

Post evaluation of the resettlement process of Upper Kothmale Hydro Power Project

Extended Abstract

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Background

The third largest hydroelectric dam of Sri Lanka, known as Upper Kothmale Hydro-Power project (UKHP) is situated in Talawakele in Nuwaraeliya District of Sri Lanka. The project had a continuous delay since its beginning of 1980's due to various issues. Especially the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process identified key environmental and socio-economic impacts associated with the project in 1994 (Nandalal, 2007). The issues which particularly include the impact on St. Clair's waterfall due to stream flow reductions, social impacts due to resettlement of affected people, possible effects on groundwater due to tunneling, impacts on downstream water usage due to dewatering of streams, and impacts on biodiversity (Kodithuwakku and Moonesinghe, 2004). Resettlement is an important as well as a controversial process in any development project. There were huge resettlement issues related to UKHP. Construction work on the project then began in 2006 and is completed by the end of 2011 less than 6 year period. Therefore, it is more important to empirically examine the impacts of the project after implemented. With this background, this study mainly focuses on assessing the impacts of the resettlement process.

Objectives

The general objective of this study is to assess the impacts of resettlement process of UKHP. Specific objectives of this study are; to explore the issues after the resettlement process, to identify the satisfactory level of the affected people on infrastructure development as a part of the resettlement process which was created by the UKHP.

Methodology

Both of primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were collected by field observation and surveying 45 households out of

497 households resettled by the project (CEB, UKHP).

Secondary data were collected by CEB reports, CEA reports and internet websites were used. Descriptive statistical methods; Graphs, charts, tables and percentages in SPSS were used to analysis the data.

Results

The field survey focused on 3 ethnic groups, Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim. According to major impacts of the resettlement process, surveyed data reveals that 66.7% of household properties were damaged. However, 73.3% of people's jobs were not affected because the resettlement process occurred in a very close proximity with compared to their original settlement. 91.1% of student's education was not affected because of the project.

According to the satisfactory level of the respondents on new infrastructure facilities provided by UKHP; power supply, water supply, transport, educational, health and recreational facilities, 28.9% of affected people are strongly satisfied, 64.4% of people are satisfied and 6.7% of people with the ideas that have no chance on the former indicated infrastructure facilities.

According to the public attitudes on the compensation they received, 33.3% of affected people hadn't got compensation and 66.7% of people had received, on the other hand, 62.2% of people who got their compensation aren't fully satisfied with the amount which they had paid, but 37.8% are satisfied.

Conclusion and Recommendation

According to this field study, the researchers identified that there are pros and cons of the UKHP under resettlement process. When considering the favorable impacts, many jobs weren't affected; education of the students of the affected families was no harm. Many people are satisfied on the new infrastructure facilities (power supply, water supply, transport, educational, health and recreational facilities) which were served by the project. Most of the affected people had received compensation.

The more properties of the people were damaged but all of them had received new houses and land. Compensations weren't satisfactory according to the public attitudes. However, it is important to note that when considering the whole resettlement process, it is more favorable when it compares with the resettlement process of the other development projects in Sri Lanka.

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There are some recommendations for the resettlements of development projects such as introduce well-planned mechanism comprising all the stakeholders including affected people in order to decide the more appropriate compensation scheme which based on the replacement cost. Otherwise, create an annual evaluation of the impacts of a resettlement process, because those impacts can be changed by time passes, enforce law and policies properly such as Land Acquisition Act, National Environment Act, and National Involuntary Resettlement Policy etc.

Keywords; Resettlement, Infrastructure facilities, Evaluation, Compensation, Resettlement policies

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