuals and communities (Dreze et al 1997; Dwivedi 1999; Morse et al 1992; Parsuram 1993; Thukral 1992; Scudder 1993; Oliver-Smith 1991; World Commission on Dams 2000). A path-breaking work on displacement and resettlement is that of Michael Cernea (2000) who points out that forced displacement and being ousted from one's land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before. Cernea's "impoverishment risk and reconstruction model"

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proposes that the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social integration. In addition, Muggah (2000) and Downing (2002) add loss of access to community services and violation of human rights to the model.

Despite a surge of literature on forced displacement, the debates have been highly un-gendered. Indeed, gender as a specific category is yet to be recognised in mainstream discourses. The oustees, or project-affected persons (PAPs), have been portrayed as a homogeneous category and not differentiated in state policies. India's National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy (2007) declared that "land may be allotted in the joint name of husband and wife". However, it leaves it to the states to formulate their own policies as resettlement is a state subject. The fact that women experience displacement and relocation in a particularly gendered manner is lacking in policy-related guidelines concerning PAPs. Beyond a general recognition that women suffer more than men, there are no detailed studies of a gendered analysis of forced displacement and resettlement programmes. In contemporary literature, displacement studies make general reference to women with other vulnerable groups like tribes or the poor. But works of Mehta (2000), Mehta and Srinivasan (2000), Srinivasan (1997), Parsuram (1993) and Colson (1999) have broadened our understanding of gender and forced displacement.

Research Methodology

Field research and interviews were conducted with women during my visit to India from August to December 2004 in New Tehri town and Mallideval and Sirain villages before the latter were submerged during the construction of the dam. The closure of the T2 tunnel during that time had submerged many parts of (old) Tehri and rehabilitation was in progress for the forcibly displaced. Interviews were conducted in New Tehri, constructed at a height of 2,000 metres, to rehabilitate the displaced people. Research work was again undertaken from June to September 2009 and December 2009-January 2010 in New Tehri and in the resettlement sites at Pashulok and Athurwalla in Hardwar for the inhabitants of Mallideval and Sirain, which had by then been submerged.

Women, as knowledge keepers, were the main source of information as their relationship with nature and water is part of everyday life and interviews with them were based on the purposive sampling method (Bernard 1994). Diversity in terms of socio-economic standing was also kept in mind to understand the differential impacts with special reference to the broad category of women. The specific aim of the research was to assess the impact of displacement and resettlement on the women of the region based on their narratives expressed in terms of comparison of the past with the present lived experiences. A narrative-based approach was adopted because the memorable experiences of these women are

meaningful and helped to establish the terms of reference to evaluate their experiences since the beginning of the displacement process.

Gender as a Category

Gender as a category is most commonly used referring to social roles, social relations and social practices (Gallin and Fergusson 1991). Gender is a powerful social and cultural construct determining ways in which social relations between men and women are structured. Gender plays a central role in how societies assign roles, responsibilities, resources and rights among men and women (Mehta and Srinivasan 2000). Gender is not merely about bodies, it also includes the institutionalisation of masculine and feminine values in the practices of organisations, institutions and the state. Thus, gendered values and practices have the potential of marginalising certain groups of people, including third world peasants, tribes, women and the poor.

In the context of development projects, gender becomes especially significant for several reasons – gender and class/race-based division of labour and distribution of property and power structure – people's interactions with nature and in the process structure effects of environmental change on people and their responses to it (Agarwal 1996: 126). Gender analysts also point out the way in which these development projects are endured differently by women and men. Several studies discuss and elaborate the impact of displacement on vulnerable communities like women and children in ways that require an evaluation beyond monetary loss of land (Colson 1999; Thukral 1996; Parsuram 1993, 1997; Srinivasan 1997; World Bank 1994, 2001). Many international conventions have drawn attention to gender justice and reduction in gender inequality. India remains committed to many of these conventions but there exists a gap between ground realities and commitment of the government to these rights. Often rules that are intended to protect women list them as dependents rather than full citizens (March et al 1999). As a result, state institutions end up marginalising women because of their lack of knowledge of what constitutes gender-sensitive programmes suitable for the needs of the people.

Gender in Uttarakhand's Context

Uttarakhand, formerly a part of Uttar Pradesh, became a state in 2000 after a major movement led by the hill people of Kumaon and Garhwal Mandal demanded a hill state in which their control over rivers, land, forests and development would actually mean livelihood security and dignity for the common man and woman. The region is geographically and culturally different from the plains – 65% of the area is covered with forests and the mountain area is underdeveloped. Women constitute half of the population and majority of the population is dependent on these forests for their livelihood. For men there are few means of livelihood except government jobs and most of them migrate to the plains in search of employment. They send money back home every month for the sustenance of their families leading to the creation of

what is now called a “money order economy”. In the absence of their menfolk, the task of running the household and community planning is left to the women.

Women form an integral part of the hill ecosystem. Despite their illiteracy, lack of exposure and drudgery, they have exhibited great potential as leaders. Women in Uttarakhand have spearheaded several movements across the state and played a pivotal role in the formation of the state. These hill women are bound together by the common bond of their tremendous work burden. However, though they remain an invisible workforce, they are the (unacknowledged) backbone of the family-economy.

Development and Displacement

The state of Uttarakhand was formed largely to homogenise with the aspirations of the hill women based on the dream and vision of a sustainable society living in harmony with Nature. However, in the nation's quest for energy, a 260.5 m rock-fill dam was envisaged at the confluence of Bhagirathi and Bhillangana rivers. The Tehri Dam project, a multipurpose scheme with a reservoir storage spread over 45 sq km is supposed to generate 1,000 MW of power, irrigate 2.70 lakh hectares in western Uttar Pradesh, provide 300 cusecs (162 million gallons per day) of drinking water for Delhi, and 200 cusecs (108 million gallons per day) of drinking water for towns and villages in Uttar Pradesh (Shiva and Jalees 2003).

Apart from these benefits, the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) brochure mentions the integrated development of the Garhwal region, including construction of New Tehri town with all civic facilities, improved communication, education and health, tourism, development of horticulture, fisheries and afforestation of the region. Construction began in 1978 amidst police protection as protests opposing the construction of the dam gathered momentum but to no avail. As the water level in the reservoir rose, Tehri town along with 125 villages – 37 fully and 87 partially – was submerged (HRC 1997). It is estimated that around 85,000 people were displaced (Paranjpye 1988) from both rural and urban locations.

Resettlement Process

The process of resettlement in Tehri was designed to mitigate economic hardships and sociocultural alienation arising out of displacement and help families and communities re-establish their social relations, institutions and value systems. In doing so, the resettlement goals needed to provide adequate compensation to people facing the hardships of relocation as forced relocation seriously affected the survival systems and adaptive strategies of the dam oustees. These strategies were aimed at achieving a steady flow of resources to control and reduce uncertainty in the minds of displaced people as resettlement in itself is a very traumatic experience (Cernea 1997).

According to Colson (1999: 26), “Resettlement involves a re-ordering of gender relations across a wide spectrum, but that re-ordering emerges from previous assumptions about gender and the gendered experiences of those involved”.

However, the understanding of gender and their roles is entirely misplaced in resettlement policies. While both men and women experience disempowerment and dependence due to displacement, women experience it more due to their role in the domestic sphere and a demonetised economy. Policies that are insensitive to gender and their roles embedded in social and historical processes work to the disadvantage of women. In the region under study, people in general and women in particular were unhappy at the way in which resettlement and rehabilitation programmes have been conducted with practically no participation of PAPS. However, though the government claims to have completed the entire resettlement process of the affected areas, the ground realities are seemingly different from official claims.

The present packages offered to people are unjust and inadequate to ensure that resettlement leads to attainment of the original standards of living (Matu 2004). These processes of involuntary displacement are therefore surrounded by “physiological, psychological and sociological components” (Scudder 1993: 13) that destabilises their traditional cultural practices with a “reordering of space, time, relationships, norms and psycho-social-cultural constructs”. The shifts in these traditional practices result in newer practices – these practices are negotiated and renegotiated in the sociocultural setting of an environment that emerges only after the breakdown of earlier routines and practices, making it very difficult for women to adapt in a new and hostile environment. The research demonstrates that as people experienced new realities, women experienced marginalisation in the process.

Male biases perpetuate gender inequality and state institutions and policies are insensitive to women's needs that are far different from a monetised economy. Processes of development are not gender neutral – a gap exists in the ways in which distribution and calculation of benefits of development is accomplished. The contributions of women as the invisible workforce have either not been calculated or its benefits have been disproportionately enjoyed by men (Agarwal 1996; Elson 1998). A gender gap exists in both policy and practice and gender justice remains distant in local and state discourses. In this study, the marginalisation and disempowerment of women was evident in the policies and processes of compensation and resettlement of the displaced families.

Lived Experiences

Most women in general experienced the natural environment as their livelihood support system in this region. Biomass – food, fuelwood, fodder, fertiliser, organic manure, forest-building material (timber thatch), medicines (herbs), etc – played a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of rural households led by women. An important aspect of this biomass-based subsistence economy was that it was mostly non-monetised. Water, fuel, fodder, building materials and even food, to a certain extent, were all gathered freely from the immediate environment; production and processing of biomass-agriculture, minor forest produce and village crafts were the biggest sources of employment.

In this subsistence or survival economy, women were responsible for collecting water, food, fuel, fodder, habitat, etc, for sustaining their families. Collection of minor forest produce and herbs not only provided extra income to the women but valuable nutrition and medicinal support as well. Animal husbandry was also an important supplemental activity that contributed to household income. Family members normally shared a single roof and lived under a single patrilineal unit. The families were mostly subsistence farming communities that provided enough for survival as the topography did not allow them to market or reap surplus produce. Importantly, the women had free access to these resources, which they claimed by traditional rights under common property resources (Rawat 1989). To ensure a more adequate livelihood, the men migrated to cities in search of employment, sending money home to the women who took care of the household.

After relocation, the women in resettlement sites complained of lack of access to common property resources that not only constituted a major portion of their survival strategies but also led to loss of supplemental income. Maina Devi from Mallideval complained:

I used to make some extra money by selling wood and milk to the nearby hotels on the highway. The fodder for my cattle was free. Today, I have not only lost my land but also the extra household income for my kids.

Research for this study demonstrated that women's income at this level mainly fulfilled the household and nutritional needs of the family. However, these aspects of the women's needs often receive no consideration as the gains that women make from common-pool resources (CPRs) are not valued in a market economy. There was also a marked difference in the living conditions of the displaced communities from their earlier places of residence compared to the present sites of relocation. In the pre-displacement sites, the Ganga was not only a free-flowing river but also a sustainer in terms of providing them with fish, fuelwood, drinking water and water for irrigation. Indeed, they never experienced water scarcity even in the hottest summers. As a woman from New Tehri observed:

If you came to my house in old Tehri, we could cook you food, go down by the river and get cold water to drink. You did not need a fridge. But in this town, there is no water for three days. Even then, the quality is bad. It smells in the tank. Tankers and hand pumps are there, but you have to go and get the water. The tanker will stand here, but how does one living at a height come and get it? I see it but I cannot fetch it. Water comes in the taps only once a week.

This comment depicts the condition of many women who lived in (old) Tehri by the riverside where water was easily accessible. New Tehri has been constructed at a height of 1,500 m and water has to be pumped up from the river at two different points to reach the town. Women experience great difficulty in accessing water as the water pumped to the storage tanks reaches the taps sometimes only once a week or at most for a couple of hours in the morning. While water tankers and community handpumps try to fill this gap in demand and supply, the town is so designed that it is difficult to carry

water from the tanker to their homes, which are situated way above the road.

Similarly, the women who have been resettled in the plains also face the same problems. The loss of free access to water, timber, roof slate, stones and sand leaves them frustrated. Water is a key issue even for the women relocated in the plains where, despite having been given land for land as compensation, there is no water to irrigate the crops. On the question of their post-displacement status, Rani Nautiyal responded:

We have been given land, but if we have no water, how can we grow crops and irrigate the crop. The government assured us that all amenities would be provided to us before we moved. To this day, we are awaiting fulfilment of those promises. Frustrated by the absence of water, many families have sold their lands.

Another woman from Athurwala in Hardwar district complained:

I was given land as compensation but agriculture is very difficult here because no irrigation is possible. We have to pay for water to irrigate our fields and we do not have any money. The local environment is completely different from my village. Pashulok and Athurwala are in the plains of Hardwar district. The flora and fauna, the landscape and the fertility of the soil are not like our mountain region. There we had free water from the river to irrigate our fields; here we have to pay Rs 50 for an hour for tube well water. There I went with my friends to collect water in my *bantha* (traditional pot to carry water) from streams, and herbs and fuel wood from the forests, but now we have to buy everything from the market.

Having lived in a labour-intensive and demonetised economy, these women have been suddenly exposed to the vagaries of a cash economy in the resettlement colonies, becoming victims twice over of profiteers, intermediaries and their own men.

Lost Livelihoods

The region where these women lived earlier had tremendous crop diversity. They grew crops like *mandua* (finger millet), *jhangora* (barnyard millet), *urad* (black gram), jowar (sorghum), bajra (pearl millet), *tuar* beans (pigeon peas), *ramdana* (amaranthus), rice and wheat. Mixed cropping and crop rotation, which is locally known as the "Sar-system", gave good yields. Along with these crops, fruits like malta, orange, nut, peach, plum, apricot and all varieties of citrus and apple fruits were cultivated mainly for domestic consumption. Nearly 90% of the total cropped area was devoted to subsistence food crops and grown mainly for domestic consumption and the local market. Commercial or cash crops occupied a negligible portion of the cropped area.

Women were the primary cultivators in the region as men migrated to the plains for jobs or worked as wage labourers for petty contractors. But resettlement in the plains has pushed them from a subsistence economy into a consumer and market-oriented economy where crop diversity has been lost and there is hardly any free water to irrigate the fields. The prospect of cash earning for livelihood expenses are limited. Some women observed:

The quality of land is very different here so we cannot produce the same crops. Earlier, except for salt and sugar, we never bought anything from the plains. We had a twelve-crop food economy. Now we

are forced into a consumer economy where we have to buy everything. We have lost our entire food culture.

Women also experienced a sense of social disarticulation by the processes of displacement. Population displacements disrupted the social support networks with kith and kin. Built up especially by women, these networks provided small loans (food and cash) or labour exchange and tided poor families through periods of shortage. Their disruption usually goes uncounted in the cost-benefit exercise of large irrigation projects and rehabilitation programmes associated with such schemes. Community networks that helped cope with poverty through personalised strategies, informal loans, exchange of food, clothing and durable goods, mutual help with farming, building houses, and caring for children have been lost. These multifunctional yet virtually invisible social networks are non-existent in their current places of residence and are a major cause of impoverishment.

A lot of elderly women whose sons have migrated or work in the plains or women who have been widowed lived in these villages. Mana Devi, who lived her entire life in her village with the help of this community network, felt an acute sense of social disarticulation and helplessness. She asks:

Married in this village at the age of eleven, I became a widow. Today I am eighty-three. I have lived my entire life in this community that has taken care of all my needs. With no land and no house, where will I go for support.

Another one said:

As men are mostly away in the plains, whenever there was a function like a wedding or death in the village, each family would contribute something and there was never any burden on one family. Now everything is gone. We have been settled in different towns and our entire community network that sustained us has been lost.

Not surprisingly, women experience a lack of well-being, which is related not just physical needs but also involves social, cultural, economic, political and psychological support systems. They miss their forest walks for fuelwood and fodder, which was also the time they spent with friends and shared their daily chores. In undertaking these day-to-day activities, they found their freedom and autonomy to run their households. As a young woman from the resettlement site mentioned:

I used to get up at 4 am. I would make *chai* (tea) and start with the household chores. I would go to the spring to collect water, make breakfast and send my children to school. I would then give fodder to the cattle and then with some of my friends from the village, go to collect wood and fodder from the forest. That was the time I spent talking to friends. In the afternoon, I would work in the fields and in the evening cook dinner for the family. I was busy but I could just wander out of my house anywhere I wanted. Here, I still get up at 4 am and finish my household chores, but have no place to go and no friends to talk to and nothing much to do. The environment in the plains is different from the hills. Women in this area do not work in the fields; it is considered inferior. So I am confined to the walls of this tin shed I live in.

In the plains, hired labourers are required to perform various agricultural tasks; in the villages, women were an integral part of agricultural practices that also included decision-making and equal participation of men and women. In the resettlement sites, since it is mostly the men who negotiate

hiring and supervision of farming activities, the women feel marginalised and disempowered as their participation in day-to-day routine practices becomes negligible. Moreover, their space of social interaction shrinks as they remain confined in their homes and the fear of moving out in an alien environment makes many women depressed, stressed and lonely, leading to high blood pressure and other health problems.

Support Systems and Security

The women also experienced a sense of insecurity in the physical and social space assigned to them. Built houses and residential patterns, cultural and linguistic differences as well as the hostility of the host populations in the resettlement areas do not provide the sense of security they had experienced in the hills. In their villages and in (old) Tehri, the women felt safe and could move around at all times. They could wear jewellery and travel to different villages to attend weddings and ceremonies. Now they are apprehensive.

I never locked my house in Mallideval. Here I have to lock the house all the time and must be home by 6 pm. It is just not safe and many people in this (host) village consider us outsiders. We have been dumped and are sufferers on both counts.

Due to a sense of insecurity and distance between kinship groups, women also experience a loss of their support systems. Dependency has overtaken their role of being the primary household keepers. Due to lack of familiarity and loss of social networks, they become dependent on the male members in the household whether it is for travelling back to the village or taking the children to the doctor.

The above analysis demonstrates that women experience displacement in a qualitatively different way from men. While displacement in general has created impoverishment risks (Cernea 2000), women share these risks with men but experience more marginalisation in everyday life due to the socially exclusionary processes at work. In spite of a reduced work burden, women felt that life of the hills was better.

In the interviews I conducted, women complained of the lack of basic amenities like water, loss of land rights, discrimination in compensation, and absence of a sense of well-being and security. As has been pointed out,

Men and women are affected differently by dam projects. Women are harder hit by resettlement than men, since they are more likely to earn their living from small businesses located at or near their residences. Women may also be affected disproportionately in rural areas since they are more often dependent on common property resources (World Bank 1984: 2/9 in Carino 1999).

Gender Bias in Resettlement Policy

Displacement compensation for the dam-affected initially began in 1976 under the department of irrigation, Uttar Pradesh. Later, with the formation of THDC in 1990, a resettlement and rehabilitation policy was drafted that became effective in 1995. Two types of compensation were provided to the displaced population: land and cash. The displaced people were offered either two acres of land in rural settlement areas

or half an acre of land within the periphery of urban municipal centres. A 200 sq m plot to build a new house and compensation for the old house was calculated on the age and type of house in existence at the pre-displacement site. The resettlers were given a land possession certificate but that did not give them the legal title to the land. In some cases, constructed houses were provided after a fixed sum varying from Rs 1-3 lakh was deposited. In many cases, corrupt government officials also demanded bribes in the absence of which many men and women lost their allotted shops or houses.

The implications of displacement of women and gender as an issue were not recognised anywhere while formulating resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) plans. In most cases, allotment of land and cash compensation was made in the name of the male member of the family. The women claimed the government had treated them unequally. Indeed, the gender bias in the resettlement package was evident. To remove the discriminatory bias inherent in the R&R policy and its implementation, a 12-member expert committee under the chairmanship of C H Hanumantha Rao, a former member of the Planning Commission, was formed in 1996. The committee brought to light the environmental and rehabilitation inconsistencies in the Tehri project and made specific recommendations about compensation for women. The unit family was defined by the committee as husband, wife, minor children and others, such as a widowed mother dependent on the head of the household. The head of the household is one in whose name the land is entered in the revenue records (HRC 1997: 14) and he represents the family for compensation purposes.

The committee recommended that women should be granted separate compensation and also approved Rs 43,000 for a single or widowed woman. It was due to the Hanumantha Rao Committee that the new rehabilitation policy included the wife as a beneficiary in the compensation package. Despite the THDC website stating, "Effective from 9.12.1998, all rehabilitation benefits (land, house, plot and cash provisions) to the affected families, including ex-gratia to additional family members, would be given and registered jointly in the name of both husband and wife", in most cases the money was not appropriately and equally distributed.

Moreover, intermediaries, profiteers and corrupt government officials added to the problems of the women. Those who paid bribes were granted compensation. Moreover, even though the allotment/registration of land/house plot was required to be in the name of husband and wife jointly, subject to fulfilment of legal requirements, almost all allotments have been made in the name of the male as the head of the household. The cash compensations, too, have been given to men with resettlement officers dismissing the idea of women being allotted land rights or compensation. Many women complained that the cash compensation granted to their husbands had been squandered away on alcohol and consumer goods. They also felt that the cash was not sufficient to build houses of the kind that they had in village. As a widowed woman, Rukma Devi said:

We are getting a paltry sum of Rs 40,000 to construct a house in Pashulok. We cannot even construct a single room for this amount in the plains. In Mallideval, constructing a house is cheap since slate and mud is free, so is wood, and help is forthcoming – you only needed a little cement.

Women who earned their living selling household things by the roadside or were hawkers in (old) Tehri have been classified as landless and are not eligible for compensation. "I was a hawker for the last 30 years but there is no provision for me in the R&R policy," a woman said.

Another woman revealed: "My husband is unemployed. I used to stitch clothes and work for a living. I have been allotted a shop in Dehradun but have no money to pay for the structure." Single women are not acknowledged – a widow, unmarried adult daughter and deserted woman is considered as a dependent. A deserted woman can only receive compensation from her husband through the process of adjudication; she is not entitled to a separate package (Singh 1992). The contribution of women to the village and the household economy are ignored by state policy. There is no attempt to compensate the women's loss of access to resources that affects them severely.

Although the government calls its plans a comprehensive rehabilitation policy, rehabilitation does not take place in any form. Indeed, the term rehabilitation does not end with compensation in land or cash; the process includes a comprehensive treatment of sociocultural, economic and psychological needs of men and women. All this is lacking in the rehabilitation policy. Gender is yet to be mainstreamed and values neglect women issues. There are no alternative measures or women-specific plans at the resettlement sites. The National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of the Ministry of Rural Development (2007) could not influence THDC's rehabilitation policy of 1998. Since the construction of the role of men and women is understood in a given sociocultural context, decisions tend to neglect the needs of women.

Conclusions

The Tehri Dam case study applied a culture-based understanding of the dam displacement processes in Uttarakhand in north India through the lens of the affected women. The question asked was: "How do women experience displacement and relocation in the dam project?" In a region where women and children make up the majority of the displaced population, insensitivity to the needs of women has shaped post-rehabilitation programmes in a way where women face impoverishment, income decline and destitution. The eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement identified in Cernea's model manifest themselves in the daily lives of these displaced women. They suffer from loss of land, joblessness and homelessness. Many of them live in tin sheds as they have lost their traditional houses and cannot afford to build new ones. They also suffer from a loss of access to commons, which creates a fodder and fuelwood shortage and decline in income and food diversity. The women face further hardships when community support structures disintegrate and family and kinship networks

break down. Systems of care, protection, compensation, and R&R remain largely insensitive to women's needs leading to a fundamentally disenfranchising experience.

In this patriarchal set-up, the women have been denied compensation for the land they had cultivated for years but did not have a patta (land deed) in their name. Cases of ineligibility have been identified in many households headed by women and widows have been excluded from compensations in the resettlement package. Since only men are recognised as heads of households, the compensation is often paid only to them. The resettlement process is fraught with impoverishment risks and the reconstruction remains incomplete. Women are forced into adopting a culture they have never known, and limitations in their social space have prevented them from rebuilding their daily practices in a new environment.¹

Thus, the women remain marginalised at the community level as well as at the national level policy-framework because of their disadvantageous position ascribed by patriarchal gender relations.

The narratives of women clearly brought out the insensitivity of state discourses to the needs of women. Although the national R&R policy acknowledges gender as a category in the resettlement process, the implementing agency is the state government. That is why state government policies should consider these problems to enable the participation of women and move towards gender justice. This narrative-based approach highlights the concerns of women affected by displacement processes for consideration by policy planners whose decisions in the name of "development and public purpose" have far-reaching implications for women.

NOTE

- 1 Women have started renegotiating their daily lives although it is a difficult process. For example, during my stay in the resettlement site women would often go to the nearby forestland in Hardwar region to gather fuelwood but it was always in big groups of 10 of 12. Women mentioned that they felt insecure as they were sometimes victims of the anger and disciplinary powers of the forest rangers who prevent them from picking fuelwood categorising it as illegal and an offence.

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