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Socio-Economic Profile of the Pong Dam Displaced Population

Vijay Kumar
Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Central University of Himachal Pradesh

Abstract: *There is a discernible trend showing that the vast majority of the displaced are Hindu. In every category, this pattern holds true. On the other hand, the second most prevalent religious group is Sikh households. Nonetheless, their share is far lower than that of the Hindu populace. According to the data, Sikhs were present in all three categories in a minor but steady number, suggesting that although they were similarly impacted, their displacement was not that widespread. The group with the lowest representation in the data is Muslim households. They are sparsely distributed throughout the rehabilitated categories.*

I. Introduction

Understanding the socio-economic profile of displaced populations is essential for assessing the impact of displacement and the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts. Displacement not only alters the physical location of households but also reshapes their demographic composition, social structures, access to resources, and overall living conditions. An analysis of these characteristics provides a foundational basis for examining the nature and extent of changes experienced by affected populations.

The socio-economic profile reflects variations in factors such as age structure, social composition, education levels, housing conditions, access to basic amenities, and landholding patterns. These factors play a crucial role in determining the capacity of households to adapt to post-displacement conditions and influence the outcomes of rehabilitation processes. Differences across categories of displaced households further highlight the uneven nature of these impacts.

This paper presents a detailed analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the displaced population, examining key indicators related to demographic structure, education, housing, infrastructure, and resource access. By doing so, it provides an empirical foundation for understanding the differential experiences of displaced households and sets the stage for subsequent analysis of rehabilitation outcomes and policy implications. For analytical purposes the sample population is divided in three categories. Category A represents displaced people who have been rehabilitated in Rajasthan, Category B represents oustees who were allotted land but could not get possession of land and Category C represents oustees who have not been allotted land.

1.2 Age

The age-wise distribution of family members across three distinct sample household categories is broken down in table 5.1. The higher percentages of people in the 0–20 age range in Categories B and C point to a younger demographic makeup in these groupings than in Category A. Given that the 21–40 age range is generally regarded as economically active and reproductive, its comparatively large percentage in Categories B and C may indicate that there are more working-age people in those categories. The older working population in Category A may indicate a delayed demographic shift or a longer life expectancy in the 41–60 age range.

Table 5.1. Age wise Distribution of Family Members (Per Cent).

All Family Members/Category	A			B			C		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
0-20	20.05	18.56	21.46	25.75	24.54	26.89	26.15	27.35	25.00
21-40	18.79	20.88	16.83	25.18	26.37	24.04	24.17	22.87	25.43
41-60	26.31	27.58	25.12	23.27	23.40	23.16	20.43	21.52	19.40
61-80	20.05	19.59	20.49	16.22	15.75	16.69	18.24	20.18	16.38
81-100	13.78	12.63	14.88	8.67	9.13	8.23	10.32	7.62	12.93
Above 100	1.02	0.77	1.22	0.92	0.80	0.99	0.69	0.45	0.86
Total	100.00 (798)	100.00(388)	100.00(410)	100.00 (1787)	100.00 (876)	100.00 (911)	100.00 (455)	100.00 (223)	100.00 (232)

Note: Figures in parentheses are the total number of family members on the basis of which the percentages have been calculated
Source: Field Survey, May-June 2023

The percentages are comparatively stable for people between the ages of 61-80. The number of people in the 81–100 age range is relatively smaller. Additionally, only a very small percentage of those above 100 are included in the data. Despite being small, these numbers are significant since they show that there are centenarians in the group under study, which may indicate unusual longevity.

Gender-wise the table brings to light subtle but important gender variations within each age group across categories A, B and C, rather than large disparities. There is a defined gender pattern in Category A. Males are more concentrated in the main working-age groups (21–60), whereas females are more prevalent in the young (0–20) and older (60+) cohorts. This points to a gendered age composition in which women are comparatively more prevalent at the demographic edges while men are more prominent in economically active parts.

There are relatively slight differences in the gender distribution across all age groups in Category B. Males have a modest advantage in the 21–40 and 81–100 cohorts, while females marginally exceed males in the 0–20 and 61–80 age groups. There is no significant gender disparity in the core working ages, as evidenced by the 41–60 age group's near-perfect parity. Overall, the disparities are negligible and erratic, indicating a fairly gender-neutral demographic structure in this category.

Category C shows a more uneven and fluctuating gender pattern across age groups. Males outnumber females in the 0–20, 41–60, and 61–80 cohorts, indicating a male concentration in both younger and middle age groups. In contrast, females exceed males in the 21–40 age group, reflecting a temporary reversal in early working ages. A pronounced shift occurs in the 81–100 group, where females significantly outnumber males, suggesting stronger female survival at advanced ages. Overall, the pattern is irregular rather than balanced, with no consistent gender dominance across the life cycle.

1.3 Religion

Table 5.2 Religion- wise Distribution of Displaced Persons across Rehabilitation Categories (Per Cent)

Religion/Category	A	B	C
Hindu	95.6	94.51	95.56
Muslim	0.00	2.44	2.22
Sikh	4.40	3.05	2.22
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2023

The data in table 5.2 illustrates the religious makeup of households that have been displaced. There is a discernible trend showing that the vast majority of the displaced are Hindu. In every category, this pattern holds true. On the other hand, the second most prevalent religious group is Sikh households. Nonetheless, their share is far lower than that of the Hindu populace. According to the data, Sikhs were present in all three categories in a minor but steady number, suggesting that although they were similarly impacted, their displacement was not that widespread. The group with the lowest representation in the data is Muslim households. They are sparsely distributed throughout the rehabilitated categories.

1.4 Social Category

Table 5.3 Classification of Households by Social Categories (Per Cent)

Social Category/ Category	A	B	C
General	100.00	56.10	51.11
SC	0.00	33.54	26.67
ST	0.00	0.00	0.00
OBC	0.00	10.36	22.22

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2023

The table 5.3 presents how the displaced families are distributed in terms of social category According to the data, every sample household in Category A falls into the general category. The population of sample households is dispersed throughout categories in Himachal Pradesh, where categories B and C are located. Unlike rehabilitated families in Rajasthan, SCs and OBCs also make up a sizable fraction of relocated households in Himachal Pradesh, even though the bulk of sample households fall under the general category. Oustees in Himachal reported that they are referred to as "dam oustees" and that other social strata that are not displaced do perceptively place them in a different category, whereas those in Rajasthan reported experiencing social isolation due to the location of their native lands. The respective percentage of General, SCs, and OBCs was found to be 56.10, 33.54, 10.37 in category 2 and 51.11, 26.67, 22.22 in category 3. No population of STs was observed.

1.5 Gender Composition

Table 5.4 Gender-wise Breakdown of Heads of the sample Households (Per Cent)

Gender/ Category	A	B	C
Male	82.42	81.10	62.22
Female	17.58	18.90	37.78
Total	100.00 (91)	100.00 (164)	100.00 (45)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are absolute numbers
Source: Field Survey, May-June 2023

The data presented in table 5.4 makes it abundantly clear that the percentage of women oustees who were candidates for allotment in Category C is higher than that of all other categories (37.78). During interviews, it was noted that women allotees found it extremely challenging to navigate the procedural and physical challenges of getting their rehabilitation done. In contrast to the other two categories, this fact led to a notable increase in the proportion of female heads of families in Category C. The data shows that the above said observation was inversely true for Category A, where the percentage of male heads of households was considerably larger than other two categories.

1.6 Education

Table 5.5 Distribution of the Sample Households According to their Education level (Per Cent)

Educational Level/Category	A			B			C		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
Illiterate	12.00	3.35	20.00	14.10	10.16	17.89	4.00	2.69	5.17
Primary	19.00	19.59	18.29	11.53	13.24	9.88	16.00	16.14	15.95
Middle	9.00	10.82	7.32	3.84	4.45	3.29	18.00	21.52	14.66
Matriculation	8.00	10.82	5.37	19.23	18.61	19.87	10.00	10.76	9.05
Secondary	14.00	15.98	12.20	11.53	13.36	9.77	14.00	16.14	12.07
Graduation	25.00	27.06	23.17	12.82	11.53	14.05	20.00	15.70	24.14
Post-Graduation	12.00	10.57	13.41	11.53	10.05	12.95	9.00	6.28	11.64
Technical Education	1.00	1.80	0.24	15.38	18.61	12.29	9.00	10.76	7.33
All	100.00 (798)	100.00 (388)	100.00 (410)	100.00 (1787)	100.00 (876)	100.00 (911)	100.00 (455)	100.00 (223)	100.00 (232)

Note: Technical Education includes courses like hotel management, polytechnic, and ITI etc.
Source: Field Survey, May- June 2023

The level of illiteracy ranges between around four per cent and twelve per cent across categories, and Category C shows minimum illiteracy levels. The data in table 5.5 show that in terms of technical education, categories B and C are way ahead of category A, which shows that students in Himachal have a tendency to go for skill-based education. Whereas oustees in Category A fared better in terms of graduation and post-graduation levels of education. It can be seen from the data that though Category C did not receive any land for rehabilitation, they have established themselves in the educational sphere, and their level of illiteracy is the least of all categories, and they have the highest percentages in middle and secondary educational levels. Category B sample households shine in matriculation as well as in technical educational levels. In the rest of the educational categories, Category A households shine as well.

At the lower end of the educational spectrum in Category A, there is a noticeable gender disparity. There is a strong disadvantage for women in accessing basic education, as evidenced by the fact that female illiteracy (20.00 percent) is significantly higher than male illiteracy (3.35 percent). Males still have a little advantage, especially till middle level, even if this disparity closes at the elementary and middle levels. The pattern becomes more complex at higher educational levels. Due to their greater access to higher education, men predominate at the secondary and graduation levels. At the post-graduation level, however, women marginally outperform men, indicating that if early obstacles are removed, female educational advancement can be really robust. Overall, Category A reflects a traditional pattern of gender disparity, characterized by female disadvantage at lower levels and partial convergence at higher levels.

Although there are still differences in some places, the gender distribution in Category B seems more balanced. Although the difference is smaller than in Category A, female illiteracy (17.89 per cent) is still higher than male illiteracy (10.16 per cent), suggesting some progress in access to basic education. Gender inequalities are minimal at the primary and middle school levels, indicating greater educational parity. However, a mixed tendency appears at higher levels. At the matriculation and graduation levels, women marginally outnumber men, suggesting that female participation in general education streams has improved. Males exhibit a distinct advantage in technical schooling at the same time, suggesting gender-based specialization, where males are more prevalent in technical or skill-oriented sectors. Thus, Category B reflects a transitional pattern marked by reduced gender gaps in basic education, selective female advantage in general education, and continued male dominance in technical domains.

The gender profile significantly improves in Category C, particularly at the lower educational levels. The gender gap in basic literacy has significantly decreased, as seen by the fact that female illiteracy (5.17 per cent) is only slightly greater than male illiteracy (2.69 per cent). Males and females are distributed almost equally at the primary and matriculation levels, indicating a high level of parity in basic education. There is a considerable female presence in higher education, as evidenced by the fact that females clearly exceed males in graduation and post-graduation. Nonetheless, men still predominate in middle, secondary, and technical education, indicating that gender disparity in some educational streams is still present. This suggests that subject or field preferences and opportunities may still be gendered even while access to school has become fairer.

1.7 Housing Conditions and Access to Related Amenities

In pre-displacement houses, the average house size was roughly the same, ranging from 649 to 657 square feet as shown in data presented in table 5.6. The largest size of dwellings is found in Category A after displacement. House sizes in Category A increased dramatically following displacement, while house sizes in Category C declined significantly from pre-displacement levels. Of the three categories, Category A presents a substantial improvement in housing sizes. In terms of ownership of houses, oustees in Category A maintained 100 per cent ownership status from before displacement to post-displacement. All the oustees in Category B as well as C owned their houses before displacement, but post-displacement, oustees in Category C showed a significant decline in ownership status (from 100 per cent to 77.78 per cent), although ownership status in Category B also deteriorated.

Table 5.6 Housing Conditions (Per Cent)

Indicator/Category	A		B		C	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Area of House (Square Feet)	650.21	1174.505	649.02	1064.39	657.33	512
Type of House						
Owned	100.00	100	100.00	90.24	100.00	77.78
Rented	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.76	0.00	22.22
Quality of House						
Kutcha	93.41	26.37	93.90	41.46	84.44	22.22
Pucca	3.30	73.63	3.05	58.54	6.67	71.11
thatched	3.30	0.00	3.05	0.00	8.89	6.67
Average number of rooms	2.48	3.24	2.21	3.18	2.86	2.91
Availability of Electricity						
Yes	0.00	97.80	0.00	9.76	0.00	86.67
No	100.00	2.2	100.00	90.24	100.00	13.33
Availability of Drinking Water						
Yes	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
No	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sanitation						
Available	3.30	94.51	3.66	100	17.78	86.67
Not available	96.70	5.49	96.34	0.00	82.22	13.33

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2023

According to the data, the majority of the displaced people in all categories lived either in thatched or kutcha houses prior to displacement. The respondents stated that due to a lack of building materials, including cement and other materials, only a small number of wealthy families were able to construct pucca houses prior to displacement. However, following displacement, the largest percentage of pucca and kutcha dwellings are found in Category A and Category B, respectively. As shown by the data, oustees in Category A have made great progress in pucca house construction. While the oustees in category A or B have entirely switched to living in either kutcha or pucca buildings, 6.67 per cent of the oustees in category C currently reside in thatched-roof houses.

The data clearly shows that the number of rooms in each category has increased after displacement, though Category C has seen a negligible increase. Before being displaced, none of the households in any of the categories had access to electricity. However, the situation dramatically changed after relocation, particularly for category A. 97.80 per cent of families in this group had access to electricity. Only 86.67 per cent of the households in category C had an electricity connection, making them the least electrified households in this case as well.

All the sample households in all the categories reported that they had access to drinking water either in pre-displacement or post-displacement times. However, the sources of drinking water post-displacement vary significantly after displacement. The majority of the houses in Category A drink water from either diggies or ponds, whereas oustees in the other two categories drink water from either step wells, hand pumps, or wells.

The majority of the sample households across the categories did not have access to sanitation facilities. However, category C had the highest percentage of households that had access to sanitation in pre-displacement settings. After displacement only Category B households had 100 per cent access to sanitation facilities. Whereas oustees in Category C have the least percentage of households with access to sanitation facilities.

1.8 Landholding Pattern

Following rehabilitation, the land ownership of Category A sample households increased from 5.01 hectares to 6.25 hectares, as the table5.7 illustrates. However, following displacement, the data on the other two categories indicates a decline in overall land ownership. Nonetheless, Category B has seen the most drastic drop in land ownership. Regarding irrigated lands, Category A's share of irrigated lands has grown from 41.30 per cent to 100 per cent. It was stated that while the Indira Gandhi Canal network provides irrigational water to the lands allotted in Rajasthan, the issue is with the frequency and quality of the water supplied, which affects the overall agricultural productivity and sustainability of the irrigated lands.

Table 5.7: Details of land (Per Cent)

Indicators/Category	A		B		C	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Irrigated	41.30	100.00	38.13	28.57	41.32	45.05
Unirrigated	58.70	0.00	61.87	71.43	58.68	54.95
Total Land Ownership	100.00 (5.01)	100.00 (6.25)	100.00 (4.29)	100.00 (1.75)	100.00 (3.85)	100.00(2.93)
Irrigated	41.56	96.61	46.00	21.47	44.70	47.05
Unirrigated	49.44	3.39	54.00	78.53	55.30	52.95
Total Operational Holdings	100.00 (4.79)	100.00 (7.68)	100.00 (3.95)	100.00(1.56)	100.00 (3.94)	100.00 (2.81)
Leases						
Irrigated	34.43	49.37	75.40	85.71	78.97	74.56
Unirrigated	65.57	50.63	24.60	14.29	21.03	25.44
Total Leased-in	100.00(0.61)	100.00(2.37)	100.00 (0.30)	100.00(0.07)	100.00(0.26)	100.00(0.05)
Irrigated	8.43	0.00	6.16	86.54	20.59	20.58
Unirrigated	91.57	100.00	93.84	13.46	79.41	79.42
Total Leased-out	100.00(0.83)	100.00(0.94)	100.00 (0.64)	100.00(0.26)	100.00(0.17)	100.00(0.17)
Orchards	11.73	0.00	8.54	5.85	6.91	26.07
Pastures	21.95	0.00	26.10	38.42	22.49	30.21
Forests	29.01	0.00	28.31	40.00	11.53	18.32
Cultivable Wasteland	34.34	0.00	2.84	10.71	1.04	23.36
Uncultivable Wasteland	2.97	100.00	34.21	5.02	2.36	2.83
Operational Unirrigated Land Use	100.00 (2.36)	100.00(0.26)	100.00(2.13)	100.00(1.22)	100.00(2.17)	100.00(1.48)

Note: Figures in parentheses are hectares; Total Operational Holdings = Total Land Ownership+ Net leased In Land

Source: Field Survey May-June, 2023

According to oustee landowners in Rajasthan, the development of the canal system into more districts has resulted in a very irregular flow of water for irrigation in recent years. Furthermore, instances of contaminated water have increased significantly in the last few years. According to the oustees, when the water in canals is not flowing for a long time, people dump their trash in the canals where the canal flows, bringing with it a lot of muck that negatively impacts farmers' financial health due to the fact that they need to first clean the trash from fields that has come along with the first water in the canals.

The proportion of irrigated lands has gone down from 38.13 per cent to 28.57 per cent for Category B, whereas it has gone up for Category C. In contrast to categories B and C, where the proportion of unirrigated fields has grown or stagnated to more or less earlier levels, category A does not contain any unirrigated lands in its total landholding; hence, the situation has improved here. The similar pattern as for total land ownership is seen in terms of total operational holdings. The operational landholding has increased in Category A alone, whereas it has declined in the other two categories. The percentages of irrigated total operational holdings have gone up in categories A and C while going down in category B.

The total area of leased-in land before and after displacement has increased for the Category A oustees. Before relocation, Category A oustees typically leased 0.61 hectares; following relocation, this area increases to 2.37 hectares. The leased-in landholdings of the other two categories, however, have shrunk. While the overall number of leased-out lands has declined in Category B, it has climbed and stayed constant in Categories A and C, respectively.

In terms of other land uses, the data shows that there has been a sea change for Category A. No data was reported for other land use categories for Category A except for uncultivated wasteland. As a result, the orchards, pastures, etc. that were available to them before displacement are no longer available after displacement. For Category B, except for pastures, forests, and cultivable wastelands, all other categories of other land uses have decreased in percentage terms. For Category C, the areas under almost every head under the unirrigated land use category have increased in percentage terms.

1.9 Results and Discussion of Hypothesis

Table 5.8 Distribution of Socio-Economic Status (SES) Score Across Groups

Category	Mean SES Score	Std. Dev.	N
A	0.393	1.803	91
B	-0.072	2.011	164
C	-0.534	2.045	45
Total	~0	1.973	300

Note: SES score is a composite index constructed using standardized values of education, occupation, income, and asset ownership. Positive values indicate relatively higher socio-economic status, while negative values indicate lower status.

Table 4.9 ANOVA Statistics

Particulars	SS (Sum of Squares)	Df(Degrees of Freedom)	MS (Mean Square)	F (F-Statistic)	p-value(Probability Value (p-value)
Between Categories	27.71	2	13.85	3.62	0.0279
Within Categories	1135.88	297	3.82		
Total	1163.59	299			

Note: The reported p-value indicates statistical significance at the 5 percent level.

The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicate that there are statistically significant differences in socio-economic status among the three categories of households ($F = 3.62$, $p = 0.0279$). Since the p-value is less than the prescribed level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. An examination of the mean socio-economic status scores reveals that Category A households have the highest mean SES, followed by Category B, while Category C households have the lowest mean SES. These findings indicate that households in the rehabilitated category are relatively better off than those who have resettled on their own. However, while the ANOVA results confirm overall differences, they do not establish the significance of differences between specific pairs of categories.

1.10 Summing Up and Discussion

This chapter has presented a comprehensive socio-economic profile of the population displaced by the hydroelectric project, with a focus on understanding the differentiated outcomes across three categories of displaced households. By examining demographic characteristics, social composition, education, housing conditions, access to amenities, and landholding patterns before and after displacement, the paper has highlighted the complex and uneven nature of displacement-induced changes in living conditions. The analysis demonstrates that displacement is not a uniform experience and that rehabilitation outcomes vary significantly depending on access to land, possession status, and location of resettlement.

The age structure of the displaced population reveals important demographic differences across categories. Categories B and C display a relatively younger population, indicating a greater proportion of dependents and economically active individuals. In contrast, Category A shows a relatively older working population in the 41–60 age group, suggesting demographic stabilization following resettlement. The presence of elderly populations across all categories, including centenarians, points to longevity but also underscores the need for social and health support systems for aging displaced populations.

In terms of religious composition, the sample displaced households are overwhelmingly Hindu across all categories, with Sikh households forming a small but consistent minority and Muslim households remaining marginally represented. While religious composition does not appear to be a differentiating factor in rehabilitation outcomes, it reflects the broader social context of the displaced population and helps situate displacement within existing community structures.

The analysis of social categories reveals pronounced differences across rehabilitation groups. Category A sample households, resettled in Rajasthan, consist entirely of families belonging to the General category, whereas Categories B and C, located in Himachal Pradesh, show a more diverse composition, including Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes. The narratives observed during fieldwork indicate experiences of social alienation among displaced households, either due to their migrant status in Rajasthan or due to being labeled as

"dam oustees" in Himachal Pradesh. These findings highlight that displacement can generate new forms of social exclusion, irrespective of formal caste identity.

The gender composition of household heads further reflects uneven rehabilitation experiences. A significantly higher proportion of female-headed households is observed in Category C, which is associated with difficulties faced by women in navigating physical relocation and procedural requirements for land allotment and rehabilitation. In contrast, Category A displays a predominance of male-headed households, suggesting that better rehabilitation outcomes may be associated with greater mobility and administrative access. These patterns underline the gendered nature of displacement and rehabilitation processes.

Educational attainment across categories presents a mixed but revealing picture. While Category A sample households perform better in higher education levels such as graduation and post-graduation, Categories B and C show greater participation in technical and skill-based education. Notably, Category C exhibits the lowest levels of illiteracy despite the absence of land allotment, indicating adaptive strategies through human capital development. These findings suggest that lack of land-based rehabilitation does not necessarily translate into educational deprivation, though it may affect other dimensions of livelihood security.

Housing conditions and access to amenities show some of the most visible impacts of displacement. Category A sample households experienced substantial improvements in housing size, quality, and access to infrastructure such as electricity and sanitation facilities after displacement. Category B households show moderate improvements, while Category C households experienced deterioration in housing size and ownership status, along with relatively lower access to electricity and sanitation. Although access to drinking water was universal across categories, the sources of water varied considerably, reflecting differences in post-displacement living environments. These findings clearly indicate that rehabilitation outcomes are strongly linked to possession of allotted land and location of resettlement.

Landholding patterns further reinforce the differentiated impact of displacement. Category A households experienced an increase in total and operational landholdings, with complete access to irrigated land following rehabilitation in Rajasthan. In contrast, Categories B and C witnessed declines in land ownership and operational holdings. While Category C showed some improvement in the proportion of irrigated land, overall land access remained limited. Issues related to irrigation quality and reliability, particularly in canal-based systems, emerged as critical concerns affecting agricultural sustainability even among rehabilitated households

Changes in leased-in and leased-out landholdings indicate adaptive responses to post-displacement constraints. Category A households increased leased-in land, suggesting expansion of agricultural activity, whereas Categories B and C experienced contractions. The analysis of other land uses reveals a significant loss of access to common property resources such as orchards, pastures, and forests, particularly for Category A households after resettlement. This loss represents an important but often overlooked cost of displacement, as such resources previously supplemented livelihoods and food security.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that displacement has produced uneven socio-economic outcomes across different categories of households. While Category A households have generally experienced improvements in housing and land access, Categories B and C continue to face constraints related to land possession, infrastructure access, and livelihood security. The findings underscore that rehabilitation should not be assessed solely on the basis of land allotment but must account for social inclusion, gender equity, access to common resources, and long-term sustainability.

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