

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

Strategy in Indian Bengal Delta ?

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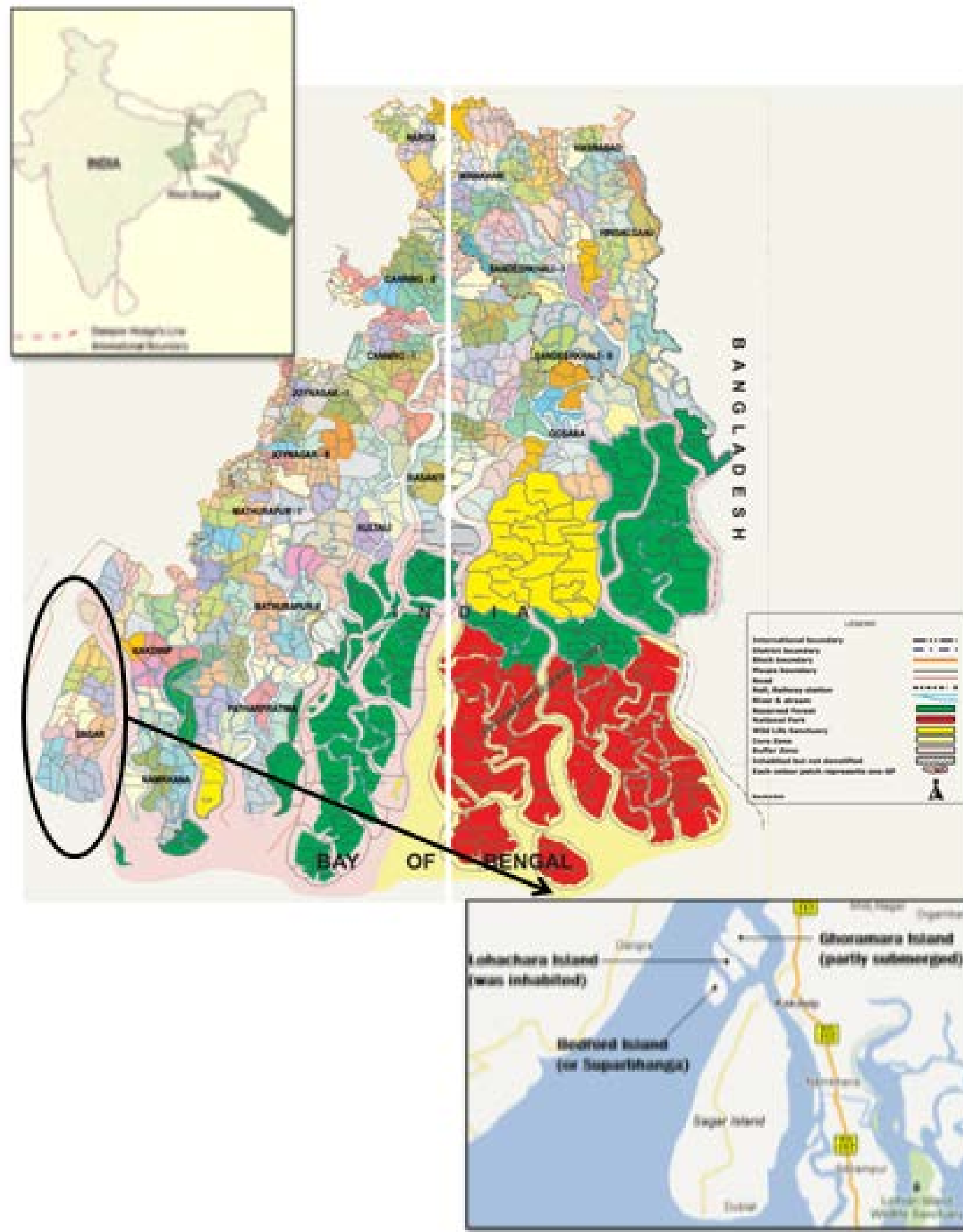


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INTRODUCTION

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.



RESETTLEMENT

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.

Parameters	Situation at the resettlement colonies
Landlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe landlessness Selling of land to meet household and other expenses Land provided in some colonies become minimal with time
Joblessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment Traditionally farmers and fishers, now earn living as rickshaw pullers, labourers, small traders Migration to urban areas as unskilled labourers for employment Child labourers
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One family one room house of about 80 sq.ft Not provided to all Self-reconstruction
Marginalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average monthly income of Rs. 1000-1500 Huge dependent population High rate of poverty and deprivation
Food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of agricultural land Meagre income
Social disarticulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontent faced from old settlers, due to pressure on common property resources Favoritism in case of distribution of resettlement packages (political)
Basic amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One tube well for drinking water for 100 persons Kaccha roads Lack of health care facilities Lack of early warning system Lack of electrification Ineffective government schemes

(Modified Cernia's Eight Impoverishment Risks, 1997)

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.

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