Development, Politics and Disaster Mitigation: a Case Study of the Moragahakanda Irrigation Project

Mahesh Senanayake*

Department of Political Science and Public Policy, University of Colombo, Colombo 03, 00030, Sri Lanka, senanayakemahesh@gmail.com

Abstract

In Sri Lanka, development projects and their aims cannot be understood in absence of politics. Not only the rationale of the project, but also it’s the process and outcomes are products of the clientelistic politics practiced in the country’s politics since its independence. In that context, examining the process and politics is immensely important to understand the disaster potential of the Moragahakanda Development Project. This project is one of the last components of the Mahaweli Development Program that was designed as a 30-year project. The main objective of the project is to provide irrigation facilities to the existing water scarce farmlands (82,000ha) and also to open up new land (5000ha) for agriculture development in Northern, North Central, and Eastern and North Western provinces. In addition, generating and supplying of 25MW hydro-power to the national grid, increasing inland fish production, provision of potable and industrial water requirements, Eco tourism and effective flood control are also among the objectives of the project. According to the Mahaweli Authority, nearly 70% of the construction work of the Moragahakanda reservoir has been completed and the project is expected to be concluded by December 2017. This paper will be based on the field research that the author is carrying out for his forthcoming publication. Often such mega projects present its objectives loud and clear while keeping pitch silent about its negative effects. This paper, in order to examine the relationship between development politics and disaster mitigation, focuses mainly on the issues that are hardly being discussed. The Moragahakanda project has displaced a total of 5870 people in 1181 families from 11 Grama Niladari Divisions (GNDs). Once the project is completed Six GND areas will be totally and six other partially submerged causing more displacement of families. It effect on the environment is also alarming. This paper aims to examine the role of politics in development in relation to Moragahakanda project and thereby study the readiness of such mega projects to mitigate possible future disasters. It is naïve to expect development projects to be completely free of consequences on environment and human lives. In addition, one has to completely ignorant of the nature of politics in our society to believe that development projects to be initiated and implemented free of politics and practice of clientelism. Therefore, the strategies for mitigating potential disasters of such projects should also be examined in relation to the politics within which such projects are implemented.

© 2018 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Peer-review under responsibility of the scientific committee of the 7th International Conference on Building Resilience.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +94 71 8004717
E-mail address: senanayakemahesh@gmail.com

1877-7058 © 2018 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.
Peer-review under responsibility of the scientific committee of the 7th International Conference on Building Resilience
10.1016/j.proeng.2018.01.137
1.1 Introduction

In Sri Lanka, development projects and their aims cannot be understood independently of politics. Not only are the rationale of a project, but also its process and outcomes products of the clientelistic politics characterizing Sri Lankan politics since independence. In that context, examining the process and politics of the Moragahakanda Development Project is immensely important to understanding its disaster potential.

1.2 Objectives

Often, such mega-projects extol their objectives loud and clear while keeping silent about any potential negative effects. Based on field research that the author carried out for a forthcoming publication, this paper examines the relationship between development politics and disaster mitigation, focusing on issues that are barely discussed regarding the Moragahakanda Project. For instance, the project has displaced a total of 5,870 people (1,181 families) from 11 Grama Niladari Divisions (GNDs). Furthermore, once the project is completed, an area spanning 12 GNDs will be totally submerged causing more displacement of families. Similarly, the effects on the environment are alarming. This paper examines the role of politics in development in relation to the Moragahakanda Project and, thereby, the readiness of such mega-projects to mitigate possible future disasters. It is naïve to expect development projects to be completely free of consequences on the environment and on human lives. In addition, one has to be completely ignorant of the nature of local politics to believe that development projects are initiated and implemented free of the politics and practice of clientelism. Therefore, the strategies for mitigating the potential disasters that may be wrought by such projects should also be examined in relation to the politics against which they are implemented.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

In the general most of the time term disaster have been used to refer only natural disasters. It is reported that more than 62 million were killed in natural disasters world-wide since 1900 (OFDA/CRED: 2003). At the same time, the concept of disaster have commonly been discussed in the disciplines such as economics, environmental studies and geography. However this paper attempts to conceptualize this term in the perspective of political science. There is a large volume of literature that focuses on the political dimension of the disaster prevention discourse (Olson, 2000; Platt, 1999; Blaikie et al, 1994; Albala-Bertrand, 1993; Bommer, 1985; Cuny, 1983; Davis and Seitz, 1982; Diggins, Wright, and Rossi, 1979; Abney and Hill, 1966)” (Cohen, Werker, 2008: 1-2). According to Fordham (2007) many scholars argues that there is a strong connection between disaster and development. McEntire (2004) and Fordham (2007) indicate four relations between development and disaster: (1) development increases vulnerability to disaster, (2) development reduces vulnerability to disaster, (3) disaster sets back development, and (4) disaster provides development opportunities. (Manandhar, McEntire, 2014: 22). Despite of the growing acceptance of this close relationship between disaster and development, many challenges like political conflict, lack of coordination, and resource inadequacy makes this integration mere rhetoric (Manyena, 2012). Nonetheless, development and disaster management activities should be integrated and go hand-in-hand in order to alleviate future impacts of disasters. There are many approaches have been employed to study the nexus between disaster and development. For instance, Fordham (2007) discusses the natural hazards, disaster sociology, and vulnerability perspectives. The natural hazard paradigm is correct to concentrate on probable natural hazards. However, this perspective often ignores man-made hazards (technological, terrorism, HAZMAT) (Afedzie and McEntire 2010; McEntire 2005, McEntire et al. 2010). The disaster sociology approach, on the other hand, looks into disasters through organizational and collective behavior lenses (Fordham 2007). This study employed building resilience approach as the key approach which emphasize the reduction of vulnerability and commonly referred as the ability to recover or bounce back to normalcy after a disaster (McEntire et al. 2002: 269). The resilience perspective looks into disasters as anticipated events and emphasizes the
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات