Chapter 11
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY LESSONS

11.1. Overall Impact of Displacement on Livelihood
The erstwhile inhabitants of Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary have been shifted from resource-rich but extremely remote forests to a relocation site that is only a few kilometers from their original place of residence. However, in terms of topography and resource endowment, the relocation site is drastically different from the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary. Across 24 villages, nearly 1650 families, mainly hunters, gatherers and subsistence cultivators, have been subjected to a sudden and poorly planned shift to agriculture-based livelihoods in a drought-prone and highly degraded landscape. The relocation package is not informed by baseline data about pre-displacement livelihood, and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to livelihood restoration has been taken, regardless of its suitability. Loss of forest-based livelihood has not been compensated through development of alternative, non-farm employment and livelihood options. As a result of inadequacy of the relocation package and gaps in implementation, the largely self-sufficient forest-based livelihoods of the Sahariya have given way to precarious, mainly wage-based, food insecure and vulnerable livelihoods. Poverty in the displaced households has increased, and they have become chronically dependent on government relief.

The implementing agency, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, has not been able to forge effective linkages with other state agencies, line departments and NGOs to enable the displaced people to access their schemes and programmes. Even though the relocation site is not as remotely located as the Kuno Sanctuary, an overall environment of poor governance and lack
of accountability has prevented the displaced people from availing of basic developmental facilities (like schools and health care) that they were promised at the relocation site. Table 1 summarizes the overall impact of displacement on the Sahariya of Kuno in terms of the modified Impoverishment Risks and Rehabilitation model. The main impoverishment risks associated with displacement are mapped against specific risk-mitigation provisions of the rehabilitation package, and set out against the actual exposure of the displaced households to these risks. It is clear from the table that despite a few gains (which are mostly in relatively less critical areas of livelihood), the net impact of displacement has been to increase the vulnerability of the displaced households to all five types of impoverishment risks, and thus to poverty and livelihood insecurity.

An immediate impact of relocation was to give the displaced families greater access to liquidity (in the form of grants for house construction and for transport of household effects, and wage employment for land-clearing activities). This may have helped some of them to emerge briefly from their below poverty line status, as captured by money-metric measures of poverty. However, in effect, most of this money was spent by the displaced households on consumption needs (including food and alcohol), and did not get converted to productive assets or investment in land or other income generating activities. Thus, as the flow of rehabilitation-related funds tapered off, permanent loss of other sources of cash income resulted in re-entry of these households into income poverty. On balance, inadequate compensation for loss of social, financial, natural, human and physical capital left the displaced households worse off than before, resulting in increased vulnerability to chronic impoverishment.
Relocation also improved access of the displaced households to transport and communications infrastructure, due to the proximity of the relocation site to the mainstream economy. However, given the loss of established livelihood, unfamiliar social and economic environment, and sudden irrelevance of established coping strategies, the terms at which the displaced households could interact with ‘mainstream’ forces like markets and the media were highly disadvantageous. Thus, these potential advantages so far have not translated into actual livelihood gains.

Thus, for the Sahariya of Kuno, displacement has set into motion a perverse process of agrarian transformation, marked by alienation from their natural resource base and growing unsustainability of agriculture as a means of livelihood. In a relentless trend towards proletarianization, a majority of these people have transitioned from poor but largely self-sufficient agriculturalists and hunter-gatherers to highly insecure itinerant wage labourers. In essence, this process mirrors the experiences of the poorest and most marginal people (including many Scheduled Tribes) elsewhere in India, and indeed, in other parts of the world. The difference, however, lies in the time taken by this transformation; a gradual process that took place over many decades for other communities was telescoped into less than five years for the Sahariya displaced from Kuno. The trauma caused by this to an already marginal Adivasi community like the Sahariya cannot be over-emphasized.
### Table 11.1: Displacement and Impoverishment Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impoverishment risk</th>
<th>Pre-Displacement Scenario</th>
<th>Provisions in Rehabilitation package</th>
<th>Post-Relocation Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of loss of physical capital</strong></td>
<td>Abundant ownership of cattle due to ample access to fodder</td>
<td>Creation of fodder plantations</td>
<td>Sharp decline in livestock holdings, due to inadequate fodder and water availability</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Privately held</td>
<td>- Adequate housing; easy access to inputs for construction and repair</td>
<td>- House construction allowance of Rs.36,000</td>
<td>- Adequate cash for new house construction; however, poor access to inputs for construction/maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Very limited, fair weather access to roads</td>
<td>- Provision for compensation for loss of immovable assets</td>
<td>- Improved access to transport, communications and the media</td>
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<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>- Very limited access to communications and media</td>
<td>- Creation of community infrastructure worth Rs.9,000 per household</td>
<td>- Electricity connections have been made available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Collectively held</td>
<td>- No electricity</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved access to and influence of markets; however, worsened ability to operate in the market due to loss of livelihood sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>- Limited and difficult access to markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Power</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to markets</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of loss of financial capital</strong></td>
<td>Easy availability of credit on the strength of high quality landholdings with assured returns</td>
<td>One-time cash compensation of Rs.1,000 per household</td>
<td>Heavy erosion of credit-worthiness due to diminished quality of landholdings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- High dependence on local elite for credit, inputs and marketing of output</td>
<td>- No provision for maintenance allowance or loans for livelihood reconstruction</td>
<td>- Despite improved access, no improvement in access to formal credit market</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- However, slight improvement in access to various government schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of loss of natural capital</strong></td>
<td>Adequate availability of land, partly through legal rights and partly through encroachment</td>
<td>Provision of 2 hectares of land for all households</td>
<td>Increase in size of legal landholdings, with improved security of tenure, but largely unchanged size of operational landholdings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>- Abundant access to CPRs for fodder, fuel, medicinal plants and biomass for household use</td>
<td>- Land development component worth Rs.36,000</td>
<td>- Fuelwood plantations not developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common property resources</td>
<td>- Well-drained, fertile land, amenable to double-cropping even without irrigation</td>
<td>- Fuel wood plantations worth Rs.8,000 per household to be created</td>
<td>- Sharp decline in access to forests and CPRs; stiff competition with host community for limited resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and soil quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>- No compensation for loss of NTFP income</td>
<td>- Poor access to surface and ground water for irrigation; poor quality of soil at the relocation site; very little expenditure on soil and water conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest produce for sale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest produce for own consumption and use as raw material</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of loss of human capital</strong></td>
<td>Very low access to public health and sanitation facilities; partly offset by availability of traditional medicinal plants</td>
<td>Existing public health</td>
<td>Improved access to public health facilities, but overcrowding, and poor quality of personnel and medicines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and sanitation, drinking water, nutrition</td>
<td>- No shortage of drinking water</td>
<td>and education infrastructure at village Agraa at the relocation site</td>
<td>- Decline in access to traditional medicines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education facilities</td>
<td>- Varied diet and easy and free access to milk, meat and edible forest products</td>
<td>- Some expenditure on replacement of school buildings lost due to displacement</td>
<td>- Poor access to drinking water for some villages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Poor or no access to schools or formal training opportunities</td>
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<td>- Lower nutritional intake</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Improved access to government schools, but very low quality due to overcrowding, poor governance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reduced relevance of traditional skills; absence of formal training and capacity building inputs for new skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of loss of social capital</strong></td>
<td>Vulnerability based on ethnicity, remoteness</td>
<td>Resettlement in original villages and clusters</td>
<td>Some increase in political clout due to less remote location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Poor political clout</td>
<td>- Provision for Village Devt. Committees to oversee rehabilitation work</td>
<td>- Breakdown of economic self-help networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Good mutual self-help networks, both economic and social</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Village Development Committees non-functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Low dignity and self-esteem due to poverty and livelihood loss</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Kabra 2006:212
11.2. Main Strengths of the Rehabilitation Package

The R&R package offered to the displaced households of Kuno Sanctuary is significantly better in many respects than earlier packages adopted in R&R projects across the country since Independence. It has the following advantages, which worked in favour of the displaced households:

1. The Kuno package does not suffer from the obvious lacunae of "land for land" type compensation packages, which have had a history of marginalizing the most vulnerable strata of rural society, particularly the landless. All adult males, as well as female-headed households, were given 2 hectares of land at the relocation site. This compares favourably with the provisions of the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NPRR 2004), which enjoins upon the state to give land subject to its availability to displaced people, and allows for cash compensation in case land is not available.

2. Also, by identifying each adult male as a separate family, the package has succeeded in allocating a larger quantum of land to each extended household. Thus, the size of operational landholdings for each extended household appears to have remained unaffected by displacement, or may have increased.

3. Getting legal ownership of land is also likely to have improved security of tenure for the relocated people, many of whom were classified as encroachers inside the Sanctuary. This, ceteris paribus, is likely to have a positive impact on the willingness of displaced households to invest in land improvement measures.

4. The actual implementation of this package by the Forest Department has also been largely free of corruption, and has been fairly well-targeted as far as identification of genuine beneficiaries is concerned. The Kuno Sanctuary Management has also succeeded in addressing innovatively some of the
gray areas in the guidelines of the Beneficiary Oriented Scheme for Tribal Development (BOTD), for instance, the treatment of female headed families¹ and intra-village differentials in land quality.

11.3. Major Lacunae of the R&R Package/Process

However, against these strengths of the R&R package and its implementation, some major gaps and weaknesses need to be positioned, in order to ascertain the net impact of the package.

1. The resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) package offered under the BOTD scheme arbitrarily fixes the upper value of compensation payable to each household at Rs 1 lakh. This does not take into account the original income level and livelihood pattern of the household being displaced. Thus, there is no guarantee, a priori, that the package will be able to compensate adequately for lost livelihoods. For instance, the BOTD rehabilitation package has been administered to the Sahariya of Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary as well as the households displaced from the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary and the Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka. No prior assessment was made of the pre-displacement livelihood in any of the above cases.

2. With the application of a generic package such as the BoTD under varying field circumstances, it cannot be ensured that the package compensates each family for loss of various livelihood resources and is adequate for recreating livelihood at the new site. In case of Kuno, for instance, the amount earmarked for 'land development' activities was used by the Sanctuary Management to pay for clearing and deep ploughing of land, and removal of stones and boulders. Given the prevailing cost structure in this region, the earmarked

¹For a detailed process documentation of the Kuno R&R, see Sharma 2003.
amount left little or no surplus for provision of irrigation facilities, and for a range of soil and water conservation measures that were necessary for enhancing productivity of the degraded land allotted to displaced families.

3. As a stopgap measure, the Forest Department has attempted to bridge this gap by tapping other funds from schemes of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. However, such efforts remain piecemeal and haphazard, and have not succeeded in providing assured irrigation to even 10 per cent of the displaced households.

4. The Forest Department was largely unable to evolve effective coordination mechanisms with various departments of the district administration to access the financial and human resources available under other state agencies and schemes for the benefit of the displaced households. Thus, isolation of the displaced households from the mainstream development processes continued, despite spatial relocation to a less remote location.

5. Despite being envisaged in the original Relocation Plan, viable community institutions were not formed for guiding the process of rehabilitation and helping the displaced people to cope smoothly with relocation-related problems. The near-complete insulation of the Forest Department, and its inability to garner support from specialized government and non-government agencies that could help in such mobilization and institution building work, are responsibility for this lacuna. The Relocation Plan and the BOTD package did not recognize that Forest Department staff is not trained to handle the complex variety of tasks associated with successful rehabilitation of an entire community. Consequently, it made no provision for expert advice and support to the Kuno Sanctuary Management, or for training
and capacity building of the Forest Department staff to acquire the necessary skills.

6. The rehabilitation package envisages a primarily agriculture based livelihood for the displaced households, ignoring the fact that prior to displacement, agriculture was only one of the many livelihood activities of the Sahariya. As a result, the displaced households were ill-equipped to handle the transition to mainly farm-based livelihoods, and needed to be supported intensively through training and capacity-building as well as financial inputs for sustainable farming, which the rehabilitation package did not provide for. Poor quality of agricultural land at the relocation site, and the lack of proper investment in soil and water conservation made the situation worse, since the land given to the displaced people was unable to generate adequate output to meet even their subsistence requirements.

7. Very significantly, loss of NTFP income was not compensated in the rehabilitation package. Consequently, the displaced households lost a vital source of cash income, nutrition and raw materials, and no efforts were made to provide non-forest based alternatives to these resources. Unlike several other rehabilitation packages elsewhere in India, the Kuno package contained no provisions for establishment of non-farm, non-forest livelihood options, including trade and micro-enterprises. This resulted in a decline in income, food insecurity and risks associated with high dependence on casual wage work.

The rapid and bewildering range of changes set into motion by displacement and relocation put enormous strain on the already tenuous coping capabilities of the displaced people. There appear to be few support mechanisms – tangible or intangible - for the displaced people, given the legal and policy environment
and the administrative machinery governing resettlement and rehabilitation. Grievance redressal seems to hinge on the ability of the displaced people to manipulate the system to their own advantage. By definition, the most vulnerable among the displaced people do not have the social, political and economic clout to leverage the system in their own favour, and for them, redressal, if any, depends almost entirely on the goodwill and efficiency of some key officers in the implementing agencies. The point to note here is that the systems governing resettlement and rehabilitation do not have any in-built checks and balances for providing necessary support for livelihood restoration. The few successes observed in R&R in India appear to be the result of ad hoc and arbitrary factors, of which the most important one is the presence of one or more "good" officers.

11.4. The Kuno Displacement: Was it Voluntary?

Literature on displacement (in general, and not only conservation induced) has grappled repeatedly with the issue of involuntary or coercive displacement, and the very definitions of these terms are controversial. The commonly understood distinction between voluntary and involuntary displacement derives from the literal meaning of these words, that is, involuntary displacement involves coercion and violence, but this is by no means the only view on the matter. For instance, Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2003) offer the following definition: "The determination of whether a resettlement is voluntary or involuntary is not related to the existence of legal titles of landownership, but to the fundamental question: do the resettlers have the option to stay, or not?"

In the case of Kuno Sanctuary, the Forest Department cites the following evidence of consultation for determining the people's willingness to relocate:
a. A Cabinet Sub-Committee of the Madhya Pradesh Government visited village Palpur on January 14, 1996, to extract the views of the villagers regarding their willingness to relocate. The Sub-Committee, in its report, adjudged the relocation voluntary and recommended relocation and rehabilitation.

b. Accordingly, the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has approved the relocation of villages situated inside the Sanctuary to a suitable site outside, vide item no. 10, dated 28th of February 1996.

It is noteworthy that the visit of the state Cabinet Committee members was limited to only one village inside the Sanctuary (Palpur, where the forest rest house is located), and was attended by 'representatives' of only a few villages. These were randomly selected individuals that happened to have been notified about the meeting by the forest department staff, and this was by no means an inclusive process that involved even adequate advance information to villagers, especially the most vulnerable segments like women and the poorest households. Thus, it can be inferred that the decision to displace 24 villages with over 5,000 people was taken on the basis of the views expressed by a very small proportion of this community. The 'voluntary' nature of this relocation can therefore be questioned on grounds of limited ability of such a committee to interact with a remote and scattered community of ill-informed villagers over a period as brief as two days.

According to staff of a local NGO, interviews with villagers through 1998 and 1999, before and during the resettlement process, revealed a variety of opinions among them on the question of resettlement. A common thread that ran through most of the interviews was of the willingness to move if the implementation agency was able to make available the amenities that had been promised, especially irrigation, schools
and electricity. The Adivasi households presented a mixed picture vis-à-vis displacement, with some of them expressing apprehension with regard to shifting, while others were willing to leave in view of the range of facilities, especially the large cash grant being offered. An exception to this were some non-Adivasi farmers, who were cultivating vast stretches of encroached land inside the Sanctuary and stood to lose this land as a consequence of displacement. Thus, two major factors appear to have been instrumental in inducing people to leave as soon as possible. The first was the promise of getting Rs.36,000 in cash (for construction of houses), which was a non-trivial sum of money, especially for the Adivasi households. The other factor was the decision of the police department to shift the police station located at village Palpur, which immediately increased the threat perception of the community from bandits who frequent the Sanctuary. Once the first few villages shifted out to the relocation site, others began to follow suit in haste to get the best possible land on offer, and also because of loss of security arising from relocation of adjoining villages, which left them more vulnerable to harassment by bandits.

When queried about whether they would prefer to stay inside the Sanctuary or move out, across the board the people interviewed said that they effectively did not have this option. They felt that if the government had decided that relocation is to be carried out, they would have to move, whether they wanted to or not. While there has been no recorded instance of the Forest Department having used physical coercion to move people out of Kuno Sanctuary, the issues raised above are critical enough to put a question mark against any claims that this displacement was truly ‘voluntary’, and that the decision to relocate was an informed choice made by a majority of the people affected.
11.5 Lessons for the Future and Best Practices

The Kuno experience throws up some important lessons for unavoidable displacement and relocation exercises arising due to conservation or development projects in the future. Some of these, which can be incorporated as best-practice principles, are outline below:

i. For each potentially displaced community, an independent baseline study of existing livelihoods must be carried out, and the data from this study should form the basis of the R&R package. Essentially, the package must be designed so as to help the displaced people recreate (as far as possible) pre-displacement livelihoods, and to at least restore their pre-displacement levels of income and asset-holding.

ii. Based on the findings of the baseline study, a detailed Relocation Plan must be created prior to initiating displacement, consisting of village-wise microplans covering each household, as well as details of cross-cutting work across villages. Formal approval of the Gram Sabha for each village to be displaced should be obtained for this plan.

iii. At the relocation site, it should be ensured that as far as possible, people from particular districts, blocks and Panchayats are moved in contiguous blocks. This will help to minimize disruption of community linkages due to migration to a new area.

iv. If the baseline surveys show that agriculture is the mainstay of the displaced people, then land-for-all must be an integral part of the rehabilitation package. Moreover, it must be ensured that land given to the displaced people is cultivable, and proper title deeds are given to the head of the household at the time of resettlement.

v. It must be ensured that distribution of agricultural land follows certain norms:
a. Each plot of agricultural land must be surveyed by an inter-departmental team (including representatives of the Revenue Department) and classified into good/average/poor/non-cultivable categories using regular techniques of cadastral mapping. The level of land development inputs for the agricultural plots must be decided accordingly - for this, norms and guidelines devised by the Parthasarathy Committee (2005) for watershed development programmes can be used as benchmarks.

b. In case of differentials in quality of land at the relocation site for the same village, allocation of land to each household should be made on a proportional basis\(^2\) to ensure equitable distribution. This is a practice that was followed even as far back as the 1950s, when resettling the refugees from Pakistan after the Partition (Randhawa 1986; please also see Annexure 9), and can be adopted to modern conditions easily.

c. Initial or temporary allotment of land must be made immediately at the time of relocation, and following due process, these allotments can be made permanent after settlement of objections and grievance redressal\(^3\).

vi. The Relocation Plan must set out in detail a menu of livelihood options, devised in partnership with institutions of the displaced people, and based on their existing skills and preferences, resource availability at the resettlement site, economic viability and socio-cultural norms.

vii. Loss of livelihood and income from commercial extraction of NTFP must be compensated through alternative, non-farm

\(^2\) For example, if there are more fertile lowland plots as well as less fertile upland plots, then each household should receive plots in both stretches. There is precedent for this in the case of Kuno sanctuary (where this is perhaps the single most important factor distinguishing between the relatively better-off and worse-off households), as well as much earlier, in the post-Partition rehabilitation in the early 1950s.

\(^3\) Please see Annexure 9 for a detailed process documentation of the Post-Partition experience by Randhawa (1986).
income generating options, especially micro-enterprises (like dairy, poultry, petty trade and others).

viii. Prior to initiating these enterprises, detailed business development planning should be undertaken with the resettled families, and thrift and credit institutions should be formed (especially with women) to promote among them the ability to deal with formal financial institutions.

ix. Mandatory training, capacity building and sensitization of Forest Department staff and others involved in R&R should be conducted at recognized training institutions.

x. Involvement of other government departments must be ensured through appropriate institutional arrangements, so that their schemes and resources can be leveraged for re-establishing livelihood of the displaced people. An empowered Steering Committee should be formed at the block and district levels, consisting of the Collector, the DFO/CF/Field Director, representatives of Line Departments, PRI representatives and members of NGOs and local civil society groups to promote such coordination.

xi. Involvement of specialized non-government agencies with expertise in community mobilization, agriculture development, natural resource management, livelihood promotion, enterprise development and other related areas must be ensured prior to relocation.

xii. It must be ensured that critical facilities are in place at the relocation site before people are moved there, including adequate land/water and access to natural resources.

xiii. Extended timelines: Work with the community needs to begin much before actual resettlement takes place, to ensure that relocation is voluntary and transition to new livelihoods at the relocation site is smooth. Further, the relocated people must

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4 For instance, the diploma course on R&R organized by IGNOU, New Delhi, the World Bank’s Non-Lending Technical Assistance (NLTA) to the GOI on land acquisition and R&R
be supported for at least 4 to 5 years after resettlement through training and capacity-building inputs for rebuilding and sustaining new livelihoods.

xiv. The relocated families should be provided with credit, support for obtaining agricultural inputs and fodder for livestock in the interim period, to ease transition to the new site. Again, precedent for this can be found as far back as the immediate post-Independence period, when *taccavi* loans were given to the migrants from Pakistan to help them re-establish livelihoods in India (Randhawa 1986).

xv. Budgetary provision must be made in the R&R package for an independent monitoring agency, which can assess and oversee the consultation processes, monitor and evaluate the relocation itself, and provide critical guidance to the authorities and the concerned villagers would help to ensure effective R&R, and will also ease considerably the work of the implementing agency i.e. the Forest Department.

xvi. The government, prior to displacement, must enter into a formal contract with the relocatees, setting out the precise terms and conditions and time frame under which R&R will take place. There should be provision for grievance redressal, and for compensation to the people in case of faulty implementation or delays. This contract should be enforceable legally.

11.5. Impact of People’s Displacement on Conservation

Given the stated principles that govern India’s democratic society and polity, it is no longer debatable whether effective conservation is required, and whether the people affected adversely should be compensated adequately. Arguments have been made in the conservation literature on the utility of time-bound human relocation as a management tool, and parallely, a
strong call has been made for better monitoring of relocation by voluntary agencies (Karanth, 2002). However, the experience of Kuno indicates that the argument needs to be far more nuanced than this. It is clear that despite a relatively progressive rehabilitation package and a comparatively well-implemented relocation programme, the displaced households have suffered a serious decline in livelihood security. In the short run, this does not seem to have been detrimental to the ecological health of the Kuno Sanctuary in particular, and conservation interests in the forests of the Kuno wildlife division in general. However, it is our contention that the adverse forces unleashed by this displacement do not appear to augur well for long-term conservation prospects in this region. Further, it can be argued that the specific example of the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary is generalisable to the wider debate on displacement from Protected Areas in India and elsewhere.

The Kuno experience exemplifies how, so far, population displacement from Protected Areas (PAs) in India has been undertaken without even a basic understanding of (and preparedness for) the complex tasks at hand. Rehabilitation packages have been designed and implemented without adequate attention to restoring lost livelihoods of the resident people. There has been little evidence of a well-coordinated response from the affected people in Kuno to the destitution that displacement has wrought upon them. Brockington's hypothesis - that conservation can be imposed because the rural poor are weak, and resistance to conservation, though present, may be ineffective - appears to be borne out by the Kuno experience. In the case of Kuno, dissatisfaction of the resettled people has been manifested most often in instances of symbolic reoccupation of their original villages inside the Sanctuary. The first instance was in 2001, when 35 families of
village Paira reoccupied their original village. In 2003, 40 families from village Nayagaon did the same. In 2004, Nayagaon (70 families); Pipalbaodi (55 families); Palpur (30 families); Basantpura (25 families) and Paira (40 families) returned to their original villages inside the Sanctuary. The displaced people seem to have used this move as a weapon to force the Forest Department to attend to the most pressing problems relating to proper resettlement, and also to earn livelihood through NTFP collection from the Sanctuary during economic emergencies like drought. However, due to lack of organization and effective leadership among the displaced households, none of these efforts was serious enough to make a significant impact on the Sanctuary. The Forest Department has tackled these token protests successfully on each occasion, using a combination of carrot-and-stick measures targeted at select individual ‘leaders’ and ‘problematic’ individuals, without any major repercussions on the Sanctuary itself (Kabra and Sharma 2007).

Thus, in case of the Kuno Sanctuary, conservation does not appear to have suffered, at least not directly and immediately, from poor rehabilitation of displaced people. In fact, in the opinion of conservation experts as well as the Forest Department, wildlife sightings inside the Sanctuary have improved after the villages were displaced (Johnsingh 2006; Rawat 2004). This could be an early indicator of improved prey base, although no firm data have been made public so far to substantiate this claim. Ironically, one of the most important factors that has contributed, de facto, to improved prey base is that the displaced families left over 5000 cattle behind in Kuno at the time of displacement (due to lack of adequate fodder at the relocation site). These cattle have now turned feral and form an important part of the prey base for large and small
carnivores inside Kuno and potential prey for the lions proposed to be translocated (Rawat 2004).

The Kuno experience points to the limitations of displacement as a tool for conservation, since it emerges as a regressive tool, the success of which seems to be predicated upon lack of information, organization and social and political clout among the displaced people. With the growing role that civil society actors like NGOs and CBOs have begun to play in the conservation and social justice arenas, chances of communities being mobilized are increasing, and rehabilitation packages and practices adopted by the state are being put under increasingly careful scrutiny. If conservation is to be ethically justifiable, socially acceptable, practically achievable and sustainable, it must instead be based on principles of participation and equity, and must make serious attempts to harmonize the livelihood needs of local communities with conservation objectives.

Even when considered unavoidable, displacement and rehabilitation need to be designed and implemented using best practices in various fields, with the involvement of multi-disciplinary expertise, and with community consent to and participation in the entire exercise. However, unless significant changes can be made to the policies and practices governing displacement, adequate rehabilitation of PA-dependent communities is unlikely in India in the near future. Without such changes, displacement will continue to be a highly contentious conservation tool, which will, to the detriment of conservation as well as human development goals, serve to sharpen already serious human-wildlife conflicts. The overall law, policy and implementation regime of India needs to improve rapidly, to minimize livelihood distress for future generations that are forced to undergo unavoidable displacement. It is also
imperative that alternative, more benign methods be found of reconciling conservation goals with local livelihood needs. Thus, co-existence of the rural population (especially the poorest and most marginalized, forest-dependent people) with wildlife and forests is emerging as the most important challenge for conservationists and Protected Area managers across the world, especially in the developing countries. While examples of successful co-existence are not abundant, it is vitally important for both poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation to channel the energies of local people, planners, implementation agencies and researchers to strive for this praxis.