Can Resettlement & Rehabilitation be a Feasible Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in Indian Bengal Delta?

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INTRODUCTION

The islands of the Indian Bengal Delta (IBD), susceptible to severe erosion, are facing submergence and cyclones with storm surges. Scientists opine that this phenomena could be linked to the rising sea level. Three islands of Lohachara, Suparibhanga and Bedford have completely submerged. The island of Ghoramara now faces the threat of complete submergence. Number of displaced population varies from 4000-7000.

The resettlement from Lohachara and Ghoramara to Sagar, was carried out by the State Government of West Bengal, India, through the local administrative body- the Panchayat. There are five Resettlement Colonies in Sagar island viz., Phuldubi Colony, South Haradhanpur Colony, Bankimnagar Colony, Gangasagar Colony and Jibantala-Kamalpur Colony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Average monthly income of Rs. 1000-1500</td>
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<td>Huge dependent population</td>
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(RESETTLEMENT)

(RESETTING)

POLICY ISSUES

- India’s Resettlement & Rehabilitation Act or Policies largely cater to those displaced by developmental projects, natural-disaster-induced refugees, remains in the shadows.
- West Bengal does not have a Resettlement & Rehabilitation Policy.
- The Disaster Management Plans of both South and North 24 Parganas, covering Indian Bengal Delta, has no scheme for rehabilitation of displaced population due to disasters.
- India’s National and State Climate Change Action Plans remain silent on the issue of human displacement and migration.

CONCLUSION

- Planned Resettlement could be a part of the Adaptation strategy but requires careful thought and meticulous planning, which was/is clearly absent in the case of IBD.
- Resettlement as a precautionary measure may not be taken up willingly by the would-be-affected people themselves.
- ‘Planned Relocations’ undertaken elsewhere, either as a precautionary measure or a post-disaster strategy, should be assessed, so as to imbibe ideas for effective planning in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is based on the research project DECCMA, carried out under CARIAA, with financial support from the DFID-UK and IDRC-Canada. The views expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of DFID and IDRC or its Board of Governors. The author would like to thank Dr. A.K. Ghosh, Director, CED for his guidance; Ms. Sunita Dey, for presenting the paper and all the DECCMA-India team for their support and encouragement.

CONTACT

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(MODIFIED CERNIA’S EIGHT IMPOVERISHMENTS RISKS, 1997)