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**Involuntary Resettlement: Comparative Perspectives, edited by
Robert Picciotto, Warren van Wicklin & Edward Rice**

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Involuntary Resettlement: Comparative Perspectives. Edited by Robert Picciotto, Warren van Wicklin, & Edward Rice. New Brunswick, NJ & London: Transaction Publishers, 2001. Pp. 146. \$35.95 cloth, \$22.45 paper.

In the controversial field of large-dam development, the World Bank is considered either a messiah or a pariah. *Involuntary Resettlement: Comparative Perspectives* is the second in a series designed by the World Bank to evaluate the development of its projects. *Involuntary Resettlement* does not seek to question the validity of large dam projects, nor does it address the ethical issues surrounding the controversy of the resettlement of large populations. Instead, the editors offer a broad view of dam building projects, review the outcomes of Bank policy, extract lessons from experience, and assess outside criticism.

The dilemma posed by large dams, according to the editors, is that of harmonizing development with the environment. The editors, all current or former Bank administrators, utilize a case-study method for assessment. They focus on eight dam projects in six countries: the Upper Krishna and Maharashtra projects in India, the Shuikou and Yantan projects in China, the Pak Mun dam in Thailand, the Kedung Ombo project in Indonesia, the Itaparica dam in Brazil, and the Nangbeto dam in Togo. These projects were selected because their appraisals came after imposition of World Bank resettlement guidelines but simultaneous with Bank efforts to strengthen the guidelines.

The Bank first implemented the guidelines for resettlement policies in the 1980s. These policies, which aim to mitigate the impact of large-scale projects on local populations, are the book's focus. Policies are assessed with respect to displacement, resettlement, compensation, social infrastructure and services, environmental effects, and the restoration of income for those affected.

Displacement has, of course, been the primary cause of concern when analyzing the human factor of large dam development. The projects selected for this study, as a whole, have displaced four times as many people as other World Bank dam projects. The largest resettlement project in Bank history is the Upper Krishna project in India, which displaced 240,000 people. India's Maharashtra project displaced an additional 40,000, while the Shikou and Yantan projects in China displaced 84,400 and 43,200 respectively. The remaining four projects discussed in the book, Itaparica, Nangbeto, Pak Mun, and Kedung Ombo, displaced a combined 89,000 people.

Involuntary Resettlement argues that project compensation rates and schedules are improving in terms of fairness and timeliness. It states that "[g]overnments are moving toward broad acceptance of the principle that displaced families should be paid the real value of their lost assets." (6). The editors then go on to illustrate the difficulties arising

out of each project regarding compensation, difficulties that as a whole contradict the assertion of improvement. For instance, in Togo, families were paid a lump sum long before it became necessary to resettle so that when the necessity arose the money had already been spent. In Kedung Ombo and in both Indian projects, compensation was inadequate to replace the land lost during resettlement and only served to inflate market prices for the limited land that was available. At Pak Mun, while compensation for land was generous, compensation for damage to the local fishing industry was inadequate.

Dissatisfaction with compensation rates and project building and resettlement schedules has negatively impacted the generally positive ratings that accompany World Bank implementation of social infrastructure and services, which are the most successful components of each of the resettlement projects analyzed in this book. However, these successes are counteracted by resettler dissatisfaction with poor supporting services. When the project authorities inevitably leave, the local authorities are unable to meet the costs of maintenance and operation necessary to operate the supporting services at full capacity.

Income restoration may be the most controversial part of resettlement. The efforts to restore lost incomes caused by these projects reveal a bleak history of the impoverishment and marginalization faced by resettlers after the loss of their traditional agriculture-based livelihoods. In all of the projects, except for the two in China, national governments, in large part, failed to address alternative sources of income after resettlement had ended; thus leaving people with a place to live but no work.

The results of income restoration policies vary due to the unique characteristics of each dam and several external factors. Significant factors include country commitment, resettler participation, and non-governmental organization (NGO) participation. Commitment by the Chinese government led to new standards in preparing for resettlement, far outdistancing the guidelines imposed by the World Bank. In contrast, the few positive steps taken by the government at Kedung Ombo were offset by the utter failure of the government to effectively administer the compensation program.

Resettler and NGO participation also affect the results of the resettlement. At Pak Mun, the active resistance of the resettlers and NGO protesters forced the project authorities to move the dam upstream and lower its height. The relocation reduced the power capacity of the dam by one third, but it also reduced the reservoir size by 60 percent and the number of affected people by 90 percent. Although resettler participation is increasing and usually leads to positive results, the editors considered NGO participation to be far from optimal, characterized by adversarial relationships and limited technical support or positive advocacy.

The editors conclude that the most important lessons learned thus far in the building of large dams concern the difference between results and plans, the limited capacity of public agencies, the different options for resettlement compensation, and the importance of borrower commitment. Better planning has not translated into better implementation in the area of involuntary resettlement. The editors note that Bank attention directed toward the planning for these eight projects was disproportionate to the attention directed to the results.

The editors also conclude that public sector agencies mishandle or ignore resettlement, with the big exception being China where public agencies were involved in the process at every stage. Public agencies, in conjunction with governments, must also develop different income restoration policies. While land-for-land policies are usually the most favored, they are not the only existing options, and the editors discuss the importance of recognizing alternatives. Finally, the editors conclude that genuine borrower commitment to resettlement is critical. Adequate resource allocation, creativity, and a willingness to listen to all players are necessary for successful development of large dams.

While the editors effectively recognize the limitations of World Bank policy in the area of involuntary resettlement and acknowledge the existence of criticism, their view of resettlement primarily focuses on the satisfactory levels of improvement and positive trends. In focusing on the positive aspects of resettlement policy and practice, this book minimizes the harsh reality faced by resettlers who have lost traditional means of subsistence and barely acknowledges the years of bitter protest that have accompanied many of these projects. While *Involuntary Resettlement: Comparative Perspectives* contributes significantly to the field of large dam development, it is important to note that it is not a critically objective account of these projects.

Depending on the reader's background, the issues presented in this book may be difficult to understand. Prior knowledge of World Bank goals, policies, and controversies helps but is not essential for the text to be effective. Despite an institutional bias, the scholarship is sound and the editors use World Bank reports and surveys that are appropriate and adequate for this study.

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