

# Resettlement and Rehabilitation: A Theoretical Retrospective on Michael Cernea's Framework

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## ABSTRACT

*Michael Cernea is a sociologist and anthropologist born in Romania who reestablished himself in the USA in 1974 where he has since lived and is widely recognized for introducing sociological and anthropological approaches into the World Bank. He worked as the World Bank's Senior Adviser for Sociology and Social Policy until 1997. At the World Bank, Cernea gradually recruited, established and led a large community of development sociologists and anthropologists, placing these social disciplines on the World Bank's intellectual map and broadening its skill mix. Cernea decisively helped to gain a place for development-oriented social research in the Bank and professional, applied sociological work in Bank's operations. He authored, or contributed to defining and writing, some of the Bank's main social policies, particularly its policies on involuntary population resettlement, on indigenous populations, protection of "chance finds" cultural artifacts, cooperation with NGOs, the World Bank strategy for cultural heritage preservation and management, water and irrigation, reforestation, agricultural extension, and others. In this context, his theoretical framework of "development-induced displacement and resettlement" is being retrospect vis-à-vis dams, displacement and rehabilitation.*

**Keywords:** Michael Cernea, Development-Induced-Displacement, Rehabilitation, Perspectives of Displacement

## INTRODUCTION:

In the 1950s and 1960s, it may be said that the dominant view in development was informed by modernization theory, which, put crudely, saw development as transforming traditional, simple, Third World societies into modern, complex, westernized ones. Seen in this light, large-scale, capital-intensive development projects accelerated the pace toward a brighter and better future. If people were uprooted along the way, that was deemed a necessary evil or even an actual good, since it made them more susceptible to change.<sup>38</sup> In recent decades, however, a "new development paradigm" has been articulated, one that promotes poverty reduction, environmental protection, social justice, and human rights. In this paradigm, development is seen as both bringing benefits and imposing costs. Among its greatest costs has been the involuntary displacement of millions of vulnerable people.

In 1994, a study of all World Bank-assisted development projects from 1986-1993 that entailed population displacement found that just over half were in the transportation, water supply, and urban infrastructure sectors.<sup>39</sup> Extrapolating from World Bank data to derive estimates of global figures, the study concluded that, in the early 1990s, the construction of 300 high dams (above 15 meters) each year had displaced 4 million

people. Urban and transportation infrastructure projects accounted for 6 million more displaced each year. Within one decade, according to a 1996 assessment, “at least 80 to 90 million people have been displaced by programs in only two development sectors.

Population displacement by development programs is now a worldwide problem, of a magnitude previously unsuspected. Moreover, ongoing industrialization, electrification, and urbanization processes are likely to increase, rather than decrease, the number of programs causing involuntary population displacement over the next 10 years.” Not only is development-induced displacement a widespread, and growing, phenomenon, but evidence suggests that while the beneficiaries of development are numerous, the costs are being borne disproportionately by the poorest and most marginalized populations. In India, for example, one study calculated that 2 percent of the total population had been displaced by development projects in the first forty years of the country’s independence (1951-1990). Of those displaced, however, 40 percent were tribal people though they comprise only 8 percent of the population. As author Arundhati Roy observed, “The ethnic ‘otherness’ of their victims takes some of the pressure off the nation builders. It’s like having an expense account. Someone else pays the bills.” In a 2002 study, the Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) documented the forcible eviction of 4.3 million people in 63 countries during the period 1998-2000.

These forced evictions occurred “largely as a result of development projects, discrimination, urban development schemes, gentrification, urban beautification, land alienation in both rural and urban areas, and in situations of armed conflict and ethnic cleansing, or their aftermath.” The COHRE study noted that “this compilation...captures only a representative cross-section of a much wider practice” and estimated that, as of 2002, there were over 3.6 million people threatened by forced eviction under existing plans and projects. Causes or categories of development-induced displacement includes water supply (dams, reservoirs, irrigation); urban infrastructure; transportation (roads, highways, canals); energy (mining, power plants, oil exploration and extraction, pipelines); agricultural expansion; parks and forest reserves; and population redistribution schemes.

Michael Cernea, a sociologist based at the World Bank who has researched development induced displacement and resettlement for two decades, points out that being forcibly ousted from one’s land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before displacement. Those displaced “are supposed to receive compensation of their lost assets, and effective assistance to re-establish themselves productively; yet this does not happen for a large portion of oustees.” Cernea’s impoverishment risk and reconstruction model proposes that “the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement.”

These are:

1. **Landlessness.** Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people’s productive systems, commercial activities, and livelihoods are constructed. This is the principal form of de-capitalization and pauperization of displaced people, as they lose both natural and human-made capital.

2. **Joblessness.** The risk of losing wage employment is very high both in urban and rural displacements for those employed in enterprises, services, or agriculture. Yet, creating new jobs is difficult and requires substantial investment. Unemployment or underemployment among resettlers often endures long after physical relocation has been completed.

3. **Homelessness.** Loss of shelter tends to be only temporary for many resettlers; but, for some, homelessness or a worsening in their housing standards remains lingering condition. In a broader cultural sense, loss of a family's individual home and the loss of a group's cultural space tend to result in alienation and status deprivation.

4. **Marginalization.** Marginalization occurs when families lose economic power and spiral on a “downward mobility” path. Many individuals cannot use their earlier acquired skills at the new location; human capital is lost or rendered inactive or obsolete. Economic marginalization is often accompanied by social and psychological marginalization, expressed in a drop in social status, in resettlers' loss of confidence in society and in themselves, a feeling of injustice, and deepened vulnerability.

5. **Food Insecurity.** Forced uprooting increases the risk that people will fall into temporary or chronic undernourishment, defined as calorie-protein intake levels below the minimum necessary for normal growth and work.

6. **Increased Morbidity and Mortality.** Massive population displacement threatens to cause serious decline in health levels. Displacement-induced social stress and psychological trauma are sometimes accompanied by the outbreak of relocation related illnesses, particularly parasitic and vector-borne diseases such as malaria and schistosomiasis. Unsafe water supply and improvised sewage systems increase vulnerability to epidemics and chronic diarrhea, dysentery, and so on. The weakest segments of the demographic spectrum—infants, children, and the elderly—are affected most strongly.

7. **Loss of Access to Common Property.** For poor people, loss of access to the common property assets that belonged to relocated communities (pastures, forest lands, water bodies, burial grounds, quarries, and so on) result in significant deterioration in income and livelihood levels.

8. **Social Disintegration.** The fundamental feature of forced displacement is that it causes a profound unraveling of existing patterns of social organization. This Unraveling occurs at many levels. When people are forcibly moved, production systems are dismantled. Long-established residential communities and settlements are disorganized, while kinship groups and family systems are often scattered. Life-sustaining informal social networks that provide mutual help are rendered non-functional. Trade linkages between producers and their customer base are interrupted, and local labor markets are disrupted. Formal and informal

associations, and self-organized services, are wiped out by the sudden scattering of their membership. Traditional management systems tend to lose their leaders.

The coerced abandonment of symbolic markers (such as ancestral shrines and graves) or of spatial contexts (such as mountains and rivers considered holy, or sacred trails) cuts off some of the physical and psychological linkages with the past and saps at the roots of the peoples' cultural identity. The cumulative effect is that the social fabric is torn apart.

Others have suggested the addition of other risks such as the loss of access to public services, loss of access to schooling for school-age children, and the loss of civil rights or abuse of human rights. Borrowing from Robert Muggah and Theodore Downing, this paper adds two additional risks intrinsic to displacement:

9. ***Loss of Access to Community Services.*** This could include anything from health clinics to educational facilities, but especially costly both in the short and long-term are lost or delayed opportunities for the education of children.

10. ***Violation of Human Rights.*** Displacement from one's habitual residence and the loss of property without fair compensation can, in itself, constitute a violation of human rights. In addition to violating economic and social rights, listed above, arbitrary displacement can also lead to violations of civil and political rights, including: arbitrary arrest, degrading treatment or punishment, temporary or permanent disenfranchisement and the loss of one's political voice. Finally, displacement carries not only the risk of human rights violations at the hands of state authorities and security forces but also the risk of communal violence when new settlers move in amongst existing populations. The impoverishment risk and reconstruction model already has been used to analyze several situations of internal displacement. Lakshman Mahapatra applied the model to India, where he estimates that as many as 25 million people have been displaced by development projects from 1947-1997.

## **CONCLUSION:**

With regard to the above conceptual framework, Michael Cernea's concept of development induced displacement was adopted for this study as he is a notable and widely knowledgeable personality in this field of research. The consensus among researchers is that impoverishment due to loss of capacity to generate income is the most apparent effect of DIDR. Additionally, displacement severs social ties which are often crucial for survival in indigenous communities. Loss of connection to historical, religious, symbolic or spatial locations resulting from forced migration diminishes cultural identity. Development-induced displaced persons, like refugees and internally displaced persons, experience psychological stress as well as feelings of helplessness and distrust towards their government and humanitarian groups. While the state is charged with protecting them as equal citizens, they are considered "others" and left to bear the cost for those who will benefit. Women

are disproportionately affected by DIDR as the loss of land used by women to generate economic worth further marginalizes their socio-economic standing as they become more dependent on their husbands.

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