

SUB- REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR THE RESETTELMENT OF THE DISPLACED RURAL POPULATION IN SOUTHERN ANATOLIA, TURKEY¹

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Abstract

Internal displacement, affecting some 25 million people worldwide, has become increasingly recognized as one of the most tragic phenomena of the contemporary world. Turkey has experienced an unfortunate low density civil dispute in the last fifteen years, ceasing to a great extent with the seizure in 1999 of the leader of the seperarist illegal party called PKK, fundamentally a kurdish movement. During this period, according to different sources 380,000 to 1,000,000 villagers, 820 villages and 2,345 hamlets has been displaced from the provinces of the state of emergency region which comprised of 11 provinces out of 81 in total in the country. These villagers either displaced by the security forces as they are suspected of giving logistic support to PKK, or they themselves left their villages for their own safety. Most of the displaced villagers resettled in the nearby city centers.

As would be expected this population deprived of home and income suffered heavily during this period. With the improvement of the situation in the region, the Turkish Government initiated a new program named Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project. This program is coordinated by the Southern Anatolia Regional Development Project Regional Administration (GAP İdaresi) and has been carried by a non-governmental organisaiton called The Turkish Social Science Association (TSBD).

Aim of the project is to help to the resettlement of the displaced population; provide a model for reconstruction of rural fabric of the region; avoid the irraionalities of previous spatial structure of the region; mobilise the idle resources in the region and help to sustainale development; provide a more rational distribution of the resources and services and ease the pressure on cities created by the immigrated population. The project, which comprised of intensive area studies in 12 provinces is completed and 24 volume of reports accompanied by upper (1/25,000) and lower /1/1,000)level scale plans are handed over to the GAP Administration recently. In this paper, a brief summary of the proposed model of regional development in the region will be presented. Main findings of the field surveys conducted in 12 provinces among displaced villagers will be followed by the planning stage in which re-organizaiton of the rural fabric is questioned and a new model of resettlement will be proposed.

Introduction

Beginning in the second half of the 1980's and intensifying during 1990's, a low density civil war between the Turkish security forces and the guerrilla or terrorist forces² loyal to PKK³ is faught particularly in the southeast Anatolia where the majority of the population are Kurds in

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² By the Turkish state they are called seperatist, terrorist forces who aim at creation of an independent state at the east and southeast Anatolia, while some political parties sympathetic to the movement call them as guerrilas fighting for Kurdish rights.

³ Kurdish Workers Party, an armed illegal organization.

ethnic origin. At the end of the decade, though limited number of clashes and security operations continued conditions in the region returned to normal thanks to the surrender of Öcalan, the head of the PKK, leaving behind it the toll of almost 30,000 in casualties and around 100 billion US dollars channelled to the international war lords.

During the years of turbulence in the region a number of the villagers were forcibly evacuated by the security forces because they were suspected of giving logistic support to PKK, while still substantial number who had participated in the village guard system were driven out of their villages by the attacks by the PKK, some left their villages for their safety at their will or the recommendation of the security forces. Whatever the cause, thousands of villagers had to leave their homes at the rural areas, which resulted in the appearance of the serious problem of internally displaced people in the region.

As indicated in one of the Human Rights Watch pamphlet⁴, “Internal displacement, affecting some 25 million people worldwide, has become increasingly recognized as one of the most tragic phenomena of the contemporary world. Often the consequence of traumatic experiences with violent conflicts, gross violations of human rights and related causes in which discrimination features significantly, displacement nearly always generates conditions of severe hardship and suffering for the affected populations. It breaks up families, cuts social and cultural ties, terminates dependable employment relationships, disrupts educational opportunities, denies access to such vital necessities as food, shelter and medicine, and exposes innocent persons to such acts of violence as attacks on camps, disappearances and rape.”

World Bank reports also point to the similar consequences: “When people are forcibly moved, production systems may be dismantled, long- residential settlements are disorganized, and kinship groups are scattered. Many jobs are lost. Informal social networks that are part of daily sustenance systems- providing help in childcare, food security, revenue transfers, labour exchange and other basic socio-economic support- collapse because of territorial dispersion. Health care deteriorates”.

Resettled people are like foreigners in the cities. There are serious economic and cultural problems in adaptation. Family bonds are destroyed and conflicts within families arise. Hence, no democratic country in the world can ignore the issue.

Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project

From the year 2000 onwards it is believed that the general security situation in the region improved sufficient enough to consider the return of the displaced villagers to their homes. Sub-Regional Development Project for the Return to Village and Rehabilitation of the Displaced Rural Population is initiated by the Turkish government in such an optimistic environment.

Project Specification Document of the Project aims at providing proposals as to how the resettlement process should be carried out; that is, development of a model providing the process of resettlement to be taken into consideration by the governors in the region. The document also comprised of preparation of detailed implementation plans and the specification of the public investment items for the selected villages in the 12 provinces

⁴ Report of the Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 1997/39.

(Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Muş, Tunceli, Siirt, Şırnak, Van), which are directly affected from displacement in different degrees. All except one of the provinces included in the project are located in the emergency region.

According to figures provided by the Emergency Region governor to the Parliamentary Commission on Internal Migration, during the internal dispute experienced in 1990's 54,000 households housing 378,335 villagers, 820 villages and 2,345 hamlets has been displaced within the borders of the emergency region provinces. Figures given in the Project Specification Document is quite close to the above figures, 833 villages and 2,382 hamlets are displaced affecting total of 384,000 people, though some unofficial sources argue that the figure related to affected number of people is in excess of one million. Geographically the great part of the region is mountainous and the general spatial scene of the area comprises small sized and dispersed villages and hamlets. According to latest census data, the total population of the 12 provinces is 5,492,165, and there exist total of 5, 447 villages in the region.

This project has been carried out by the Turkish Social Science Association which is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1967 having 250 members most of them are social scientists from different Turkish universities. The project is prepared for the government organisation named Southern Anatolia Regional Development Project Regional Administration.

The main objective of the project is to provide guidelines and a model for the resettlement of the displaced population. By this, the project aims to, a) help to the resettlement of the displaced villagers, b) provide a model for reconstruction of rural fabric of the region in spatial terms, c) avoid the irrationalities of previous spatial structure of the region, d) mobilize the idle resources – both uncultivated fertile land and unused social and technical infrastructure- in the region and help to sustainable development, and e) provide a more rational distribution of the resources and services and f) ease the pressure on cities created by the immigrant population.

Planning Process

A: The First Step of the Planning Process began with the extensive field research in the 12 provinces. Several focus group interviews (rapid rural assessment) are conducted among the displaced villagers living in cities (province centres and sub-province centres) in the region.

The main objective of the focus group interviews is to assess the conditions of the displaced population and their expectations, resources, willingness and obstacles they face regarding the resettlement process.

Focus group interviews were carried out with 1197 displaced villagers from 297 evicted villages in 12 provinces. The sample constitutes 9 percent of the all evicted villages and represents approximately 2 percent of the displaced population. 62 percent of the villages that the interviewees before the displacement occurred lived were still uninhabited, while in 32 percent 1 to 50 people still live. Interviewees with the displaced villagers are mainly carried out in the cities and towns where they took shelter. The cities have different characteristics in terms of origin of the displaced population. Some cities have received displaced villagers only from their own jurisdiction whereas some others catchments area extended to their neighbouring areas. The cities that received from only their own territory are Hakkari,

Mardin, Şırnak and Tunceli which can be characterized as being relatively less populated and less developed centres compared to others.

92.7 percent of the respondents are male, and most of them are head of households, that is decision makers regarding different aspects of migration and rehabilitation processes. 95 percent of the interviewees were over 25 years old.

The research focused upon four stages as, 1) demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents before the displacement, 2) Displacement Process, 3) Present Condition in the City, 4) Future Expectations.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents Before the Displacement

The basic findings of focus group research related to the demographic and socio-economic characteristics can be highlighted as follows:

In terms of demographic characteristics it is found that the average number of households in villages is 102 and half of the villages have less than 70 households while 2/3 of them have 120 and less households. Average number of people per village is calculated to be 834 persons, while half of the villages have 600 and less people, 2/3 of them have less than 1,000 persons. Average size of the households was 12, and only half of the households had less than 10 persons. These figures represent two to three folds above the average household sizes of the urban centres of the country.

Economically, 16 percent of households had no regular income, 57 percent occupied primarily with agricultural production and 24 percent with animal husbandry. However, 90 percent of the respondents pointed that they had secondary source of income in agriculture. Agricultural production however, is not diversified but intensified in the production of cereals. There is a fragmented, small and dispersed land ownership pattern in the region. ¼ of the villagers owned less than 15 dekar land while half and ¾ of the households owned less than 40 and 100 acres of land, respectively. In Turkey, on the average, 85 percent of the villagers have less than 100 acres of agricultural land. In other words, the sample's findings are not very different than the country's general pattern, which is characterized by the prevalence of the small land ownership, coupled with unequal distribution. Although 86 percent of the interviewees stated that they owned domestic livestock, it is found that, only 10 percent of them had more than 20 cattle, while the average figure per villager is calculated to be 13. Similar unequal distribution witnessed regarding the number of sheep respondents owned. While 94 percent of the villagers owned sheep, half of them reported that they had less than 70 sheep. Unequal development in terms of ownership of the domestic livestock prevailed before the displacement process among the respondents.

In sum, subsistence economy with small land ownership, low level of fertility, lack of specialization and competitiveness coupled with almost no coordination and cooperation among the villagers characterizes the pre-displacement overall economic pattern in the villages.

An evaluation of the physical and social infrastructure in addition to housing condition prior to displacement is also investigated in the research. Findings showed that over half of the

villages are located over 35 kms. away from the province or sub-province centre. 25 and 11 percent of the villages are located at a distance less than 20 km and over 70 kms from such centres, respectively. Highway connection, though mostly as stabilized roads exist in 85 percent of the settlements. Drinking water and electricity existed in 87 percent of them. Data related to social infrastructure in the villages, however was rather dramatic. 1/5 of the villages had no primary school; half of the villages had no or only one teacher. Findings in respect to health services were even worse. 84 percent of the villages had no health facilities. 13 percent of the villages had health infrastructure but no personnel. Lack of necessary social infrastructure in rural areas particularly in underdeveloped regions of Turkey, as in southeast Anatolia is a common, striking and unresolved issue. This shows the indispensability and urgency of the development of a new and effective model in the region as a whole.

Housing conditions of the displaced villagers were not satisfactory, either. Average room number is found to be 3, meaning that almost 4 persons per room, on the average. 87 percent of the houses had power connection, while only 1.7 and 4.6 percent of the houses had domestic water supply and telephone connection, respectively. In only 9.2 percent of the cases toilet facilities exist within the house.

Displacement Process

Focus group findings indicate that 77 percent of the displacement took place between 1992 and 1995, percentage has risen to 87 between the years of 1990 to 1995. At the time of interview majority of the respondents were living in cities away from their villages for 7 to 9 years. The lack of security and the threats from PKK are cited as two major reasons behind the displacement. 95 and 96 percent of the interviewees stated that their houses in the villages are destroyed and their fields are left uncultivated, respectively. 80 percent of the respondents had to sell their livestock at the time of displacement under market prices to provide initial cash money to make their future living in cities. Different factors are taken into account by the displaced villagers in the selection of the city to take shelter. Majority of the respondents pointed that the spatial proximity to their village and the existence of relatives and friends in the target city are the main reasons behind the choice of the future settlement. It is also understood that the relatively well off groups moved outside the region to the large metropolitan centres.

Present Condition in the City

Significant changes have occurred in terms of demographic characteristics of the displaced villages in the cities. Average size of the households has decreased down to 7 persons in the city. Considerable increase – from 7.3 to 20.6 percent- in the number of nuclear family is noted.

These positive changes however, are not accompanied by the economic welfare. Findings showed that most of the migrant population work either in irregular, seasonal and informal jobs (54 percent) or unemployed (28 percent). Those who managed to secure a regular job in the city constitute the minority (almost 7 percent). 83 percent of the respondents stated that they are not equipped with any skill, which would provide them with a job in the city. Considerable part of the migrant population is under the poverty line. Monthly income of the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents stated to be less than 100 U.S dollars per household. Only a negligible minority (3 percent) earned more than 250 U.S dollars per month. It should be added that the minimum food expenditure for a family of four persons was 180 U.S dollars at the time of

interview, which means that 4/5 of the displaced villagers, lived below the absolute poverty line in cities.

On the other hand, as would be expected level of urban infrastructure services, both physical and social are better as compared to village life. The greater majority of the houses have main services such as electricity, water and sewage system and the communities they live provided with educational and health services, though relatively low in quality. Almost half of the displaced villagers had the ownership of the houses they live in cities. The average rent is calculated to be 32 U.S dollars much lower than their counters in the cities of West Anatolia. Average number of rooms in the city houses have remained the same as in villages, however the comfort level has risen, that is, the number of persons per room decreased to 2, thanks to the lower size of households in the urban areas. Almost half of the dislocated villagers are entitled to have “green card” which provides them free health services in the cities.

In terms of housing comfort and provision of social and physical infrastructure, villagers are better off in the cities as compared to their settlements of origin. Still, however, the situation is far from being that rosy in cities. Although the dislocated population is better of in terms of main services and housing conditions, there are considerable problems faced the already troubled cities. Their social and physical infrastructure is not good enough to cope with the massive population influx. Most of the houses occupied by the migrant population are substandard and located at the unauthorised/illegally-developed parts of the cities. Main infrastructure services provided by the State are not satisfactory, that is power cuts and breakdowns in sewage system are usual.

Future Expectations and Views on Return to Village

There seems to be an overwhelming desire (93 percent) among the displaced population to return to their villages. 87 percent of the interviewees applied to the related authorities to go back their villages. At the time of interviews, only 12 percent of the applicants were informed positively, while the majority were still waiting for an official decision. 85 percent of the respondents argued that the all of the co-villagers intend to return to their villages. Almost all of the interviewees stated that they want to return to the same village they left.

However, most of the respondents (80 percent) declared that it is impossible for them to return to their villages relying solely on their own resources. Interviewees carried their expectation regarding the provision of the support by the State in the resettlement process.

90 percent of the respondents stated that they would pursue that same agricultural occupation they used to do before the displacement, while 7 percent will attempt in initiating additional jobs. Most of the house owners desired to keep their houses in the city. In fact, there seems to be a dual strategy among the displaced families regarding the resettlement process. They want to keep their existence in both at the village and in the city. While younger members and breadwinners would stay in the city, older members are willing to return to their villages. Hence, most probably, they will adopt a new life strategy which interrelates the positive attributes of the both locations and life styles will be experienced by them.

B: The Second Step of the Planning Process is devoted to the development of models in relation to socio-economic and spatial planning of the return process. At the outset it should be stated that there were different initiatives and implementations by local authorities, notably, by governors and other field administration of central governments. However, they are oriented to solve individual problems, case by case; piecemeal and ad hoc; from above

and uncoordinated. Given the size of the problem, it is necessary to advance a more comprehensive approach which would allow developing a more holistic approach, planned development, participatory process and an environment allowing different agencies to work together.

At this stage of the project, prior to the development of a comprehensive new sub-regional development plan and an accompanying spatial reorganization, main constraints/barriers to be faced by the new model should be clarified.

It should be pointed out at the outset that the project is not aimed at restoration of the previous physical and social structure in the region. The complexity of the problem requires a more sophisticated and multi-layered approach. The complexity arises from certain adverse conditions which can be classified under four headings:

- 1) Social Barriers: Considerable part of the displaced population, in particular the young generation is not willing to return to their villages for different reasons; in some cases there are tensions ranging from individual disputes to ethnic and community issues among the villagers and among neighbouring villages. Others believe that the living conditions and opportunities at the urban areas are better than the ones in their villages,
- 2) Financial Barriers: The finance of the resettlement is too high and neither displaced population nor the related government institutions are able to finance the resettlement process in full terms. A very rough estimate of the project team shows that the total loss incurred due to displacement process is about 4 billion U.S. dollars.
- 3) Spatial Barriers: The existing spatial settlement pattern of the villages are very fragmented and dispersed, increasing the cost of resettlement and service provision. The number of hamlets, each house 2 to 5 households is 3,5 times as many as the number of villages creates a serious bottleneck in provision of social and infrastructure.
- 4) Security Barriers: Rough mountainous landscape in the region creates security problems and makes the resettlement in certain areas impossible for security reasons.

In the planning stage the project team adopts some principles.

Firstly, planning of the process is to adopt a holistic approach to the issue. Rather than taking each village as a unit of analysis, settlements are taken with their surrounding environment. Hence, sub-regions are taken as the planning units; a sub-region is constituted by more than one village and defined by their economic, cultural and social ties within it. They are considered as a system within which the cooperation and division of labour among the villages are encouraged.

Secondly, nearby cities and villages are thought to be indispensable parts of the same spatial system. Family members and goods produced should be able to move easily between the city and their villages. Therefore, the existing semi-closed settlement pattern is to be revised to strengthen the transportation and communication ties between the cities and the surrounding villages.

Thirdly, taking the scattered and dispersed small settlement units -not very far from each other- and the unfeasibility of the scattered service provision pattern, together with limited financial strength of the central government into consideration, "central village" concept is encouraged. Central Villages are planned to be centrally located settlements within the sub-regions, where the basic social infrastructure investments such as educational and health

facilities, post office, cultural and sports activity centres, some other village level government units and security offices would be located. This approach is different from other formulations, which impose the aggregation of the nearby rural population in these centres. In the project public services rather than population are planned to aggregate in the Central Villages. Relations with the other settlements of the sub-region would be strengthening by improving the quality of the interconnecting roads and development of public transportation. Central Villages would perform the role of the city centre while the nearby settlements would correspond to the dormitory towns.

Fourthly, the process is planned to be a co-ordinated one. One of the main objectives of the planning on this scale is to provide a framework for the coordination among the various public agencies that are responsible from the service provision and a guideline for the investments to be made in the related areas.

Last but not the least, planning process will a participatory one. It will allow the public to participate in the process in every stage from research to planning and implementation.

Throughout the planning phase the above-mentioned constraints and planning principals are taken into consideration by the project team. The project is required to delineate a sub-region composed of several villages and hamlets in each province for modelling the resettlement process. Social, economic and infrastructure relations among the settlements within the selected sub-regions are expected to be investigated in detail. Furthermore, one village within each sub-region is selected for the preparation of the detailed implementation plan (1/1,000 scale) of the settlement.

For this aim, in each province one sub-region among alternatives and one village among the several in the sub-region have been chosen after extensive field surveys in the project territory. 180 villages were visited and detailed research was carried out in each village regarding physical, economic and social conditions. In this respect, natural resources, agricultural and economic development potentials, availability of arable land, workforce characteristics, demographic characteristics, social relations, education and other social and physical infrastructure, housing conditions, accessibility and transportation facilities, topographical features, geological conditions, vulnerability to natural disasters, past and present land use patterns, etc. are studied for each settlement. Then, 180 villages are divided into 27 sub-regions.

Preparation of strategic actions plan in the scale of 1/250,000 (Regional Strategy Plan) and 1/100,000 (Provincial Strategy Plan) is followed by the more detailed plans. For each province one sub-region and one village within these sub-regions, preferably the one in which most of the public services will be aggregated are chosen for the preparation of strategic action plans at the scale of 1/25,000 together with investment port folio for each settlement in the selected sub-regions.

Selection criteria of a village for detailed planning in each sub-region comprised of several aspects such as geographical position within the sub-region, accessibility and transportation connections with the nearby settlements including the nearest urban centre, population, existence of social and physical infrastructure, social dispute with the nearby settlements, economic potential, etc.

At the final stage of the project, in addition to the investment portfolio to be realized by different State organizations and the rough estimate of the costs for each investment item is determined. These investment items are delineated in the detailed implementation plans (1/1,000 scale), which are prepared for the selected villages, which will function as central villages. Plans included detailed plan reports for each planning level indicating the methodology to be followed in specific sub-region and the prospective ones to be determined by the central State agencies and governors.

Conclusion

The aim of the Sub-Regional Development Project for the Return to Village and Rehabilitation of the Displaced Rural Population project is not to plan a full return of the displaced population to their villages. Its main objective is to provide a model which would provide a guideline to the related authorities to plan and realise the resettlement process. The restoration of the previous situation is neither possible nor desirable. Previous settlement patterns have emerged as a result of a long historical and socio-economic process. It reflects the small, fragmented and dispersed land ownership pattern in the region.

Villages and hamlets have relatively small populations making service provision and staffing difficult and costly. In some villages, educational facilities and medical centres are working under capacity. In some others, they are either not available or without staff.

The landscape in the region is very rough and uneven which creates a great deal of difficulties in access and communication. Certain villages and hamlets have very poor connections to main urban centres. Some hamlets have no road connection at all.

Economic bases of the villages are fragile and not open to the market. Considerable part of the village economies is based on subsistence production and unlikely to survive without subsidies. In sum, main problems in the region are, the small land ownership, low level fertility, lack of specialisation, lack of coordination and cooperation among the farmers.

In addition to the above ones, the project took the conditions and expectations of the displaced population, and the expectations of the related State authorities and agencies. In the plans prepared by the project, special emphasis is put on the development of a more integrated settlement pattern, which will bring economic efficiency, and rationalisation of investments and service provision. Delineation of sub-regions and selection of the Central Villages in these regions where the main public services is proposed to be aggregated can be considered as the key decisions in the formation of the new settlement pattern which is thought to be an initial step in development of a more rational settlement pattern and a more rational distribution of the resources and services in the whole region.

This experience shows that contrary to the various NGO's conservative policies related to the return of the internally displaced population back to their original settlements, a new and a more comprehensive approach should be designed.

Firstly, internally displaced villagers who lived at semi-closed economic and cultural environments in the villages experienced, though in rather miserable conditions, a different life style in the relocated cities. This new life together with its harsh living conditions brought some amenities that were not experienced previously. These conflicting sides of the city life

affect different age and gender groups at different moments of the life cycle in dissimilar ways. Hence, while the old generation and male head of households who are the major victims of the displacement could not cope with the new economic and cultural environment would like to return their villages, youngsters who had less adaptation problems in cities would like to live in cities. In most cases the women who would not like to experience the severe life conditions in the villages back them. Therefore, a more dynamic and flexible model of resettlement model should be developed. In the new model problem should be treated not solely in the context of rural environment but as a combination of urban and rural ones.

Secondly, displacement problem should be turned to an opportunity for restructuring the rural fabric. In other words, the restoration of the previous situation should not be aimed. The displacement process provides a new opportunity for redesigning the inefficient and irrational aspects of the rural settlement pattern in a more rational way to increase the efficiency of public service provision.

Thirdly, the adverse consequences of the whole process of return to village should be minimised through careful planning and intervention. New rural development methods should be introduced to increase the agricultural efficiency and to prevent the production loss which will incur due to loss of previous manpower that preferred to stay at the cities. The ultimate aim should be to enable villagers to attain a higher living standard prior the displacement.

Finally, the whole planning and implementation process should be committed to the principles of sustainability and participation. Internally displaced villagers should be consulted and informed about the each and every step of the resettlement process.

Briefly, if these principals are taken into consideration and vitalized, the problem of internal displacement may turn into an opportunity both for the country and the adversely affected people.