

Sardar Sarovar Project - A Summary

Why in news?

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The Sardar Sarovar Dam was recently dedicated to the nation.

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How has the project evolved?

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- A small dam of 49.37m height was planned across Narmada in 1956 but the project was subsequently dropped.
- The Sardar Sarovar Project was proposed in 1979, that envisioned a massive 138.68m dam.

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• The project ran into controversy due to the enormous negative impact on communities and the ecosystem.

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• While the barrier wall of the dam has just been declared open, only 33% of the project canals in Gujarat have been completed till now.

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What are the controversies?

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- **Impact** Full reservoir capacity will cover 40,000 hectare and hence expels 244 villages and one township.
- About 10 lakh people involved in diverse economic activities would have to be displaced.

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• Vast tracts of forest stare submergence.

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• Prime agriculture land and at least a few thousand cattle in each village will be lost.

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• NBA - "Narmada Bachao Andolan" an NGO started an intense campaign against it.

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• It elaborately documented the economic damages and the plight of the displaced.

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- \bullet Its research on the environment & ecological implications of the project even won the applause of the apex court. $\$
- **Court Rulings** While the project wasn't stayed, Supreme court passed orders to address the greviences of the displaced.
- A Grievance Redressal Authority (GRA) was step up to receive complaints and pass directions to the state authority.
- \bullet Those entitled to land were sanctioned Rs.60 lakh compensation. $\mbox{\sc h}$
- SC also directed that all amenities, mandatory under law, should be in place at resettlement sites by June 2017 - an enormous task.

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What is the plight of these being displaced?

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• While the state & the GRA have defaulted considerably in facilitating smooth migration.

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- Many of those eligible for compensation have not received them, but are facing pressure to shifting immediately nevertheless.
- Rehabilitation sites are also not ready they do not have drinking water supply, drainage facilities and cattle grazing lands.
- They currently suffer harassment by the police and other government machenity.

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How can the future be better planned?

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- Development of power plants, dams or government townships will all considerably contribute to the economy.
- \bullet But the larger question that needs evaluation is that wether it is worth the socio-economic and ecological losses that it might cause. \n
- In almost every major developmental project, there is little concern for compensation and mitigation like in Narmada's case.
- \bullet Evolving systems for ensuring better rehabilitation is a prerequisite if the frutits of development is to be shared equitably. \n

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Source: The Hindu

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