

Indira Sagar Dam

Site	On Narmada River, about 10 km. from Punasa village, in Khandwa district of western Madhya Pradesh, India
Schedule	Project initiated in 1984, started in 1992, scheduled to finish in 2005
Cost	Rs. 2167 crore but expected to be nearly Rs. 5,000 crore
Loss	250 villages along with 1,75,000 people will be displaced. 91,348 ha. of land will be submerged of which 41,444 ha. are deciduous forests.
Purpose	Irrigation of 1,23,000 ha. land and production 1,000 megawatts of electricity.
Status	The dam will be 262.19 meters high above sea level and will have a reservoir of 7.90 MAF storage capacity

1. **Site of the dam:** The dam is being built on the Narmada River, approximately 10 kilometres from Punasa village, in Khandwa district in western Madhya Pradesh, India (see Fig. 1).
2. **The year of project proposal:** The foundation stone was laid by late Smt. Indira Gandhi on 23.10.1984.
3. **The goal:** The main goals of this project are to provide irrigation and substantial hydroelectric power generation.
4. **The cost of the project:** The power component is Rs 1575 crores (Unit I & Unit III) at 1990 price levels which is contemplated to be completed by joint venture with N.H.P.C. The Irrigation-component i.e. the canal is Rs.591.98 crores Unit II at 1990 price level and would be completed with State resources and aid from G.O.I. under A.I.B.P.

The social cost of the project includes complete submergence of 69 villages and partial submergence of 180-186 villages in Khandwa, Harda-Hoshangabad and Dewas districts, as well as Harsud town which is a tehsil headquarter. The dam is scheduled to displace 30,739 families and 80,572 people (Government report), all in Madhya Pradesh. 16% of the displaced people are adivasis, and almost 80% of the total population is engaged in agriculture with 20% population engaged in other occupations.

The Indira Sagar dam will also submerge 91,348 hectares of land of which 40,332 – 41,444 hectares are deciduous forests.

5. ***The benefit of the project:*** The Indira Sagar project is supposed to irrigate 1,23,000 hectares of land in the districts of Khandwa, Khargone and Badwani. The project will have 8 turbines of 125 megawatts each with an installed power generation capacity of 1,000 megawatts of electricity. The firm power will be 212 megawatts which will decline to 118.30 megawatts when the canal starts functioning.
6. ***The environmental clearance by MoEF:*** In 1987, the project had received conditional approval from the MoEF, which includes Phase Catchment Area Treatment, Compensatory Afforestation, Command Area Development. The state Government was supposed to submit a plan for the treatment of the catchments by 15th December, 1987, which was to be carried out by the project cost, although the sanction from MoEF came on 7th October, 1987.
7. ***The planning commission clearance:*** The project was first approved in the 7th five year plan with a monetary allocation of Rs. 230.45 crores. This approval is extended through 8th and 9th five year plans with a total allocation of Rs. 1845.94 crores. The investment clearance of total Rs.1993.67 crores was given on 6th September, 1987 by the planning commission. However, this approval is conditional and the condition includes proper rehabilitation process following the guidelines of *Narmada Dispute Tribunal Award*. In 1987, the rehabilitation of the Madhya Pradesh government had been prepared which states,
 - (a) Every land owning families that stand to lose more than 25 percent of their lands be awarded a minimum of two hectares of irrigated land, subject to a land ceiling of eight hectares. This land-for-land rehabilitation is *mandatory*.
 - (b) Every advasi and dalit outsee family should receive a minimum of two hectares of irrigated agricultural land in lieu of lands lost to submergence.
 - (c) The irrigated land is provided by the government or irrigation be provided at government cost.
 - (d) Each adult son and adult unmarried daughter will be counted as a separate family.
 - (e) Each outsee family will be given a house with all basic amenities and infrastructure.
8. ***The starting of the project:*** The construction of the main dam was started on 1992.
9. ***The structure of the dam at the completion and the present status:*** The Project envisages construction of a 92 m. high and 653 m long concrete gravity dam with a surface power house of 1000 MW installed capacity (8x125) and a 249 km long canal. On completion, a reservoir of 7.90 MAF live storage capacity will be created. The height of the dam from the sea level will be 262.19 meters. In January, 2003 the height was allowed raise to 238 meters while in September it was permitted (without seeking a review of the construction process) to the current elevation of 245.17 meters. The NHPC records that Units I, II, III, and IV are “*synchronized successfully and are under commercial operation*”. The initial schedule for the completion of this project was in 2007 which has been advanced to 2005.

10. ***The real cost at present:*** The unofficial list current costs between Rs. 2,500-5,000 crores. The estimated cost of the power component of this project was stated to be Rs. 3,527.54 crores at September, 2000 price level and has increased substantially by now.

The actual number of displaced people should be 1,75,212 according to the current estimate instead of the stated 80,572 because the previous estimate was based on 1981 census.

The NVDA states that compensatory forestation has been completed to 85% and catchment area treatment is completed by 70%, no full report on the actual status is available till now.

11. ***The real benefit:*** The 1,950 million units of power that this project is supposed to generate will provide 12.4 % of the total electricity requirement of the Madhya Pradesh state annually, while the transmission and distribution loss is 44.2% of the annual requirement.

Further, water logging will impact 40% of Indira Sagar dam (survey from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore).

In 1982, around 20% of the command was already irrigated and currently it is estimated that a third or more of the area to be irrigated is already irrigated!!!

This project will have the largest impoundment among all the mega dams in the country and lives of more than 1.5 lakh of people are at stake. Lets look at the real situation beyond just dry statistics and decide.

Few stories....

In Harda, the Government fixed compensation of Rs. 60,000 per acre of irrigated and Rs. 40,000 per acre of unirrigated land while the market price is between Rs. 80,000 to Rs. 1 lakh. Moreover, these are the registration prices for 1997-1998 although the people are being rehabilitated in 2003-2004.

A man in the resettlement sector in Chanera, the New Harsud, had been issued a plot beneath high tension wires and in the path of run-off water from fields, making it unfeasible for him to construct habitable housing on the land allocated him.

On 26 December 2003 Ramsingh Kunjilal, a Dalit community member, committed suicide. Mr. Kunjilal was deeply troubled that his son Sushil Ramsingh had not received compensation for his house. Mr. Kunjilal had attempted to secure such compensation from the authorities on behalf of his son but found his efforts to be of no avail. Mr. Ramsingh is yet to receive compensation.

Survey says that outsees from 31 villages and the Harsud town had not been offered any land compensation at all. Further, 23 of these settlements responded that they had not been guided for cash compensation either!!!

In November, 2003, one sluice gate was blocked and the diversion tunnel was closed to commence impoundment. The riverbed went dry, killing fishes and other aquatic

animals, causing severe water shortage in near by areas and pollution due to unavailability of fresh water.

In Harsud, the government ordered the residents to destroy their own house in order to receive “a special package” in May, 2004.

And the story goes on....

However, struggle is also going....

In May, 2004 the Harsud affected people filed a case to Jabalpur High Court. The two member bench asked for a response from the Government by 31st August which was submitted. On the same day, the Court ordered the petitioners to file a list of problems they are facing. At the hearing held on 4th October, 2004, the High Court ordered that the Grievance Redressal Committee appoint its members to inspect the resettlement provisions in Harsud.

However, due to the absence of sustained people’s movement there is little organized movement to state’s mistreatment

In Indira Sagar project, the same story of oppression from the ruling side continues with usual attempts to cheat the indigenous people and destroying their democratic rights. So, do we start the struggle and stand beside these lakhs of people?



Fig. 1:
Location of
Indira
Sagar dam

- Source: 1. Without land or livelihood, Report of Independent People's Commission, October, 2004.
2. <http://www.nvda.nic.in/>
 3. http://www.ncaindia.org/isp_index.htm