

Can Displacement and Possible Impoverishment of Millions of People be Justified by Societies' Need for Infrastructure ?

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Introduction

Population migration, whether voluntary or involuntary, has been a constant feature of human history. Whether through war, natural disasters or economic hardship, displaced populations have become an integral part of modern history.

The last decade could well be known as the decade of forced migration or involuntary displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the number of people who fell under their mandate, as of January 1998, were 22.4 million. It has been estimated that there were an additional 30 million people, who were internally displaced. Almost 85% of these “oustees” fall outside the mandate of the UNHCR.

In development terms, “Oustee” is used to describe people who have been forcibly displaced from their place of habitual residence by governmental action. The reason for such displacement is development-required. It is estimated that infrastructure construction programmes - usually due to dams, reservoirs, industrial estates, road / rail links, urban developments – displace many millions of people per annum. Unlike refugees, this group remains within national boundaries and is outside the mandate of UNHCR.

“ We must act so that poverty will be alleviated, our environment protected, social justice extended, human rights strengthened. Social injustice can destroy economic and political advance ” Wolfensohn,1995). The need to build infrastructure for new industries, irrigation, urban developments like schools, hospitals cannot be denied. However, according to Michael Cernea (Senior Advisor for Sociology and Social Policy, World Bank, 1997), involuntary displacement for development reasons embodies an intrinsically perverse contradiction in a developmental context.

Policy makers and international agencies struggling at national and international levels with concerns of economic growth, food security and resource scarcities are faced with the dilemma of working out the interface between development, food production and water management.

Whilst there is a loose consensus about what Development can mean for a society, very different ideas exist about what it is. To some it is a process of modernisation, involving transformation to greater productivity, efficiency and flexibility of output as determined by capitalist relations to production and service provision. Others suggest that it is a planned intervention to achieve change, considered beneficial by its initiators, to bring out the potential of people in society for further growth and advancement. It has also been suggested that it is the process of incorporation with “traditional” social groups, relations and institutions gradually but inevitably being incorporated into a new “modern” and larger social, economic, cultural and political settings. Whatever the definitions, the common assumption is to use technology and resources to underpin livelihoods.

Development, spontaneous or induced not only brings benefits but often causes social disruption. The industrialisation of agriculture to secure export markets, wildlife and forest conservation projects and the need to meet the demands posed by tourism to maximise earnings from foreign exchange, has exacerbated the movement of oustees or “development – displaced

people”. It is estimated that some 10 million people are displaced each year by development programmes, of which approximately 4 million are due to the construction of large dams¹.

Forced displacement embodies social and psychological marginalisation as well as the material and cultural losses of certain groups. There would appear to be considerable evidence that the involuntary displacement caused through development programmes create major impositions on certain segments of the population. These are, almost always, the poor and most vulnerable people in the community. Not only does this population have its rights restricted; it also leads to hardship and their impoverishment. The concept of exclusion adds to the understanding of impoverishment. Sen (1997), who defines development as increasing freedom, in a critical assessment of social exclusion, argues that the various forms of such exclusion are inimical to the nature of development. This raises major ethical questions about the development process, as they show that the distribution of the benefits and losses of development are inequitable.

It is routinely argued that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. However, when the process allows many to be displaced and few to be rehabilitated and the outcome is an unjustifiable repartition of the costs and benefits of development, then major issues of social justice and equity, arise. The concept of the “ greater good for the larger numbers ” invoked to rationalise and justify such actions, has to be called into question.

“ Before any developmental project is taken up, the social costs involved must be evaluated with a view to balancing the advantages.... Every developmental program must provide for the simultaneous rehabilitation of the persons who are thrown out of their land and houses on account of acquisition of land for such developmental projects. No developmental project, however laudable, can possibly justify impoverishment of large sections of people and their utter destitution” Judgement of the Supreme Court of India (Lalchand Mahato & Others Vs Coal India Limited, 1982).

The judgement incorporates the phrase “... impoverishment of large sections of people...”. In this context, what is the definition of “large” – if only one or two people were affected would the judgement have been different? However, should not the emphasis be on “ ... must provide for the simultaneous rehabilitation of ...” rather than be distracted by the numbers game?

During the industrial revolution in Western Europe, many lives were devastated, many groups were impoverished and whole populations lost their entitlements. However, today, the majority of the population of the industrialised nations enjoys benefits, which the majority of the world’s population cannot even dream about. So who would deny that the pain suffered by the few benefited their great-grand-children? Was the justification for tolerating those ills unwarranted?

The infrastructure needs for new industries, irrigation, power generation and the like, through the provision of employment and better services, improve the lives of many people. There is no doubt that “ Development ” through change in land and water use will continue to dislocate population and its rewards will be shared inequitably. A commonly held view is that in the long-term, the totality of its beneficiaries will be more than those who suffered its consequences.

This rather gloomy scenario should be contrary to the proclaimed goals of induced development. It is therefore necessary to question the above hypothesis and examine ways and means by which such inequity can be avoided. Addressing the need to redress the inequities and marginalisation caused by displacement, to enable the displaced people to rebuild their lives

¹ Report of World Commission on Dams (2000) – Earthscan Publications, London
www.development-ideas-and-practices.org

and share in the benefits of development, must be an economic necessity and a moral imperative.

The rest of this paper will examine the dislocation caused through development, taking the particular case of displacement through the construction of large dams. It will look at the risk and resettlement model as proposed by Cernea and try to suggest some procedures not only to mitigate the harmful effects of dislocation, but also to ensure active participation in and a share in the process of development by those most affected.

The example of displacement caused through the construction of large dams has been chosen because whilst some of the benefits are typical of other infrastructure projects, there are others which are unique to dams and specific to particular projects. The negative social and human impacts of dam construction are highly significant, particularly as the numbers of people displaced are large.

Cernea's model has been chosen because of his influence in the World Bank, which more often than not finances projects that cause displacement. Furthermore it is a model which provides a theoretical basis for looking at involuntary resettlement, is practical insofar as it produces possible solutions to the problems of resettlement and provides a structure within and around which further research could be developed. The strength of the model lies in its ability to bring together and inform the disciplines of sociology and economics, thereby evolving the policy that fair compensation must include not only market – value adjustments but also for the intangible losses like access to natural resources, social networks and opportunities for social and economic development. This policy has been and is being field tested in many areas with a degree of success.

Dams and Development

According to the World Bank, a modern infrastructure is the foundation on which all economic development must rest. The United Nations Food & Agricultural Organisation (UNFAO) maintained that improved agricultural efficiency was the key to improving living standards for developing countries. UNESCO believed that investment in education was the most important thing, whilst the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that good health was the precursor to a good life.

It was, however, the World Bank which had the money to back its views "... an adequate supply of power, communications and transportation facilities is a precondition for the ... industrialisation and diversification of the underdeveloped countries" (World Bank 1951). Consequently the infrastructure-based theory became dominant in development circles and construction of dams, ports and railways were seen as producing measurable economic benefits within a short time.

The construction of dams appears to be the world's favourite development project. It is estimated that, during the 1990s, US\$32 – 46bn. annually, were spent, on large dams – 80% of it in developing countries. Dams are built to provide water for agricultural purposes, domestic and industrial use, generate power and act as flood control and water storage systems. Dams are seen as strategic investments with the ability to deliver multiple benefits. Job creation, agricultural production, fostering an industrial base, the ability to create export earnings through the sale of electricity and / or processed products from electricity intensive industries e.g. aluminium refining, are some of the immediately perceivable benefits.

The issues surrounding dams are those that determine how water – related decisions are made. Dams alter and divert river flows affecting rights of access to water and river resources. They

uproot existing settlements and deplete and degrade existing environmental resources. That all this is done in the interests of the population at large, shows how complicated and sensitive are the issues surrounding the decision to build large dams.

It is estimated that by 2025, over one third of the population of the developing world will face severe water shortages (Seckler et al 1998b). However, in many of these regions large amounts of water, annually, flood out to the sea. The floods do tremendous amounts of damage and the water is wasted. It is said that the annual rainfall in India occurs over 100 hours – the remaining 8660 hours of the year are dry! There is, therefore, a need to capture and store water when its value is negative for use in periods of shortage.²

Large dams have the advantage of storage efficiency due to a small surface area to volume ratio, resulting in lower loss due to evaporation. They can store excess flows in the wet season for use in the dry season. Their capacity also allows for multi-year carryover to weather droughts. Other advantages are relatively low storage costs (Keller, 1993- *the figures and calculations used here would appear to be very selective!*³) and multi-purpose e.g. hydropower and irrigation.

It should be noted that 55% of the world's registered large dams are in North America and Europe, which are water-rich whilst only 5% are in Africa where most of the water scarce countries are located (LeCornu, 1998).

The social consequences of dam construction are evident in the fact that between 1986 and 1993, an estimated 4 million people were displaced, annually. These communities lost their livelihood and access to natural resources, whilst their cultural heritage was submerged by reservoirs or rivers transformed by the dams. Resettlement and compensation has, at very best, been meagre. To give some perspective, development displaced people due to dams number almost 20 million in China and between 16 – 38 million in India : large figures even taking the lowest estimates. In World Bank funded projects involving displacement, dams and reservoirs account for 63% of people displaced. These figures do not include people displaced by other aspects of the projects such as canals, powerhouses, project infrastructure and compensatory measures such as bio-reserves.⁴

The huge growth of dam building in the 20th century took place against a backdrop of significant and qualitative changes in politics, economics and technology. In the last 20 years there have been wide – ranging changes in the concepts, development, dependence and interdependence between states as well as with the environment. These changes are redefining the roles of government, civil society and the private sector. Resistance to large dam construction has spurred this debate, which in turn has become a catalyst for change.

At this stage it is useful to consider some particular instances of large dam construction.

The Volta River Scheme (Ghana)

This scheme was started in 1961 to produce electricity for the smelting of bauxite to produce aluminium. Ancillary developments included railways, irrigation systems and ports. 80,000 villagers, mostly subsistence farmers and fishermen were displaced. Each family was promised 12 acres of land but lost the markets, hospitals and roads, which they had enjoyed before. Because there was not enough land for the “oustees” to practice their traditional form of

² Thukral, E G (ed) (1995) Big Dams, Displaced People: Rivers of Sorrow, Rivers of Change. New Delhi, Sage Publications

³ My Italics

⁴ World Commission on Dams (2000) Dams & Development-A New Framework for Decision Making
www.development-ideas-and-practices.org

agriculture, widespread starvation was avoided only through the intervention of the UN, providing emergency food for six years.

The changed river flow altered the balance between fresh and saltwater. A thriving clam industry, which employed 2,000 women, was destroyed. Aquatic weed prevented river transport. River blindness and schistosomiasis affected hundreds of thousands of the population.

The electricity generated was used by the Ghanaian subsidiary of Kaiser Aluminium. They negotiated a price below cost. The average Ghanaian pays five times as much as the Aluminium company. None of the auxiliary developments, like irrigation, railways etc took place. In 1961, The World Bank lent Ghana US\$47million towards this project.⁵

The Chixoy River Dam, Guatemala

Facing displacement, the indigenous Achi Indians organised a protest against eviction without due compensation. On the 4th March, 1980, the “oustees” of Rio Negro gathered in a church to protest against the coming evictions. They were fired upon and seven people were killed. In 1993, an international team of forensic experts exhumed 177 bodies. Another 190 villagers were killed in separate incidents before the reservoir started filling.⁵

The Muran River Hydroelectric Project, Orissa, India

In 1993, a whole village was forced to leave without adequate compensation to buy new land. They had to walk 10 kilometres to buy basic necessities like salt; they had lost their temples and wells. Nevertheless, they built new huts and planted crops in the floodplains of the seasonal river and were waiting for the water to come. They were not aware that the river had been dammed upstream and that it would never water the land again.⁵

The Yacyreta Dam, Paraguay/Argentina

This project was started in the 1970s and was supposed to produce 2,700 mw of electricity at a cost of US\$1.7billion. In 1990, the dam was 60% complete, had cost US\$3billion and the 50,000 displaced people remained unrelocated. By mid – 1995, 15,000 people still had not received any land or compensation. The dam remains unfinished and is expected to cost at least US\$6 billion.⁵

Kiambere Hydropower Dam, Tana River, Kenya

This project displaced 6,000 farmers. The oustees lost much of their livestock and ended up with half as much land as they had before being forced from their homes. Their incomes fell by an average of 82% mainly because the land they had was not as good as that taken over by the dam.

In 1993, the Kenya Government, with the assistance of the World Bank, endeavoured to establish a protected zone for two species of endangered monkeys along the Tana River. This would have entailed moving 5,000 people who had lived there for over 600 years. The East

⁵ Caulfield, C (1998) Masters of Illusion : The World Bank and the Poverty of Nations, London, Macmillan Pan Books

African Wildlife Society pointed out that the threat to the primates were from the Kiambere dam and the Bura irrigation projects and not the people.⁵

The Narmada Valley Project, India

Apart from the Three Gorges dam in China, this is probably the largest dam project, in the world, under construction. The centrepiece of this scheme is the Sardar Sarovar dam. Stretching 4,000 feet across the river it will rise to height of a 455 feet. With its canals, irrigation works and power transmission lines it is the biggest water development project in India. This multi – billion dollar venture is intended to irrigate 4.8 million acres and bring drinking water to 30 million people. The cost will be the displacement of over 300,000 people many of whom are tribals – subsistence farmers and cattle and goatherds. Additionally, three more reservoirs will be constructed displacing another 200,000 people.

The Government of India tried to resettle the people by giving them land in other areas. However, most of them returned due to the terrible conditions ranging from barren land to polluted drinking water. India's resettlement record is disturbing – at least 11 million people have been displaced through dam construction and another 5 million through other infrastructure developments, of which about 75% have not been rehabilitated. Poor but self – sufficient peasants have been turned into beggars or left to scratch a living in the informal sector of the nearest large city.

Despite the World Bank withdrawing from the project in 1993, the scheme is still active. It is estimated by the Bank that 2 million instead of the projected 30 million, people would be helped!⁶

The Three Gorges Dam, Yangtze River, China

This is estimated to displace 1.2 million people. Despite the World Bank having pulled out from the project, it is still going ahead.

Large dams often represent the largest single irreversible investment by a country. Although their justifications are for macro – economic benefits their physical impacts are locally concentrated. The costs and repayment of associated loans represent a huge demand on a national budget. Engineering estimates, construction and operation are erratic and rarely consider all options. Social costs are poorly conceived and influenced by policies of assistance which are poorly designed and executed. Compensation programmes are inadequate in relation to goods lost. Those resettled from the sites, very often lose their homes and importantly, their livelihoods. Their social and environmental impacts have been, so far, largely ignored. The loss of habitat, ecological diversity and human locality is not compensated by the new reservoir that may materialise. In practice, dams have failed to live up to their projected, economic, performance.⁷

A study by the Asia Technical Department of the World Bank, carried out in 1995, found that of the twenty five dams in India, none was designed to withstand a major flood. It warned that this was only the “tip of the iceberg” as India has constructed many dams .⁸

⁶ Caulfield,C (1998) Masters of Illusion:The World Bank & the Poverty of Nations, London, Macmillan Pan Bks

⁷ Report of the World Commission on Dams, 2000

⁸ Memo obtained by Pratap Chatterjee, Journalist with Inter – Press Service

In 1994 the World Bank commissioned a review on involuntary resettlement of its projects between 1986 and 1993. It found that not only had over half the projects no resettlement plans but where there were plans, their estimates grossly underestimated the number of people affected. Turkey's Izmir Water Supply project indicated that 3,700 people would be moved – the real figure was 13,000. An Urban renewal project in the Cameroon estimated that 12,500 people would be evicted, the real figure was almost 24,000. The Andhra Pradesh Irrigation Project II estimated that 63,000 would be displaced though the real figure was 150,000. Among projects funded by the World Bank, the actual number of people to be resettled was 47% higher than that estimated at the time of appraisal.⁹

According to John Briscoe¹⁰ of the World Bank, large public investment schemes, in water and sanitation, have become “ ... vehicles for the interest of powerful groups – upper and middle – class consumers, contractors and the politicians ”. The result is corruption and a system that subsidises the wealthy, bypassing the poor.

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), however, takes a more positive approach to dam construction. Irrigation, drainage and flood control of agricultural lands have become necessities for the world food production system. Irrigated agriculture depends on the storage and regulation of water flows and requires various hydraulic structures to perform this function. They are the tools needed to feed and provide employment for billions of the rural and urban poor. Dams play a crucial role in mitigating floods, they also store a tremendous amount of water, which is invaluable during the dry season as well as in arid and semi – arid regions. The costs and negative impacts of dams and irrigation development must balance food security for the poor. Organisations such as ICID are of the opinion that the benefits have outweighed the cost of many dam projects.

According to the World Bank, between 1986 and 1993, they approved 200 projects for dams, roads, pipelines, canals, plantations and urban renewal. When completed these projects alone will have displaced and dislocated 2.5million people. During 1994 and 1995 28 more projects displacing more than half a million people were approved. According to Ismail Serageldin¹¹ “...involuntary resettlement is an inevitable result of development ”.

It is interesting to note, that the Inter – American Development Bank, adopted the following principle, in 1994, re – iterated in 1998¹², “ when a ----- significant portion of the affected community would be subject to relocation and / or impacts affect assets and values that are difficult to quantify and to compensate, after all other options have been explored, *the alternative of not going ahead with the project should be given serious consideration* ”.¹³

Risks and Reconstruction – Cernea's Model

The impoverishment of a large number of people is the most widespread effect of involuntary repatriation. In India, according to Fernandes (1991), during the last forty years, development displaced people numbered over 20 million – more than 75% of these people remain to be rehabilitated. The vast majority of development resettlers have lost their livelihoods and have become impoverished (Mahapatra, 1999b).

There are numerous other countries where such impoverishment, without social justice and equity, occur. Oustees epitomise the exclusion of certain groups. The extensive material and

⁹ Report of the World Commission on Dams, 2000

¹⁰ John Briscoe – Chief of Water and Sanitation Policy, World Bank

¹¹ Ismail Serageldin – Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development, World Bank

¹² OP – 710 Involuntary Resettlement, Prevailing Reference Document : GN1979 – 3, July 1998.

¹³ My Emphasis

cultural loss lead to physical and economic exclusion and the destruction of functioning social networks.

Protection against loss of entitlement and rights is not obtained through conventional planning approaches. However, the regularity with which resettlement without rehabilitation occurs, points to deficiencies in the domestic development policies being pursued by various governments.

Michael Cernea, Senior Advisor for Sociology and Social Policy at the World Bank until 1997, found that underfinancing of resettlement is pervasive and that it undercuts project outcomes as well as the outcomes for the oustees. He has produced a model that identifies and eliminates or mitigates the risks of involuntary resettlement.

Cernea has defined this model as “ The impoverishment risk and reconstruction model for resettling displaced population ” (IRR). In the model Cernea looks at the commonalities in the situation between “ refugees ” and “ oustees ”, he then examines its four basic functions – predictive, diagnostic, problem – resolution and research and then suggests strategies for reestablishing livelihoods based on the economics of recovery.

Ousteas and refugees confront similar economic and social problems. Impoverishment is a consequence of virtually all types of displacement. This allows for a common denominator to be developed which informs and enhances the knowledge base of both types of displacement. However, since the causes of impoverishment are different, it would not help to transpose the knowledge between the two situations, forgetting the differences (Voutira & Harrell – Bond 1995). Kibreab, having examined the model, concludes that it is a relevant tool for refugee – related research and practical relief work and that the differences “...do not limit the scope of the model, but, rather make it compellingly relevant ”.

The displacement risks are identified as : lack of land, loss of job and home, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources and community disarticulation. The predictive capacity helps predict likely problems of displacement embedded in new situations. It enables the planners and would – be displacees to recognise risks in advance and search for alternatives and develop coping strategies.

The diagnostic function helps to explain and assess the project situation at hand. It assesses the likely intensity of the impoverishment risk in the particular context and outlines the socio – economic hazards to be faced.

The problem – resolution aspect allows the moving from prediction and diagnosis to action. It does this through its awareness of the ability of the social actors in resettlement to interact, communicate and contribute to the resolution of the situation.

The model’s ability to generate hypotheses about relations between key variables, the exploration of mutual linkages and the reciprocal reinforcement or weakening effects between related risks, provides researchers with a conceptual scaffold from which to organise their work.

According to Cernea, it is the model’s ability to predict and diagnose risks that provides problem – resolution. Risk identification leads to action for risk reversal. Risk assessment leads to the planning for counter – risk measures.

However, conventional risk analysis is the product of project economics and financial planning. The risks caused by displacement are outside the scope of such analyses. Cernea takes this to

task and shows that while the risk to the investor and invested capital are looked at carefully, the risks posed by the project itself are not subjected to rigorous analysis since they are outside the scope of classic investment analysis. He concludes that conventional project risks must be reformulated to explicitly include the risks of displacement and impoverishment, as indicated by the IRR, and design insurance measures to safeguard against the risks of impoverishment.

Cernea goes on to state that cost – benefit analyses must take account of each population affected and not just society as a whole. This, what he calls the “equity compass” must recognise the differential impact – positive or negative – on the different population.

Legal frameworks that define the rights and entitlements of a displaced population must be established. Open public debate on the goals and means of *development* must take place and resettlement costs must be fully recognised. The challenge to economics is to shift from the shortsighted economics of merely compensating the oustees to an economics of support for full recovery and enhanced growth. This implies an economic analysis that goes beyond Cost – Benefit and the financing of growth-supporting investments thus leading to a qualitatively different pattern of financing resettlement.

The lack of consultation with the likely oustees at the project design and preparation stage compounds the contradictions inherent in the purely economic approach to the problem. Joint communications between planners and resettlers, conscious participation, negotiation and the adoption of coping strategies are the only safeguards to the problems of displacement.

The model, therefore, shows that risks inherent in displacement can be controlled through an integrated policy response but not through piecemeal palliatives. It also shows that specific resettlement plans are required each time through concerted action by interested institutions and social groups, including resettlers.

It is incumbent on governments, as they are the primary agency which uses the weight of and the power of the law to expropriate and displace, to ensure that they get back on their feet and share in the benefits made possible through their displacement.

The model has been “ field – tested ” in India, Phillipines and Columbia and is being, increasingly, used operationally as well as for social research. It has informed the Comprehensive Development Framework adopted by the World Bank “..We cannot adopt a system in which the macroeconomic and financial is considered apart from the structural, social and human aspects and vice versa. Integration of each of these subjects is imperative” (Wolfensohn 1999, President, World Bank)¹⁴.

Conclusion

According to Thayer Scudder of CalTech¹⁵, “ Forced resettlement is the worst thing you can do to a people, next to killing them ”. Many planners and administrators find it difficult to understand why it is that development – induced displacement is so disruptive. To them long – distance movement is a constant feature of human history. However, it is not the movement *per se* that is so traumatic, it is the disruption and destruction caused to existing economic and social structures which causes the trauma. “ The fundamental features of forced displacement is that it causes a profound and sudden unravelling of existing patterns of social organisation ”

¹⁴ “A Proposal for a Comprehensive Development Framework” Memo to Board, Management & Staff Jan. ’99

¹⁵ Thayer Scudder, Consultant to World Bank, in “The Price of Progress” Central TV (London) 1987

(Michael Cernea). Furthermore, it is something that is *done to you* rather than a result of your own urge to move on.

Cernea examined the empirical findings of many field monographs and concluded that the common factor underlying the consequences of displacement was the *onset of impoverishment*. This is caused through production systems being dismantled, established communities being disorganised -scattering kinship groups and family systems – and the informal networks providing mutual help are rendered nonfunctional.

Forced displacement can start a vortex of impoverishment that extends beyond immediate visible effect. The damage so caused deepens with time and can cast whole communities into a downward spiral of despair which even the most resilient of communities find difficult to overcome.

Participation of affected people in the planning and implementation process of dam projects is practically non – existent. Displacement has essentially occurred through official coercion. The denial of development opportunities, for years, has characterised the process of resettlement.¹⁶

Despite it all, there appears to be a consensus that development projects make a positive contribution to a nation's well – being. The political and economic conflicts caused are the result of national interests cutting across the interests of smaller groups and long term gains causing short term pain.

Development can never be free of these conflicts – the positive contribution to national wealth, does have an unavoidable negative effect on certain groups. It is not denied that those affected are mainly the poor and politically weak segments of the population and that some means of reconciling these conflicting interests must be found. The lives of the displaced must be protected and the social and economic losses suffered by them must be replaced not only at current levels but also allow for the loss of potential. These concerns form the core of the New Development Paradigm which emerges from “ ... the failures of past conceptions and the changes in the world that lead to the necessity of a new conception ” (Joseph Stiglitz, Chief Economist, World Bank).¹⁷

The above reasoning does not question the fundamentals of “development” as currently defined. It accepts the economic based GDP (gross domestic product) definition of development. The laudable aim is to lift the impoverished from their poverty and include the marginalised into society. However that GDP based economics do not deliver justice or equity is evidenced by the fact that although many countries have growing GDP, the growing number of people moving down into poverty is acknowledged by even the World Bank and IMF.

The impoverished and the marginalised **are** the majority in the world. They live, laugh, cry and die like the “others” – it is the middle – classes and the rich who are in the minority in this society. However, this majority does not have the power or the wealth to articulate their wishes and desires which find a place beyond the clamour of the minority. Development, however defined, is determined by this minority and designed to meet their requirements.

It is salutary to note that after over 300 years of development, in the rich, industrialised countries, on average, the top 10% own over 55% of the wealth, the average earnings – gap has grown to over 40 times and the poorest 10% have no entitlements at all.

¹⁶ Report of the World Commission on Dams - 2000

¹⁷ “Towards a New Paradigm for Development” 19 October, 1998 Prebisch Lecture at UNCTAD Geneva

The example of the blacks in the United States, following their migration to the North, shows how impoverishment can devastate future generations. The slaves who had no entitlements, by definition, leaving the South faced exploitation of a different kind in the factories of the North. They did not participate in the wealth created by their labour and were unable to build up any entitlements. Research on their lives in the Southside of Chicago points to their deprivation, which has its roots in the first migration to the North over 150 years ago.

It is time that development theorists looked at the survival strategies employed by the majority and designed policies to increase their entitlements and strengthen their political voice. Until this change in attitude and approach take place, the poor will continue to pay for the benefits from which they will be perpetually excluded and “ society ” will wring its hands and try to develop policies – vide Cernea’s model - to ameliorate their loss and continue to reap the benefits.

In answer to the question posed, one can do no better than reiterate Cernea ’s point “... involuntary displacement for development reasons embodies an intrinsically perverse contradiction in a development context ” and end with quoting the Judgement of the Supreme Court of India, given as early as 1982, “ No developmental project, however laudable, can possibly justify impoverishment of large sections of people and their utter destitution ”.

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