SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECONOMICS OF
RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted among the oustees of Pong Dam, in Ghamroor village, District- Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. This study has been conducted on the second generation of the oustees as the dam was built in 1974. The process of land acquisition for the construction of dam started in 1960s, due to which people were evacuated and displaced. Thus, this study has been carried out after more than 40 years of displacement. The researcher has attempted to study the socio-economic status of PAPs in the post displacement scenario. Besides examining the impact and the effect of displacement on the different socio-economic variables in particular and lives of people in general, the people’s notion of development and its associated processes (like displacement and compensation along with resettlement in the framework of social justice) have also been explored.

This study has been conducted using interpretive theoretical paradigm, which focuses on the emic point of view; the people’s perspective; how they view the development process and its outcomes; their internal feelings and perception about compensation and its related effects. An ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Ghamroor Village, where the oustees had come back and started living in their houses which were acquired for the project purpose but it has not been used by the Dam authority. This was a typical case to study as this village is very near to the dam and the dam had been built in the region of Ghamroor itself. The name of Pong also has been derived from the Ghamroor village. The people of this village were the first to be displaced and resettled in Ganganagar district of Rajasthan.

Case study has been used as a method of study. Besides this, techniques such as in-depth interview, genealogy, observation, oral history and narratives have been used. Further, interview schedule has also been administered and its responses have been analyzed statistically. For this study, purposive sampling was used and the study was conducted among 20 households. The study participants were mainly the heads of the households as they were the eldest and could recall all the incidents of displacement and provide relevant information. However, the family members were also interviewed and their genealogy was taken to get the family details.
In a nutshell, from this study, it was found that there has been complete denial of social justice in the case of Pong dam oustees. They had not been given any developmental opportunities except compensation and even the compensation was not justified at that time when they were displaced. They had not been involved in the resettlement process, their choices and preferences had not been valued, rather they had been evacuated forcibly and thrown into an altogether alien environment which was socially and culturally completely different from them. Facing hostility from the local population and in absence of any sustainable livelihood, they were forced to come back. This whole process has made them socially and economically worse off than before as reported by the oustees.