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## **Some Socio-Economic Impacts of Women After Development Induced Displacement – A Case Study in West Bengal**

**Madhumita Sen gupta**

*Research scholar, Department of Geography, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India*

**Sumana Bandhopadhyay**

*Head of the department, Department of Geography, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India*

### **Abstract**

*The word displacement in recent time has received attention of the social scientists as in the contemporary history of one hundred years millions of people got displaced for various reasons. This study is not exactly on displacement; this is an attempt to understand how a woman in general suffers when displacement takes place. Any type of displacement affects vulnerable population adversely and women are vulnerable within the vulnerable; so women are most affected people after displacement. Vulnerability can be expressed into three ways - social, economic and psychological. , to take up an analysis of development induced displacement Rajarhat block in North 24 Paraganas district of West Bengal (where an urbanization project is now being carried out) is chosen. The entire work is framed on women voice, their individual experience and perception. The nature, extent and factors affecting the impact of displacement on women are evaluated through qualitative analysis of information collected through interviews, focused group discussion and content analysis of policy documents. The study is based upon primary surveys in the selected urbanization project-affected areas. The study concludes that though displacement is gender neutral the affects and impacts are different for men and women. Women as marginalized among the marginalized population do suffer more vis-à-vis men economically, psychologically and also, socially when displacements take place*

**Key words:** *Development, Displacement, Gender, vulnerable, migration, joint family, over-burden.*

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**Introduction:** Development presently is a very sensitive issue especially in developing and low developed countries. This is because in the name of development millions of people were displaced from their own land; this displaced population caused severe social, economical, cultural and political tension in their own country. Many theories and calculations on the basis of cost – benefit framework tried to prove that development projects are must for a country's economic growth and for this purpose some people must suffer temporarily; the basic idea is for their present sacrifice their future generation will gain more. But a developing country like India, after sixty years of sacrifice (since after

independence in 1947) the plight of these people did not improve. They remained marginalized and vulnerable. Eminent social scientist Vandana Shiva termed this development as 'mal-development' and activist Arundhati Roy viewed that this development was for steel tycoons, politicians and land mafias, which according to her was a 'triangle of land shark'. Does displacement have any gendered meaning or signifier? The answer is yes or no at the same time. It depends how one looks upon displacement – the very perspective of displacement. From economic and political perspective both men and women fall prey to the forces of displacement. But from social perspective women are the built-in-class of displaced in the society. Mies (2010) has questioned that what is the new wave of nationalism meant for women, their role in this process and what role did women play historically with the rise of modern nation-state? She also pointed out that after reunification of Germany in early 1990's women were the main sufferer of this decision. The percentage of women unemployment rose from 50% in 1991 to 62% in 1992. Among all 21.8% women were jobless whereas it was only 12.6% among men.

**The basic methodological frame work:** This paper is aimed to focus on an urban development induced displacement with one case study in new township project in Rajarhat block of twenty four parganas district in West Bengal. This study primarily attempts to assess the impact of displacement on displaced people especially on womenfolk. The main objectives of the study are to identify some social impacts of women due to this project oriented displacement to base upon a general hypothesis that any kind of displacement affects women adversely than men.

The study is based on the understanding of a gendered perspective of community dynamics affected by disruptions leading to displacement. It was found in literature that the best approach for analytical clarity for such perspective was qualitative methods for both data collection as well as analytical framework. Accordingly group discussions were held across villages to enable discussions and multiple opinions and perceptions which could be validated because of the presence of number of people. The group number was selected on the basis of their being members of displaced households. Individual interviews were also held across households for women members only of displaced household.

Quarries were related to economic activities, family condition, migration of family members, changes in daily time allocation of household works in the post displacement period vis-à-vis pre displacement period.

Five displacement affected mouzas in Rajarhat block were chosen using purposive sampling method and household in the selected mouzas were chosen by random sampling method and stratified random method respectively. Total number of respondents is three hundred and thirty four.

**Table no-1:** shows the case study of the surveyed area,

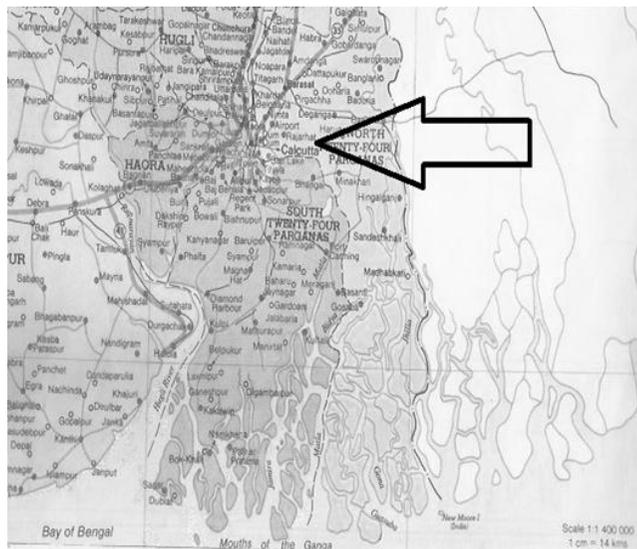
Mouzas	No: of respondents	No of group discussion
Rekjuani	36	7
Tarulia	70	13
Baligari	50	11
Chhapna	38	9
Patharghata	140	16

**Source:** primary survey report 2013-14

**Figure-1: Location map of Rajarhat**

**Spatial location of the project area:**

East of Kolkata there is a huge marshy land known as East Kolkata wet land which is extended from 22°30' to 22°40' North latitude and 88°25' to 88°35' East longitude. When the project of Salt lake city was started a large portion of the low land including huge water bodies were filled up and environmentally that was a great loss for Kolkata, especially for sewerage system (gupta,2005). In the year 1971 remaining portion of the wet land was declared as world heritage area by Ramser project. In spite of this restriction government of West Bengal decided to establish another planned township on some part of that wet land area (22°34'-22°38' North latitude and 88°25'-88°30' longitude). The project area covers 2750 hectares of land out of which 653 hectares were wet land. As on 12/11/2012 WBHIDCO (the official partner of this project) has actually acquired 2474.838 hectares of land.



**Empirical findings:** An analysis of the primary data collected from the selected women respondents of the affected households in Rajarhat block has been made in structural questionnaire as mentioned earlier.

As this study of socio-economic impacts of displacement on the affected women, researcher has tried to this in terms of the following parameters; changes in economic activity, land loss, increased marginalization, forced migration, break down of joint family system and changes in time use pattern.

The three hundred and thirty four respondents' families lost their land due to land acquisition. Though government compensated those families but the compensation money

was not properly distributed and the value of land was less than the actual market price of those lands. Most of the land which was acquired was arable land- not residential plots. So the majority of the population did not lose their dwelling places and hence, was not displaced from their residential spaces. Rather, they lost their agriculture land and thereby, their subsistence. This is, therefore a case of displacement of population from their livelihood. Some people who were dependent on fishing for their livelihood also faced displacement from their livelihood as wet lands were filled for this urbanization project.

Table-2: indicate the changes in economic activities due to new urbanization project. Economic activities imply money income generating activities of the respondents. In pre displacement period of the study area the major economic activity of women was agriculture followed by other activities. Women used to work as unpaid family labour in agriculture before displacement. They were mainly helper of their family member at agriculture field. After forced displacement there is a shift from unpaid labour to paid casual labour. In post displacement period, the respondents cutting across eggs and engaged in multiple activities to supplement their family income. This shift from independent agriculture worker to casual labour may increase their income but decrease their time for care giving activity at home and time for leisure and rest. Total number of respondents was three hundred and thirty four, among them two hundred and seven respondents were unpaid family labour in pre displacement period but the number of unpaid family labour among the respondents is almost half (one hundred and eleven) after displacement. On the other side number of the respondents as paid agriculture labour has increased sixty three in pre displacement period to one hundred and sixty eight after displacement. At the same time number of casual labour at home service and private sector has increased from sixteen (two as private sector worker and fourteen as home service ) in pre displacement period to two hundred twenty three after displacement. Number of self-help group worker also increased after displacement. The government of West Bengal with the help of some NGOs is started some self-help group after displacement, their main goal is to train unskilled women to some income generating activity. Another important thing to be noted that, after displacement number of women with no economic activity has decreased. This means either they are forced to earn for their family at any cost or displacement has increased their opportunity of income generating activity. Unfortunately the first one is true for this areas respondents'. They are forced to earn for their family after displacement.

**Table no-2:** the number of respondents of different economic activities in pre and post displacement period

	Number of Respondents in the Pre-Displacement Period	Number of Respondents in the Post-Displacement Period
Agriculture(un paid family labour)	207	111
Agriculture (as paid labour )	63	168
Rearing Domestic Livestock	252	154

Fishing	147	78
Sewing	100	197
Vending	94	46
Casual labour ( home service)	14	125
Casual labour (private sector)	2	98
SHG(Self help group)	25	102
No Economic Activity	77	45

**Source:** Primary survey 2013-14

**Note:** A person may at the same time perform more than one economic activity and hence, there is overlapping of numbers and the total number of respondents as pre economic activity will exceed the total number of respondents.

As local populace was displaced from their means of livelihood of subsistence viz agriculture land they had to seek alternative livelihood elsewhere as the alternative were not adequate for them in their own area. Forced migration was consequence of massive land acquisition. Those who migrated to eke out an alternative livelihood were mostly male. Few female also migrated. However in this case there was one unique feature of forced migration. Those who migrated did not take their families with them as they did not lose their residential lands and their income was not enough to maintain their family in a new city. Hence the families from which migration occurred in many cases became dependent on the female members of those families. There were two types of migration. Firstly, some people permanently migrated to far off places either to big cities in India or abroad, they seldom comeback to see their families but send money regularly to their families. Secondly, everyday some people used to go to Kolkata to earn their bread and butter and do come back home in night. In both cases, the onus of running the families has to be borne by the female members of these families. One can argued that in the age of globalization people have an opportunity to take better job and migration is easier at present days. In this rural area male population are forced to migrate as there was no alternative way of earning in their own area.

**Table no-3:** Migration of family members of the respondents' families,

Place/ no: of respondents	Pre displacement period	Post displacement period
Kolkata	51	107
Big cities in India	13	98
Abroad	0	37
At home	270	92

**Source:** primary survey report 2013-14

From the Table no-3 this is clear that number of migration has increased after displacement, though there are many reasons but displacement is one of the reason of forced migration of the families from their arable land viz their means of subsistence.

With growing urbanization one generally notices shift in family structure from joint family to nuclear family. There are certain pros and cons of joint family system vis-à-vis nuclear family system. In joint family people live collectively on the principle of sharing daily in-house workload. Rural family in India is still significantly of joint family type. With displacement of local common place from their means of subsistence in rural society too there is increasing trend of collapse of the joint family system. In the surveyed area the characteristics of the land has been changed from agriculture land to urban settlements. Before the urbanization this area had rural characteristics but the joint family system gradually broken down mainly due to this development induced displacement, which had its toll on physical and mental health of women there. From the table no: 4 it is clear that after displacement number of big or joint family system has decreased. This is to be noted that single family means husband, wife and their minor children.

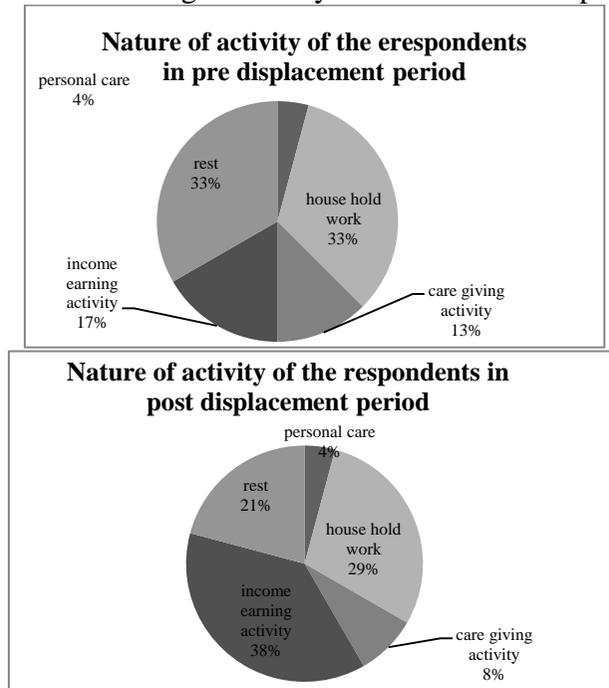
**Table no-4:** Number of family lived jointly in a house

	>3 family	3 family	2family	Single family
Pre-displacement period	90	102	127	15
Post-displacement period	54	76	160	44

**Source:** primary survey report 2013-14

Lastly in Figure no-2 indicates the percentage of daily time allocation of the respondents' women from pre to post displacement period. This time allocation chart is prepared on the basis of responses obtained from the respondents in this regard. This is an average or approximation of a particular activity during a particular time. It can be noted from figure no: 1, in the post displacement period percentage of time allocation of household work has decreased and percentage of time allocation of income earning activities has increased, this is mainly to supplement their reduced family income due to displacement. Most of the women are involved housekeeping profession, making incense sticks or sewing, young and literate women work in private sector. All those jobs are uncertain and above all they sometimes feel physically insecure in their workplace. So in the post displacement period they are subject to double burden of work. Their participation in the labour market is out of compulsion, not out of their own choice. Also they have less time allocated for care giving, household work and rest in the post displacement period as compared to before.

**Figure no-2:** Changes of daily activities of the respondents



**Source:** primary survey report 2013-14

**Conclusion:** Displacement has far reaching impacts upon the communities that are affected by it. Inadvertently, the nature of losses and changes in the socio economic parameters of the affected community determines the proportion or direction of affectation. The need to view the poorer communities, who are already vulnerable due to insecurities of livelihood and employment, was critical in the choice of research problem. Again it has been noted the literature that within the poorer and more vulnerable communities, women deal with more pressure of everyday living-accessing food and nutrition, as care givers to the young ,old and ill person, providing the domestic infrastructure, which she does along with livelihood related activities. A displacement of any kind leads to an increase in this multidimensional pressure upon women. Each daily chore becomes more difficult to maneuver and even simple care giving activities become complicated due to unavailability of medicines, nutrition requirement etc.

To summaries the findings of the impacts upon women that have been studied one may conclude the following:

- 1) Displacement caused *joblessness* of men and women are compelled to take up *income earning activities*
- 2) *Push and pull* factors led some men to *migrate* resulting in *over-stress and increased burden* upon the women.
- 3) Women are *overburden* and have less time spending for *care-giving activity and rest* after displacement.

- 4) Disintegration of *joint families* increased *physical and mental stress* among women.
- 5) Social status of women underwent change from *housewives to wage earners* in many cases, but with distinct discrimination of wage structure.
- 6) Displacement has increased the *vulnerability* of women –especially those who belong to the poor families.

In this context it is important to find effective long-term solutions instead of adhoc or temporary policies (like monetary compensation) and problems of women will be considered not only in monetary terms but also its social and other impacts too.

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