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Research Article

Development Induced Displacement: Key Aspect of Thar Coal Project in Sindh

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate relationship between development projects and the subsequent displacement of communities, especially concerning significant infrastructure and urban growth challenges. Development-Induced Displacement (DID) refers to the forced physical and/or economic relocation of individuals resulting from development activities. Since the beginning of Thar coal project, it has been source of debate over a number of with a number of social and environmental issues. This study has been designed to primarily focus on the key aspects of displacement of local communities, which is brought by the development of the Thar coal project. The Introduction part elaborates importance of Thar desert along with its reservoirs which make it the richest coal mine. Besides, other social, environmental and health issues created by Thar coal mining are highlighted in the Literature Review. Development induced displacement has been a key issue in all regions of the world and mining induced development has increased over last many decades especially in South Asian developing countries as they heavily rely on coal reservoirs to meet their energy needs. The paper sheds light on the displacement in Thar desert, the land disputes with the companies, and the key concerns of the locals. The circumstances compelled people to record protests and forward their demands to protect their rights. The paper also discusses the land resettlement policies and patterns of land utilization. For this research qualitative approach has been used and data have been taken from secondary sources. This paper recommends some viable options to secure the land rights of the locals.

Key Words: Development, Displacement, Tharparkar, Coal, Land, Mining



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INTRODUCTION

The Thar coal field spans 140 kilometers in length and 65 kilometers in width, covering more than 9,100 square kilometers; it has undergone extensive exploration and research since its discovery in 1988. These coal reserves are estimated to be 175.5 billion tons, located within the Thar Desert of Pakistan. The coal field represents the largest desert region in the Tharparkar District. Consequently, the extensive area has been subdivided into smaller sections (blocks). These blocks were surveyed by the experts of Sindh Government which have been affected by the project. The size and quantity of coal deposits in these blocks vary. The Government of Sindh has assigned six blocks to different companies for coal development initiatives. The Government of Sindh has designated thirteen blocks within the expansive Thar coal field area located near Islamkot Town in the Tharparkar District. The Thar Desert, which spans the southeastern border of Pakistan and the northwestern border of India, encompasses a vast area of 200,000 square kilometers (around 77,000 square

miles), which makes it the ninth-largest desert worldwide. Tharparkar, the most extensive desert region in Pakistan, is inhabited by 1.5 million individuals. Unlike many other deserts, the Thar Desert is not completely barren or dry; during the monsoon season, the golden dunes of Tharparkar are transformed into verdant landscapes, captivating those who observe them (Aman, 2024).

Despite its natural charm, Tharparkar is one of the most underdeveloped areas in Pakistan, holding the 32nd position in national socioeconomic indicators. The district is frequently linked with issues like hunger, famine, malnutrition, and fatalities resulting from water shortages. While these problems exist, they only provide a partial view of the situation. Tharparkar is also recognized as one of the planet's most fertile deserts, brimming with diverse flora, fauna, and wildlife. The variety found within the desert is astonishing; in certain regions, fresh water can be accessed at just 50 feet below the surface, while in other areas, it can be found at a depth of 300 feet (Aman, 2024).

The establishment of the Thar coal mine in Pakistan's Sindh province holds the promise of enhancing energy security in the area. The mine is projected to yield around 6.8 billion tons of coal, which could be utilized for electricity generation and to fulfill the needs of various energy-demanding industries. This development could diminish Pakistan's dependence on fuel imports and bolster its energy independence. The Thar coal mine is anticipated to produce roughly 660 MW of electricity. That coal can generate 100,000 MW for the next 250 years, indicating a heightened interest in industrial development and fostering socio-economic connections with developed nations. (Raza et al., 2020) Utilizing domestic coal resources may also help lower greenhouse gas emissions, as it can substitute for more carbon-heavy energy sources, including oil and gas.

Nevertheless, coal mining operations in the Thar area of Sindh have significantly influenced the local communities, affecting social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Extensive land acquisition for coal extraction has resulted in the displacement of many residents, displacing them from their homes and farmland and interrupting their essential infrastructure and livelihoods. The rapid changes in the region have further affected local culture, traditions, and lifestyles, as external forces have led to notable social transformations. Leela Ram, a petitioner, stated that the mining firm plans to dispose of wastewater across 2,700 acres of arable land and forestry. "This will have a direct impact on 15 significant villages inhabited by 15,000 individuals, leading to the death of 200,000 trees, compelling all these people to leave their hometowns," Leela Ram asserted (Guriro, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over 175 billion tons of lignite coal have been discovered across more than 9,000 square kilometers in the Thar desert, which borders India on Pakistan's side. These reserves are comparable to the total oil reserves of Saudi Arabia and Iran when considering heating value. Ahsan Iqbal, the Federal Minister for Planning and Development, states that the coal in Thar could sustain Pakistan for 400 years. Currently, the plan includes the installation of two transmission lines at Matiari—one directed to Lahore and the other to Faisalabad—which will integrate with the national grid to benefit all regions of the country.

The SECMC has been allocated only 100 square kilometers out of the total coal reserve to extract roughly 1.57 billion tons (1 percent of the full reserve) for the aim of producing 5,000 MW over 50 years. The coal extraction will employ the open pit method. Excavation activities are being conducted both during the day and at night, and a 650 MW coal power plant utilizing subcritical technology is under construction, which is expected to begin supplying electricity to the national grid by June 2019.

The cost of mining is estimated to be \$845 million, with \$211 million coming from equity and the balance financed through debt, while the power plant is projected to cost an impressive \$1.1 billion, which includes \$277 million in equity and the rest as debt. The mining company has already secured a portion of the land. Mohsin Babbar from SECMC reports that over 200 acres have been purchased from local villagers for Rs300,000 per acre. Furthermore, there are 700 acres designated as state land. "That leaves us with just 500 acres where there are ongoing disputes," says Babbar, who remains optimistic that the matter will be settled soon (Ebrahim, 2017).

The Thar coal mine, situated in the Thar Desert in Sindh, Pakistan, has been regarded as a potentially transformative force for the nation's energy landscape due to its extensive coal resources. Nonetheless, there are several troubling aspects related to its development and functioning. These issues encompass environmental, social, and economic challenges: The reservoir is expected to hold approximately 30 to 35 cusecs of brine from the coal mine over the upcoming three years, and residents from the 12 villages claim this will pollute roughly 30 wells that supply water to a community of over 15,000 people and their livestock across 2,700 acres. However, that is not the full picture. In

addition to tainting the water, the locals argue that the wastewater will infiltrate the ground, making nearly 1,500 acres of land unsuitable for farming or grazing indefinitely (Ebrahim, 2017).

The research examines the effects of mining and energy production in Thar over a 30-year timeframe by analyzing coal blocks one, two, and six, utilizing data supplied by the companies engaged in mining and energy generation (Hasan, 2020). Its results indicate that Thar is projected to become a significant source of air pollution, as well as a hotspot for mercury and CO₂ emissions in South Asia, which could lead to approximately 29,000 fatalities linked to air pollution, 40,000 emergency room visits for asthma, 19,906 new asthma diagnoses in children, and 32,000 premature births, among other issues (Hasan, 2020). An estimated 1,400kg of mercury will be released annually from the nine coal power plants evaluated, with 320kg of that expected to fall within the local area, posing a serious public health threat to the 100,000 indigenous individuals residing near the project sites (Hasan, 2020).

Despite the employment opportunities created by mining projects in Thar, Akash highlights that most of these advantages have benefited outsiders, leaving residents with only entry-level labor jobs and lacking representation in decision-making processes. The displacement from homes and farmland has further weakened the local economy, increasing the challenges faced by the community. Akash does not accept the media's depiction of Thar as merely a place of thirst, hunger, and death. He affirms that the people of Thar are self-sufficient, environmentally aware, and have a distinctive way of life that is now at risk due to the coal project (Aman, 2024).

Agriculture plays a vital role in Sindh's economy, and mining activities could disturb local farming practices. Redirecting water for the coal project may impact irrigation for crops and affect local farmers' livelihoods. "Twenty percent of the mercury released by the coal power plants would end up being deposited into the land ecosystems in that area. The majority of this deposition would occur on agricultural land, resulting in higher mercury levels in crops," stated the lead analyst of CREA (Hasan, 2020).

Kamran Khosa, a researcher at the Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development, a think tank focused on climate justice, states that the livelihoods in the Thar desert are closely tied to land. "However, gauchars hold greater significance [for the indigenous people] than agricultural land. Agriculture is sporadic due to the frequent droughts in Thar," she notes, adding that "their survival hinges on livestock." In his research, Khosa has discovered that the livestock numbers in certain villages have plummeted by 20 to 70 percent due to the loss of gauchar (Kamran, 2024).

Development Induced Displacement

Displacement has significantly affected the lives of nearly 200 million people worldwide over the past twenty years (Cernea & McDowell, Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees, 2000). Forced or induced displacement refers to the removal of people from their homes and land against their will, followed by their relocation to a different area; it is commonly equated with resettlement. A majority of these resettlement efforts are carried out under the guise of development (Downing, 2002).

Across the world, the problem of displacement and resettlement caused by mining activities is regarded as a significant threat to both environmental and social sustainability. The seriousness of this issue can be illustrated by the comments made in the policy of the World Bank Group:

The experiences of the Bank show that if involuntary resettlement occurs during development projects without proper measures taken, it frequently leads to severe economic, social, and environmental challenges: productive systems are disrupted; individuals may face poverty when they lose their productive assets or income sources; people are moved to environments where their skills may not be as useful and where resource competition is heightened; community institutions and social networks are weakened; kinship groups are scattered; and cultural identity, traditional authority, and the possibilities for mutual assistance are reduced or entirely lost (World Bank, 2001).

The Asian Development Bank defines affected individuals as those who, as a result of a development project, lose both their physical and non-physical assets. This includes homes, social connections, agricultural land, environmental resources like forests and rangelands, significant heritage sites, past income opportunities, and aspects of social and cultural capital (ADB, 1998).

Mining induced Displacement

The idea that displacement caused by mining will be a significant issue in the future is complex due to various factors, such as valuable mineral deposits often being located in regions where acquisition costs are low for corporations and the local populations having little political power to resist. Such communities are primarily found in developing countries, including those in South Asia. In this context, India has emerged as a key indicator of displacement challenges (Downing, 2002). The Indian government has reported that since gaining independence, over 30 million people have been displaced due to development initiatives, with many still awaiting rehabilitation

(Mahapatra, 1999). The problem of displacement in South Asia has intensified to the point where some individuals have been displaced multiple times, resulting in a transient population of development-induced impoverished individuals (Downing, 2002).

In India, an approximate estimate indicates that mining has resulted in the displacement of 2.5 million individuals since the 1950s (IGNOU, 2001). The rate of displacement caused by mining has increased significantly since the 1970s, largely due to the transition from underground coal mining to open-cast mining, which increased from 40 to 156 million tons during the 1980s. Similar instances of mining-related displacement have been observed in countries such as Venezuela, Suriname, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Indonesia, Guyana, Honduras, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, Argentina, and Chile. It has been predicted that the occurrence of induced displacement will likely grow due to the globalization of mining policies, as multinational corporations favor open-cast mining, particularly because the population density in rural regions is escalating (FIAN, 2001).

Displacement of Local Communities in Thar

The establishment of the Thar coal mine has resulted in the forced relocation of indigenous populations. Numerous villagers residing near the mining site have been moved, often without adequate compensation or effective resettlement strategies. This situation has sparked protests and opposition from the residents. According to a report, 75 percent of the land in Thar would be utilized under different titles for Thar coal, resulting in the displacement of people. "The natural beauty of Thar will also be impacted" (n.a., 2020). The ACJCE research examined 10 village communities with a combined population of roughly 30,000, who have access to 78,000 acres of land for both cultivation and grazing. This region is predominantly Hindu and is recognized as one of the most impoverished areas in Pakistan. In 2019, it faced its third consecutive year of drought conditions (Khan, 2021).

The research revealed that half of the total land within the studied villages has been, or is anticipated to be, taken for the Thar coal projects, and six out of the ten village communities foresee "complete displacement." According to the study, "There is a general uncertainty among communities and families whose land is not directly acquired, but are certain to be displaced due to ecological and environmental problems." It is projected that between 80% and 100% of the surveyed communities in Blocks I and II of the coal mining regions will likely be displaced (Khan, 2021).

Irshad Laghari, a journalist from Sindh, illustrates how coal mining has altered the landscape of the Thar Desert (Aman, 2024). Currently, two significant coal projects are in progress, causing the displacement of communities that have inhabited the region for generations. Although the government has relocated these communities to newly created villages, Irshad notes that the residents were hesitant to leave their ancestral territories. The government attracted them with assurances of a promising future, yet many of these commitments have not been fulfilled, resulting in widespread disillusionment. Irshad advises that the government should rethink its plans to expand the coal project to additional blocks, taking into account the lessons learned from the ongoing projects.

The acquisition of land for coal mining in Tharparkar took place under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, a colonial law that allows the government to take ownership of citizens' land. Nonetheless, this legislation has faced criticism for not ensuring public consent, equitable compensation, and transparency, which has resulted in cases of forced displacement (Aman, 2024).

A report from Human Rights Watch emphasizes that this antiquated law fails to align with contemporary needs or international human rights standards, urging for urgent reforms. In Thar, concerns regarding transparency and adequate compensation have emerged during the process of acquiring local lands, and these issues must be addressed. There are worries that the anticipated job opportunities and economic advantages have not been fully realized for these communities, leaving many without adequate support.

However, it can be argued that it will not be sustainable without land reforms and subsequent redistribution of land and redefining land ownership rights. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023).

Public Resentment and Protest

Numerous protests have occurred throughout Sindh Province since the commencement of projects in the Thar Desert area. In December, a large number of residents from Tharparkar and Umerkot districts traveled to Karachi to demonstrate against the BRI-related initiatives. Protesters claimed that the BRI projects are failing to benefit the local community and are instead harming the environment, traditional livelihoods, and leading to homelessness as workers demolish villages. Most residents of the Thar region depend on livestock and agriculture, which rely on rainfall. "As part of corporate social responsibility, the projects are expected to provide jobs, quality education, and healthcare services to the residents, yet, regrettably, the mining companies have neglected their social responsibilities", stated Lala Bheel, one of the organizers of the protest (Rehman, 2020).

Due to growing unemployment, deep resentment and hopelessness have caused unrest among the local youth, leading many to take their own lives, he mentioned. According to data from regional police, there were at least 133 suicides in Tharparkar and Umerkot districts in 2019 (Rehman, 2020). Protesters also claimed that the projects took land from villagers in the Thar region without their consent. Gorano village is one of twelve villages impacted by the construction of a reservoir for the purpose of storing surplus salt water from the mining sites associated with the project.

In June 2016, residents submitted a petition to the Sindh High Court, arguing that the project had wrongfully acquired land under the urgency clause specified in the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, without the consent of the landowners (Rehman, 2020). The villagers of Gorano, conducted a series of protests from June 2016 to July 2018 in various locations throughout the province, including Karachi. The land was "forcibly and deceitfully taken," remarked Bheem Raj, a spokesperson for the affected villagers of Gorano who participated in the December protest in Karachi (Rehman, 2020).

KEY DEMANDS OF PROTESTORS

1. A primary demand was an equitable share of royalties from the Thar coal initiative. The demonstrators contended that a sufficient amount of profits should be used to promote local development. They also requested a detailed 'Thar Land Grant Policy' that would enable families to rent their lands to the project instead of enduring permanent displacement (Arisar, 2024). "This issue extends beyond land; it's about safeguarding our heritage and way of life," expressed Hemraj Bheel, an activist and lawyer. It is the constitutional responsibility of the Government to protect local communities and their resources (Arisar, 2024).
2. The protesters submitted a Charter of Demands and raised their concerns. They demanded mapping of the impacted areas and the inclusion of displaced communities in the revised resettlement plans.
3. They also demanded the immediate allocation of 1,000 acres for grazing and 500 acres for resettlement to assist the displaced villagers, along with fair distribution of royalties and job priority for locals, as pledged in agreements between Engro and the government (Arisar, 2024).
4. Protesters called for environmental protection of reducing pollution and safeguarding local flora, fauna, and human health.
5. They demand to ensure their access to clean drinking water, scholarships for youth, and job opportunities for residents of Thar.
6. Protesters demanded that their contributions to the national economy be acknowledged by providing them opportunities for participation (Arisar, 2024).
7. The protesters highlighted the environmental damage caused by the project, referring to respiratory illnesses, polluted water, and devastated crops. They argued that in the absence of protective measures, the projects have severely harmed local ecosystems and jeopardized community health.

RESETTLEMENT POLICIES IN PAKISTAN

The Land Acquisition Act 1894

The Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894 is utilized for the collective acquisition of land for major development initiatives in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Act outlines the process for obtaining private properties for broader public interests. This Act inadequately addresses the challenges faced by communities. They raise concerns over unfair compensation, loss of assets, lack of job opportunities and lack of access to clean water and unavailability of land for agriculture and livestock grazing. Moreover, due to the lack of a resettlement policy in Pakistan, the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 is applied on an ad hoc basis for communities affected by the loss of their ancestral lands, livelihoods, and cultural traditions in the name of development. The LAA 1894 does not ensure project timelines but instead categorizes projects based solely on their funding sources. Federal and provincial budget priorities often result in insufficient allocation of necessary funds, which consequently delays payments to project-displaced individuals and hinders the timely execution of the project's resettlement plan.

Draft National Resettlement Policy (2002) & Draft Provincial Settlement Policy

This policy, formulated in 2002, not only addresses the individuals affected by projects within the current system but also offers a consistent and fair approach to resettlement issues nationwide. The National Resettlement Policy of 2002 is applicable to all major projects, including the construction of large dams, significant irrigation canals, infrastructure such as roads, highways, motorways, and development projects related to natural resource extraction,

including oil drilling and coal mining. This policy addresses the adverse effects of these developments such as the loss of income opportunities, disruption of community social networks, services, grazing land and pastures. The policy also deals with places of social and religious significance, including graveyards, mosques, shrines, and schools etc. It focuses on development projects that involve land acquisition, property loss, loss of livelihoods, and involuntary displacement. This policy also emphasizes the aspects that have not been covered by the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. Additionally, this policy also considers individuals or communities who have been affected but not displaced in these situations, such as through the loss of personal property or communal assets, including productive and shared resources. Unfortunately, the national resettlement policy of 2002 was never formalized as a legal document by the Government of Pakistan or any of its provincial governments. Similarly, the provincial bureaucracy of Sindh has recently drafted a policy for the resettlement and rehabilitation of people displaced by development projects. The policy was opened to public debate to discuss the objective of this policy i.e., provide reasonable compensation to people dislocated from sites and to mitigate their difficulties. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023). The absence of a resettlement policy framework in Pakistan has led the ADB delegation to conclude that the country does not adequately support its citizens who have been involuntarily displaced by infrastructure development projects. In the absence of established national and provincial resettlement policies, project developers and funding agencies are compelled to apply and execute their resettlement practices on available laws of colonial times such as Land Acquisition Act, which fails to address the challenges faced by individuals displaced by large-scale development initiatives. As a result, these pressing issues have sparked violent protests, culminating in confrontations between security personnel and those affected by the projects.

THAR LAND DISPUTES

The Land Acquisition Act of 1894, a vestige from the British colonial period, has been utilized to secure land for coal mining in Tharparkar (Aman, 2024). This statute allows the government to appropriate private land but has been criticized for not adhering to modern principles of public consent, proper compensation, and transparency. It has also raised alarms about the possibility of forced evictions.

Human Rights Watch rightly argues that this outdated legislation is not in accordance with current needs or international human rights norms and this calls for immediate reforms. In that region, issues regarding transparency and adequate compensation have emerged during the land acquisition process, demonstrating the urgent need for reforms and to tackle these problems effectively.

Muhammad Badar Alama, previously a journalist and now affiliated with the research organization PRIDE, contends that the media often mirrors the interests of the government or the corporations involved (Aman, 2024). He criticizes the media's depiction of Thar, asserting that it wrongly portrays the Thar coal initiatives as advantageous for national economic growth, categorizing this representation as propaganda. Alama notes that the media overlooks the difficulties faced by the local community because of these projects. While mainstream media does not play an effective role in highlighting the deprivation of people of Thar region. The media largely ignores the concerns of indigenous people regarding the way land is being taken away from them.

For example, the construction of dam required only four acres of land, but they were taking 40 acres. "They informed us they needed 40 acres, yet they have taken over 80 acres of land. The government has no strategy in place for their resettlement." Saeed Baloch, the General Secretary of the PFF (n.a., 2020).

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

In Tharparkar, small number of individuals possess legal titles and land ownership rights. It is common for land ownership in the area to be undocumented and inherited. Many individuals have been farming vast expanses of land for generations, despite it not legally belonging to them. Additionally, the local community utilizes communal land for the purpose of grazing, drinking and irrigation.

A major point of contention surrounding the project is the appropriation of communal land. The local community protesting against the reservoirs argues that they have lost access to communal land, and their plots, which they have cultivated for generations, have fallen under the land disposal scheme. In a newspaper interview, SECMC acknowledged that out of the 1,500 acres, 532 acres are privately owned, while the remainder consists of communal grazing land. There is also a disagreement regarding the total area of land acquired for the project. SECMC claims to have taken only 1,400 acres, whereas villagers argue that the area in question is 2,700 acres.

Harassment of the Community

One notable aspect of the opposition against the Gorano and Dukkar Cho reservoirs—characterized by a year-long demonstration, mobilization efforts, and a legal petition—is the way the state chose to respond with a heavy-handed approach to the community's dissent.

The protests led to the formation of two mobilization groups: Thar Sujag Sath and Thar Voice Forum. These groups were initiated by activists and professionals from Tharparkar. Activists involved in both movements, who prefer to remain unnamed, report experiences of harassment and threats while campaigning on this issue. “The Engro Management even threatened to use force to control the protests against the Gorano Dam”.

The activist affiliated with the movement, Dileep Doshi from Thar Sujag Sath, also confronted the threat of a fabricated blasphemy charge when a local religious group filed a complaint against him (Qureshi and Shaukat, n.a.). Ultimately, the coal reservoir was constructed, disregarding the local community's opposition concerning the detrimental effects of the project on their livelihoods and the environment.

Unfair Compensations

The Land Acquisition Act extends the definition of “public purpose” to encompass private profit-making, which leads to inequitable compensation, especially in regions with a stagnant land market. The legislation includes a frequently utilized “urgency” clause that strips individuals of their rights to contest acquisition, compensation determinations, and procedural shortcomings. This law has consistently resulted in delays in compensation without rate adjustments and has no clear provisions or obligations for resettlement and rehabilitation.

An assessment revealed that half of the land in the examined villages has been, or will be, taken for the Thar coal projects, with six out of ten village communities anticipating “total displacement.” It is predicted that the overall displacement in Blocks I and II of the coal-producing region will reach 80-100 percent for the communities surveyed. “There exists a pervasive sense of uncertainty among families and communities whose land is not directly taken but who will undeniably face displacement due to ecological and environmental issues,” the report states.

Out of the ten villages surveyed, only three indicated that a public hearing had occurred; in one instance, this was merely a visit by officials from a Thar coal company.

The study highlights significant inconsistencies in the type, quantity, process, and timing of compensation awards. Most residents from the surveyed villages reported that there had been no determination of the “house rate” for compensation, and that varying rates were extended to different communities at different times. Some communities have only received an initial payment and are struggling to buy new homes. In surrounding areas, such as Islamkot, land prices have surged due to increased demand, far surpassing any compensation amounts. It has been noted that some communities were promised jobs and monthly payments to compensate for the loss of their livelihoods, yet the majority reported receiving neither the monthly payments nor job opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focuses on displacement caused by development. As a result, indigenous communities are forced to abandon their ancestral lands for the greater good of the nation. Indigenous populations experience the loss of their land, housing, livelihoods, and social connections. There are several social, economic, and environmental effects on the Thar region. The Thar Coal Project in Pakistan, particularly Thar Block II, focuses on establishing a significant coal mine along with connected power plants. A primary concern in extensive infrastructure projects is the matter of displacement, affecting both local populations and the environment. Thus, the following recommendations can be useful for dealing with the issues of displacement.

Partnership Strategy

Individuals should be included as partners in the initiative, as recommended by Dr. Sono Khangharani in the seminar. He argued that the project was not designed to assist the local Thar community, and that if the government genuinely cared about the well-being of the Thari people, it would have involved them as partners in the project or leased the land from them to provide a consistent source of income. Instead, the government and Engro purchased the land, depriving the Thari people of their resources, displacing many members of the community. The funds allocated to the Thar people are not effective in improving their dire circumstances; rather, the government should have provided them with assets that could be advantageous in the long term. By involving residents as partners in the project, both the government and Engro can guarantee that the Thar people receive tangible and sustainable benefits from it.

Community Engagement and Empowerment

To mitigate the adverse social and psychological impacts of the Thar coal mine on surrounding communities. The

government needs to foster community involvement and empowerment engaging residents in the planning and decision-making processes. It is crucial to incorporate the perspectives of the affected communities in the decision-making process, ensuring that their opinions are acknowledged and their concerns are addressed. This could involve creating channels for consultation and dialogue with local populations, such as forming community advisory boards or hosting public meetings, and making sure that the thoughts and worries of local communities are considered when decisions about the mine are made.

Improvements to Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure development that serves local communities can be an effective approach to mitigate the adverse sociological and psychological impacts of the Thar coal mine on residents and enhance infrastructure. By building new roads, establishing educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other public resources, communities can access vital services and amenities that can elevate their quality of life and overall well-being. To guarantee the effectiveness of infrastructure initiatives, it is crucial to implement, maintain, and operate them in alignment with the needs and preferences of local communities. Furthermore, exploring partnerships or collaborations with local organizations or entities may be beneficial in facilitating the development of infrastructure projects. This could involve cooperating with local governments, NGOs, or community organizations to identify infrastructure requirements and devise and execute projects that serve the interests of local communities.

Livelihoods for the Locals

1. The Thari community seeks to reduce its dependence on rainfall in the long term. A system should be established to divert river water by constructing new canals and installing pipelines for both drinking and agricultural needs, which would enhance stability and growth in livelihoods.
2. Priority should be given to creating business opportunities for local residents by offering them financial support and incentives.
- 3 The provincial government has provided food packages for the people, but there is a lack of assistance for livestock and local animals. A long-term solution is required for establishing fodder banks and safeguarding grazing areas for livestock.

Thorough Resettlement Action Plan (RAP)

1. Impact Assessment: Perform an extensive social and environmental impact assessment (SEIA) to grasp the complete extent of displacement, encompassing both physical displacement (people needing to relocate from their homes) and economic displacement (loss of livelihoods).
2. Engagement with Affected Communities: Involve affected communities from the beginning of the planning process. Local engagement is crucial to build trust and ensure that their concerns are acknowledged.
3. Compensation Packages: The Government needs to make sure that compensation for displaced communities is equitable, transparent, and sufficient to restore or enhance their livelihoods. This should encompass financial compensation, land-for-land options, and access to housing, healthcare, and education.
4. Programs for Livelihood Restoration: We need to create comprehensive initiatives to recover the livelihoods of affected communities, including job opportunities within the project, vocational training, and alternative economic prospects.

Land Acquisition and Provision of Alternative Land

1. There is no mechanism to deal with such procedural complications in resettlement and dislocation without amending the colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894. Forced dislocation of people, free labor, exploitation of local resources should be avoided and the policy for displacement must be protected by legislative process. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023)
2. Equitable Land Acquisition: The Government must strictly follow legal and ethical guidelines for land acquisition. Confirm that the procedure is open, fair, and aligns with international standards, including acquiring free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from the affected communities.
3. Providing Alternative Livelihoods and Land: If returning to their original properties isn't possible for displaced individuals, they should be offered alternative agricultural land, housing, or business opportunities. Forced dislocation of people, free labor, exploitation of local resources must be avoided and the policy for displacement must be protected by legislative process. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023)

Land Allotment Policy

The land allotment policy should also be revised to promote forestland to reduce the escalation in environmental degradation caused by deforestation. National resettlement policy must be revised in the light of issue of

displacement. Further, the provincial policy of resettlement should also be further debated and revised keeping in view the difficulties of displaced people. It can be argued that these policies will not be sustainable without land reforms and subsequent redistribution of land and redefining land ownership rights. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023). In addition, Government needs to develop mechanism to deal with legal complications. Thus, amendments must be made in the colonial land Acquisition Act 1894. (S. Ahmed, Mahesar 2023)

Initiatives for Community Development

1. Essential Infrastructure and Services: As part of the resettlement process, Government needs to ensure that displaced communities have access to crucial infrastructure (roads, water, sanitation, electricity, schools, and healthcare services). Enhancing living conditions in resettlement zones can help alleviate negative consequences.
2. Social Integration Programs: Initiatives focused on social integration can assist displaced individuals in adapting to their new environment, including education about the project's benefits, cultural integration, and access to social safety nets.

Creation of Jobs and Skills Development

1. Employment for Locals: The coal project authorities must prioritize hiring residents for the project. Offer training and skill development initiatives for displaced individuals to enable them to work in the coal mines, power plants, or related infrastructure projects.
2. Support for Local Businesses: Concerned authorities must encourage the establishment of small local businesses by providing microcredit access and business development assistance.

Mitigation of Environmental Impact and Community Health

1. Plans for Environmental Protection: To tackle potential adverse environmental consequences of mining activities on nearby communities, such as air pollution, water contamination, and land degradation, the Ministry of Climate Change and environmental protection agencies must implement monitoring frameworks and mitigation measures to lessen these impacts.
2. Health Services and Monitoring: There is great need for developing health monitoring initiatives and providing healthcare access to both displaced and host communities, focusing on addressing health risks associated with industrial activities.

Strengthening Legal and Institutional Frameworks

1. Establish Independent Monitoring: The authorities should create independent monitoring organizations to ensure adherence to all social and environmental standards throughout the project's execution. These organizations should include representatives from civil society and affected communities.
2. Accessible Grievance Mechanism: The management of the project should set up a transparent and reachable grievance redressal system to swiftly and effectively address concerns or complaints from displaced communities.

Planning for Sustainable Development and Long-Term Strategy

1. Commitment to Long-term Sustainability: The Government should ensure that development is sustainable from both environmental and social perspectives. This encompasses implementing community development plans post-project, including lasting economic opportunities and community involvement.
2. Ongoing Support for Communities After Project Completion: Following the initial resettlement phase, ongoing community development efforts should be upheld to ensure enduring advantages for the displaced populations.

Role of Government and NGOs

1. Active Government Involvement: The government should take a proactive role in monitoring the rehabilitation efforts to guarantee that the project aligns with both national development objectives and global best practices.
2. Collaboration with NGOs: Partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in displacement matters that need to offer expertise, advocacy, and on-site assistance to impacted communities.
3. By adopting these suggestions, the Thar Coal Project can alleviate the negative impact of displacement, and it can support the economic advancement of the area, and ensure that the communities affected do not miss out on the benefits of the project.

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