CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher is summatung the study with conclusions derived from the entire work which is divided into two sections, Part - I entails a brief introduction of the subject matter, the objectives, and the methodology adopted for the study, it also presents the assessment of the study findings vis-à-vis the IRR Model followed in the study. On the basis of the findings of the study, and Part –II of this chapter brings forth suggestions and recommendations to different stakeholders, like at the policy level, the civil society bodies and to the social work education and profession.

The study on understanding the impact of special economic zones on the displaced women in Rajasthan was undertaken by the researcher after her personal experiences in the involuntary resettlement issues around the country. There was a nagging doubt in the researcher’s [then social development professional] mind while being part of the resettlement planning management of an international development bank which emphasised on the Social Impact Assessment as being mandatory aspect for every infrastructure development project, however during the Social Impact Assessment consultations in the rural communities in different parts of the country, it was observed consistently that the women displacees were never there or if they were there, the representation was for namesake and no actual involvement of the women were expected or derived in these meetings. When literature was explored on the issue of the affected women’s participation in the subject matter, there were sparse empirical researches conducted in India and in fact the Special Economic Zones
scenario was almost untouched in academic researches; identifying these gap areas, the researcher was encouraged and theoretically guided by her supervisor to understand the issues in its minutest detail.

Conceptual understanding on the subject was derived from the pioneering works of the anthropologists and sociologists in the area such as Robert Chambers, Michael Cernea, Theodore Downing and the likes who spoke primarily about the involuntary resettlement scenario as being unavoidable and necessary for the betterment of the people as well as the nation at large. An interesting interjection was made by Dwivedi (2002) when he pointed out that the involuntary resettlement may be viewed through reformist-managerial lenses or it may also be viewed through radical-movementist lenses. The former perspective may be attributed to the resettlement experts working in the infrastructure development area negotiating to minimise and mitigate the losses to the best of their abilities while the latter perspective were propounded by the opponents of the same such as the land rights activists who believe in no-land acquisition and, if at all undertaken, should be after extensive consultation with the affected people. No land loss is the most desirable alternative for development scenario however it is utopian concept because industry requires land mass and according to official data millions of hectares of land as much as 24 million hectares land is lying fallow around India. It will be most constructive to identify those fallow parts of land mass for developing the industry that would nominally or not at all impact the people and at the same time keeping in mind the environmental restoration aspects as well. The resettlement experts have identified different social parameters that would ensure in enabling the affected people to remain in their existing social situation
or would help them to achieve betterment in their standard of living after the development project is introduced. Therefore good practices in involuntary resettlement scenario is the desired objective.

The empirical academic studies in India involving the displaced populations have been from economic, business management, political science, sociological and anthropological perspectives in the areas mostly involving dams, mining sites, forests areas, etc. therefore affected people in general in many States across India have been part of such studies. And in case of Special Economic Zones which is comparatively a newer avenue in the infrastructure development scenario in India, there are sparsely any academic studies. And the affected women as a research target is also found to be almost absent, but not fully because studies would incorporate women as a minor section of their work which is indeed negligible.

With this background in mind, the present study ventured into the subject area with the objective to:

1. To study the dynamics of Special Economic Zones in terms of its nature and process.
2. To understand the cultural uniqueness of the community in terms of its Pre and Post Displacement condition.
3. To understand the economic situation of the displaced people, with special reference to the livelihood of women.
4. To ascertain the perspectives of the women with respect to the effects of displacement on their lives.
5. To explore the response of civil society organisations to displacement especially women displacees.

The research methodology that was selected after extensive readings, deliberations and discussions with the guide and other experts in the area and which best suited the research objectives for this work was the descriptive research design. The descriptive research design enables in understanding the research area as it functions and operates under natural, real surroundings. The location was identified after a brief feasibility reconnaissance of the area and the sample was drawn through the incorporation of both probability and non-probability sampling. After purposive selection of the study area, the three villages and the women in those villages were systematically selected by the researcher for the study. A total strength of 211 women were part of the study, which was divided into 150 semi-structured interview schedule respondents and 61 were part of the six FGDs, each village had two discussion groups. This entire primary data collection was carried out over a period of six-months that gave the researcher a clear imagery of the life, structure, customs, food habits and social interaction among the women in these villages. The quantitative data was then entered into excel sheet while the qualitative information were transcribed and analysed. The information were then thematically coded and interpretations were summated as the findings of the study. The adoption of the concurrent mixed method allowed the research to triangulate and validate her information at every stage of the research.

Women in the study area are found to be in a transitional stage where they are trying their level best to negotiate through the tussle of day-today problems with
as much life skills as they can manage. The known social sphere has changed for them from their previous settings and understanding and discussing through that is a challenge they are facing on a regular basis. The IRR Model which guided the research in understanding the subject area and identifying the various nuances in the field while interacting with different stakeholders, some face-to-face, some refusing to talk. The SEZ authorities declined to interact with the researcher after she had shared her research objectives leading to the researcher to believe that they are also aware that the social assessment of any project site is crucial and when not carried out leads to various kinds of complications and misunderstandings among the affected parties and the industry.

Taking each of the IRR indicators it will now be attempted to ascertain the adverse or positive impact of the project on the affected women as found in the study area; this would be helpful to understand the way forward in resettlement management discourse as well,

1) From Landlessness to Land-based resettlement,

In case of facing the impact of landlessness by the affected women, the researcher can confidently say that all the women were impoverished by the land acquisition process in the area. Furthermore, the compensation package did not keep any of the women in their affected party list as a result of which not a single women was identified as the affected person and the remuneration as well as the ‘land deal parcel’ along with the job entitlement were completely in favour of the men in the community. The adult married women were all working in their respective family agricultural lands before the acquisition however more than 60 percent of the women today are not working and are
housewives in all the villages. Their role as homemaker is not a worry for them as they anyways were looking after the household activities, their sadness was their current landless condition. In fact, there was even absence of lack of information among these women as many of them, in the researchers interaction she was able to identify that the women in the village of Bhambhoriya did not even know that the compensation package entailed a ‘land-deal parcel’ which their men, husbands or father-in-law’s sold off immediately after getting the deed document from the executing agencies to the land sharks in the area. It reflects that the men did not even consider their spouses as important members to even discuss about the subject among themselves at the time of the acquisition process. Another important finding was that not even one participant in the study sample possess any asset such as land or property in their name before or after the displacement process.

2) From Joblessness to Re-employment,

In case of the displaced women in the project area, 100 percent of them were engaged in their respective farmlands supporting their spouses in the cultivation process, however 60 percent of them are now with no work and are housewives only. About 19 percent of the women are engaged in the gardening work in the SEZ, however they did not get this work as part of the resettlement package but are in individual contractual capacity which is subject to being non-renewable if found unsatisfactory. This aspect needs to be seen more acutely as the women in order to remain employed and earn a livelihood for supporting their family are not able to object to uncharacteristic working ethics, such as their lengthy hours at work which begins by 7:30 AM and goes till 5:30-6 PM, there are incidences of workplace physical violence as well and emotional stress is quite
high among these women. The monetary compensation is also deplorable for the load of work they are required to carry out on a daily basis. The psychological stress is aggravated by the uncivilised comments from the contractors on the women’s health as being obese and useless is shattering their self-identity and self-worth. Some of the women are hopeful to get employment in the stitching units in the SEZ in future when the handicrafts section would be operational. As the SEZ did not identify the women as their affected party, no efforts were made to provide employment opportunities to them.

3) From Homelessness to House Reconstruction

The habitation area where the affected people were residing has not been impacted physically and they are intact, so house reconstruction as a result of land acquisition under the MWC project was not required as such. The pucca and semi-pucca houses in the villages are earlier constructions and in case of new constructions, it was observed that they were erected with the goal to attract the people coming from different regions to work in the SEZ and were in the look-out for cheap and easily accessible rooms to live locally near to their work area in the MWC project.

4) From Marginalization to Social Inclusion

The displaced women in the project area have most definitely been marginalised and no effort from the executing agencies have been made to address and mitigate the same. The economic, social and psychological impact of the project on the displaced women has been immense however it holds no value to the executing agencies as they supposedly have done their social accountability bit by ‘providing 25 percent of developed land …free of cost’ (“Land wars”, 2011).
The executing agency believes that by giving the affected people a share in the developed land, their social consciousness is appeased, however, they are unwilling to understand that the marginalised sections such as the poor and the women are unable to reap any benefit out of such acts and moreover creating piece-meal strategies will not be effective in achieving social inclusion in a deprived society. A detailed discussion and consultation with the affected people, with the men and the women would have provided a clear perspective of the people who would have as a result of the engagement and involvement been more accommodating and facilitating. The friction between the haves and the have-nots can never be overcome with closed or indifferent approach towards the affected parties. The element of social and moral economy that focusses on economic growth on the ground of its social and ethical parameters along with the economic aspects is the sustainable and urgent requirement for a just resettlement experience for the affected parties as well as the acquiring party. International funding agencies and socially conscious economists are vouching for it significance however the capitalist outlook has to understand the importance for influencing the changes.

5) From Increased Morbidity to Improved Health Care

The study area has shown clear indications of increase in the morbidity as well as mortality incidences after the dispossession among the elderly, adults and children. As was found during the interactions with the women that over a period of just three years 27 elderly people have died since the land acquisition and the health issues of the elderly presently living in these three villages are also deplorable and they have constant complains of various kinds of physical ailments and psychological stresses. The stress of losing their generations’ old
lands have made the elderly people psychologically vulnerable and fragile. The lack of food in form of their home-grown grains like jawar and bajra and other staple diets as well as the absence of dairy intake have posed a physiological stress on the elders that is alarming.

Among the children, it was found that malnourishment was present among the 0-6 years age group as shared by the Anganwadi workers in the area, one of the main factors for that seems to be again the lack of dairy products that was earlier easily accessible for them. Among the women, different types of morbidities were identified, anaemia, weak bones, etc. were common place in all the three village sample. Additionally all the three villages do not have potable water in the area and water tankers on twice-a-week basis are providing the drinking water for them. The family size is on an average seven or more people per household and the pressure of providing even a glass of drinking water for the family members is a constant stress and the intake of the women is hampered as their nurturing attitude makes them susceptible to not consume as much as required by their own self. Earlier they were able to substitute with milk and such dairy product which has also totally been taken away.

6) From Food Insecurity to Adequate Nutrition

As shared in the above, the nutritional intake has been adversely impacted as a result of the acquisition. In their earlier state they did not suffer from any food insecurity as their farm product was able to address a considerable amount of the dietary requirements among the villagers. Among the four quarters of a year, they shared that two-three quarters were managed from their farm produces
after selling about half of the produce in the wholesale market and only a nominal amount of grains were purchased from the market annually. They also had access to home grown vegetables which helped the nutritional level as a whole among them. But now, with the absence of land – grains, vegetables and even dairy has been wiped out from their dietary chart.

7) From Loss of Access to Restoration of Community Assets and Services

The common property resources in the form of grazing land have been completely taken away from the villagers, the trees in the fields that had religious, sentimental and cultural significance in their lives have also been separated as a result of the land dispossession and no initiative from the executing agency has been undertaken to address this issue. In fact, the researcher would not be wrong to say that the executing agency does not even care for the same as may be evidenced from the entire absence of a Social Impact Assessment exercise in the area. It is piecemeal when Mahindra points out that livelihood restoration initiatives are underway for the communities living in the peripheries of the MWC compound. Ironically though it is MWC that has imposed itself on the community and not the other way round.

8) From Social Disarticulation to Building Networks and Community Rebuilding

There are no efforts taken by the executing agency towards rebuilding the community and its resources. The disadvantaged situation that was created due to the land dispossession in the three villages have however made the community extremely vulnerable and accessible among each other for support which is physical and psychological in nature. As the participant had shared that
the women who are staying at home have taken it upon themselves without anybody’s pressure or request to look after the children of those women who are going out of the village to earn a livelihood in their neighbourhood. The social disarticulation as a situation in the communities is transformative in nature where the formal and informal networks are estranged due to the change in circumstances. In case of these three villages the social disarticulation is acutely felt in the breakage of their cultural practices and rituals that were dependent on the farmland for their observance. The absence of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Plan due to the absence of the Social Impact Assessment has affected the social lives of the people in these villages. The community is grappling to adjust with all the changes undergone due to the dispossession process without any form of formal agitation, unlike many other villages all around the country. This is attributed to the ignorance level of the majority of the villagers as they were not able to voice their disappointment and concern, the researcher believes that allurement of the land deal only worked for the affluent landowners as they are now actively involved in the real-estate conglomerate in and around the area. The actual adversely affected people were the marginal farmers and their families who did not even understand the value of the land deal parcel and sold it off immediately to the land sharks in and around the vicinity. The executing agencies did not even have a system where they could at least guide the marginal farmers to keep the deeds with themselves for future benefits. Other than the MWC’s livelihood restoration initiative under their Corporate Social Responsibility that began in 2014-15, in which the youth are provided with trainings to work in the handicrafts and some in the jewellery
units, no efforts have been undertaken by the MWC for betterment of the surrounding villages.

From the above discussions, the researcher would like to forward few suggestions and recommendations to the policy makers, civil societies, and the social work curriculum.

**Policy Level:**

1. The SEZ Act is brought in place to encourage and excite foreign direct investment into the economy which has its obvious financial benefits and no one is proposing that it be scrapped. But the only interjection is that the provision of Social Impact Assessment be made mandatory in case of land acquisition, irrespective of the land being fallow or fertile. Immediately after the MoU is signed in any SEZ project, the process for acquisition should be mandatorily preceded by Due Diligence, Social Reconnaissance, and Social Impact Assessment (SIA). The recent amendments through the ordinances in the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 regarding non-compulsoriness of conducting the SIA in private acquisitions is detrimental for the social sustainability of the affected persons in case of land acquisition.

2. Due diligence is the initial mapping of the area to-be acquired and Social Reconnaissance is the detailed resource-mapping of the area to-be acquired, it is implored by us that these two processes should be conducted together and in detailed manner for the social assessment experts to visualise the field realities in as much vividness as can be
achieved. By conducting these steps genuinely, a prospective infrastructure development project like a SEZ can gain the community support and readiness in case of a fair and transparent acquisition.

3. Although SIA is considered a hindrance by the business conglomerates for their smooth operation and functioning it is actually beneficial for them too for understanding the location they are planning to set their industries. SIA is the detailed social census of the area-to-be acquired which is disclosed and tallied with the community to crosscheck discrepancies, and to deliberate on the nature of the resettlement packages that the community would want. This package can be of various forms - only monetary, monetary and job in the project area, monetary and land-for-land, and so on. This report enables the development of a judicious Resettlement and Rehabilitation Plan for ensuring the social disarticulation of the affected communities.

4. Resettlement Plan design and implementation ought to be made mandatory for all the developmental projects in case of land acquisition for Special Economic Zones after an extensive consultation with the future affected community. This will enable the affected community to feel a sense of safety and belongingness that is essential for addressing social depravities.

5. Another important and often ignored aspect is the requirement of recruiting social sciences professional for the SIA operations as they are sensitive towards social aspects, and empathetic towards the apathy of the community that is about to face the displacement.
6. The Civil society should be engaged in the Social Impact Assessments as they can facilitate the process more professionally as well as with sensitivity towards the affected people.

Civil Society:

1. The civil society need to be more proactive in aspects of R&R, they need to play an important role in sensitizing people and making them aware about the implications of land acquisition and resettlement issues.
2. Civil society needs to play an important role in advocacy, becoming the voice of people and helping them to negotiate their claims with the state and the corporate world.
3. Civil Society should be engaged to conduct Social Impact Study by the Implementing agency so that the real need of the PAP is brought forth to make a realistic rehabilitation plan.
4. Civil Society should take a lead in conducting disclosure meetings where all the queries and concerns of the stakeholders are answered satisfactorily by the concerned parties.

Social Work

1. Social Work curriculum needs to deliberate issues like Displacement, involuntary resettlement, gender perspectives vis-à-vis development-induced displacement scenario at the national and global level.
2. In area of involuntary resettlement, various other social science professionals are bringing in their expertise, thus it is important for the professional social workers to develop an in-depth understanding and strategy for intervention in the area of involuntary resettlement.
3. Professional social workers need to undertake further research to build up the empirical data base on the issues of effects of displacement and their mitigation strategies.

4. The skills and knowledge base of social work students need to be honed for working in this specialised sector of resettlement management. Hence there is a need for developing competency of the social work students in the area of R&R so that they can use this expertise in carrying out social impact assessments, advocacy and developing interventions.

5. The engagement of the student social workers in the SIA process should be conducted under regular supervision of an expert as it is a specialised process and there is need for induction training for the same.