

FOCUS

JAMUNA BRIDGE PROJECT

Policies and Issues in Resettlement of the Displaced

by Tasneem Siddiqui

The resettlement action plan of the Jamuna Bridge Project is of immense importance, as it is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. Before this there existed no legal framework for this kind of activities. There is every likelihood that this plan will have a major influence in developing strategies for future development projects.

UNTIL recently, involuntary displacement of people for development purpose was treated in the national and international policy-making circles as an unavoidable side effect in the way of greater development goals. Therefore, involuntary displacement of people was all along the low priority area of such development projects, infrastructural components being the major focus of attention.

A major infrastructural development project currently being implemented in Bangladesh is the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project (JMBP). The bridge will provide direct transport link between north-west and eastern parts of the country. It is meant to end the relative isolation of the agriculturally fertile northwest region of Bangladesh and thus stimulate overall economic growth of the country. However, the project also involves displacement of people from their original land. The construction of the bridge itself has not caused any displacement, it is the construction of the two guide bunds, a hard point and approach roads which involved land acquisition (7,000 acres) and concomitant displacement.

Resettlement

Action Plan
From the inception of the project, potential donors insisted on appropriate compensation and resettlement of the evicted people to be considered as integral part of the project. In view of the fact that donor money would not have been forthcoming without this component, GOB commissioned a Resettlement Action Plan, prepared by Randell, Palmer, Tritton and Bangladesh Consulting Ltd., (1990). The study, however, underestimated the number of the project-affected-people (PAP). In 1992 BRAC was commissioned to undertake a socio-economic baseline survey of the project-affected people (PAP) on the east side of the Jamuna river. The study divided the PAPs into two categories: directly-affected and indirectly-affected. Those who

would lose their homestead, land or any other structure were considered to be directly affected people. Indirectly affected people were identified as those who would lose their source of income due to project implementation.

This included farm and non-farm workers, tenant farmers, squatters and uthuls. This study came with a figure that 11,945 households with a population of 77,280 will be affected by the project, directly or indirectly only in the eastern side of the Jamuna river. There was, however, a further increase in the number of affected people, during the implementation of the project. According to the latest available information, 16,341 households, with a net population of about 100,000 have been affected by the project. Among them, 3,604 households have lost their homestead land entirely. Alongside, 32 community facilities, 13 educational institutions, 14 mosques, 2 cemeteries and one cooperative building had to be abandoned.

A formal Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) was prepared in March 1993. Under World Bank's insistence, it was further revised. In October 1993, the revised resettlement action plan was endorsed. The resettlement work for the JMBP began basing on this Revised Resettlement Action Plan (RRAP). The RRAP treated resettlement and rehabilitation of PAP as a separate programme, with its own objectives and budget. It created a separate Resettlement Unit for managing and supervising the project. The budget of the project is Tk 236 crore amounting to 5 per cent of the total JMBP budget.

Resettlement, under RRAP, has been conceived as a development programme. It upholds that affected people should be compensated for all quantifiable losses at a full replacement cost, compensation should also be paid to people who were af-

fected indirectly, absence of legal title should not be made bar for paying compensation, proper incentive structure should be developed for host-guest integration, a resettlement site has to be prepared for those who would not be able to resettle on their own, NGOs will participate in project implementation. The October 1993 RRAP is primarily focused on the resettlement requirement of the eastern side of the bridge. The final location of the west guide bund, west bridge end and west bridge corridor, was then still uncertain. Therefore, it was decided, "consecutive resettlement actions related to other components of the project will be derived by analogy from the RRAP."

Compensation

Fourteen categories of PAP have been identified in the RRAP who were entitled to get compensation. A compensation policy guideline was developed where the categories of losses were defined and entitlements for different kinds of losses, were spelt out. These were transfer grants, house construction grants, owner-cultivator grants, farm worker grants, non-farm worker grants, tenant cultivators' grants, dismantling and removal grants, reconstruction grants for commerce and industry, replacement land stamp duty grants, grants to cover premium, maximum allowable replacement value grants, grants for uthuls/squatters to purchase homestead land. People who were entitled for compensation, were termed as entitled persons (EP). Under the new arrangement, each of them was provided with an identity card and an entitlement card. To keep the process transparent, a computerised database has

been created on each EP. The compensation process involved information campaign, group meeting and distribution of leaflets and brochures. A Grievance Committee was also set up. It was authorised with a power to act as a quasi-judicial body to pass order with respect to disputes over land ownership and compensation. The Grievance Committee could only take cases on land title-related disputes, if those were not pending in court. By 1996, all fourteen kinds of compensation have been paid in the eastern side and the EP files were formally closed. The Grievance Committee handled 8400 cases and according to the Resettlement Unit authority 89 per cent of these cases have been resolved by the committee and no EP had to take recourse to court.

However, one may note that JMBP land acquisition work began at least two years before RRAP was prepared. By the time the RRAP and Resettlement Unit established, one-eighth of the land was already acquired. The District Commissioner's office handled compensation package for this group of people. According to Director, RU, the difference between the two compensation packages were reimbursed to this group with retrospective effect. However, it is difficult to comprehend that the authorities could track down all persons evicted two to three years earlier.

The RRAP also had provision to cover the rights of those affected by river erosion or flooding caused by the bridge project. A \$200m additional loan was sanctioned by IDA for compensating those persons who have lost or likely to lose their land, houses and sources of income, due to possible erosion in the area, caused by river train-

ing and construction of JMBP. The river erosion and flood-related compensation will be paid up to the year 2000. Area covered under this programme stretches from 8 km upstream and 10 km downstream of the bridge, including mainland and chars. Receiving compensation for loss of land due to erosion or flooding will not affect the land title of a person. If land of a compensated person in acquired again in natural way, within thirty years, the owner will be able to regain possession of her/his land. A baseline survey has been undertaken in this area and 28033 families have been registered whose land could be endangered. Compensation process has begun and satellite imagers are used to verify claims in this regard. If any of these household lose homestead they will be entitled to relocate themselves in the resettlement sites. Women-headed households of char areas will be given 20 per cent more transfer grant.

Resettlement

Two resettlement sites have been planned on both sides of the Jamuna river. During the initial phase planners were considering of resettling at least half the displaced population at the resettlement sites (1990). But as there was a large gap between eviction and development of the resettlement sites, not very many people showed interest in resettling at the sites. In the eastern side out of 3604 households, 564 registered for allocation of resettlement plots. So far, 291 families have taken possession. The rest of the displaced households have resettled themselves elsewhere, mostly in the surrounding villages.

Under the circumstances, RRAP defined resettlement in a broader term and included in it the task of helping the displaced find suitable homestead land in surrounding villages. It conducted a land market survey and disseminated information among the EPs on land available in the adjoining areas. The Director of RU reported that 90 per cent of the displaced people have been able to purchase

homestead land with or without the help of RU. Forty-five per cent of the EPs who lost arable land could replace theirs. He further claimed, this is a major achievement, and is a record for World Bank-financed projects. The western resettlement site has yet to become suitable for habitation. Basic infrastructure such as school, health-care centre, mosque, marketplace, road, community centre are still under construction.

NGO Involvement

Various NGOs have become active partners of the Resettlement Unit in implementing RRAP. It has been stated earlier that the 1992 baseline survey of the east bank was conducted by BRAC. The same NGO was also responsible for the 1996 survey which determined the possible impact of JMBP on the people of surrounding river erosion and flood-prone areas. In the compensation programme of this component BRAC is also working as an implementing partner with RU.

With the broad goal of ensuring the pre-eviction economic status of the PAPs intact, a Tk 5 crore credit programme has been designed.

Three thousand EPs have been identified for participating in training and credit programmes. PKSF has been contracted to supervise the credit programme. Two NGOs DORP and ASAUS have been selected through open tender as implementing NGOs.

ment leased out the hospital to Grameen Kalyan, a sister organization of Grameen Bank. For ninety-nine years, Grameen Kalyan has developed a health-care system for the PAPs. The hospital will maintain computerized health record of the PAPs. A contract has also been signed with Grameen Matshya Foundation (GMF), another sister organization of the Grameen Bank, and Shubash. Under the agreement Tk 1 crore interest-free loan has been provided to these NGOs for fish cultivation. They have also been given 25 years lease of derelict water bodies for this purpose. As per the agreement, the NGOs will get 60 per cent of the profit and the PAPs will get the rest.

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A Preliminary Assessment

JMBP resettlement programme is the first planned resettlement programme of Bangladesh. It is understandable that implementation of such a project has been a complex task. Among other problems, cumbersome land acquisition law, non-updated land ownership and absence of updated land document, work as hindrance in the way of delivering the compensation package to the affected people. A problem that the project faced, has been the development of vested interest groups for reaping undue benefits.

For example, a group of

people were getting resettled in the surrounding villages on their own. One may, however, argue that preparation of resettlement site took quite a long time and people could not afford to wait for and got themselves rehabilitated wherever they could find some place. Once resettled, they did not want to move again. It would have been a better deal if they got the opportunity to resettle at the first instance.

In case of NGO involvement with the project one may point out that all these NGOs are participating in the project at the implementation level only. They did not demand participation in project planning and designing. NGO policy advocacy role in favour of the PAPs, which has been seen in many parts of the world, is conspicuously absent in the Jamuna Bridge Project.

The resettlement action plan of the Jamuna Bridge Project is of immense importance, as it is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. Before this there existed no legal framework for this kind of activities. There is every likelihood that this plan will have a major influence in developing strategies for future development projects.

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BANGLAPAEDIA: National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh

by Enayetullah Khan

History which sold some 13 lacs worth of books in face value. Our experience with the **History** has given us a convenient springboard from where the **Encyclopaedia** has taken off.

Though the Project Director feels confident about the future of the project, the sheer act of raising 9.6 crore taka could be a spine-breaking experience. It warrants a tremendous ability to move and organise and a rare expertise in salesmanship among the prospective donors as large majority of whom would be foreign donors. The **History**, has lent credibility to Professor Islam's new venture — the **Banglapedia**.

Since the project has to undertake a two-pronged offensive, namely, organised funds and coordinate scholarship, the experience already gathered will go a long way in giving a piece of solid ground to stand on for the project itself.

Professor Sirajul Islam and his Project Implementation Committee have already had some success with fundraising. The public universities of Bangladesh have formed a kind of consortium which is something unique in the history of scholarship in this country.

This is for the first time that the public universities of Bangladesh under the leadership of Professor Iqbal Mahmud, the Vice-Chancellor of BUET and President AUB, have unanimously resolved to provide some funds on a yearly basis for the next five years, provide scholar loan and buy some copies of the **Encyclopaedia** before publication.

The University Grants Commission is not lagging behind.

hind. They too have decided to support the **Encyclopaedia** in terms of funds and human resources. The vice-chancellors of public universities in Bangladesh deserve to be congratulated for this unique resolution in an otherwise factionalised partisan atmosphere in Bangladesh.

This gesture of the vice-chancellors has proved that Asiatic Society along with its new **Banglapedia** above partisan politics and members of the society would love to see it stay there. Professor Islam's and his project implementation committee's second big success was with the Sonali Bank whose Chairman Mr Asafuddoula instantly saw the merit of the Project. Taka 5 lacs provided by the Sonali Bank will go down in history as the first puff of indigenous funds received by the Project. The third success in fund-raising was with the Bangladeshi Bank.

The BB governor along with its distinguished board of directors recognised, in an unusual gesture of patronage, first in the history of this country and perhaps not even heard of in any other country, the merit of the project and came out with a grant of Taka 10 lacs which is awaiting early release. But what is 15 lacs in a sea of 960 lacs which has got to be provided for?

Meanwhile work is going on at a hectic speed and some 20 scholars are busy giving finishing touches to commissioning scholars and preparing the style-sheet incurring an expenditure of nearly 1.3 lacs every month. The very prospect of pushing ahead with such a huge

bill lying at your door every month and at the same time keep cool and do the scholarly work is appalling.

It is estimated that the **Encyclopaedia** when completed will generate assets worth 21 crores just as the **History** of Bangladesh has already generated some 52 lacs for the Society which has a yearly budget of only 25 lacs.

There is some last minute good news for the project. The British Council has agreed to provide technical assistance under which six of our scholars working for the Project will go to England for training in **Encyclopaedia** making and two of British experts will come and work here for a brief period. The Netherlands Embassy will provide a scholarship for one of our scholars to undergo training in a neighbouring country. An Amsterdam-based organisation, South-South will sponsor two scholarships for our scholars working for the project. The best news of all perhaps is the exchange of 25 scholars from each country under the recently concluded Academic Exchange Programme between India and Bangladesh.

Since so much support is coming from other countries, it is expected that wealthy individuals belonging to different professional groups would come forward and form their own professional consortiums to support this project. Each citizen of Bangladesh has an obligation to support this project which will symbolise one of our highest achievements — something the nation has never attempted before.

The writer is Chief Editor of the **UNB** and Editor of the **Dhaka Courier**.

by Jim Davis



by Hanna-Barbera



Garfield ®



Tom and Jerry



BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of the Cross Examination of 44th Prosecution Witness

Shaifulullah or Shafiuallah made the telephone to Bangabandhu.

Q : Is Major Hafiz, who was accompanying Major Rashid when he went to your residence, an MP now?

A : Yes.

Q : Did any units of your brigade who were asked to take war preparation carry out the order?

A : I asked 1st, 2nd and 4th East Bengal Regiments to take preparations. They carried out my order.

Q : Did you not ask 2 Field Artillery?

A : No, because they were rebels.

Q : It is not correct that Major Rashid resided at Bangabandhu.

A : Major Rashid and Major Farooq were staying at Bangabandhu for all the time after August 15.

A : This is not true.

Q : You were informed earlier about the August 15 incident and it took place as per your plan?

A : This is not correct.

Q : You committed the November 3 incident as you were not promoted and provided facilities after August 15?

A : Yes.

Q : And all those are patriotic who participated in the Liberation War.

A : Yes.

Q : Major Noor was also a patriotic freedom fighter.

A : Yes.

Q : Did you take any action against those of your unit who took part in the killing of Bangabandhu?

A : No, it was not possible.

Q : You didn't witness anything that you told the court.

A : I told the court that I came to know from the officers. Besides, Major Noor and Major Dalmi later also met me and described all the stories.

Q : What action did you take against them after hearing from them?

A : I had no capacity then to take action against them as they themselves were running the government.

Q : You were informed earlier about the August 15 incident as they themselves were running the government.

A : No, it was not possible.

Q : You didn't witness anything that you told the court.

A : I told the court that I came to know from the officers. Besides, Major Noor and Major Dalmi later also met me and described all the stories.

Q : What was the position of Lt Col Salahuddin?

A : He was the Director, Military Intelligence. Now he is a businessman.

Q : And Lt Col Anwar Hossain?

A : He is a retired Major General.

Q : Who shifted the Field Intelligence Unit (FIU) from your brigade?

A : It was made at the order of army headquarters.

Q : Was your opinion sought before the unit was shifted?

A : There is no provision in army to take opinion in such cases.