Re-Conceptualizing the Impact of Development on Childcare: The Volta River Project and the Child Survival Challenge in Dzemeni

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Abstract

Ghana's most prestigious energy infrastructural project, the Volta River Project (VRP), aimed to trigger industrial development through the generation of cheap electricity. At its initiation, the project had a people-oriented resettlement and livelihoods restoration programme, which was abandoned. The Tongu Ewe who constituted more than 80 per cent of those displaced, have faced socio-cultural and economic dislocation without adequate compensation. Within the Development-Induced 'Displacement and Impoverishment' literature a content and knowledge gap especially theoretical models of the impact on child care. As such, this paper proposes two models that focus on the effects of displacement on childcare practices of impoverished mothers who have assumed multiple roles. This is to establish an understanding of the economic and emotional effects of impoverishment and socio-cultural dislocation from development project displacement as the study in Dzemeni portrays.

Key words: *childcare costs; impoverished mothers; Tongu Ewe migrants; Dzemeni; development-induced-displacement; development impact on childcare*

Résumé

Developpment industriel grâce à la production d'électricité bon marché. Lors de son lancement, le projet a bénéficie d'un program de réinstallation AXÉ sur les populations et de restauration des moyens d'existence, qui a été Abandonnee. Les Toung Tongu, qui constituaient plus de 80% des déplacés, ont été confrontés a une dislocation socio-culturelle et économique sans compensation adéquate. Dans la Littérature «deplacements et appauvrissement» induite par le développement, il existe un fossé de contenu et de connaissances, notamment des modèles théoriques de l'impact sur la garde d'enfants. En tant que tel, le présent document propose deux modèles qui mettent l'accent sur les effets du deplacement sur les pratiques de garde d'enfants de mères appauvries qui ont des Roles multiples a assumer. Il s'agit d'une comprehension a établie des effets économiques et de l'appauvrissement emotional et de la dislocation socio-culturelle du deplacement du projet de développement comme Dzemeni dépeint dans l'etude.

Mots clés: *frais de garde d'enfants; Meres appauvries; Tongu Ewe migrants; Dzemeni; Développement-induit-deplacement; Impact sur le développement des enfants*

Introduction

The Volta River Project (VRP), Ghana's most prestigious energy infrastructural project, aimed at the socio-economic development of the country, was brought to the fore of wider public attention when, in 2009, the Vice President and later President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. John D. Mahama admitted that Ghana had committed mistakes regarding the lack of faith in discharging social responsibility of the state to communities affected by the VRP. This admission was an open invitation for self-reflection and critical analysis of the economic and socio-cultural effects of the dam on all the groups displaced when the VRP was executed. To many purposes, it could also present the foundation for the state to initiate social policies and development strategies that would rescue those who sacrificed their vibrant livelihoods for the survival of Ghana's socio-economic development for decades.

For the purposes, at least, at its initiation, it was clear in Nkrumah's mind what the dam was to represent and signify for Ghana. He and his country thence became expectant beyond measure as it clearly marked an advent of hope, for both the surreal expectations and the practical manifestations. Ghana was to be catapulted to a position of prominence and her image solidified as an economic haven for all black people, if possible. Although this was not openly acknowledged, the power from Akosombo was to ignite the industrial revolution in and around Ghana and transform her access to power into the epicentre of the generic and global connotations of the 'Power Icon'.

As expected, praise for the VRP filled every space on the airwaves during the period of the recent celebrations of the VRA, which was seen by Ghanaian to be powerful, but a connotation which did not necessarily connect sovereign Ghana as a powerful entity. And this power aura of the VRA and the importance of the VRP have significantly failed to coincide with the expectations of the Tongu Ewe. Thus, for the Tongu Ewe especially, half a century later, the logical and moral imperative to insert the *hows* and *whys* within the national development discourse has forged to the fore more poignantly. Although scholarly treatise of the topic has been established within academia, yet the nation has yet to further contemplate whether the ethics of development have not been 'celestially' violated and their plight neglected in current national development planning. As legitimate questions call up anew, there seems to be a resurgence of activism to draw attention to the wrongs of the past in the execution of the VRP.

Notable among the works that have pointed to the destruction of the livelihoods of the Tongu through the construction of the VRP and studied the alternative livelihoods available to them as a result are; Geker (1999); G. W. Lawson (1963); R. M. Lawson

(1961; 1963; 1968; 1972) and Tsikata (2006). Today, the Tongu Ewe who constituted more than 80 per cent of those initially displaced (Geker, 1999) are intent upon finding out whether they have not been deliberately thrown out of the celebrations of the fortune the nation found in their backyard. It seems more probable by the day that although their livelihoods were truncated without adequate compensation, yet, their real or perceived marginalisation in the fashioning of special development packages has been established. And this is just made to fall within the global normative culture and practice of overlooking the plights of those marginalised in development project execution as a Faustian legacy.

As a phenomenon of nascent global significance, the debate for eco/human-friendly energy sources has become topical within the global energy strategy and discourse. In that regard, this paper intends to stoke the continuing debate on the VRP and the compensation to the displaced downstream and upstream, largely. Although not a core issue of discussion here, the paper desires to rake up the issue of the relevance of developing states' continued reliance on large dams in the wake of their decommissioning elsewhere. Especially pertaining to livelihoods large dams are noted culprits in their destruction and non-replacement.

Tsikata (2006) has noted that when the VRP was executed in the mid-1960s, destruction of livelihoods and displacement of thousands of the population was not an issue of prolonged hassle. The project had worked out a satisfying, relieving package for the livelihoods restoration for the displaced populations by community, individual and household count. According to Tongu Ewe elders, an important component of the agricultural schemes was an all-year-round irrigation farming, which promised relief and hope in the resettlement package, for which they have yearned in vain. For unspecified and unjustified reasons, they could simply not be implemented.

It seemed at the beginning, emotion reigned to a point where a critical and encompassing sociological audit was either relegated to the background or inadequately incorporated. Through an ethnographic study undertaken, between 2005 and 2008 (by the author), many questions arose regarding Ghana's review of and attention to the economic, emotional and the socio-cultural effects of the VRP especially on the Tongu Ewe. The study benefitted from many earlier studies into large dam displacement, and the VRP and livelihoods of the Tongu Ewe but which did not specifically treat the issues as a combined cocktail of household provisioning and child care practices in the home and in the market. Many earlier frameworks led by those of Cernea which proved invaluable to this discussion are thus reviewed for our analysis.

Earlier Frameworks

Michael Cernea, a sociologist employed by the World Bank (WB) in the 1980s to review the effects of the bank's sponsored projects uncovered numerous negative

effects on people displaced by these projects. The Volta River Project, also a World Bank sponsored project, was included in the study from which it was concluded that the 1 per cent of Ghana's population that was displaced by the VRP constituted then the largest per centile proportion of those ever displaced in relation to the general population in any large dam displacement on the globe.

Cernea (1997: 7, citing Cook and Mukendi, 1994), has noted that "involuntary resettlement caused by government sponsored development programs has generated and continues to generate, a distinct set of problems on the African continent". This, however, is not peculiar to Africa. Involuntary resettlement processes are only a sub-set of the broader massive population resettlement processes which have been going on all around the world (Cernea 1997: 2). Involuntary resettlement is not normally an intended end in itself. But the need for population movements has been a response to the problem of attempting to match the spatial distribution of the populations with the rich endowment of natural resources for sustenance and growth (Cook and Falloux 1994, cited in Cernea 1997: 2). It is now a well-known fact from the Large Dams literature that the genuine attempts of states to develop industrial capacity through dam projects establishes a complexity that is difficult to avoid and appropriately manage.

From one angle, this complexity is established by the long term effects of the destruction of livelihoods of those initially displaced. This results in their involuntary movement in search of new livelihoods. The impoverishment risks faced by the descendants and dependants of the displaced populace seem to be replicated in a cyclical manner over the years. They then could assume an unstable social and economic status in new settlements. This status as 'troublesome guests' is mischievously bandied about and used as a weapon in psychological warfare by their hosts at the least provocation, even without any provocation. In such instances, a settler at one settlement could be seen abandoning everything acquired over years and embarking on the search for a new, friendlier settlement. And this underscores and illustrates the complexity of the initial displacement that places them on a constantly rolling wheel of the search for a place to find some viable livelihood.

Thus, the diminution of the economic opportunities for settlers in lakeside communities, such as Dzemeni, can be traced to dam projects that initially destroyed the livelihoods of their *clan*. Added to this is the inescapable fact that the potential of limited access to livelihoods in these communities to affect the survival chances of their children has not been fully addressed in many survey studies or by state policy.

Many factors, that have remained unexplored, account for the childcare challenge. Negligence of parents (at the individual and household level) cannot be completely ruled out. But, at the same time, a wider examination of other factors is imperative. In lakeside settler communities, the prevalence of the problem could have existed and be aggravated, to a higher degree, as a result of the 'migrant statuses' of mothers. For, 'migration is a significant event that could easily create the conditions for the slackening

in the observance of traditional sanctions and grounds for individual's deviation from cultural norms' (Oppong and Abu, 1987: 3).

From another angle, (that of analysing the child care challenge in lakeside communities), it is clear that one complexity of dam projects is the irony embedded in them. Projects that are crucial for initiating economic growth and promoting social change do not have a one-way traffic of a smooth passage. They portray the associated features of a double edged sword - a dichotomy of end results with dual contradictions of benefits and costs, joy and pain. A common practice prevails that could not be fully understood and also fully questioned. State operatives assume or are mandated to fashion out development projects that determine and allocate economic opportunities to sections of their societies. In the aftermath of such development projects, one possibility exists as an established order- the destruction or distortion of the economic organization of sections within the nation state. Apart from the loss of economic opportunities, the social organization (of the displacees) becomes disintegrated and their cultural heritage dismembered. And this is largely occasioned by their exodus from home in droves in search of greener pastures. But in the case of the Tongu, it is in the search of 'deeper waters' that set their socio-cultural orientation in strange lands and strangeness, and their economic activities in imbalance that have refused to support normal Tongu Ewe child care practices.

However, in Africa, it is not only imbalances in economic opportunities that initiate population movements; it is also a characteristic feature of Africa's mostly agrarian economy. Indeed, 'traditionally, spatial mobility is a central feature of many African societies' (Cernea, 1997: 2). Cernea (passim) has explained that population displacement and resettlement and its unintended consequences have displayed certain characteristic traits that have manifested in different forms, pointing out that:

> First, involuntary resettlement is itself never the primary objective of a project that causes displacement; it is the by-product-often unavoidable-of urban programs or of the construction of dams, highways, industrial estates, ports, forestry, natural resource management projects, and so forth. Second, whereas other types of projects explicitly aim to increase agricultural productivity and people's incomes, forced resettlement starts by taking away land, the main asset for family livelihood. Third, if not properly addressed by the state, involuntary resettlement operations certainly degenerate into processes of massive impoverishment and also social disarticulation (Cernea, 1997: 3) (emphasis mine).

Significantly, development-induced population displacement and resettlement has introduced a quite different dimension of response in Africa. Apart from the resultant recreation, re-adjustment, redefinition and realignment of demography over geographical

space, it has also led to impoverishment of sections of populations on a massive scale. And this, in no mean measure, significantly contributes to the diminution of the capacity for child care. In particular, motherhood and child care have remained silently hauled and shaped by these physical and socio-economic re-adjustments initiated by displacement in ways that have remained invisible.

In Ghana, the status of pre-eminence assumed by state interest over individual or a smaller group interest (deemed insignificant) could have been responsible for pushing away the negative effects of the dam displacement out of the content of public discourse. In many situations, the role of the state in initiating development decisions is normally well-intentioned and has often resulted in tremendous benefits for the larger section of its citizenry. But, at the same time, some of the development projects have led to devastating effects for specific and minor population sections. Cernea (1997: 2) observed that:

> The challenges posed by mandated processes of involuntary resettlement epitomize some of the most complex problems involved in inducing, accelerating, and managing development. They raise core questions about the role of the state in population relocation decisions, the goals and social actors of development, its costs, pathologies, and benefits.

Displacement, Resettlement and Livelihood Deprivation

It cannot be denied that, although displacement in itself is not the genesis of impoverishment, yet it nevertheless increases or aggravates an already poor condition. O'Brien and Leichenko (2000) refer to this human condition as 'Double Exposure'. The following observation by Cernea (1997) further explains the reality:

> Many of the people subjected to forced displacement are poor even before displacement, or are in a marginal economic situation. They have already been working hard to overcome poverty and to improve their incomes, health and sanitation. Then suddenly, a development program intended to bring benefits to many people (triggers a resettlement operation that is so inequitably designed and implemented it fails to protect the affected people from a worsening of their situation. Such a program turns displacement into a weapon that aggravates rather than alleviates poverty. The paradox is as blatant as it is unjust and unacceptable (p.19).

Tsikata (2006) has documented the livelihood trajectories of the people displaced by the VRP in the mid-1960s. The findings from her study do not point to "improvements in the well-being of participants". Rather, she noted, "in general terms, these efforts have fallen short of expectations". She has identified that initially, states and the international institutions did not respond to the plight of people suffering the negative effects of dams. The response came from academia and development professionals. The coping strategies of displaced and resettled people in their new 'worlds' have been studied. From these emerged proposed models as the processes through which their lives are reconstructed and reorganised.

These studies, of models, have also established the fact that dam projects affect succeeding generations of those initially affected, since livelihoods are not only economic but also community assets and social/cultural legacies. A focus of these studies, which is relevant to this discussion, is that, they have delved not only into the short-term impact but also the long-term economic, socio-cultural and also psychological effects. This paper is another contribution in this regard. Its focus on child care is a novelty so far as the discourse on well-being effects of Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) is concerned. Some of the relevant findings from the analysis of the coping strategies of Large Dam displacees by Cernea, Stanley, Chambers, Scudder and Colson, Colchester and others including Tsikata and Lawson to which this study and paper are heavily indebted provide valuable insights.

Theoretical Models on Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR)

Stanley (2008) has studied the various theoretical models existing in the DIDR literature and observed how inapplicable some were to the real situations and experiences of displaced people. Several such conceptual models have been in use in the social science literature over the last three decades. According to Stanley (2008), the first model in the literature was Robert Chambers' (1973) conceptual representation of population, land settlement as a three-phase process. But this did not work as it was later found to be an inadequate representation of the lived reality, hence the need for universally applicable models. In response to this need, for a more universally applicable model, Scudder and Colson (1982) proposed a four-stage model of how people and socio-cultural systems respond to resettlement.

The stages were labelled recruitment, transition, potential development, and handing over or incorporation. In the recruitment phase, policy-makers and/or developers formulate development and resettlement plans, often without informing those to be displaced. During transition, people learn about their future displacement, which heightens the level of stress they experience. Potential development occurs after physical

relocation. Displacees then begin the process of rebuilding their economy and social networks. Handing over or incorporation refers to the handing over of local production systems and community leadership to a second generation of residents, that identified with and felt at home in the community. Once this stage has been achieved, resettlement was deemed a success (Stanley 2008: 12).

The Scudder–Colson model was interested in behavioural tendencies commonly associated with each of the different stages through which resettlers pass. But the mounting evidence of the failure of involuntary resettlement schemes to pass through all four stages in the 1980s and 1990s showed how inapplicable it was to all such cases. It meant that in order to explain the consequences of involuntary relocation, a new theory was necessary. "What was increasingly seen as predictable impoverishment in forced resettlement schemes" could then be modelled (Stanley 2008: 13).

In response to the recognition of the need for a new theory, Cernea's Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model arose in the 1990s. Contrary to the Scudder–Colson model, the IRR model did not identify the different stages of relocation. It rather tried to identify the 'impoverishment risks intrinsic to forced resettlement and the processes necessary for reconstructing the livelihoods of displacees' (Stanley 2008: 13). It noted that if targeted policies failed to specifically address the negative effects of displacement, displacees could face dangers such as loss of access to common property resources, marginalization, landlessness, homelessness and joblessness. They could also have to contend with the challenge of food insecurity, with associated problems of community disarticulation, increased mortality and morbidity (ibid.).

Stanley (2008: 13) refers to the additional risks stated by Downing and others, such as: loss of access to public services, civil and human rights and disruption of formal education activities. The model also recognizes impoverishment risks to the host population. At the same time, it noted that not all of these processes necessarily occur; neither are all displaced households affected, in each case of forced resettlement, by each process (ibid.). Cernea (1997:10) has conceded that his model takes a different, complimentary approach, as it is not aiming at distinguishing the stages of resettlement. Rather, it is "identifying the fundamental impoverishment risks intrinsic to resettlement and the key socio-economic processes critical for reconstructing the livelihoods of resettlers" (ibid.).

The category that is often affected in aggregate terms by DIDR are the marginalized who are already the most economically, politically, and socially vulnerable in a population (Stanley, 2008: 14). And then at both the individual and community levels, certain segments of the displaced population can feel the impoverishment risks associated with resettlement more intensely. Children can be included in such categories since they are wholly dependent on adults.

Others have found similar correlations in their studies. For instance, Colchester (2000, cited in Stanley, ibid.) provides an overview of the worldwide impact of dam projects on certain marginalized sections of some countries. Some of these indigenous

populations and ethnic minority groups make up a disproportionately large percentage of those whose livelihoods are adversely affected by development projects. For instance, Colchester observed that the Adavasis, an ethnic group in India, make up only about 8 per cent of the population of India, but they are estimated to constitute 40 - 50 per cent of those displaced by development projects in the country.

Some of the difficulties indigenous peoples have encountered with regard to dam projects have been identified by Colchester (2000). The outright dispossession of land and resources, lack of consultation, insufficient or complete lack of compensation, cultural alienation and a lowering of living standards are some forms of the human rights abuses that result. Apart from these measurable and identifiable factors, a more harmful one exists. The physical dislocation becomes potentially more harmful due to "the specific and strong cultural connection that many indigenous groups have with the land on which, and the environment in which, they live, and "from which they are removed (Colchester, 2000, cited in Stanley 2008: 14). Both the short and long term effects of displacement have different implications for the two sexes. Examining these implications from the DIDR literature is important for understanding of the conditions of Tongu settlers in Dzemeni.

Gender Disparities in Resettlement

Stanley (2008: 14-15) has observed that gender disparities in resettlement operations have not been well highlighted in the DIDR literature. He found out that:

> A small number of studies have shown that women often experience the adverse consequences of forced resettlement more strongly than men. For example, compensation payments are usually paid to the heads of households, which can concentrate the cash value of family assets in male hands, leaving women and children at higher risk of deprivation".

Women have been identified to be the section of society that loses heavily from projects that take away people`s livelihoods. The reason for this is that, "in rural areas, women can be more adversely affected because they are often more dependent than men on common property resources [such as land and water resources] for income sources" (Stanley, 2008:15). Women are more likely to suffer impoverishment as a result of loss of access to rights and opportunities for negotiating compensation, due to power relations in the domestic setting (ibid.). He also refers to Guggenheim's (1993) discussion of Mexico's Zimapan Dam Project in which women were initially consulted for the negotiations, but as it started yielding results, the men began to attend in place of the women.

Normally and because women and young children are in coterminous terms, when women are pushed and heckled out of the way of benefits and access to compensatory resources, the well-being of children is being pushed to higher levels of risk and vulnerability. As 'childhood' remains an unclassified category in the gender division, it is naturally put together only notionally with 'women'. Therefore the effects of displacement on women logically affects more than just women.

Conceptual Frameworks

Although no single framework referred to addresses all the aspects of the study, each of them suits an aspect of it. It uses frameworks developed from the DIDR conceptual models and the UNICEF framework to examine the child care practices of migrant women. The first, (Fig. 1), is named: 'External Influences on Household Resources and Child Well-Being'. It asserts that child well-being in the household and community level is determined by the invisible hand of macro-economic policies at the global and national level and socio-economic and cultural influences on the household access to and utilization of resources. The VRP was an international economic development model that postulated that Large Dams were necessary in establishing a firmer foundation for the development of a young nation's economy. The Akosombo Dam was initiated and implemented by the state with international co-operation; advice from international economic consultants and World Bank sponsorship. The connection between the impoverishment of those displaced by these projects and failure of state social policy to address their plight cannot be discounted.

Child care is eventually at the receiving end of these policy failures by state and international organizations. The model also asserts that the fundamental support system for the child, that are expected to provide domestic resources for child survival are father, mother and kin, who are the closest form of security for the child, and the 'primary players'. But these players' access to resources could be manipulated or influenced by the 'larger forces' of local environment, cultural influences, state and international economic policies.

The second framework for this study is based on the UNICEF framework. It is named 'Health – Seeking Behaviour of Mother for Child: Determinants of Child Well-Being' (Fig. 2). It suggests that the prospects for the attainment of child well-being and survival are not only dependent on the provision of health facilities and programmes, but also contingent upon the suitability of the programme, access to resources by the household, and the schedule of the child's mother. In addition, kin support, (and that of the husband), proximity of facilities, and friendliness of programmes are important determinants. Thus, institutional support, household resources and mothers' time play significant parts in contributing to success in ensuring optimum child survival prospects.

Fig. 1: External Influences on Household Resources and Child Well-Being

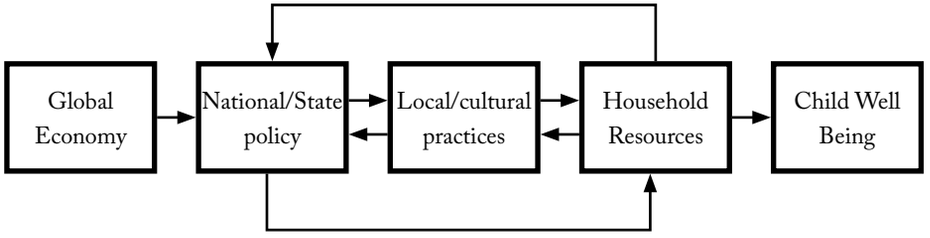
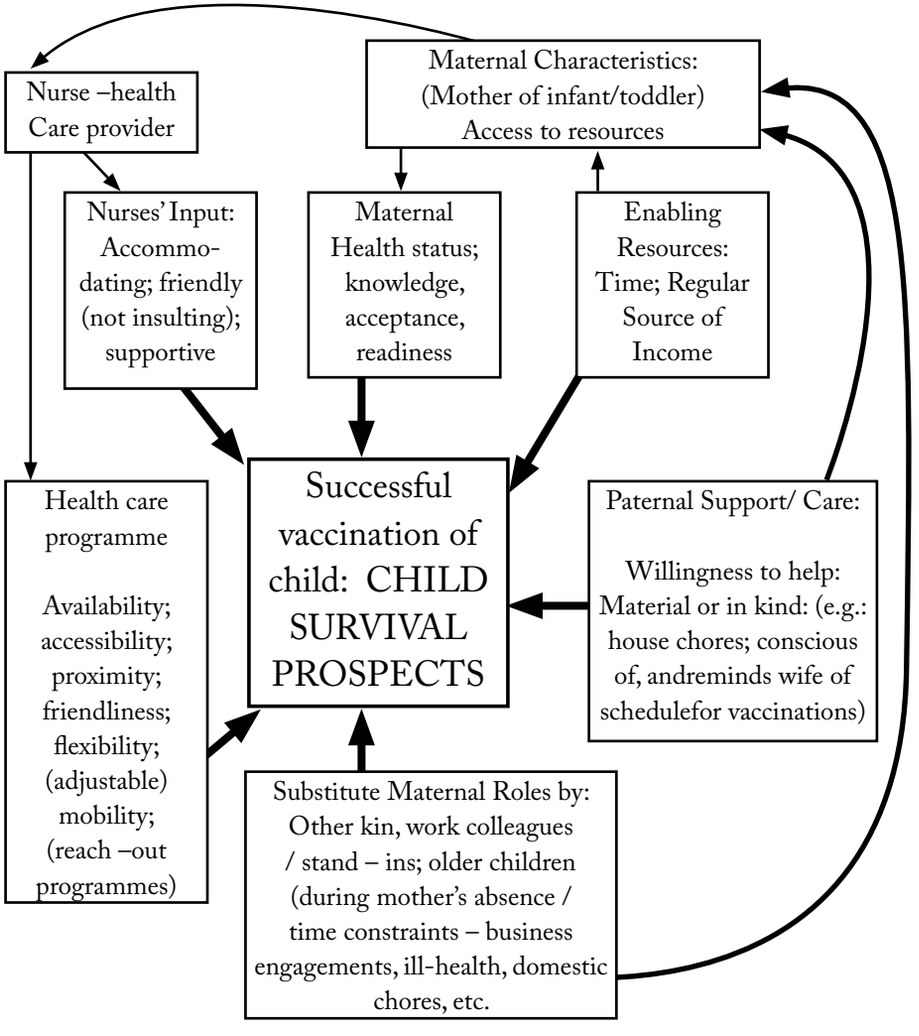


Fig. 2: Health –Seeking Behaviour of Mother for Child; Determinants of Child Well-Being.



Conclusion

The paper has reviewed some of the theoretical models proposed for the analysis of dam impacts on displaced populations from the available literature. Mainly, the works of Cernea, Stanley, Chambers, Scudder and Colson, and Colchester have been reviewed and analysed. Their significance or otherwise regarding the lives of displacees of the VRP has been placed in context. The practical context presented here is the household experiences from the findings of a 22-month ethnographic field study into the child care practices of Tongu Ewe migrants in Dzemeni situated along the Volta Lake at the upper reaches of the Akosombo Dam. It has come to light that childcare has been inadequately treated within the existing frameworks available for review. Proposed frameworks for the analysis of childcare in relation to dam displacement and impoverishment risks are presented. It is worthy of note that a multiple-site larger study of the effects of displacement on mothers, child care practices and child survival prospects is needed for a fuller understanding of the phenomenon that has failed to attract adequate attention from economists and politicians. This is in order to lay the foundation for a firmer re-conceptualization of displacement and exposure to impoverishment risks from large dam or other development projects within the corpus of literature on demography and development discourse. It looks apparent that knee-jerk solutions to development displacement have been a creation of the development enterprise itself. Individual governments have to back away from the mantra of the UNDESA laid down in the 1951 justification for the destruction of livelihoods and dislocation of socio-cultural structures. The larger ramifications of the sweeping devastating effect of the failure of the state to address the livelihood loss of the Tongu Ewe might not be fully known. But the state can still make the attempt with state policy to halt the debilitating effect of such losses on child care for already resource-access vulnerable groups. Perhaps, certain

Economic models have informed state operatives' dereliction or inability to address livelihood loss questions. Another possibility is that this neglect has thrived on the silent ideology that the destruction of the opportunities for survival by a sub-group within a state could be referred to as the 'price of economic progress'. It is known that the 'suffering for the good of all' ideology which Prime Minister Nehru stood upon in his famous public declaration in 1948 is now deemed anachronistic and anti-people. Unfortunately, this was promoted by such an important body of the United Nations. Perhaps the consolation could be that the time lapse has made that organ of the UN to discard such lewd ideology.

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Endnotes

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