

UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT AND VICTIMIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

As a quest of development some mega projects have already been completed and some are undergoing in Bangladesh. However, the development project adversely affects the marginal, poor and ethnic minority people as they have less power and poor voice to protest the development project. As a result, many of them victim to displacement and receive scant remedy to resettle, and thus fall into an uncertain future. Unfortunately, not many researches and data are available on this victimization. As an approach to fill up the void, this paper sets out to understand and analyze the present picture of the development-induced displacement and resettlements processes of Bangladesh. Using case study method, this small-scale interpretative study specifically aims at analyzing the spectrum of victimization, triggering factors behind the displacements. These three case studies taken for this study addresses development projects in three different kind of geographical settings—Jamuna multipurpose bridge represents the displacement of plain land people, while the displacement of Patro community is representative of the customary exploitation and extermination of indigenous communities around the country. Furthermore, this small-scale study also provides a theoretical analysis about the structural underlying factors and political economic perspectives behind this phenomenon. Applying the “Impoverishment, Risk and Reconstruction (IRR)” model, this paper finds that development project forcefully displaces people, and many of them hardly get proper compensation, and thus fall into poverty and livelihood failure. This paper also finds that development induced displaced people are generally victim for the faulty politics, dispossession, and faulty legal system. This paper thus suggests implementing development project with taking care of adequate measures of resettlement and diversifying livelihood.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to a 2017 report of the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Bangladesh has ranked sixth among the Asian countries with 614,000 people internally displaced in their own country. In the name of globalization, development and transformations, many vulnerable group of people uprooted in their own countries are already at record-high numbers.

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In the present transitional development chapter of the country, development-induced victimization and displacement are seldom considered as an important substance in Victimology. The concept of 'displacement' is more integrative and holistic as compared to most other terms like migration or refugees as it encompasses the varying levels of disturbances, disruptions and impacts associated with the involuntary withdrawal of a local community from one geographical or physical setting to another¹. In parallel, when people are compelled to forgo their respective homes, often also their homelands, for the sake of various development projects, then it is called development-induced displacement. Development-induced displacement is currently among the most prominent categories of forced migrations that have entailed severe humanitarian consequences². However, despite its deepening social consequences, the problem of development-induced resettlement still remains unapprised by the general public and it has only been recently coined by social scientists to recognize the multitudinous harms associated with the current dynamics of economic development³.

Lone⁴ delineates that for every political policy, there are both good and bad sides. When developers create mega projects, a group of people benefits from it but another group falls in sorrow and frustration. Each year, millions of individuals around the world are migrated from their shelter and earnings by the large-scale advancement ventures such as dams, stores, power plants, streets, ranches, urban reestablishment, and oil, gas, and mining ventures which is called development-induced displacement. This does not only strip people of their shelter homes but also exterminates them from their old ancestral bonds and roots. Relocation seems like a reasonable solution but it denies individuals their homes, profitable resources, culture, employments, natural conditions suited to their aptitude and hones, community systems and sense of having a place.

There are both extensive and imperceptible impacts of development induced displacement that largely goes unaddressed. Victims of development induced displacement are not usually rehabilitated properly, neither are they compensated with any suitable guideline to restore their livelihoods. In the last decade (2010-2019) alone, around the world, every year approximately 15 million people are forced to leave their homes to give way let go of their homes in response to the phenomenon known as development induced displacement and resettlement (DIDR).⁵

¹ Gebre, Y. and Ohta, I., eds., *Displacement Risks in Africa*, Kyoto University Press, 2005.

² Terminski, B., *Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: Causes, Consequences, and Socio-Legal Context*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2015.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Lone, R., "Development Induced Displacement", 3.2 (2014) *Journal of Social Science Research*, pp.216-224.

⁵ *supra* note 2, at p. 3.

As discussed above, development induced displacement has become increasingly common across the globe and Bangladesh being a transitional country falls into the same circle of fate. The country has been experiencing a surge of economic growth that has been mostly owing to the growing infrastructure and tourism industry. However, these infrastructural developments and tourism ventures continue to take place at the cost of dispossession, displacement and loss of livelihood of the local and ethnic communities in those regions. Nevertheless, in the present transitional development chapter of the country, development-induced victimization and displacement is seldom considered as an important substance in Victimology. In light of that scenario, this paper seeks to depict the current scenario of development induced displacement and the eventual nature of victimization in transitional Bangladesh. It also sheds perspective on the underlying structural factors like the political economy of these development projects and the course of accumulation by dispossession working behind these phenomena.

The three case studies taken for this study addresses development projects in three different kinds of geographical settings—Jamuna multipurpose bridge represents the displacement of plain land people, while the displacement of the Patro community is representative of the customary exploitation and extermination of indigenous communities in the country. The Marriott Hotel and Amusement Park in Bandarban, on the other hand, is a project that has not yet been fully materialized but poses an avowed reminder of the extent of victimization that is going to take place in the near future. Together, these case studies shall not only help in understanding the nature of displacement and eventual victimization due to these development projects, but shall also shed perspectives upon the underlying factors behind these events.

II. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The above discussion makes it apparent how development induced development has emerged to be a globally pervasive phenomenon with Bangladesh not being beyond it. Despite it being so prevalent in terms of scale and magnitude, the nature of displacement and the ensuing victimization caused by development projects in Bangladesh is seldom addressed. Against that context, this paper has adopted a qualitative methodology to address and understand the present scenario of development induced displacement and victimization in context of transitional Bangladesh. In pursuit to that, content analysis of secondary sources like books, journals, articles, media reports, etc., were conducted to reveal the findings. Besides, three case studies (Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge, displacement of Patro community in Sylhet and the ongoing Marriott Hotel and Amusement Park in Bandarban) were taken to understand the pattern of displacement and spectrum of victimization as these victims strive to seek their own security and solutions due to these development projects.