

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF LAND ACQUISITION FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS : CASE STUDY ON SOUTHERN HIGH WAY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

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Introduction

The last century was a period of unprecedented economic development in many areas in the world. Providing land is the significant issue for the development activities since there are limited land resource in the country. If projects are implementing in a particular area, people living in those areas should move away from their homes willingly or unwillingly. Therefore when projects construct people have to move from their homes voluntary or involuntary. Though every projects have consisted compensation scheme it is only economical value rather than the social value. In relation to that most of social impacts arise due to the land acquisition. This research principle focuses on examine the social impacts of land acquisition for Southern Transport Development Project.

Objective of the Paper

The objective of this study is to identify social impacts of land acquisition for the development projects.

Methodology

The Southern High way Project was selected to examine this problem and Structured and semi structured interviews were used to collect primary data.

Results

The research findings revealed several social impacts of land acquisition for the STDP Project. Though displaced people receive compensation for their land, people have faced social impacts due to the degradation of cultural value of lands.

Offering a small plot of land i.e. 20 perches and having to travel a long distance to utilize the previous unaffected lands in the native village are the results of landlessness. Compensation distributed among them was not adequate to purchase another plot of land in the same area. In addition, the cultural symbolic value of the land was destroyed when land was acquired by the government for development projects i.e. loss of land inheritance.

Research findings point out that there are four types of losing lands.

01. Loss of agricultural land
02. Loss of homestead land
03. Loss of economically valuable
perennials (specially fruit trees)
04. Losing of standing crops.

Discussion

Homelessness is the consequence of land acquisition. Loss of shelter is temporary for most of those displaced but for some families it may remain a chronic condition. If compensation for demolished shelters is made at assessed market value rather than replacement value, the risk of homelessness has increased. Not only that, families in Sri Lankan society basically build around the ancestral home called "mahagedara".

The cultural status of displacers is belittled when they go to new relocation areas, where they are regarded as "strangers" and denied opportunities and entitlements. Psychological marginalization and its consequences are typically overlooked in the resettlement. For an example, one of old age person said that, the high way is in his land. ("*Oya para thiyenne ape edame*") This statement indicates the Psychological trauma experienced by this person, as a result of land loss. Yet, cultural and behavioural impairments, anxiety and decline in self-esteem, have been widely reported from people.

When they relocate in the new locations, they have been selected dispersed manner. Therefore neighborhood relationships have been dismantled and it has effected to their social security too. The people, who lived in the former village as

neighbours and relatives, have been randomly resettled in the new locations. Such type of selection has caused to arise other social risks among them. It cumulates physical exclusion from a geographic territory with economic and social exclusion out of a set of functioning social networks. Social insecurity is the dreadful problem, which was raised due to the random settlement.

Research has shown that more vulnerable groups, such as the aged, suffer from increased morbidity and mortality rates as a result of losing their prior homes. Exposure to the "social stress" inherent in forced relocation was highlighted as having differential consequences on mental health across age, gender, and marital and occupational status.

When land is acquired, the small businesses which were running along that land were not evaluated properly, hence when these people are resettled in other locations; their businesses face grave difficulties. For an example take a small wood work business carried out by a person. When he is resettled at a new location, he will have to face the competition with other similar type of businesses in that locality thereby hindering his economic prospects. Further, these types of businesses contribute to the unemployment in that area and when the business is re-located in a new area, the unemployment increases in the previous area.

The compensation provided for the demolished shelters are made by not assessing a forecasted market value but its replacement value, the risk of

homelessness has increased. The Sri Lankan society basically build its homes of the offspring around the ancestral home called "Maha Gedara". Most people who were affected by the highway have lived in their whole life near their ancestral homes. Though they have been offered compensation for their houses, the loss of their Maha Gedara has caused loss of social and cultural value of "home".

93% of the communities which were affected are rural communities. Since belonging to a rural community, the whole living system was based on land based production and self-employment through these production systems. This land based production systems collapsed, when the resettled people were unable to find adequate lands which sustain cultivation; in the resettled areas.

Conclusion

Acquisition of land captured broad range of problems. It is not only the economic deprivation but also the social and cultural ones. Those are inter-related problems and not affected to the community similarly. The dimensions of impacts are differentiating each other. Social impacts are severe issues than the economic ones. Hunting the land which

they live in long term, destroy their living system around them. It can't be evaluated economically. This can be accomplished through targeted strategies, backed up by adequate land based resettlement.

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