

## **TITLE: DISPLACEMENT DUE TO NATURAL DISASTERS VIS-À-VIS POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### **ABSTRACT**

It is not an unknown fact that India's North-eastern region is one of the most disaster-prone areas of the country. One of the main causes of impoverishment of the rural areas of Assam has been the recurrent floods and riverbank erosion. Beyond the more obvious and immediate outcomes of loss of life, property and infrastructure, any natural or human-induced disaster has more long-term and difficult outcomes of vulnerability to various elements: increased poverty, malnutrition, leading to out-migration from villages, enhanced social disparities and strife (Niazi, 2009). *Displacement* too is one such effect, which has life-changing consequences. Getting displaced results not only in loss of livelihoods but also has wide-reaching social, economic and political effects. Consequentially, the change in roles results in family dynamics as well; loss of agricultural land and the lack of quality education to their children and crises of identity. Thus, due to such disasters caused by natural hazards not only families but communities too are being displaced at large. This compels them to find an alternative, temporary shelter and begin life from scratch.

People in the state are not unacquainted with the problem of floods or erosion. With a repeated experience of getting displaced for over three times a year on an average, getting adjusted to the array of problems that follows these natural disasters has been the real challenge. The cross-cutting issues of marginalisation based on community/language, economic and social backwardness and inaccessibility to constitutional and political rights form a major part in this issue. Hence, effective implementation of any inclusive developmental activity still remains a faraway cry for such refugees in their own land. Moreover, in a state where huge landmass gets eroded by flood water every year and there always exists a political brawl over *land*, an urgent need arises to study the perspective of Disaster Management while treating the northeast of India as a unique case study.

The role of the state in this aspect is highly negligible, with displacement not being perceived even as an 'issue' to be addressed. This group is not even recognized as a '*especially affected group*' and thus are deprived of governmental and other associated benefits. The response of the government in dealing with floods and riverbank erosions is significantly limited to engineering solutions like building embankments, dams or dikes and distributing immediate relief. A more holistic approach is thus needed

to take socio-political, economic as well as ecological considerations into account.<sup>1</sup> This study will thus endeavour to approach the issue of displacement due to natural disasters vis-à-vis existing policy frameworks.

**Key Words:** Displacement, Natural disasters, Policy Framework, Marginalised communities

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<sup>1</sup> Rahman, S. M., *“The Internally Displaced People of Bangladesh*