

(DRAFT – NOT TO BE QUOTED)

Institutional history of Pulichintala project*¹

Abstract

The current document is an attempt to document the institutional history of the Pulichintala Project under the Jalayagnam program implemented by Andhra Pradesh state government. A total of 29 villages are affected in the two districts of Guntur (15 villages) and Nalgonda (14 villages). We start with a brief history of the irrigation projects in Andhra Pradesh along with an overview of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy of the State that was passed in 2005. The main argument of this document is that the progress in R & R activities is determined by the pro-active Project Administrator, in this case the Joint Collector of the respective district. In other words, the district administration as the facilitator of R & R works is being examined and the next step would be to provide a set of best practices for the entire state. We documented the institutional innovations in the context of Pulichintala project that need to be scaled up across the state. The document ends with outlining the field based constraints in Guntur district.

Introduction

Andhra Pradesh has taken up irrigation projects on a large scale with 37 projects taken up in the last 20 years in Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema regions. While constructing these dams, the local communities living 542 villages in these three regions are affected – either partially or fully. In envisaging the construction of huge irrigation projects, land acquisition forms an important component. In this process the villages which are in the course of the channels/dam have to be moved if they would be fully submerged. In addition the agricultural land is acquired for undertaking construction activities of the dam. This land acquisition has significant impact on the standard of living and the livelihoods of the communities inhabiting these villages.

Brief overview of the R & R activities

In the 37 projects, 546 villages are in the affected zone with a total number of 1,34,784 project affected families (PAFs). To identify eligible PDFs from these villages, the government has conducted Socio-Economic Surveys (SEs) in 511 submergible villages of the 546 villages. So far there are 54 R & R centres that are completed and 229 centres are under development in which 1,31,343 houses are to be built, out of which 20,300 houses are completed. To rehabilitate the Project Affected Families (PAFs) and Project Displaced Families (PDFs), the Andhra Pradesh government formulated a Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation in 2005. The main focus of

¹ The inputs of Dr Yuvaraj, the then Joint Collector (Guntur) and the Project Administrator for Pulichintala project and his team have been highly valuable in preparing this document. Their significance is duly acknowledged

the government policy is to create infrastructure facilities and amenities that are far superior to that of the submerged villages. To this extent the government has promoted provision of cement roads, assured water supply, electricity supply to the houses and street lighting, improved drainage facilities among others.

In addition to these, the relocated colonies are to be provided with ration shops, provide quality education to all the school going children, health care facilities to the population (including children, pregnant women and lactating mothers). The status quo for the women who were part of the self help groups in the original village will be maintained and in case they have relocated to multiple villages, then they will be reconstituted so as to maintain their seniority. In addition to providing infrastructure in the R & R centres, the policy also provides monetary benefits to the PDFs. The various components provided in the policy are:

- Each PDF is provided with 5 cents of land, financial assistance for constructing the houses in the allotted lands in the respective R & R centre
 - House construction grant of Rs 53,000 for BPL families
 - In addition, the financial support to eligible PDFs is provided through Indiramma Awas Yojana (IAY).
- Each identified PDF is given transportation charges of Rs 5000 to move to the centre
- In case the household has cattleshed in their house in the original village, then an additional amount of Rs 15,000 is provided
- Financial assistance under various heads
- Minimum agricultural wages (varying number of days) depending on the eligibility of the PDF

Despite the seriousness of the initiatives in the field, there are not many instances of swift resettlement of the PDFs to the identified R & R centres. There have been field level problems in terms of lack of funding at the correct time, raw material not provided to the PDFs on time and lack of coordination among the government line departments – to name a few.

Institutional history of Pulichintala project

In view of this, we have undertaken an exercise to understand the role of the district administration in successful implementation of the R & R activities. We look at the case of Pulichintala project and examine the proactive role of Dr N Yuvaraj, the Joint Collector of Guntur district who also is the Project Administrator for Pulichintala Project. Dr N Yuvaraj assumed charge as JC for Guntur district on 11th August 2011 and continued to the PA till 15th January 2013. In a sense his holistic perspective made a huge difference in finding solutions to the field level problems. He has been proactive in creating an enabling environment in the project area with a sympathetic understanding of the perspective of the PDFs and engaging with their problems. The orientation of the JC and his team has been to ensure community

participation to the extent possible, particularly during crisis situations. It was because of this proactive attitude of the JC and his team that the implementation of the R & R activities has picked up pace.

Significant actors

As mentioned earlier, the JC/PA has a significant role in implementing R & R activities. However, there is no specific wing for R & R team under JC/PA across the state. The common operational mechanism followed by the district administration is as follows: the team to implement R & R activities is headed by Joint Collector (JC) who takes the responsibility for the entire gamut of work under R&R. Dr Yuvaraj observes that the JC has to apply himself/herself for every issue under R&R so that as per the local district conditions, he/she gives the idea and directions for early resettlement. Basically, his/her job is to make resettlement at the earliest or as per the due date. His/her level of planning for rehabilitation is less vis-à-vis the others in the team, as he/she generally does regulatory works and development works are out of his/her gambit or regular review departments and he/she does the actual development work in the R&R. He/she constantly reviews and convenes the DLEC meeting to clarify and get order from the DLEC on matters which require ratification or order from the Commissionerate. In the final analysis, he/she is the leader for the project and he/she is project manager on management grounds for the R&R activities and his/her involvement and interest makes progress a sure event. Under the JC-PA is the Special Collector (LA) who is assisted by PA to Special Collector. He/she provides directions to the staff under him/her duly taking orders from the JC/PA, serving as a link between both. He/she plays a pivotal role in the initial acquaintance and coordination with other wings of R & R like housing, revenue, education, health, DRDA, RWS, engineering and other line departments. He/she is actually responsible for the progress of LA. The SDCs play the role of the Special Collector for group of villages and are cutting edge level players.

As of now there is no specific work chart given to them under R & R, though the responsibilities of the R & R officer are clearly explained in the GO. They should monitor on daily basis the issues surrounding the R&R in village level and the progress or involvement of other wings responsible for R&R like housing, revenue, education, health, DRDA, RWS, Engineering, etc. The Deputy Tahsildars help the SDCs in visiting the field and gathering the information from the PDFs. They are one responsible for circulating files through SDC and Special Collector for getting the orders or sanctions for release of payment or getting approval of a policy decision and also prepare the agenda for the DLEC meeting. The Revenue Inspectors are the next in the hierarchy and usually visit field and do the verification exercise duly collecting statement from stake holders or PDFs.

In Guntur there are three units – Unit 1, 2 and 3 which are under control of 3 Special Deputy Collectors (SDCs), who directly report to Special Collector. These three units cater to different villages in the project area and they deal with officials of the line departments in the villages. The unit caters for a group of villages and they are present and working at District level rather than at village / Mandal level. In other districts of state, the RDOs/Sub Divisional Magistrates

are designated as R&R officer under JC/PA. However in Guntur, since inception, RDOs are not generally used under R&R as equivalent cadre SDCs are available and used for the activities.

Though there are no designated and statutory teams at the JC/PA level, various teams are formed to serve different purposes. For instance, one team is formed to mobilize the people for resettlement at R&R centres, another is formed to verify the veracity of the claim for inclusion in SES data, one more formed to verify the structures of the PDFs for making payment, and finally a team is constituted to verify the status of the houses of PDFs so as to make payments. Basically, all the team formed include RI / DT and staffs from other wings involved in R&R like Engineering (PR / Irrigation / RWS), Housing, Panchayat wing, etc. These teams are constituted and reviewed at the level of the SDCs, and it is the responsibility of the SDC in-charge to see that these teams are functional in the field. However it is required to have a unit separately for appraising progress and status of R&R to JC. Ideally this team should consist of one Tahsildar, one DT, one Senior Assistant and one Computer Operator. Out of the 2 SDCs under Special Collector, one can be utilized only for R&R purpose. Also it is mandatory to have one accountant deputed from Audit wing as it requires release of crores of rupees based on the proposals from SDCs. Their co-ordination is paramount importance as these field level functionaries are responsible for the things to happen. It would be ideal if the unit is present in the office of the Special Collector reporting to JC through Special Collector so that besides, LA issues, R&R issues can be monitored with much focused angle and this unit should be notified rather than as an administrative arrangement at the level of JC and this unit should be reviewed at monthly meeting at the Commissionerate.

The main success of the R&R lies with the imminence of the resettlement based on the impounding of the water. The public / PDFs are mostly aware and they take active interest in the resettlement works once they are confirmed of the impounding date or if they have seen the impact of water impounding. For instance in Guntur, during September 2011, there was flash floods in Krishna river and due to which, though the gates of the project are not erected, the water got impounded. In this process, the roads leading to the few villages under the KL Rao project got cut and this made the public / PDFs realize the imminence of the resettlement and urgency of the same.

Main activities undertaken in R & R

The first step while implementing R & R activities is to conduct inquiry and create a database of SES profile of all the eligible PDFs in the affected zone under the Pulichintala project. The second step is to publish and notify the data to give statutory power to the list of eligible PDFs. The next step in the R & R action plan is to identify places for resettlement of these notified PDFs and provide them with house site pattas in R & R centers of their choice. Since the PDFs cannot relocate to the R & R centres without constructing their house, the PDFs have to be provided administrative sanction under IAY housing to complete it at the earliest. The process of house construction can be expedited with effective monitoring of the progress of housing and release of the amounts spent for housing under both IAY and R & R package. The next

significant step is to provide physical infrastructure at the centres like roads, drains and leveling of the housing plots. The PDFs should also be provided community infrastructure like water for drinking and domestic purposes as well as house construction, continuous supply of electricity, land for grave yard, bus stops to be built among others. The next level of infrastructure pertains to provision of facilities like school and anganwadi centres for ensuring access of education facilities to the school going children in the submerged villages, and health care facilities both for humans and cattle in the R & R centres. The district administration should also make plans to provide offices for the Gram Panchayat and also religious structures for different communities i.e., temples, mosques and churches etc. The R & R Policy envisages that the R & R centres should be provided superior infrastructure facilities vis-à-vis the original village.

In addition to providing the physical infrastructure to the PDFs, the district administration also took active part in planning for sustainable rehabilitation of the PDFs, particularly the women. The activities of the SHGs would be restored in the village level and economic activities both for individual and groups are to be taken up. In addition, there can be various modules for employment depending on the age, qualification and interest of the individual PDF concerned for ensuring the livelihoods of the PDFs. In addition the R & R action plan also should provide employment opportunities under NREGS, STEP and other government schemes from the state government. Also efforts should be made to integrate the relocated PDFs into the local population and duly retaining their unique identity by creating separate GP and setting up separate polling stations during elections. Also efforts should be made to keep the records of these PDFs so that the future benefits are made available to them as and when government policy changes and also ensuring that the PDFs are not exploited by others on various grounds.

Institutional innovations in the Pulichintala project area

All across the state, the Joint Collector's office is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the identification of PDFs and the disbursement of the R & R package. The Pulichintala project area presents a distinct case where the proactive Joint Collector and his team have expedited the implementation process. The following are the institutional innovations that were successfully implemented in the field by the district administration:

I Updating SES data – The first and foremost aspect of concern was the way SES data was collected. The four main issues that were resolved by the district administration are

Issue 1: Procedure to prevent duplication of data

Procedure followed: After collecting the SES data, the same is uploaded on to an e-tool developed by Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad. However in many cases the district administration has observed that there are families which are enumerated in more than one village. This is not taken care by the e-tool/software. In order to prevent this, the district administration i.e., the JC and his team of officials started using biometric tools and IRIS which are unique to every individual. This step has eliminated the PDFs which have been registered in

more than one village. Another measure taken by the district administration is to integrate the ration card, Aadhar card with the IRIS data which further fine tuned the SES data.

Issue 2: Procedure adopted for PDFs whose occupations are not entered in the SES data

Procedure followed: In this case the Special Deputy Collector instructs eligible PDFs who are not included in notified SES data, they are required to approach the Tahsildar indicating his current occupation with necessary documentary evidence. The Tahsildar submits report to the SDC after detailed inquiry about the present occupation of the applicant. Upon which the SDC concerned will publish the village wise enquiry data in the notice boards of the village/GP offices and R & R centres. In case there are no objections within a week of notification, the SDC is required to issue proceedings confirming the above details which would be followed by release of R & R benefits. A detailed report is submitted to the JC and PA for required permission from the Commissioner of Resettlement and Rehabilitation to publish the corrigendum to the above effect to the notified SES data of village. The same information is uploaded on the data base through CGG. It should be borne in mind that this is required to be a one-time process.

Issue 3: Procedure for modification of existing entries in occupation column in SES data

Procedure followed: The SDCs are required to inform the PDFs (who are henceforth to be treated as separate PDFs) to apply for modification of entries in the occupation column in the notified SES data to the SDC concerned. If the SDC is satisfied (after due inquiry) about the proposed change, the details will be notified in the notice boards of the GP/village and the R & R centres for claims and/or objections. If none are received in a week, the SDC will submit a report with all details to the JC and PA for permission from the Commissioner of Resettlement and Rehabilitation to publish the corrigendum to the above effect to the notified SES data of the village in question.

Issue 4: Procedure to delete individuals/families from the notified SES data

Procedure followed: The need to delete individuals/families from the notified SES data arises under 2 circumstances. These are:

1. The individual in question would have died
2. The family in question would have been disqualified on account of collection the biometrics of the PDFs

In such cases, the SDC will issue proceedings after publication of such data in the GP/village and R & R centre as specified after which a report would be submitted to the JC and PA accordingly. This would be forwarded to the Commissioner of Resettlement and Rehabilitation for permission to publish the corrigendum to the above effect to the notified SES data of the village.

Issue 5: Procedure to be followed for addition of new born children in notified SES data

Procedure followed: As and when the PDFs apply for the inclusion of their new born children in the SES data along with the birth certificates. The SDC is required to take family photo including the new born children through biometric indicators. A new house site patta certificate generated

through biometric system is issued after collecting the old patta form from the PDFs. This is followed by the issue of proceedings after publication of the above data on the notice boards in the GP/village and R & R centre concerned. The SDC also submits elaborate report to the JC and PA for further action of publishing corrigendum.

Issue 6: Issue of 5 cents land to the major daughters in the villages affected

Procedure followed: Subsequent to the clarification from the Government, the SDCs have been instructed to issue house site pattas to the major daughter under the project subject to ratifications of the DLEC.

Issue 7: Mechanism for grievance redressal

Procedure followed: Grievance redressal becomes an important component in gaining the confidence of the communities towards the project administrator. In the Pulichintala project, the officer in charge from the JC's office (be it Special Collector or SDC) visits the R & R centres to interact with the PDFs. This process is also a means to resolve grievances faced by the PDFs and also coordinate with the officials of the line departments and the field staff who are stationed in the R & R centres.

Issue 8: Auditing the financial statements

Procedure followed: An audit of the project accounts for the expenditure towards R & R in the Pulichintala project (for the years between 2007 and 2011) was conducted by Mr P VMallikarjuna Rao, a qualified CA in Guntur. This is an innovation in itself as no such exercise is currently undertaken in any other project area across the state. This step ensures greater transparency about the R & R expenditure not only in the district administration but also among the PDFs and the general public.

Issue 9: Formation of self-help groups in the R & R centres by integrating women from different groups in the original village

Procedure followed: As the villages move to different R & R centres, the existing SHGs are likely to be disrupted as the women are likely to move to different R & R centres. Realizing this, the district administration aims to form new groups in the R & R centres by bringing together women from the PDFs who relocated to these centres.

Issue 10: Impact assessment of the R & R package in the project area

Procedure followed: The Sociology Department of Nagarjuna University is currently executing a project to evaluate the impact assessment of the R & R package on the communities. This is work in progress and report is awaited.

Community feedback

Each district will be having unique characteristics and under common umbrella of the policy guidelines, the issues have to be addressed at district level. All Districts did not concentrate at the time of preparation of SES data which is the fundamental for better execution of R&R. The

provision of biometric in generating pattas for PDFs which in turn will weed out the bogus or duplicate among PDFs will act as a deterrent if employed properly. Deterrence of criminal case against the bogus PDFs is required to make the rightful PDFs alone to claim the benefits. The community – both PDFs and general – responded very positively for the good work and they expect the timely release of monetary benefits so that they have confidence in undertaking resettlement activities. The status of all activities relating to R&R should be appraised to them from time to time so that the information acts as knowledge for them to decide further course of action especially on marriage, livelihood side, etc. The socially marginalized groups have taken active interest in the R&R activities as they feel as an opportunity to build a better house than that in the original village and the economic support measures are actively expected by these groups. The external political influence is much on the PDFs especially on these socially and economically marginalized sections of the society and this influence is not always for the good things for these PDFs. Good track record holding NGOs should be involved since inception. The involvement of Sociology / Anthropology departments of the neighboring universities should be encouraged since inception i.e., since planning of R&R.

Field based constraints

While implementing the R & R activities in Guntur district, the constraints faced by the JC/PA's team can be clubbed under the following heads:

Financial

One of the important aspects of financial matters is to ensure the timely release of budget meant for the R&R activities from the head office and also provide proper guidance for maintenance of accounts by the PA office. Also there has to be an active involvement of local fund audit department for the audit of the same. Also it has been observed that huge amounts are released within shortest time and the necessary checks and balance are missing now. This could be ensured by having proper accounting procedure and training the project team is a must on this.

Social

As regards the social issues, one of the constraints is not having proper mechanism involving the community and/or NGO in finalizing the SES data has led to complex situation culminating in all the subsequent problems. The role of the community and that of the PDFs in deciding on the names to be included in the SES data is lesser and NGOs are not at all considered in this process. In addition to this the PDFs are not much bothered about the inclusion of ineligible people into the SES data. The village level R&R committee should be given clear mandate especially in finalizing the SES data duly giving the responsibilities and liabilities clearly spelt out.

Political

If followed strictly, the above procedure of preparation of SES data can avoid unnecessary and unwarranted involvement of influential people from different political parties in getting the ineligible or marginally eligible people included into the SES data list. The progress has to be kept informed to the political representatives so that necessary inputs on the mind set of PDFs

can be received through them and they can be involved in propagating the necessary information on timely resettlement.

Economic

The economically ineligible PDFs should be discouraged of any other benefit except the house site on emotional angle. The economic support measures for early resettlement should be encouraging so that all PDFs try to move to the centres at the earliest. Really marginal PDFs who cannot construct houses on their own should be identified and institutional help should be given

Interpretation of the policy

Though the policy near perfect, it requires some more consultation with stake holders and consolidation in procedural execution. More discretion or flexibility is not required and a liberal policy should be followed towards unmarried PDFs as they should be given some preference in economic support schemes of the government.

Summary and conclusion

In the final analysis, the district administration plays a critical role in implementing the R & R activities in the respective project areas. The pace of R & R activities depends on the proactive nature of the district administration represented by the JC/PA. The current document has provided an institutional history of the Pulichintala project and some of the technical details of dam construction could be missing from this. It has highlighted the institutional innovations in the project area, community response and the field constraints. The next step could be to incorporate these findings as base and further develop on the basis of findings from other project areas and ultimately into a resource book for further practitioners.