

# Environmental-Induced Displacement: Impact On Rural Women Of Dibrugarh District Of Assam

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**Abstract:** Displacement is a worldwide phenomenon. It is multidimensional in nature which affecting the lives of people including economic, social and cultural spheres. The displacement affects men and women adversely, but women are affected more than men. Knowing the causes of displacement is the most significant aspect to understand the plight of women and womanhood. The causes are mainly responsible for the activities of women after displacement to survive themselves in a new situation. Displacement is one of the social phenomena which impacts the life chances and lifestyle of human beings. The consequences of displacement also raise the gender issues. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to explore the causes and consequences of displacement of women in Dibrugarh district of Assam.

**Keywords:** Displacement, Women, Causes, Consequences, Environmental-induced displacement.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term displacement symbolizes the disorganization and even complete rupture of societies that come under the influences of different phenomenon. It invokes images of mass catastrophes and suffering brought about by natural as well as men made factors. The natural factors may include flood, erosion, earthquake, drought, famine etc. On the other hand, the men made factors of displacement include planned urbanization, planned industrialization, and other such political-economic endeavors. The natural force of river can wipe out vast tracks of inhabited land or the construction of big dams may cause huge displacement of populations residing on the surrounding areas. The 'destructured conflicts' or 'low-intensity wars' have also generated displacement for a long time. When displacement occurs, both men and women are forced into restricted mobility, living with new regulations and entering new social relationships which may challenge old ties and kinships. But displacement has different consequences for women and girls than for men and boys. Women face new demands in providing for themselves and their children, with increased workloads and limited access to and control over the benefits of goods and services. As a result of conflict and the breakdown in law and order, women and girls face increased risks of sexual violence and abuse. Displacement has a greater negative impact on women than on men. It has been generally noticed that men are engaged with jobs and had some control over the forest and land resources. As a result, women were deprived of their livelihood as well as from their Common Property Resources (CPRs). Generally, it is seen that women depend on men to access their basic goods and services, and lack of their individual identification increases the potential for exploitation of women. The challenges women face when displaced often have implications for the wider household. Moreover, the new roles women take on as income-generators and heads of the household during displacement can be sources of tension and violence in their households and communities during displacement.

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## Statement of the Research Problem

Assam is more prone in terms of natural disaster especially annual flood and river bank erosion. Dibrugarh is one of the flood-affected and erosion-prone areas of Assam. A huge population of Dibrugarh district displaced because of river bank erosion by the Brahmaputra River. Displacement forced the individual as well as communities to displace from their original place to another place. They lost their previous livelihoods, their natural resources, cultural heritage, and their integrity. The people become landlessness, joblessness, homelessness and the social fabric of the place totally destroyed. In this situation, though both men and women were suffered some previous studies revealed that women were more suffered due to displacement. They faced different problems in the place of relocation and rehabilitation. Their economic power becomes deteriorate as they were lost their agricultural economy in their previous place. Therefore, the present study tries to find out the causes and consequences of displacement of women.

## Objective of the Study

- 1) To know about the causes of displacement.
- 2) To explore the consequences of displacement of women.

## Field and Methodology

As the domain of the study is concerned with rural displaced women, the fields were two villages of Assam i.e. Udalguri and Garpara Konwar Gaon were selected purposively. The respondents are displaced from the region of Rohmorja to these two villages. Each village comprised of 50 respondents making a total sample of 100 women respondents. In this study, purposive sampling was used as a sample which is the part of non-probability sampling. In this sampling, the respondents were selected on the basis of research purpose which is also judgmental in nature. The study selected 100 respondents i.e. married, widow, and divorcee as sample unit from the universe. The information, which required for the present study was collected from the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources such as interview schedule, interview guide, observation, focus group discussion, case study, photographs etc. The secondary sources are books, magazines, newspapers, paper-clips, journals, published works made by the scholars, different statistical reports, internet, website etc. The interview schedule included

questions related to the general information and causes and consequences of displacement. In this study, the design of research work is an exploratory research design.

## Analysis and Interpretation

### Socio Economic Profile of Displaced Women

The analysis of the socio-economic background of the respondents is very important because it facilitates and helps to understand the social and economic condition of the respondents and help to study the personality pattern of the individuals. In this study, it was found that out of 100 respondents, the highest numbers of respondents are from the age group of 29-39 years. This group consists of 32(32%) of respondents of the total respondents. As many as 28(28%) respondents belong to the age group of 18-28 years. Again, 21(21%) respondents belong to the age group of above 50 years. Only a rest of respondents i.e. 19 (19%) belong to the age group of 40-50 years. It has been revealed that all the respondents 100(100%) belong to the caste group of More Other Backward Class (MOBC). Regarding the community of the respondents, out of 100 respondents maximum 78 (78%) respondents belong to Muttak community and a rest i.e. 22(22%) respondents belong to Chutia community. In this study, it was found that out of 100 respondents, maximum numbers of respondents i.e. 93 (93%) are married. As many as 5(5%) respondents are widows and significantly 2 (2%) respondents marital status is a divorcee. All the respondents belong to the religion of Hinduism. So, there is a no different opinion of the respondents towards their religion. Regarding the educational status of the respondents, out of 100 respondents, highest number of respondents i.e. 41(41%) is illiterate. As many as 39 (39%) respondents read upto class X. Again, 11(11%) respondents are HSLC (Matric) pass and only 9(9%) respondents fall under the category of H.S pass. In the context of the occupational status of the respondents before displacement, it was found that out of 100 respondents a maximum number of respondents i.e. 50(50%) were engaged with agricultural activities. As many as 45 (45%) respondents were a housewife and they were engaged with household activities. Only 5 (5%) respondents had any other activities i.e. weaving toy making etc. In the context of the occupational status of the respondents after displacement, it reveals that out of 100 respondents 71(71%) respondents are a housewife. They are not engaged with any income generating activities and they only engaged with household activities. As many as 18 (18%) respondents have other income sources, such as weaving, embroidery, toy making etc. A least 11 (11%) respondents are a daily wage earner and they mainly working in a tea garden near their villages. Therefore, it has been found that after displacement their occupational status has been changed and maximum respondents become housewife whereas earlier they were engaged in their agricultural sectors.

### Causes of Displacement of Women

Knowing the causes of displacement is the most significant aspect to understand the plight of women and womanhood. The causes are mainly responsible for the activities of women after displacement to survive in a new situation. The causes sometime may create a problem or challenge to displace women as they are bound to overcome all kind of

problem. Again, the effort to find out the causes give a new way to solve the problem of displaced women if they face new challenges in the new environment. There are different causes of displacement i.e. environmental, developmental, conflict, war etc. and it has a diverse effect on displaced women. They have been suffering in several ways in their day to day lives. Riverbank erosion is the main cause of displaced women in this study. In the present study, it has been found that all respondents i.e. 100(100%) are displaced because of erosion. The study reveals that they are permanently settled in the new area. River erosion is the burning problem in Assam. Riverbank erosion is a natural phenomenon that results in the removal of material from the banks of a river. River erosion is the burning problem in Assam as well as Rohmorria. This study reveals that out of 100 respondents, a maximum number of respondents i.e. 59(59%) have no knowledge about the causes of riverbank erosion and a rest number of respondents i.e. 41(41%) have the knowledge about the causes of river bank erosion. Thus in this study, it has been found that out of 41 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 20(48.78%) opined that the cause of river bank erosion was cutting of trees. As many as 12(29.27%) respondents are expressed the cause of erosion is the yearly flood. Again, 6(14.63%) respondents responded that over the use of land was the main cause of riverbank erosion. The study reveals that their knowledge regarding the causes of river bank erosion is basic. They are unable to express some other reasons which are also scientific in nature such as stream bed lowering or infill, saturation of banks from off-stream source, redirection, and acceleration of flow within the channel, poor Soil Drainage, wave Action, excessive Sand/Gravel Extraction, intense water from rainfall etc. However, the respondents have some knowledge regarding the causes of river bank erosion what actually they tried to express.

### Displacement and Its Consequences

The displacement is one of the social phenomena which impacts on the life chances and lifestyle of human beings. Again the consequences of displacement may bring change the activities of a social institution. On the other hand, gender issue also connected with displacement. The consequences of displacement also raise the gender issue. Therefore, to inculcate the consequences of displacement especially the experienced of women are a very essential part of the gender perspective. It is because women are always experienced differently than men during the period of displacement as well as after post-displacement also. Women health issues are notable in term of gender issues. The consequences of women health issues are adverse. Displaced women have been very worse experiencing during displacement, pre-displacement and post-displacement period. A maximum number of respondents i.e. 94(94%) suffered health problem such as skin diseases, viral fevers, cardiological problems, acute dysentery, actual cough etc. during displacement and after displacement also. In this study when the respondents were asked about the consequences of displacement, all respondents expressed their views in interaction during the field visit. They talked about different aspects which are mainly responsible more or less to the effect on their lifestyle and life chances. In this study it has been found that out of 100 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 64(64%) lost 1-5 bighas residential land, the second majority of

respondents i.e. 31(31%) and they have lost 6-15 bighas land. As many as 2(2%) respondents had more than 15 bighas residential land and they have lost above 15 bighas residential land. Significantly, 3(3%) respondents didn't know about their land. From the study it has been found that out of 100 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 46(46%) lost 1-4 bighas agricultural land, the second majority of respondents i.e. 38(38%) and they have lost 5-10 bighas land. As many as 8(8%) respondents have lost 19-25 bighas land and 5(5%) respondents have lost 11-18 bighas of agricultural land. Significantly, 3(3%) respondents don't know knowledge about their land. The study reveals that displacement affected the livestock of the respondents mostly and therefore the rate of livestock decreases after displacement. The study reveals that out of 100 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 58(58%) don't want to settle them at their place. The second majority of the respondents i.e. 21(21%) respondents never feel secure with new people. As many as 13(13%) respondents are not cooperative by nature. Again, 5(5%) respondents respondent that internal conflict is existing between old people and newly settled inhabitants and only 3(3%) respondents have other perception towards them. The overall study reveals that the relationship between the people of their neighbouring village and newly settled people in the region were very deteriorating at the very beginning though it becomes gradually comfortable in some extent day by day. Thus the study reveals that majority of the respondents faced problems of food habit after displacement. The highest number of respondents i.e. 40(40%) have the poor economic condition and therefore, they are not able to maintain good food habit as earlier. The second majority of respondents i.e. 32(32%) have no sufficient arrangement as it was earlier. As many as 15(15%) respondents have problems for marketing near the settled area. Again, 8(8%) answered that there have no available food items as required and only 5(5%) respondents have other problems. The findings disclose that highest number of respondents i.e. 51(51%) faced the problem of adjustment in the new educational institution. Again, 25(25%) fails to concentrate on education as earlier. As many as 16(16%) respondents never got the chance to manage their time, they are basically completed their Lower Primary school. A minimum number of respondents i.e. 8(8%) have other problems that affect their child's education after displacement. The study reveals that maximum respondents have adjustment problems because they are unaware about the new place and unable to adjust with the new environment. It creates problems or hindered their child's. Therefore, their child sometimes fails to concentrate on education as it was earlier. It has been observed that highest number of respondents i.e. 50(50%) are faced the problem of cooking due to lack of money. As many as 25(25%) respondents have a lack of sufficient food for cooking. Again, 21(21%) respondents responded that there has a scarcity of wood and a least i.e. 4(4%) respondents have other problems related to cooking. Regarding the rituals, the study reveals that the highest number of respondents i.e. 47(47%) are not able to continue the activities of ritual function because the new social environment does not permit to perform such function. As many as 21(21%) respondents have no opportunities to perform ritual activities. Again, 14(14%) respondents lost faith in supernatural power and 13(13%) respondents are not interested. Only a least i.e. 5 (5%) respondents are not able to continue ritual function other causes. In terms of the

menstruating period before displacement, the study found that out of 100 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 27(27%) are not allowed to enter kitchen; 25(25%) respondents are not given permission to enter any temple. As many as 16(16%) respondents not allowed to touch anything which is considering sacred. Again, 26(26%) respondents expressed that they are bound to follow all the strict social roles i.e. not allowed to enter kitchen, temple and touch anything which is considered as sacred during the menstruating period. Only 6(6%) respondents have other strict social roles followed in the period of menstruating. It was revealed that 97(97%) are following same strict social rules before and after displacement and only 3(3%) respondents are not following the roles after displacement. In this study, it is observed that though displacement destroyed the social, cultural and economic coherence but women are not free from these rules during this situation also. The study has been found that the maximum number of respondents i.e. 94(94%) suffered from health problems and only 6(6%) respondents were not suffering during to displacement. 94 respondents suffered from different health issues i.e. skin diseases, viral fevers, cardiological problem, acute dysentery, actual cough and other problems. Moreover, the study reveals that out of 100 respondents 94 respondents were suffered from health problems and other 6 respondents were out of health issues. Out of the 94 respondents the highest number of respondents i.e. 42(44.68%) suffered skin diseases. As many as 21(22.34%) respondents faced cardiological problems. Again, 15(15.96%) respondents suffered from viral fevers. Moreover, 8(8%) respondents are suffering from the problems of acute dysentery and 5(5.32%) respondents suffered from an actual cough. Only 3(3.19%) respondents faced other health problems or issues.

## CONCLUSION

From the study, it has been observed that the displaced people were lost all of their residential as well as agricultural land. They lost many of livestock i.e. cow, goat, oxen, buffalo. The study reveals how displacement influenced the entire life of the displaced people in general and women in particular. Displacement affects the food habit, cooking, and education of their child's and also decreases the amount of bank deposit. Displacement influenced on ritual functions and it reveals that the new social environment was not permitted them to perform such ritual activities in a similar manner as earlier. Due to displacement, women have faced socio-economic challenges in their day to day life. Displacement impacts the rules, norms and values of their life. Displacement has a great impact on the health issues of women

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