

Mega dams cause involuntary displacement of a large number of people who need to be resettled. *How has the Pakistani state gone about resettling its displaced?* I want to answer this question by tracing the evolution of Pakistan's resettlement policy in the case of the Tarbela Dam. I will do so by collecting and analyzing archival data on resettlement plans and high-level policy debates.

While the story of resettling the Tarbela's 96,000 displaced spans over half a century, I focus on two critical periods – the 1960s when the dam was built; and the 1990s when the issue of resettlement was highlighted by transnational protest movements. Tarbela Dam was built during the 1960s as the center-piece of Pakistan's developmental agenda. Existing land acquisition laws were insufficient for resettling the large number of the displaced. Given the significance of this project, the state founded a separate body for resettlement, built housing colonies, and allocated agricultural land in Sindh and Punjab. I wish to examine the formative debates that resulted in these resettlement plan.

The second time period spans across the late 1990s, when a global anti-dam movement forced powerful development actors to recognize the high cost of large dams and announce policy changes. National governments and global development institutions, like the World Bank, responded by establishing investigative commissions and announcing new resettlement policies. The Government of Pakistan also established the Tarbela Commission in 1998 to consider the outstanding cases of the displaced – around 11,000 in total. Given the shifts in global discourse around dams, resettling the landless was also put on the agenda. I wish to examine how Pakistan state official responded to these new challenges.

The Tarbela Dam therefore provides a unique case study for investigating how the resettlement policy was debated at the highest-level of governance during two very different eras of global development. The study will examine how the Pakistan state acted based on an evolving sense of responsibility towards its displaced peoples.

My approach differs from usual analyses of displacement and resettlement in two ways. First, existing studies show that Pakistan relies on colonial-era laws to compensate for land loss, and these archaic laws undervalue land, incur long delays, and exclude the landless. But we don't know a lot about high-level policy debates around addressing the legal shortcomings. Second, studies tend to evaluate whether particular resettlement plans were successful or not, without examining how debates around particular projects belie state's anxieties and can lead to broader shifts in the resettlement policies.

The AIPS Short-term research grant will enable me to spend two months in Pakistan collecting archival and policy data. During a recent trip to the country, I visited the National Documentation Center (NDC) and National Archives in Islamabad. I have identified a set of documents that cover the Cabinet and Ministry level debates. In addition, I will visit WAPDA and Provincial archives to collect data on land allocation issues. I will also supplement this data with the fieldwork for my dissertation later this year, which focuses on protests movements against Indus river projects.

For scholars of water politics in Pakistan, my study will provide an account of an overlooked episode in the development of the Indus Basin. My study could also have a broader impact by informing the ongoing debates around large-infrastructure development, and the problems of the land acquisition and resettling the displaced.