

Displacement in North-Western and North East India: Challenges and Pathways to Rehabilitation

KANWALPREET KAUR*¹ AND DIKUMONI HAZARIKA²

¹Associate Professor and ²Research Fellow

¹Department of Political Science, DAV College, Sector 10, Chandigarh (U.T.) India

²Panjab University, Chandigarh (U.T.) India

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the challenges faced by displaced populations in North-Western India and North-East India focusing on the underlying causes of displacement and its impact on livelihoods and community integration. Displacement in this region, often driven by large-scale development projects such as dam construction, industrialization, and urban expansion, has disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, including Tribals, Dalits, and rural populations. These communities face significant hardships, including loss of land, livelihoods, social disintegration, and limited access to compensation or rehabilitation. The study uses secondary data collected from various government reports, academic articles, newspaper reports, and NGO publications to explore the socio-economic and psychological consequences of displacement. By analyzing the current policies and rehabilitation frameworks, the paper highlights the gaps in their implementation and the challenges in addressing the needs of displaced populations. The findings suggest that displacement leads to severe disruptions in social and economic structures, with lasting effects on the identity and well-being of affected individuals and communities. The paper concludes by advocating for more inclusive and transparent development policies that ensure equitable compensation, community participation, and a holistic approach to rehabilitation, emphasizing the importance of balancing development with the protection of human rights and community resilience.

Keywords: Displacement, North-Western India, North East India Livelihoods, Community Integration, Development Projects, Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

After gaining independence, India continued to function under the Government of India Act of 1935 until the adoption of the new Constitution on January 26, 1950. However, the demand for the reorganization of states along linguistic lines, which had been raised even before independence, gained significant momentum. The creation of linguistic states was seen as a means to preserve cultural identity and ensure administrative efficiency. This movement ultimately shaped India's federal structure, reflecting its diverse linguistic heritage.

However, linguistic reorganization and other socio-political factors have also led to conflicts in various states,

forcing people to leave their homes and seek security elsewhere. This has contributed to the emergence of a new term: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). While there is no universally accepted definition of IDPs, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define them as: "*Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular, as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border*" (OHCHR, 2024). Displacement can occur due to various factors, including natural disasters, armed

How to cite this Article: Kaur, Kanwalpreet and Hazarika, Dikumoni (2025). Displacement in North-Western and North East India: Challenges and Pathways to Rehabilitation. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.*, 12 (3 & 4) : 240-251.

conflicts, poorly planned urbanization, geological hazards, and environmental degradation.

India is a region of cultural and historical significance, comprising the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the Union Territory of Chandigarh. Its geographical proximity to Pakistan further enhances its strategic importance. In contrast, Northeast India, which includes the eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Sikkim, is characterized by unique ethnic, cultural, and geographical diversity. This study was conducted to examine the challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons in both Northwestern and Northeastern India, with a focus on understanding the causes and consequences of their displacement.

Objectives and Methodology of the paper:

The major objective of the paper is to examine the challenges faced by displaced populations in North-Western India and North East India, with a particular emphasis on identifying the underlying causes of displacement. The second objective is to explore effective pathways and strategies for the rehabilitation of displaced populations in these regions.

The study is descriptive. Secondary data was collected from government reports, academic articles, newspaper reports, NGO publications, etc. Academic articles provided theoretical frameworks and critical analyses to support the study's findings. Newspaper reports were utilized to capture recent events and public narratives surrounding displacement, while NGO publications offered insights into ground-level interventions and lived experiences of affected populations. By drawing on diverse and credible sources, the study ensured a clear understanding of the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of displacement in these regions.

Displacement Realities In India:

The number of IDPs in India has been steadily increasing, yet there is no concrete or consistent data to accurately measure their plight. According to the World Refugee Survey 2000, approximately 507,000 people are categorized as IDPs in India (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2000). However, more comprehensive estimates, such as those quoted by Associate Professor Mahendra P. Lama in his paper '*Internal Displacement*

in India: Causes, Protection, and Dilemmas,' suggest that the number could be as high as 21.3 million, based on figures provided by the Indian Social Institute and the Global IDP Project (Lama, 2000). These figures highlight the immense suffering of individuals and families who are forcibly uprooted from their homes, often without warning or preparation.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) at the end of 2023, India had approximately 610,000 IDPs (The Telegraph India, 2024). This sudden displacement leaves them without the necessary resources or skills to adapt to their new environments. In many cases, they are forced to leave behind their belongings, further deepening their vulnerability. The trauma of displacement is not just physical but mental as well, leading to a range of psychological issues, including anxiety and depression. The disruption also sets in motion a vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, crime, and even suicides, as displaced individuals struggle to rebuild their lives. The term "refugee" itself is very much stigmatizing, stripping away the identity and dignity of those affected. Refugees are often forced to leave their country or place of origin due to various forms of persecution, whether based on religion, politics, ethnicity, or other factors and seek refuge in another region or country. The experiences of IDPs in India reflect a similar hardship, where displacement not only threatens their physical security but also undermines their social and emotional well-being.

Unpacking the Drivers of Internal Displacement: *Political Violence and Displacement:*

Political violence is one kind of violence occurring in India. Political Violence (Localized Violence) refers to the violent acts carried out by individuals or groups driven by political motives, typically targeting specific localities, communities, or individuals. This type of violence often emerges from tensions between different political, social, or ethnic groups, and is typically confined to a specific geographic area. Localized political violence can take various forms, such as protests, strikes, riots, armed conflicts, assassinations, or attacks on political leaders, opposition parties, or state institutions. The partition of India in 1947 is considered one of the most violent and traumatic events in modern history, leading to massive displacement, killings, and communal violence. The hurried implementation of the partition, which split Punjab and Bengal, caused the forced migration of millions

of people across religious lines, with Muslims moving to Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs to India. This migration was accompanied by extreme violence, including retributive genocide, abductions, rapes, and killings, particularly of women. The breakdown of law and order, alongside the dysfunction of bureaucracies and police forces, contributed to widespread chaos (Brass, 1990). The census of Pakistan of 1951 says that the number of displaced people in Pakistan was 7,226,600, most of them being Muslims who had entered Pakistan from India. The Census of India of the same year gives the figure of 7,295,870 displaced persons in India who moved from Pakistan to India. While the Indian and Pakistani governments made efforts to recover abducted women, many were unwilling to return due to fear and stigma. The partition left people in refugee camps, where diseases like cholera, malaria, and typhoid led to many fatalities. The initial hope that violence could be controlled proved futile as violence erupted in different regions, with communities that once coexisted turning against each other. The refugees, left with no homes or resources, had to start over, often in unfamiliar regions. Both India and Pakistan witnessed waves of migration, and millions were displaced and reported as missing (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2007). The tragic events of the partition have been documented through various efforts, including museums and interviews. Literary works such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*, as well as films like *Gadar* and *Earth*, explore the human cost of the partition (Devi, 2021).

Another example of political violence leading to displacement is the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir in the 1990s, highlighting the ongoing struggles of displaced populations in India. Former Supreme Court Judge, Sanjay Kishan Kaul, places the number of displaced Kashmiri pandits as 4.5 lakhs. He has recommended setting up a '*Truth and Reconciliation Commission*' so that people can vent their grievances and that the real reasons behind the exodus can come out. Many left the Valley, while others felt compelled to move because 30 to 80 Kashmiri Pandits were said to have been killed by militants in a short period. The killing of the Kashmiri Pandits was targeted. The Kashmiri Pandits were a Hindu minority population and were targeted by the Muslim insurgent groups (The Hindu, 2023).

The 2002 Gujarat riots, sparked by the mysterious burning of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra, resulted in

the massacre of over 2,500 Muslims and 254 Hindus, widespread violence, and the displacement of thousands (Genocide Watch, 2023). The aftermath saw the creation of relief colonies lacking basic amenities for the affected families.

Another major issue involves the displacement of Hindu Bhil tribals from Pakistan into Rajasthan, where they face harsh living conditions and lack proper documentation (Ota, 2009).

Caste-based violence in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh also contributes to internal displacement. The Human Rights Watch report highlights the oppression of Dalits, who often face brutal treatment and displacement, as seen in the attacks by caste-based militias such as the Kuer Sena and Ranvir Sena (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, Dalit communities are frequently targeted, causing them to flee rural areas for urban spaces to escape caste-based violence. Religious fundamentalism and communal riots, such as those in Coimbatore and other cities, also lead to displacement. In Coimbatore, violence arising from communal tensions between Hindu and Muslim groups resulted in significant property loss and forced migration (Rajeshwari, 2004). The "son of the soil" theory in Assam further contributes to displacement by promoting regionalism, where people from outside the state face exclusion and violence.

International displacement is highlighted through the movement of refugees during historical events such as the partition of India in 1947 and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, which led to the influx of refugees from Bangladesh, Tibet, and Bhutan into India. This displacement, driven by political instability and violence, has often led to tensions in the host country, where local populations resist sharing resources with refugees.

Nature-Induced Displacement:

In recent years, natural disasters have emerged as a leading cause of displacement worldwide, surpassing conflict and war as the primary drivers of forced migration. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council, approximately 24 million people in India were displaced by natural disasters, with many forced to live in relief camps for extended periods. This phenomenon is not confined to India but is part of a larger, global trend (IDMC, 2023). The World Migration Report 2022, published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), reported that in 2020 alone, 30.7 million new

displacements were triggered by natural disasters across 145 countries and territories (IOM, 2023).

India, particularly vulnerable to climate-induced displacement, ranks third globally for disaster-related displacements, following China and the Philippines. According to the IDMC's report 2016, Assam, in northeastern India, has become a focal point of this crisis (IDMC, 2016). The state is regularly affected by devastating floods that displace thousands of people. For example, in 2022, floods and heavy rains affected over 400,000 people across 26 districts in Assam, forcing them to seek shelter in relief camps (The Hindu, 2024). The situation worsened in July 2023, when water was released from Bhutan's Kurichhu Dam, resulting in floods that impacted 67,000 people across 17 districts (The Indian Express, 2023). The Brahmaputra River, a vital lifeline for the people of Assam, also acts as a double-edged sword. While the river provides sustenance, its annual swelling, especially during monsoon season, causes widespread devastation. The flooding erodes fertile lands and displaces agrarian communities, leaving them without livelihoods and forcing them to migrate in search of work.

In Assam, riverine areas along the Brahmaputra are known as 'chars' (sandbars), home to approximately 2.5 million people across 2251 villages in 14 districts, as per the Socio-Economic Survey of 2003-04. However, these communities are among the most vulnerable to climate-induced displacement. With frequent flooding and soil erosion, the char dwellers often lose their homes, livelihoods, and agricultural lands. The situation becomes even more dire when they face the added challenge of being excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) list, which denies them legal status as Indian citizens. Many of these individuals do not have official documents of land ownership, especially since their lands are regularly destroyed by floods. The NRC system, which allows people to use pre-1971 land ownership records to prove their ancestry, is of little help to those whose land has been washed away. Consequently, many char dwellers are labelled as "illegal immigrants," especially in the context of Assam's unique demographic and political issues. This perception further aggravates their vulnerability, as they are caught between environmental calamities and the struggle for their rights as citizens.

Climate change has also severely affected the livelihood of nomadic tribes such as the Gujjars and Bakarwals, who roam the Himalayan ranges from Pir Panjal to Hindukush and Ladakh. Traditionally, these

tribes' rear livestock such as buffaloes, cows, goats, and sheep, and migrate seasonally with their herds in search of grazing grounds. However, due to global warming, they are being forced to alter their traditional migration patterns. The unusually warm climate has resulted in reduced rainfall and shrinking pastures, prompting these tribes to move to higher altitudes earlier than usual. This disruption to their way of life has led to a decline in their livestock, their primary source of income. Moreover, the displacement of these tribes is not solely due to climate change. Human activities, such as industrialization, have compounded the problem. In Jammu and Kashmir, for instance, the acquisition of 24,000 hectares of forest land for industrial development has led to the forced eviction of thousands of tribals, further intensifying their displacement (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023).

The increasing displacement of people due to natural disasters highlights the need for urgent and comprehensive action to address the impacts of climate change. The affected communities, already marginalized, face a unique set of challenges that demand attention from both national and international policymakers. While countries like India are witnessing the consequences of climate-induced displacement, this crisis is global, requiring collaborative efforts to implement effective solutions. Efforts should focus on not just providing immediate relief but also on long-term strategies for adaptation and resilience. This could include the rehabilitation of displaced communities, the establishment of sustainable livelihoods, and the protection of cultural identity for vulnerable populations. Furthermore, as seen in Assam, legal frameworks such as the NRC must be sensitive to the complexities of climate-induced displacement and ensure that displaced individuals are not denied their basic rights.

Identity-Based Movements Asking for Autonomy:

India's history of state formation has been deeply influenced by linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identities. The first significant step in the process of linguistic reorganization was the creation of the state of Odisha on April 1, 1936, marking the first instance of a state being formed based on language. Odisha was separated from the Bihar and Orissa provinces, with the Odia language serving as the defining characteristic of the new state. This was a precursor to the broader reorganization of states based on linguistic lines, which gained momentum in the post-independence period (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1955).

The Linguistic Provinces Commission, also known as the Dhar Commission, was formed in June 1948 to assess the possibility of creating new states based on language. The commission, however, rejected language as a sole criterion for state formation. This rejection sparked further debate and led to the establishment of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in December 1953, under the leadership of Fazl Ali. The SRC, after extensive deliberation, submitted its report on September 30, 1955, recommending the reorganization of states based on linguistic identities. This report was passed in Parliament, leading to the creation of 14 states and 8 Union Territories, including Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Assam, among others (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1955).

This reorganization, however, did not resolve the demands for linguistic autonomy. It intensified the desire for separate states among other linguistic groups. The states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, for instance, were carved out from the Bombay state on May 1, 1960, following the Bombay Reorganization Act. Similarly, the demand for a separate Barak state emerged during the Bengali language movement in 1961. The state of Nagaland was created on December 1, 1963, after the Naga people of Assam's Naga Hills demanded a separate state. The Punjabi Suba Movement, advocating for a separate state for Punjabi speakers, resulted in the creation of Punjab and Haryana in 1966, and the formation of the Union Territory of Chandigarh. This trend continued with the formation of states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Telangana in the recent past (Sarangi and Pai, 2008).

However, the ongoing demand for autonomy and statehood based on linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities has persisted. Many regions and groups across India are still pushing for the creation of new states. These include Gorkhaland, Bodoland, Awadh, and Mithilaanchal, among others. Each of these movements is driven by a desire to protect the language, culture, and identity of the local population, often in response to the perceived marginalization by the state or neighbouring communities.

While the creation of states on linguistic lines was intended to address grievances, the process has often been accompanied by violence, displacement, and loss of life. One of the most tragic and significant examples is the Khalistan movement in Punjab during the late 1980s (Dyke, 2009). The movement, led by secessionist leaders like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, sought the creation of a

sovereign state for Sikhs Khalistan comprising parts of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, and even parts of Pakistan. The movement gained momentum, particularly among the Sikh diaspora, who provided both financial and political support.

In June 1984, the Indian government, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, ordered Operation Blue Star to remove militants holed up inside the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. The operation was highly controversial, as it took place on the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun Dev, one of Sikhism's most revered Gurus, and caused significant loss of life. The operation led to widespread outrage among the Sikh community, culminating in the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984, as an act of revenge. Her assassination triggered violent anti-Sikh riots across India, particularly in Delhi, where more than 3,000 Sikhs were killed. This period of violence led to large-scale displacement, with many Sikhs fleeing the violence in urban areas and relocating to Punjab (Das and Rohilla, 2020). While the Khalistan movement eventually lost momentum due to internal divisions and the exhaustion of the community with prolonged militancy, the scars of the violence remain.

Similarly, in the Bodoland region of Assam, the Bodo Autonomous Council area witnessed violence and displacement. The Bodo movement, which initially sought greater autonomy, escalated into a violent insurgency that involved forced evictions of non-Bodo communities through arson, massacres, and persecution. This led to the displacement of thousands of non-Bodo families, who took refuge in temporary relief camps. These kinds of conflicts are rooted in the "son-of-the-soil" theory, where indigenous communities claim ownership of land, resources, and culture, and view external migrants as a threat to their identity and livelihood (Hussain and Phanjoubam, 2007).

The Naga insurgency in Nagaland and the Bodo insurgency in Assam are prime examples of how identity-based movements, driven by cultural, linguistic, and ethnic pride, can lead to violent conflict and large-scale displacement. These movements, while demanding greater autonomy or separate states, often find themselves in direct conflict with the interests of the state and other communities. The demand for autonomy and statehood often arises from a combination of historical, cultural, and emotional factors. Historically, various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in India have lived together,

often in harmony. However, as the political landscape evolved, the boundaries between states were drawn based on political expediency rather than cultural or linguistic affinities. This fragmentation of communities has resulted in a sense of insecurity and marginalization among certain groups, who feel that their identity is under threat. In the process of migration, displacement, and resettlement, the demographic composition of regions has been altered, leading to tensions between indigenous populations and migrants. This, in turn, can cause ethnic, cultural, and political instability. The Bodo, Naga, and Khalistani movements exemplify how such tensions can lead to violent struggles for autonomy. Additionally, the states, in trying to maintain law and order, often worsen the situation by employing force, which further escalates violence and displacement.

Development Projects Like Dams and Development of Infrastructure:

The displacement of tribal and marginalized communities due to development projects, especially large infrastructure projects like dams, has been a major issue in India. These communities often reside in fertile lands with valuable natural resources, which attract commercial interests and lead to their displacement. The construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River displaced around 41,000 families, 56% of whom were Adivasis (Thakkar, 2010). Despite government compensation, many of the displaced faced inadequate land, lack of basic amenities, and emotional distress from being separated from their communities. This led to the formation of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), which advocated for the rights of displaced people and opposed the dam project. The Tehri Hydro Power Project (THPP) in Uttarakhand displaced over 10,000 families, with many facing issues such as lack of ownership rights, insufficient land for irrigation, and no access to basic services like clean water (Sundaram *et al.*, 2023). The Chipko movement, led by environmentalists like Sundarlal Bahuguna, also opposed the project on environmental and cultural grounds, emphasizing sustainable development over profit-driven projects. Other projects, such as the Pavana Dam in Maharashtra and the Chakan International Airport development, have also led to displacement, with many affected individuals not receiving proper compensation or land ownership rights. These cases reflect the broader issue of the negative impact of large-scale development on local populations, particularly those

who rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihood. Protests, hunger strikes, and activism have been ongoing in response to these projects, highlighting the importance of considering the rights of displaced communities in development plans. The other major development-related displacement has been discussed below:

a) *Widespread Protests Over Land Acquisition:*

Maharashtra has witnessed numerous protests in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), especially in the Raigad and Pune districts. In Raigad, proposals for SEZs cover large swaths of agricultural land, threatening the livelihoods of Adivasi, Koli, and OBC communities engaged in farming, grazing, and salt production. Farmers are particularly angry over the forcible acquisition of their land without adequate compensation, which often leads to long-term displacement and loss of livelihood. The SEZs, which offer tax exemptions and other benefits to developers, have led to accusations that the government is prioritizing corporate interests over the welfare of the local population. In Pune, the Bharat Forge SEZ has faced resistance from villagers who oppose the diversion of fertile agricultural land for industrial purposes (Kale, 2010). The Mundra SEZ in Gujarat, being developed by the Adani Group, threatens to displace fisherfolk living in coastal villages. Critics argue that the SEZ is being built at the expense of local communities, who face joblessness and inadequate compensation for their land. Kutch, Gujarat: The Case of Mundra SEZ. In Kutch, Gujarat, the construction of the Mundra SEZ, led by the Adani Group, has sparked significant opposition from the local fishing communities. Fishermen argue that the SEZ violates Coastal Regulation Zone laws, leading to the destruction of the fragile ecosystem, especially mangroves and creeks. The group is also accused of encroaching on grazing lands, which were traditionally used by pastoralists. Despite opposition, the SEZ continues to expand, with the government prioritizing economic development over environmental conservation and the livelihoods of the local population. Public Interest Litigations (PIL) have been filed, highlighting the adverse effects, but legal challenges have largely been

dismissed (Down To Earth, 2013).

b) *Sinnar, Nashik District: Development vs. Agriculture:*

The situation in Sinnar, Nashik, highlights the conflict between industrial development and agriculture-based livelihoods. In this drought-prone area, farmers have invested heavily in water conservation and irrigation projects to make the land fertile. However, the government's push for a new SEZ threatens to undo years of hard work by acquiring irrigated agricultural land. The farmers, many of whom have shifted to cash crops, are distressed about losing their land to industrial development, which they fear will erode their sustainable way of life (Vora, 2024).

c) *Dharavi Bet, Mumbai: The Threat of Coastal SEZs:*

In the case of Dharavi Bet, a rich, resource-laden island off the coast of Mumbai, the proposed SEZ has been met with fierce opposition. The area supports a large fishing community and has rich mangrove forests. However, developers, including *Pan India Paryatan Ltd (ESSEL)*, are eyeing the land for industrial development. The local population fears that their livelihoods will be jeopardized, and their homes, which rely on fishing and small-scale agriculture, will be displaced. The proposed SEZ is said to threaten the delicate coastal ecosystem and the fishing community's traditional way of life (The Hindu, 2024).

d) *The Chakma Issue: Internal Displacement in Northeast India:*

In the northeastern states, the Chakma issue has led to tensions between indigenous communities and Chakma refugees who fled from East Pakistan in the 1960s. The Chakmas were initially given temporary refuge in Arunachal Pradesh, but tensions escalated as the Chakma population grew. The local communities, including indigenous tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, argue that the Chakmas have encroached on land, including forest reserves and pastoral lands, affecting local livelihoods. Protests and blockades by the native population have been frequent, demanding that the Chakmas be removed or granted Indian citizenship rights. The Supreme

Court's 2015 judgment ordering the government to grant citizenship to the Chakmas has been a significant development, but the community still faces challenges in integrating with local populations (Chakma, 2017).

e) *Coal Mining and Displacement:* Chhattisgarh contains vast coal deposits, with the Adani Group being awarded contracts for four out of six approved coal mines. In 2021, villagers protested the mining projects but were later divided and influenced by the company's tactics. The protest was gradually weakened through social engineering, where trusted community members were paid to suppress resistance. Between 1950 and 1990, over 2.5 million people were displaced due to mining activities, with many not being consulted about land acquisitions (Naidu, 2024). The legal framework, such as the Coal Bearing Areas Acquisition and Development Act (1957), is criticized for being outdated and insufficient to protect displaced communities.

f) *Tiger Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries:* The creation of the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan, which is being considered for designation as a tiger reserve, has led to the displacement of indigenous groups such as the Bhils, Garasias, and Raika Pastoralists. Local populations argue that the forests are not home to tigers but support other species like wolves and leopards. Tribal communities around tiger reserves such as Rajaji, Mudumalai, and Sariska have protested displacement due to conservation efforts. A large-scale foot march was conducted by the Adivasi Janjati Adhikar Manch, demanding the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (2006) and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) (Mohanty, 2023).

g) *Development Projects and Dams:* Several dams, including the Bhakra, Bargi, Hirakud, and Jobhat Dams, have displaced thousands of people, often with insufficient compensation. For example, the Bhakra Dam displaced over 11,000 families in Himachal Pradesh, and many of them continue to face difficulties due to inadequate resettlement. The construction of the Jobhat Dam in Madhya Pradesh and the Hirakud Dam in Odisha displaced hundreds of thousands of

people, leaving many without proper compensation or alternative livelihoods.

h) Townships and Urbanization: The construction of Chandigarh as a planned city led to the displacement of around 50 villages. The displaced villagers were offered compensation but struggled with the loss of agricultural land and cultural ties. Many faced difficulties in resettlement and were excluded from the benefits of urban development. The case of Chandigarh highlights the social and cultural losses experienced by displaced communities, particularly the erosion of their language and traditions (The Tribune, 2016).

Conflicts Arising from Government Policies:

These can often result from the attitude of the authorities, leading to significant tension between the people and the state. A notable example of this occurred after the Indo-Pak War of 1965 when then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri encouraged farmers from Punjab to settle in the barren Kutch region along the India-Pakistan border. Shastri believed that brave, hardworking individuals should be stationed near the international border to act as the first line of defence in case of cross-border tensions. The farmers who relocated to Kutch transformed the land into fertile agricultural fields. However, in 2012, the Gujarat government invoked the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, of 1958, placing a freeze on the landholdings of these farmers. As a result, they were prohibited from selling, buying, or obtaining loans or subsidies for their land. Despite a favourable ruling by the Gujarat High Court, the state government moved the case to the Supreme Court. This decision has left thousands of farmers fearing displacement, as 20,000 acres of land were frozen, affecting their livelihoods.

Civil wars can also range from deep-seated ethnic, religious, or political divisions within a country, leading to violence and a breakdown of social order. A tragic example of this is the ongoing conflict in Manipur, where sectarian violence erupted in May 2023 between the majority Meitei community and the minority Kuki community. The Meiteis, who are Hindus and more economically prosperous, live in the Imphal Valley, while the Kukis reside in the surrounding hills. The conflict began when the Meiteis demanded Scheduled Tribe status, which would grant them land-owning rights and

access to educational and employment opportunities. The Kuki community opposed this demand, fearing that granting these benefits to the Meiteis would reduce their own share. The violent clashes between the two groups have resulted in the displacement of thousands, with over 143 days of internet blackout imposed, making it the second-longest such blackout in the country's history. The state remains under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which provides the military with special powers in areas deemed disturbed, except for 19 police stations in the Imphal Valley (Behera, 2023). The consequences of this conflict have been dire: hundreds have been killed, and thousands more have been displaced. The Meiteis have fled their homes and sought refuge in Meitei-majority areas, while the Kukis have retreated to their controlled zones. An estimated 60,000 people have been displaced, with the state now divided into ethnic zones fiercely protected by each group (Baker, 2023). The Meiteis control the valleys and lowlands, while the Kukis dominate the hills. Moving into another group's territory often results in certain death. The survivors, having witnessed brutal killings, now live in constant trauma.

Effects of Displacement: An analysis:

Displacement, particularly among tribal and marginalized communities, has profound socio-economic, psychological, and cultural implications. Tribals, who are often dependent on forests for food, livelihood, and social structure, face catastrophic disruptions when their land is taken away. When tribal people lose their access to forests and traditional sources of livelihood, they are thrust into an uncertain and hostile environment. Historically, tribal communities in India have organized themselves through self-governance models, such as 'Gaon Ganrajya' or 'village republics.' Organizations like Jan Chetna Sansthan and Astha are working to help these communities reclaim their traditional land and resources, demanding the implementation of laws such as the PESA (Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act) and the Forest Rights Act. These laws aim to restore and protect the rights of the tribals over land, water, and forest resources. However, the struggle to retain their cultural identity and control over community resources is fraught with challenges.

The following sections detail the various effects of displacement:

Psychosocial Impact:

Displacement is not just a physical loss of land and home but also a profound emotional and psychological upheaval. The feelings of humiliation and loss of dignity are common among displaced people. Having their livelihoods, homes, and ancestral lands taken away, they often experience: Nostalgia for the old life- A deep yearning for their lost homes, communities, and cultural practices. The loss of land and livelihood creates a feeling of deprivation, compounded by inadequate compensation and lack of access to basic resources such as water and food. Settling in unfamiliar urban or rural areas, often on the fringes of cities, increases insecurity. Displaced individuals face constant harassment from police and local authorities, which exacerbates their sense of alienation. The inability to access education, healthcare, or gainful employment leads to feelings of helplessness and desperation, particularly for children and women, who are often the most vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

Economic and Livelihood Impact:

The economic consequences of displacement are stark. Tribals often rely on land and forests for their livelihood, including farming, gathering forest products, and hunting. When these resources are taken away, they face extreme economic hardships: Displaced people are often forced into menial labour or informal work with low wages. Displaced individuals experience chronic unemployment or are forced into poorly paid, exploitative work. This leads to economic stagnation and frustration, often increasing social unrest. Many displaced communities face repeated displacements, which further erode their economic stability. After being relocated to new settlements, they often end up in slums or unauthorized colonies, where conditions are poor, and employment opportunities are limited.

Cultural and Social Disintegration:

The loss of ancestral land leads to the disintegration of social structures and cultural practices. Tribal societies are deeply rooted in their land and natural resources, and these disruptions break the bonds that hold communities together. They are often separated from their families and kin, which disrupts the support systems that are central to tribal communities. This social fragmentation leads to a breakdown in community solidarity. The forced relocation results in the erosion of tribal identity and

traditions. As they settle in new locations, displaced people are often unable to retain their customs, language, and cultural practices, leading to a loss of self-identity and a sense of purpose.

Health and Education Challenges:

Displaced communities face severe health and educational disadvantages. Children suffer from the lack of access to schools and proper nutrition, which hinders their development. People often find themselves in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, leading to poor health outcomes. Health services in temporary settlements or urban slums are inadequate, resulting in increased morbidity and mortality. The lack of educational infrastructure in resettlement areas prevents children from attending school. Displacement leads to a cycle of illiteracy and poverty, which is difficult to break.

Political and Legal Exclusion:

Displaced people often face political and legal exclusion, which exacerbates their vulnerability. Despite being displaced from their land and livelihood, many individuals do not receive the legal recognition or compensation they are entitled to. This lack of legal support keeps them in a perpetual state of insecurity. They often lack the political clout to influence decisions regarding their resettlement or rehabilitation. As a result, they are frequently excluded from the political processes that affect their lives.

Increased Vulnerability to Exploitation:

Displacement often leads to increased vulnerability, particularly for women and children. Trafficking, sexual exploitation, and child labour become real threats for these groups, particularly in urban slums or temporary settlements. Women and children are often forced into dangerous and exploitative labour conditions, with little recourse for justice.

Environmental Consequences:

Large-scale development projects like dams and industries often disregard environmental sustainability. The construction of dams can lead to the submergence of vast forest areas, further disrupting the delicate ecological balance on which tribal communities depend. The destruction of forests and agricultural lands affects biodiversity and climate stability, which in turn impacts the livelihoods of displaced people.

Government Response and the Role of Legislation:

Despite the overwhelming impact of displacement, the government's response has often been insufficient and inadequate. The Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act of 2013 was an attempt to address the concerns of displaced communities, but its implementation has been riddled with flaws. The lack of transparency in land acquisition, insufficient compensation, and failure to address human rights violations leave displaced individuals vulnerable to exploitation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) does not intervene in internal displacement within India, as India has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. This leaves displaced people without international protection or support. India's development model, which prioritizes industrialization and infrastructure development, continues to result in displacement, often without adequate compensation or rehabilitation for the affected communities.

The Need For Responsible Development And Inclusive Policies:

The effects of displacement are far-reaching and manifold. While the government has recognized the need for rehabilitation and resettlement, true reform will only occur when there is a shift towards responsible and inclusive development. This requires:

1. **Sustainable Development:** Development should not come at the cost of marginalized communities. Development projects must be assessed for their social, environmental, and economic impacts on local communities.
2. **Community Involvement:** The voices of affected communities must be included in the decision-making process. Local people should have a say in the planning and implementation of development projects that affect their lives.
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** The process of land acquisition, rehabilitation, and resettlement must be transparent. Clear compensation policies and the effective implementation of rehabilitation programs are essential to ensure that displaced people are not left behind.
4. **Legal and Political Support:** A legal framework that protects the rights of displaced communities, ensures fair compensation, and provides avenues for redress must be strengthened. Moreover,

political representation and advocacy for displaced people are critical to upholding their rights.

Conclusion:

Displacement in North-Western and NE India presents a complex set of challenges that significantly affect the lives of vulnerable populations. The impact of displacement is manifold, including loss of land, livelihoods, social structures, and a deep sense of humiliation and insecurity. The displacement caused by development projects, such as dam constructions and industrial zones, often creates socio-economic inequalities, particularly when communities lack adequate compensation, legal recognition, or resources to rebuild their lives. The physical, psychological, and emotional toll of displacement is evident in the disrupted lives of millions of people who are forced to migrate to urban fringes, often into slums, without the means for a dignified life. While policy frameworks like the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill of 2013 offer hope, their implementation remains inconsistent and often lacks transparency, leaving many displaced persons without a legal basis for compensation or rehabilitation. Therefore, the need for a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable approach to development cannot be overstated. A holistic approach that considers the socio-cultural fabric of displaced communities, respects their rights to land and resources, and ensures equitable compensation and rehabilitation is crucial for mitigating the adverse effects of displacement. The path to rehabilitation must involve collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, and local communities to ensure that development does not come at the expense of vulnerable populations. Empowering displaced communities to actively participate in the decision-making processes actively, safeguarding their cultural heritage, and ensuring access to essential services like education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities are key to creating sustainable pathways to rehabilitation.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S., Iqbal, Z., and Antahal, P. C. (2023). Impact of Climate Change on Nomadic Herders' Livelihoods: Evidence from Bakarwal Community in the Western Himalayas in India. *Environmental Development*, **48**: 100930. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2023.100930>.
- Baker, G. (2024). "India's Rising Economic Inequality and the

- Challenges It Poses.”*BBC News*, November 16. Retrieved November 17, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-66260730>.
- Basu, D.D. (2015). *Introduction to the Constitution of India*. 22nd ed. Gurgaon: LexisNexis.
- Basumatary, I. and Khawzawl, T.L. (2024). Folklore of the Himalayan Foothills: Weaving Traditions in Bodo Folklore. *Rupkatha J.*, **16** (2). <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n2.09g>.
- Behera, A. (2023). The Social and Political Dimensions of Ethnic Conflicts in Manipur. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-social-and-political-dimensions-of-ethnic-conflicts-in-manipur>.
- Bharadwaj, P., Khwaja, A. I. and Mian, A. (2008). The Big March: Migratory Flows After the Partition of India. *Faculty Research Working Papers Series, RWP08-029*. Yale University; Harvard University; University of Chicago. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from RWP08-029.pdf.
- Brass, P.R. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved November 13, 2024, from https://www.paulbrass.com/the_politics_of_india_since_independence_19577.ht.
- Chakma, R. (2017). “The Chakma-Hajong Challenge.” *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved November 16, 2024, from <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/chakma-hajong-challenge>.
- Das, D. Z. and Rohilla, B.S. (2020). Operation Blue Star and the Course of India: Through the Legal Filter. *SSRN*, March 15. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3584116>.
- Dasgupta, A. 2001–2002. Char’red for a Lifetime: Internal Displacement in Assam Plains in India. *SARWATCH* 3 & 4: 1.
- Devi, A. (2021). Partition Trauma Through Hindi Cinema. *Internat. J. Advanced Res. Sci., Communication & Technol.*, **7** (2): 568–789. <https://doi.org/10.48175/568789>.
- Down To Earth*. (2013). Adani Project in Mundra Has Violated Environmental Norms: MoEF Committee Report. *Down To Earth*. Retrieved November 6, 2024, from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/adani-project-in-mundra-has-violated-environmental-norms-moef-committee-report-40853>.
- Forced Migration Review (2000). Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). *Forced Migration Review*. Retrieved November 6, 2024, from <https://www.fmreview.org/lama>.
- Government of India (2021). *The Constitution of India (8th Schedule)*. Ministry of Home Affairs. Retrieved from <https://legislative.gov.in>.
- Human Rights Watch (1999). *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s Untouchables*. New York: Human Rights Watch. Retrieved November 1, 2024, from <https://www.hrw.org/report/1999/03/01/broken-people/caste-violence-against-indias-untouchables>.
- Hussain, M. and Phanjoubam, P. (2007). A Status Report on Displacement in Assam and Manipur. Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group.
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2023). “India.” Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Retrieved November 20, 2024, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/india/>.
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2016). *2016 Global Report on Internal Displacement*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Retrieved November 19, 2024, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/globalreport2016/pdf/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf>.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2022). *World Migration Report 2022*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Retrieved November 13, 2024, from <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/WMR-2022.pdf>.
- Kale, S. (2010). The Anti-SEZ Movement in India: An Account of the Struggle in Maharashtra. *National Centre for Advocacy Studies*. Retrieved November 12, 2024, from http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/sez_sam.pdf.
- Lama, M. (2000). Internal Displacement in India: Causes Protection and Dilemmas. *Forced Migration Review*.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (1955). *State Reorganization Commission Report of 1955*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/State%20Reorganisation%20Commisison%20Report%20of%201955_270614.pdf.
- Mohanty, A. (2023). How a New Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan Is Causing Fear of Displacement. *IndiaSpend*. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://www.indiaspend.com/forest-rights/how-a-new-tiger-reserve-in-rajasthan-is-causing-fear-of-displacement-881741>.
- Naidu, J.S. (2024). Hasdeo Arand Mining Issue: A Protest Explained. *The Indian Express*, November 16. Retrieved November 3, 2024, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/hasdeo-arand-mining-issue-protest-9641436/>.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2024). About Internally Displaced Persons. *OHCHR*. Retrieved November 20, 2024, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-idps>.

- www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons.
- Ota, A.B., ed. (2009). *Development Induced Displacement and the Tribals*. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research & Training Institute. https://repository.tribal.gov.in/bitstream/123456789/73960/1/SCST_2009_book_0118.pdf.
- Press Information Bureau (2017). The Total Population in 2011 Is 121.08 Crore: Census Data Reveals. *Press Information Bureau*, August 18. Retrieved November 19, 2024, from <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=126326>.
- Rajeshwari, B. (2003). *Communal Riots in India: A Chronology (1947–2003)*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Retrieved November 16, 2024, from https://nagarikmancha.org/images/1242-Documents-Communal_Riots_in_India.pdf.
- Sarangi, A. and Pai, S., eds. (2008). *Interrogating Reorganization of States: Culture, Identity, and Politics in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Sundaram, S., Sharma, S., Mathur, R., Kashyap, K. and Verm, K. (2023). A Case Study of the Background, Aspects, and Impacts of the Tehri Dam on the Economy, Ecology & Population of India. *Internat. J. Innovation & Multidisciplinary Res.*, **3** (1): 75. ISSN 2583-4452.
- Thakkar, H. (2010). “Displacement and Development: The Construction of the Sardar Dam.” *Cultural Survival*. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/displacement-and-development-construction-sardar-dam>.
- The Hindu* (2023). “Very Little Said About 4.5 Lakh Displaced Kashmiri Pandits Because They Were Not a Big Electorate.” *The Hindu*. Retrieved November 18, 2024, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/very-little-said-about-45-lakh-displaced-kashmiri-pandits-because-they-were-not-big-electorate-form>.
- The Hindu* (2024). “Dharavi Rehabilitation Petition Challenges Maharashtra’s Infrastructure Decision.” *The Hindu*, November 16. Retrieved November 17, 2024, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/very-little-said-about-45-lakh-displaced-kashmiri-pandits-because-they-were-not-big-electorate-form>.
- The Indian Express (2023). Flood Alert in Assam as Bhutan Releases Water from Reservoir. *The Indian Express*. Last modified November 4, 2024. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/flood-alert-in-assam-as-bhutan-releases-water-from-reservoir-8838334/>.
- The Telegraph India (2024). Manipur Violence Accounted for 97 Percent of Displacements in the South. *The Telegraph India*. Last modified November 1, 2024. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/manipur-violence-accounted-for-97-per-cent-of-displacements-in-south>.
- The Tribune (2017). Chandigarh: The Revenant. *The Tribune*. Last modified November 11, 2024. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/kaleidoscope/chandigarh-the-revenant-276916/>.
- Tunbridge Wells (2024). Cultural Richness of India: A Journey through Traditions and Diversity. Last modified November 16, 2024. <https://mytunbridgewells.com/cultural-richness-india/>.
- U.S. Committee for Refugees (2000). *World Refugee Survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2023). “India Overtakes China as the World’s Most Populous Country.” Policy Brief No. 153. Last modified November 16, 2024. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-no-153-india-overtakes-china-as-the-worlds-most-populous-country/>.
- Van Dyke, Vernon (2009). The Khalistan Movement in Punjab, India, and the Post-Militancy Era: Structural Change and New Political Compulsions. *Asian Survey*, **49**, no. 6 (2009): 975–997. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.6.975>.
- Vora, Sharmistha (2024). Learning Together for Groundwater Management: A Case of the Devnadi Basin, Nashik, Maharashtra, India. *Internat. J. Commons*, **18** (1): 507–521. <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1323>.
