

Scope for Social Work intervention in preparation of a Resettlement Plan: A case study of a development project in Kashmir

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Abstract

Present age is the age of development and the development will keep on going. It is through proper resettlement planning that the adverse impacts of the development projects can be assessed and mitigated. Resettlement of affected persons and rehabilitation of their lost assets and livelihood are critical and yet imperative social development exercises of infrastructure development projects. To cater to the needs of those affected, social work professionals are the best suited professionals to intervene in the field and promote wellbeing of those affected. Social workers through their interventions assist people to address their needs and issues. Social work skills are often deployed to good effect in collaborative work with other professionals, either in on-going multi-disciplinary teams or in ad hoc joint work around the needs of persons in need. Social workers can help in better family profiling of the affected families, assessing the vulnerability of marginalized, impacts on the community assets, specifying needs and proposing the livelihood restoration measures best suited keeping in view the socio-economic fabric of the community affected. This research study tries to explore the scope for social work intervention in preparation of a Resettlement Plan through study of an infrastructure development project in Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir by taking a sample of 15 (10 road and 05 bridge) subprojects.

Keywords:

Social work, resettlement plan, development, intervention, infrastructure, scope

Introduction

Economic development and prosperity is the dream of every nation. In post independent India the pace of development has been multi-folded to meet the increasing demands of the overwhelming population by undertaking a series of development projects. However, the execution of development projects perpetuates involuntary resettlement which in turn leads to adverse impacts on those whose land and other assets are acquired in the process. In order to address these adverse impacts arising out of execution of development projects, resettlement planning is done in order to minimize such risks and to ensure that the affected people at least regain their pre-project standard of living. It is through proper Resettlement Planning that various efforts to bring a better life for affected people and local people can be achieved. Resettlement of affected persons and rehabilitation of their lost assets and livelihood are critical and yet imperative social development exercises of infrastructure development projects. The model of development that has emerged over recent decades, namely people-centered development, puts people and their well-being at the centre of development. However, in reality the model sounds simple but is actually far from being so in practice. There are many complex issues affecting the implementation of any social

development strategy like, the political barrier, the economic barrier, faith in capital-intensive large-scale industrialization and neglect of agriculture and the rural areas (Cox, 1993). There is no doubt that people-centered development is consistent with the values and goals of social work. A significant contribution of social work practice is its ability to span many levels of development. But to be affective, social workers would need to have a very well formulated understanding of the area of their intervention. Keeping this fact in mind, this research paper aims at exploring the scope for social work intervention in preparation of a Resettlement Plan (RP)¹ through study of an infrastructure development project funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Kashmir.

Social work intervention

The purpose of social work intervention is to promote human and community well-being. Social workers through their interventions assist people to address their needs and issues. The degree to which social work interventions are effective is determined by the degree to which client goals and outcomes are achieved. When goals and outcomes are achieved as demonstrated by the results of the work done between the social worker and client, the interventions used are then recognized as effective (Humphrey, 2012). Social work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development. Although the holistic focus of social work is universal, but the priorities of social work practice will vary as per the changing conditions from time to time (Hazra, 2011). Social work intervention in the preparation of a RP cannot be of any specific type, but it has to be of a generalist type and/or of an integrated approach type. Social work is known for its integrated view, which focuses on persons in the context of their physical and social environments (DuBois and Miley, 1999). Social work skills are often deployed to good effect in collaborative work with other professionals, either in on-going multi-disciplinary teams or in ad hoc joint work around the needs of persons in need. Social worker has the skills to promote the participation of socially excluded groups, to manage change, negotiate conflicts and build on capacity (Don Brand, 2005). Modern social work is practiced within a range of settings and is increasingly undertaken as part of integrated service delivery systems. This diversity occurs partly because utilization of knowledge and skills is a contested activity in social work and also due to the complex situations faced by those using the service confronting multiple oppressions on a daily basis (West, 2006).

Resettlement Planning

Resettlement Planning is one of the basic and crucial requirements for reflecting the adverse impacts on PAPs along with the mitigative measures to address such adverse impacts arising out of the implementation of the development projects. According to International Finance Corporation (IFC)² without proper planning and management, involuntary resettlement may result in long-term hardship for affected people. Such potentially negative consequences diminish the developmental impact of the project, tarnish the reputation of the project sponsor, and are contrary to mission of improving the lives of people through private sector investment (IFC, 2002).

¹ RP also known as Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) is a perspective plan prepared for the PAPs of a project in order to address and mitigate the adverse impacts arising out of the execution of a Project. Plans and programmes for both physical resettlement and economic rehabilitation of the affected are envisaged in this document. In other words, it is a time-bound action plan with budget, setting out resettlement strategy, objectives, entitlements, actions, responsibilities and mechanism for monitoring & evaluation mechanism (ADB, 1998).

² IFC – International Finance Corporation (A member of the World Bank Group) through its Environment and Social Development Department has prepared a guideline entitled “Handbook for Preparing a Resettlement Action Plan” which provides essential steps for best practice in designing and implementing RAPs.

Involuntary resettlement caused by development projects should be informed by comprehensive mitigation measures in order to reduce adverse impacts on the existing social fabric of PAPs. One of the most crucial aspects of implementing infrastructure development projects (such as roads and highways) is acquisition of land and/or properties and resettlement thereof of PAPs and their families/households (Maiti, 2011). However, there has been a lack of effective planning and execution of the infrastructure projects. Most of the development projects in India have brought adverse effects to the people (Woldeselassie, 2000). The negative impacts of development projects started from earliest days, continued in the British India and became even more acute in the independent India (Murickan, George, Emmanuel, Jose & Pillai, 2003). In order to prepare an effective RP for the affected people, the various steps to be followed need to be spelled out. Some of the important steps are:

- 1) Avoiding or Minimizing Resettlement:-** First and foremost thing to be kept in mind before starting preparation of an RP is to look for the possible measures of avoiding or minimizing resettlement. Resettlement impacts can be minimized, if not avoided by adopting a careful technical design. For example alignment for roads, bridges, irrigation canals, etc can be altered to reduce the corridor of resettlement impact especially in heavily populated areas or in case of fertile agricultural land. This can be done by social workers by carrying out the transact walks and consultations with the community and executing agency to arrive at the least resettlement option.
- 2) Inform the people about the Project:-** One of the important requirements is to announce the commencement of the project to the public and particularly to the affected people through appropriate means. In addition to this a lay-out map of the project indicating the impact corridor should be displayed for the information of the affected people. Such information needs to be displayed at convenient public places. This task can be performed by the social workers effectively as they work with the people very closely.
- 3) Information dissemination regarding Resettlement & Rehabilitation (R&R) provisions and entitlements under the Project:-** Experience has shown that in most of the projects the affected people do not know their R&R entitlements as envisaged in the policy and a large number of affected people also get cheated due to lack of information regarding their entitlement. So the information regarding R&R provisions is very crucial and as such needs to be properly disseminated. The information dissemination can be done through local newspapers, distributing project information brochure and also a local NGO can be engaged by the project authorities to organise such information campaigns in the project area. This activity needs to take place immediately after the announcement of the project. So scope for social work intervention in information dissemination is clearly seen.
- 4) Meaningful Consultation with the PAPs:-** Before the initiation of land acquisition process, meaningful consultations with the community should be carried out regarding the details of the project, the likely benefits, their entitlement and measures to be taken by the EA. According to ADB consultation with PAPs is the starting point for all activities concerning resettlement. People affected by resettlement may be apprehensive that they will lose their livelihoods and communities, or be ill-prepared for complex negotiations over entitlements. Participation in planning and managing resettlement helps to reduce their fears and gives PAPs an opportunity to participate in key decisions that will affect their lives. Resettlement implemented without consultation may lead to inappropriate strategies and eventual impoverishment. Without consultation, the people affected may oppose the project, causing

social disruption, substantial delay in achieving targets or even abandonment, and cost increases (ADB, 1998). Negative public and media images of the project and of the implementation agency may develop. With consultation, initial opposition to a project may be transformed into constructive participation. Consultation with the affected persons is essential in selecting acceptable resettlement options. So for holding meaningful consultations with PAPs, the social workers can act as a bridge between the PAPs and EA, so that both are mutually benefited.

- 5) **Preparation of an Entitlement Matrix:-** Based on analysis of the impacts likely to arise out of the project, an entitlement matrix should be prepared based on categories of PAPs according to their losses and entitlement. The matrix proposes 'who' will get 'what'. It sets standards for compensation. The entitlement matrix is taken as a base while performing monitoring and evaluation of the project. The scope for social workers can be seen in framing the entitlement matrix. The social workers can highlight the specific issues which need to be looked at the time of preparation of the entitlement matrix. For example what should be the amount paid to the HHs in case the HHs need relocation or there is loss of livelihood or the HHs who lose the residential spaces etc.
- 6) **Mechanism for grievance redressal:-** The grievances of the affected people should be heard and addressed to from the very initial stage of the project. This helps in addressing the concerns of the PAPs and also reduces the chances of litigation. Social workers can act as mediators in the process between the EA and PAPs so that the grievances are amicably resolved.
- 7) **Public disclosure of R&R policy provisions:-** Disclosure of information on the policy principles and entitlements of the PAPs as agreed in the project should be organized in all project areas by the project authorities. The key stakeholders such as PAPs, community representatives, vulnerable groups, women representatives, local government officials and representative of project authorities must participate in the same. A local NGO can be engaged to undertake disclosures and to organize information campaigns in the area.
- 8) **Demarcation of the corridor of impact:-** This is one of the essential step towards preparation of an RP for the project. The boundary of the project land to be acquired should be physically demarcated on ground with marking stones/pillars so that people can see the extent of land required for execution of the project.
- 9) **Conducting baseline Socio-economic Survey:-** This should include the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Census Survey. Carrying out a baseline Socio-economic Survey (SES) as well as census survey of the PAPs is one of the prerequisites for preparation of an RP. A census covers all PAPs irrespective of entitlement or ownership and provides a complete inventory of their assets. While as SES is carried out on a sample of PAPs among the total affected usually through a household questionnaire usually for 20-25 percent of the population. These surveys will indicate the various socio-economic aspects of the affected people and categorize them according to the degree of the project impact on them. These may be supplemented by Participatory Rural/Rapid Appraisal (PRA) methods to update the PAPs data base during project implementation. Social workers are very conversant with the tools of PLA and PRA.

10) Identification of Vulnerable Groups:- Every population and area have some vulnerable groups like women, elderly, Below Poverty Line (BPL), Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST). Their identification is essential in order to provide measures in an RP for mitigating their adverse effects due to project implementation. This will also help in linking these vulnerable groups with the various government schemes from which they can be benefited. According to ADB vulnerable groups merit special attention in planning and implementing resettlement and that resettlement represents an opportunity to help them improve their status. The ADB's Involuntary Resettlement Policy of 1995 defines as vulnerable groups the poorest, those without legal title to assets, households headed by women, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, and pastoralists. There may be other groups, such as isolated communities, the disabled or those unable to work, or those left behind when the majority of their community becomes eligible for relocation. ADB policy specifies that, where "adversely affected people are particularly vulnerable, resettlement and compensation decisions should be preceded by a social preparation phase to build up the capacity of the vulnerable people to deal with the issues". The social workers can play a major role in identification of the vulnerable groups so that they can be benefitted in the process of development.

11) Skill identification of PAPs:- Restoration of income of PAPs is one of the important and crucial activities. The skill identification will help in assessing the training needs and also will help in formulation of an effective income restoration plan. This will prove effective in identifying ongoing income generating government schemes and financial assistance rendering agencies, which would facilitate the economic rehabilitation of PAPs. Here the role of social worker can prove very effective in identifying various skills possessed by the PAPs and can also assess the needs for skill acquisition/up-gradation. Through social work intervention the resource base of each PAP can be prepared which will be essential for deciding upon the nature and type of training to be provided because unless the resource base of each PAP is known, the resources needed such as assistance and the specific vocation in which s/he will be rehabilitated cannot be known and hence it will not be possible to reflect it in the R&R plan.

Universe of the study

Infrastructure development project funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and executed in the Kashmir Valley of Jammu & Kashmir. For the purpose of this research study a sample of 15 (10 road and 05 bridge) subprojects which had involuntary resettlement impacts were chosen.

Process of RP preparation

The preparation of an RP is an important stage of a Project Cycle³. Once the project is conceived by the Executing Agency (EA), a preliminary study is carried out in order to prepare the Summary Appraisal Report (SAR) for the project. One part of the SAR is dedicated to the overall social aspects of the project and this contains the likely/anticipated adverse impacts arising out of

³ A project cycle in a development project consists of various activities of operations or stages – Project identification is the first stage followed by other stages namely pre-appraisal, preparation of Resettlement Plan (RP), implementation, monitoring and evaluation; project completion.

project implementation. This report is generally prepared by the persons with social science background. Social workers can effectively perform this type of job in following ways:

- Foresee the potential resettlement impacts due to proposed project.
- Sum up the potential economic impacts by way of loss or partial impact on the livelihood.
- Loss of community assets and its impacts on the overall social aspects in the community.
- Impact on more vulnerable and marginalized people especially women, children, poor, elderly etc.
- Through participatory consultation/approach propose in advance the proper mitigative measures.

Thus there is scope for social work intervention and the social workers can perform the job of RP preparation better than any other person with non social work background because of their professional knowledge and skills. Social workers personal characteristics enhance their ability to function professionally. Among these personal qualities are warmth, honesty, genuineness, openness, courage, humility, concern, and sensitivity. Also social workers have mastered the requisite knowledge base, developed competencies in the requisite skills in order to be professional helpers (DuBois and Miley, 1999). This on one hand will provide job opportunities for the social workers and on the other hand will be beneficial for both the PAPs and EA. In absence of a professional social worker the above things can seriously skip out of canvass of consideration while a project is in the early stages, which ultimately can swell into major issue as the project progresses. The properly prepared RPs are helpful in highlighting and mitigating the adverse impact(s) on the PAPs and at the same time the project gets through without any resentment from the PAPs and as such is helpful for the EAs also. This can be better understood from an example of one of the sample subprojects namely Batamaloo-Tengpora-Jehangir Chowk-SKIMS Road in Srinagar district which got terminated before its completion owing to problems with acquisition of land and other assets which finally forced the EA to terminate the subproject. After the finalization of SAR, it is sent to the funding agency for their perusal and approval. If funding agency is satisfied with the SAR in terms of its overall benefits then the SAR is approved, and subsequently the preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) starts. If the SAR reflects more negative impacts which can cause a reputational risk to the funding agency, then the SAR is either returned to the EA for necessary modification or it is rejected and no financial support for such project/subproject is provided. The RP is a part of the DPR.

It is a recognized fact that a complete and thorough socio-economic investigation is deemed necessary in order to provide detailed and reliable information for the preparation of resettlement plan (ADB, 1998). Here we see great scope for social work intervention as social workers are the best professional to get detailed information from those who are going to be affected as a consequence of the project. As social workers work with the community, so it is easier for them to get the desired and detailed information from the affected population for preparation of the RPs. The professional social workers can use various tools while in interaction with the community. Unlike non professionals, through use of trusted participatory tools a professional social worker can better side with the community, understand its problems/perceptions about the project. The professional social workers most of the times act objectively and act as a bridge between the community affected and the project authorities. They can plead the perceptions and views of the people in a more objective and transparent manner. Such a bridge would be beneficial to the overall project in the long run. Social workers are acquainted with many techniques and skills to work in a community e.g., by making use of PLA/PRA techniques the social workers can obtain lot of information from the community within less span of time. Also social workers build rapport with the community and indulge in nurturing of the local leadership thereby increasing their acceptance in the community which makes their intervention in the community acceptable. We also know that

the people likely to be affected are ultimately the best judges to decide about the steps to be taken for their rehabilitation. Through consultation the peoples' participation is ensured which ultimately leads to social preparation, which is an important process for reducing tension and obtaining cooperation when resettlement is likely to cause social resistance (ADB, 1998). Social workers can prove very helpful in facilitating the process of consultation because they closely work with the people and as such are trusted by the people. The importance of participation and its merits in a project cycle can be highlighted by the social workers and at the same time the community in general and the PAPs in particular can be mobilized for the consultation process. Social workers can also become the voices of the PAPs and can take part in the consultations so that the disadvantageous PAPs can be represented in the process of consultations.

After the preparation of the RP, the EA has to submit the RP to the funding agency (here ADB) for approval as it is a mandatory requirement for the commencement of the civil work for the subproject for which the RP has been prepared. The project being the first externally funded project the focus was to choose projects which have less resettlement impacts as it was a learning for the state. This can be followed by taking bigger projects with larger impacts because till that time the capacity of the EA would have increased to deal with higher magnitude projects. The Resettlement Plans were prepared in conformity with the ADB's Involuntary Resettlement Policy. For the preparation of the RP the engineering design was consulted so that the corridor of impact is known. This was followed by marking the boundary of acquisition. If the area for acquisition happened to be large thereby impacting a large number of households (HHs) then the corridor of impact was reworked e.g., a subproject road having a width of 10.5 m was reworked on a width of 9 m so that the resettlement impacts are reduced. Alternatively if the acquisition was required in built up areas, then the road in built up areas was suggested to be built as per the available corridor thereby decreasing the resettlement impacts. This helped both the EA and PAPs to avoid the tussle usually arising out of the forced acquisition.

The anticipated impacts on the basis of proposed design are profiled through a 100 percent census survey and socio-economic survey which when explained in the context of the proposed entitlement against the loss of the assets involved forms the major components of a Resettlement Plan. Relevant laws and legislations and overall policy framework within which these anticipated impacts are proposed to be mitigated are also detailed therein. And on the basis of these impacts and entitlements a budget is also prepared followed by a time schedule for RP implementation with monitoring arrangements.

Status of impacts

The details of impacts as per the approved RPs are provided in Table 1. The data reveals that 307 is the total number of affected families in the 15 subprojects. Out of these families 27 fall under vulnerable category (21 BPL and 06 WHHH). Out of the total affected families 55 were identified to lose their income as a result of execution of the subprojects with an impact on 122 structures. However, the impact on the quantum of land is not mentioned because those HHs which had impact on their land had lost only an insignificant portion of their total land holding. The subprojects being linear in nature impacted land in strips, whose impact has not any significance that is the reason for omitting the impact on land.

Table 1: Details of the impacts as per approved Resettlement Plans

Subprojects	TAFs/HHs	TPAPs	Vulnerable Families				Structures affected	Income loss
			SC	ST	BPL	WHHH		
10 roads	251	1255	00	00	13	06	112	35
05 bridges	56	386	00	00	08	00	10	20
Total	307	1641	00	00	21	06	122	55

TAFs/HHs-Total Affected Families/Households, TPAPs-Total Project Affected Persons, SC-Scheduled Caste, ST-Scheduled Tribe, BPL-Below Poverty Line, WHHH- Women Headed Household

Source: Project Management Consultants engaged by EA for the Project

There has been a change in the degree of impacts which were envisaged at the time of RP preparation and at the time of actual implementation. A comparison of the envisaged impacts and actual impacts is presented in Figure 1.

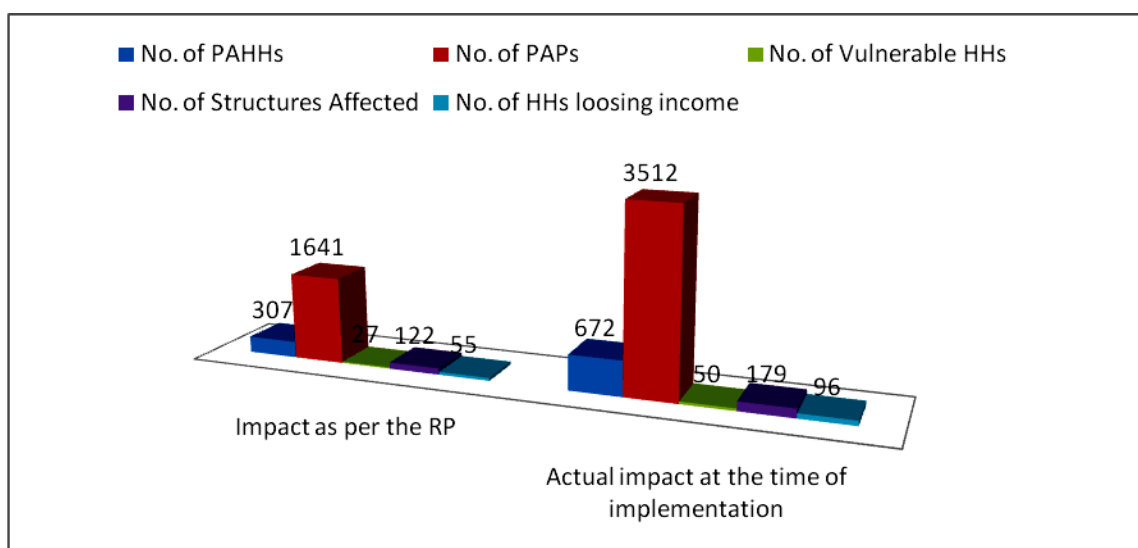


Fig. 1: Comparison of degree of impact as per RPs and during actual implementation

From figure 1 it is clear that the number of affected HHs and PAPs has been more than double at the time of implementation in comparison to the actual number reflected in the RPs. The impact on commercial structures directly has an impact on the livelihood of an affected family. For the restoration of the lost livelihood one can see great scope for social work intervention. A good number of NGOs throughout the country are working in the field of livelihood restoration and there has been success on this front. ADB funded projects in Bihar and West Bengal have had the involvement of some very effective NGOs in livelihood restoration of the PAPs. So livelihood restoration is one of the areas where we can have social work intervention. There has been an impact on the community and government owned assets in few subprojects also. The effective mitigation of impacts on the community assets becomes possible through meaningful in-depth consultations with the community where there is lot of scope for social work intervention. Such impacts can better be mitigated in consultation with the community. Sometimes the community can better propose an effective mitigation. From the above subprojects there are inferences where the community organizations instead of opting for cash compensation opted for restoration of the

affected assets by the project authorities itself. Small and easy to accommodate demands of the community which can go a long way in the community welfare can ensure a lot of community support to the project authorities. Such instances can be installation of a water connection, construction of community toilets, restoration of an old staircase of say a mosque or temple etc. A professional social worker can help a lot in linking the community with the project authorities by arbitrarily acting between two on the issues of mitigating impacts on community owned assets.

Conclusion

The research study was conducted with the sole objective to find the scope for social work intervention in the preparation of a Resettlement Plan. The effective resettlement plans can be prepared only when the people for whom the plans have to be prepared are taken along in the process of development. As social workers work with the people for their betterment, it makes them more suitable professionals to prepare RPs owing to their professional knowledge, methods and skills. The professional social workers most of the times act objectively and as a bridge between the communities affected and the project authorities. They can plead the perceptions and views of the people in a more objective and transparent manner. Such a bridge would be beneficial to the overall project in the long run. In the process of land acquisition social workers can act as facilitators to benefit the whole process of acquisition which usually becomes a cumbersome process if the PAPs are not taken along in the process. Through the use of integrated social work approach Resettlement Plan implementation can be done effectively because social workers work with the affected people and people have confidence in them. This can be highlighted from the fact that now the Safeguard Policies of many multilateral agencies clearly state that the implementation of the Resettlement Plans should be done through involvement of NGO's. Safeguard policies are generally understood to be operational policies that seek to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts, including protecting the rights of those likely to be affected or marginalized by the development process.

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