

Relocation and Resilience: A Case study from Sariska Tiger Reserve

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Abstract

India have set up more than 980 protected areas with the primary aim of conserving biodiversity. Human habitation and use of natural resources are forbidden within these protected areas. However, biomass extraction including grazing and fuelwood collection is common from communities residing inside or situated in periphery of the protected areas (Kothari *et al.*, 1989; Pande, 2005). Biomass extraction is observed as the most serious warning to biodiversity by forest authorities, therefore relocation has become a primary objective to create inviolate spaces for biodiversity conservation. Role of these inviolate spaces is considered significant in large forest habitats for nourishment of biodiversity and reduction of human-wildlife conflicts (Soule & Terborgh, 1995; Karanth, 2005).

Relocation of villages have implications on socioeconomic status of forest dependent people, however studies have often ignored the well-being of people after relocation. Sariska Tiger Reserve has undertaken relocation as one of its key programmes for biodiversity conservation. Sariska has a long relocation history, Karnkawas and Kraska were the first relocated programs in the reserve in 1977 (Johari, 2003). The recent project in Sariska comprised relocation of 493 households from villages of Umri, Deori, Kankwari, Haripura etc (Sahabuddin *et al.*, 2007). Relocation programs in Sariska are on anvil since 2000, after complete extinction of tigers in 2005, government felt the need for relocation and people were seen as the main reason for tiger loss due to hunting and poaching pressures.

In my study I took a field work of analysing the ground realities of relocation in Sariska Tiger Reserve. The objectives of the study suggest: (1) documenting the perception of forest department and communities towards relocation. (2) analysing the resilience of communities in “Relocated” and “To be Relocated” sites. My study includes the use of sociological survey techniques including questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews, observatory analysis, focused group discussion etc. The study was conducted in two relocated sites (1) Rundh Maujpur (2) Bardod Rundh and future projects villages for relocation Kankwari, Haripura,

Lilunda and Kraska. 86 households were surveyed in relocated sites and 96 households were surveyed inside the core zone of Sariska. Results of Resilience have been quantified through abstract and non-abstract measurable.

The finding in the study shows that, the influence of local inhabitants on relocation process is very limited. Forest department and local authorities need to retrospect their notion of conservation and rethink their plan for relocation. Results for the resilience measurable in the study shows that relocation facilitation have improved educational accessibility, decreased natural resource dependency, increased livelihood options, development of basic infrastructural facilities and enhanced material assets. The result also found that the involvement of local communities is still foreseen from organizational lens. Local knowledge and potential of communities in management of resources is underestimated in the relocation process at Sariska Tiger Reserve.

Based on my results I conclude that execution process of relocation is yet to be more community inclusive in Sarsika Tiger Reserve. My study reiterates that the relocation process should be more decentralised, should involve NGOs and social organisations in implementation. Execution of propose plan in relocation needs more focus from forest authorities. The scope for improvement is present in community concerning issues for relocation, notifying the need of basic amenities. The relocation package proposes pre-planned meetings with community members which is missing in case of relocation of STR. Inclusion of the opinions of stakeholder community in relocation package needs more consideration and issues resulting with relocation needs instant actions. A success of any relocation project cannot be just determined by achieving ecological objectives, consideration of attaining social requirements is also equally significant.