



Impact of Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project on Development in Tribal Regions

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ABSTRACT

The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) is a proposed development project in India that aims to provide water for irrigation and drinking to the eastern districts of Rajasthan leading to improved agricultural productivity and income, reduced poverty, and improved quality of life. The project, if implemented, is expected to have a significant impact on tribal regions, both positive and negative. The paper reviews the existing literature to check the feasibility of the ERCP in the tribal dominated areas of the state and made some recommendations such as providing compensation and rehabilitation for displaced tribal people.

Keywords: Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project, tribal regions, development, impact

1. Main text

1.1 Introduction

Tribal communities in India constitute over 8% of the country's population. However, they remain among the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the country. Tribal regions in India suffer from high levels of poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition. They also lack access to basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare.

Development projects are often seen as a way to address the challenges faced by tribal regions. However, there is a growing concern that development projects can also have negative impacts on tribal communities. One such concern is that development projects can exacerbate existing development disparities between tribal and non-tribal regions.

This research paper examines the impact of the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) on development in tribal regions in Rajasthan. The ERCP is a proposed water transfer project that aims to divert surplus water from the Chambal River basin to the water-scarce eastern and south-eastern districts of Rajasthan. The project is expected to provide drinking water to over 50 million people and irrigation to over 2 million hectares of land.

The ERCP is expected to have a significant impact on tribal regions in Rajasthan. The project will involve the construction of a network of canals, reservoirs, and other infrastructure that will pass through several tribal-dominated areas. The project is also expected to lead to a significant increase in the demand for land and water in the region.

1.1.1 Case study of the ERCP and its impact on tribal regions:

The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) is a proposed water transfer project in India that aims to divert surplus water from the Chambal River basin to the water-scarce eastern and south-eastern districts of Rajasthan. The project will involve the construction of a network of canals, reservoirs, and other infrastructure to transfer water over a distance of over 500 kilometres. ERCP is one of the largest and most expensive water infrastructure projects in India which is expected to provide drinking water to over 50 million people and irrigation to over 2 million hectares of land. It will also help to improve the groundwater table and reduce the risk of drought in the region.

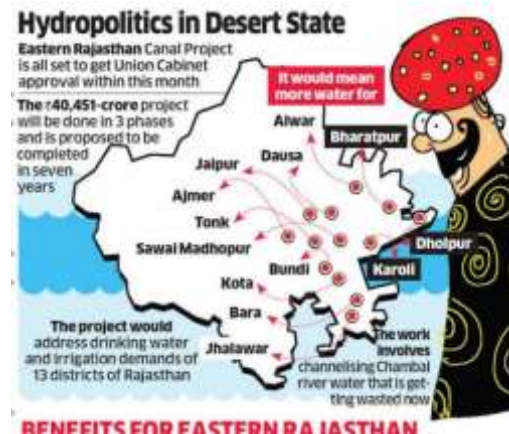


Figure 1: ERCP Route Plan (Source: <https://www.insightsonindia.com>)

The project was first proposed in the 1970s, but it has been delayed due to a number of factors, including environmental concerns and opposition from neighboring states. However, the project has gained renewed momentum in recent years, and the Rajasthan government has approved a financial proposal of Rs 14,200 crore for its construction.

The ERCP is a complex project with a number of potential benefits and drawbacks. It is important to carefully weigh the pros and cons of the project before making a decision about whether to proceed with its construction.

Potential benefits of the ERCP:

- Provide drinking water to over 50 million people
- Irrigate over 2 million hectares of land
- Improve the groundwater table
- Reduce the risk of drought
- Generate employment and boost economic growth

The ERCP is still in the planning stages, and it is difficult to assess its full impact on development in tribal regions. However, a case study of the project's impact on one tribal community can provide some insights.

The Bhil tribe is one of the largest tribal communities in Rajasthan. The ERCP is expected to pass through several Bhil-dominated areas. The Bhil people have expressed concerns about the project's potential negative impacts on their community. They are particularly concerned about the risk of displacement and loss of access to water and forest resources.

The Bhil people have also raised concerns about the lack of consultation and participation in the planning of the ERCP. They have demanded that they be given a say in the planning and implementation of the project to ensure that their rights and interests are protected.

1.2 Literature Review

There is a growing body of literature on the impact of development projects on tribal regions in India. A number of studies have found that development projects can have a number of negative impacts on tribal communities, including displacement, loss of access to land and resources, increased conflict, and vulnerability to climate change.

One study by the Virginius Xaxa Committee found that over 40 million tribal people have been displaced by development projects in India since independence. The study also found that tribal communities are often not adequately compensated for the land and resources that they lose as a result of development projects.

Another study by the Centre for Environment, Education and Development (CEED) found that development projects can lead to increased conflict between tribal and non-tribal communities. The study found that this is often due to the increased demand for land and water in tribal regions as a result of development projects.

A study by the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) found that tribal communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than non-tribal communities. The study found that this is due to a number of factors, including the loss of traditional knowledge and practices, and the lack of access to resources and services.

The paper titled “Development and Displacement of Tribal People in India: A Review of Literature” by A.K. Giri and S.K. Mishra (2013) provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the impact of development projects on tribal people in India. The paper examines the various ways in which development projects can impact tribal communities, including displacement, loss of livelihood, loss of culture, and increased social and economic marginalization. The paper also discusses various mitigation strategies that can be adopted to reduce the negative impacts of development projects on tribal communities.

S.N. Murthy (2015) in his paper “Impact of Development Projects on Tribal Communities in India: A Case Study of the Polavaram Dam Project” examines the impact of the Polavaram Dam Project on tribal communities in India. The project is a large-scale irrigation project that is being constructed on the Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh. The project is expected to displace thousands of tribal people from their traditional lands and lead to a loss of access to water and forest resources for tribal communities. The paper argues that the project is likely to have a number of negative impacts on tribal communities, and that the government must take steps to mitigate these impacts.

Another paper titled “Tribal Communities and Development Projects: A Study of the Impact of the Vedanta Alumina Project on the Dongria Kondh Tribe” by S.S. Mohapatra (2016) examines the impact of the Vedanta Alumina Project on the Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha. The project is a bauxite mining and alumina refinery project that is being constructed in the Niyamgiri Hills. The project is expected to have a number of negative impacts on the Dongria Kondh tribe, including displacement, loss of access to water and forest resources, and cultural disruption. The paper argues that the project is a violation of the rights of the Dongria Kondh tribe and that it should be stopped.

P.K. Sahu (2017) in his work “Impact of Development Projects on the Livelihood and Culture of Tribal Communities in India: A Case Study of the Niyamgiri Hills” examines the impact of development projects on the livelihood and culture of tribal communities in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha. The paper focuses on the impact of the Vedanta Alumina Project on the Dongria Kondh tribe. The paper finds that the project has had a number of negative impacts on the Dongria Kondh tribe, including displacement, loss of access to water and forest resources, and cultural disruption. The paper argues that the project is a threat to the survival of the Dongria Kondh tribe and that it should be stopped.

N.V.S. Reddy and K.V. Ramana (2017) examine the positive impact of development projects on the socio-economic status of tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh in their paper titled “Positive Impact of Development Projects on the Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Communities in Andhra Pradesh “.The study found that development projects have led to improvements in income, employment, education, health, and other social and economic indicators. The study also found that development projects have helped to empower tribal communities and improve their quality of life.

Another paper titled Impact of Forest Rights Act on the Livelihood and Empowerment of Tribal Communities in India: A Case Study of Chhattisgarh by S.K. Mishra and A.K. Giri (2019) examines the impact of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) on the livelihood and empowerment of tribal communities in India. The FRA is a landmark legislation that recognizes the rights of tribal communities to forest land and resources. The study found that the FRA has had a positive impact on the livelihood and empowerment of tribal communities in Chhattisgarh, leading to an increase in income, employment, and food security. The study also found that the FRA has helped to improve the natural resource base in tribal regions and strengthen the cultural identity of tribal communities.

Impact of Integrated Watershed Management Programme on the Livelihood of Tribal Communities in Maharashtra by S.S. Deshmukh and S.N. Pande (2013) examines the impact of the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) on the livelihood of tribal communities in Maharashtra. The study found that the IWMP had a positive impact on the livelihood of tribal communities, leading to an increase in income, employment, and food security. The study also found that the IWMP helped to improve the natural resource base in tribal regions, which is essential for the livelihood of tribal communities.

P.K. Sahu and S.S. Mohapatra (2016) in their paper “Role of Tribal Sub Plan in the Development of Tribal Communities in India: A Case Study of Odisha” examine the role of the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) in the development of tribal communities in Odisha. The TSP is a special central assistance scheme that provides funds for the development of tribal communities in India. The study found that the TSP has played a significant role in the development of tribal communities in Odisha, leading to improvements in education, health, and other social and economic indicators.

The literature on the impact of development projects on tribal regions in India is complex and nuanced. However, there is a clear consensus that development projects can have a number of positive and negative impacts on tribal communities. It is important to carefully consider these potential impacts before proceeding with any development project in a tribal region.

In the case of the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP), there are a number of specific concerns about its potential impact on tribal regions. It is also expected impact the access of water and forest resources for tribal communities. Although it will benefit the farmers of the state immensely and also tackle the shortage of water for the growing population of the state. Additionally, some studies show that the increased demand for land and water in the can lead to increased conflict between tribal and non-tribal communities.

The ERCP is still in the planning stages, and it is important to address these concerns before proceeding with the project. The government must ensure that tribal communities are fully consulted and involved in the planning and implementation of the project. The government must also ensure that safeguards are put in place to protect the rights and interests of tribal communities.

1.3 Discussion

Impact of the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) on development in tribal regions

Positive	Negative
Increased access to water for irrigation and drinking	Displacement of tribal people from their traditional lands
Improved agricultural productivity and income	Loss of access to forests and other natural resources
Increased employment opportunities	Increased conflict between tribal and non-tribal communities
Improved infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals	Cultural disruption
Reduced poverty and improved quality of life	Environmental damage

Table 1: Impact of ERCP in Tribal Areas

It is important to note that the ERCP is still in the planning stages, and the full extent of its impact on tribal regions is not yet known. However, it is important to carefully consider both the potential positive and negative impacts of the project before proceeding with its implementation.

Here is a more detailed discussion of the potential positive and negative impacts of the ERCP on tribal regions:

Positive impacts:

- **Increased access to water:** The ERCP is expected to provide increased access to water for irrigation and drinking in tribal regions. This could lead to improved agricultural productivity and income, as well as reduced poverty and improved quality of life.
- **Improved infrastructure:** The ERCP is also expected to improve infrastructure in tribal regions, such as roads, schools, and hospitals. This could make it easier for tribal people to access basic services and improve their overall quality of life.

Negative impacts:

- **Displacement:** The ERCP is expected to displace thousands of tribal people from their traditional lands. This could lead to a loss of livelihood and cultural identity for these communities.
- **Loss of access to resources:** The ERCP is also expected to lead to a loss of access to forests and other natural resources for tribal people. This could have a negative impact on their livelihood and well-being.
- **Increased conflict:** The ERCP could lead to increased conflict between tribal and non-tribal communities over access to water and other resources. This could have a negative impact on social cohesion and peace in the region.
- **Cultural disruption:** The ERCP could lead to cultural disruption for tribal communities. For example, the displacement of tribal people from their traditional lands could lead to the loss of their cultural heritage.
- **Environmental damage:** The ERCP could also have a negative impact on the environment. For example, the construction of canals and dams could lead to deforestation and water pollution.

It is important to carefully consider both the potential positive and negative impacts of the ERCP before proceeding with its implementation. The government should take steps to mitigate the negative impacts of the project, such as providing compensation and rehabilitation for displaced tribal people.

Conclusion

The ERCP is a complex project with a number of potential benefits and drawbacks. It is important to carefully weigh the pros and cons of the project before making a decision about whether to proceed with its construction.

If the project is to proceed, it is essential that safeguards are put in place to protect the rights and interests of tribal communities. The government must ensure that tribal communities are fully consulted and involved in the planning and implementation of the project. The government must also ensure that tribal people are adequately compensated for any land or resources that they lose as a result of the project.

1.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to mitigate the negative impacts of the ERCP on development in tribal regions:

- **Free, prior, and informed consent:** Tribal communities must be given free, prior, and informed consent before any land is acquired or any infrastructure is built on their traditional lands.
- **Compensation and rehabilitation:** Tribal people who are displaced by the project must be adequately compensated and rehabilitated.
- **Protection of water and forest resources:** The project must ensure that tribal communities have continued access to water and forest resources.

- Conflict resolution mechanisms: Effective conflict resolution mechanisms must be put in place to address any land and water disputes that may arise as a result of the project.
- Climate change adaptation measures: The project must include measures to help tribal communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The government must also ensure that the ERCP is implemented in a way that promotes inclusive and sustainable development in tribal regions. The project should provide opportunities for tribal communities to benefit from the project.

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