

Oral Testimony Works

Siobhan Warrington

“*Like a rock on my heart*”

Heavy hearts and minds:
listening to the resettled

“

I feel that the beat of my heart will be in the direction of this place where my life was. It will remain as a rock on my heart when I think of the place that I am being removed from. . .

”

‘Maseitapi Moqhali

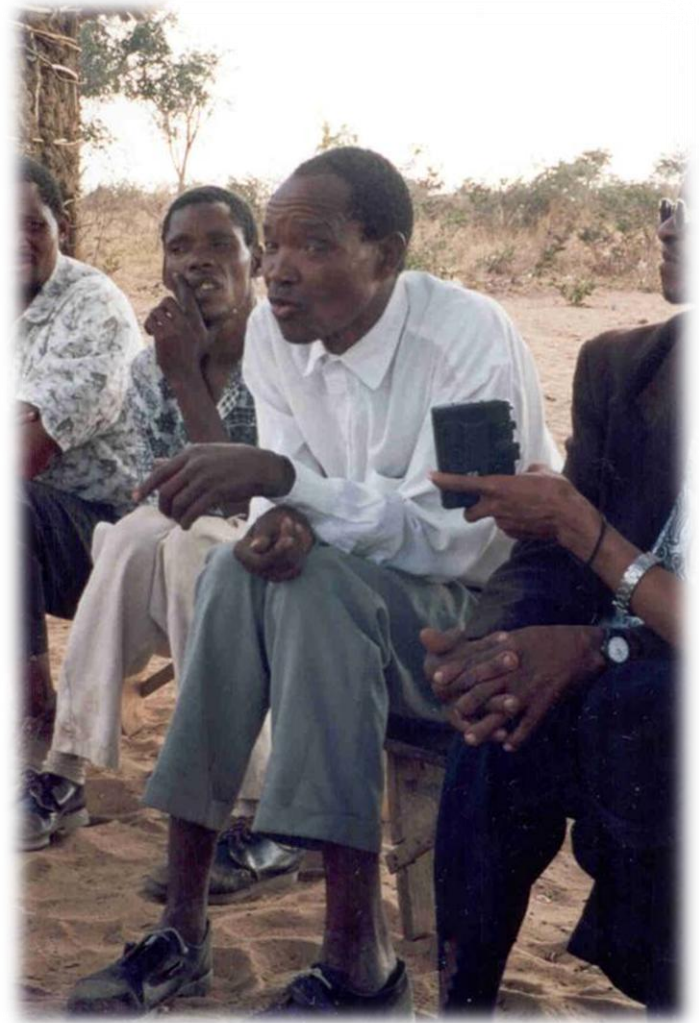


Oral Testimony Resettlement Project (1997-2003)

Panos London (www.panos.org.uk)

- Record and amplify the voices of women and men affected by development-induced displacement.
- Increase understanding of the less visible impacts of resettlement; the social and cultural impacts.

- Kariba Dam, **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**
- Tarbela Dam, **Pakistan**
- **Lesotho** Highlands Water Project
 - Jarkhand, **India** (coalmining)
- The San: **Namibia** + **Botswana** (conservation + development)
- Pastoralists, **Kenya** (conservation + agriculture)
- **Madagascar** and **Jamaica** (mining)

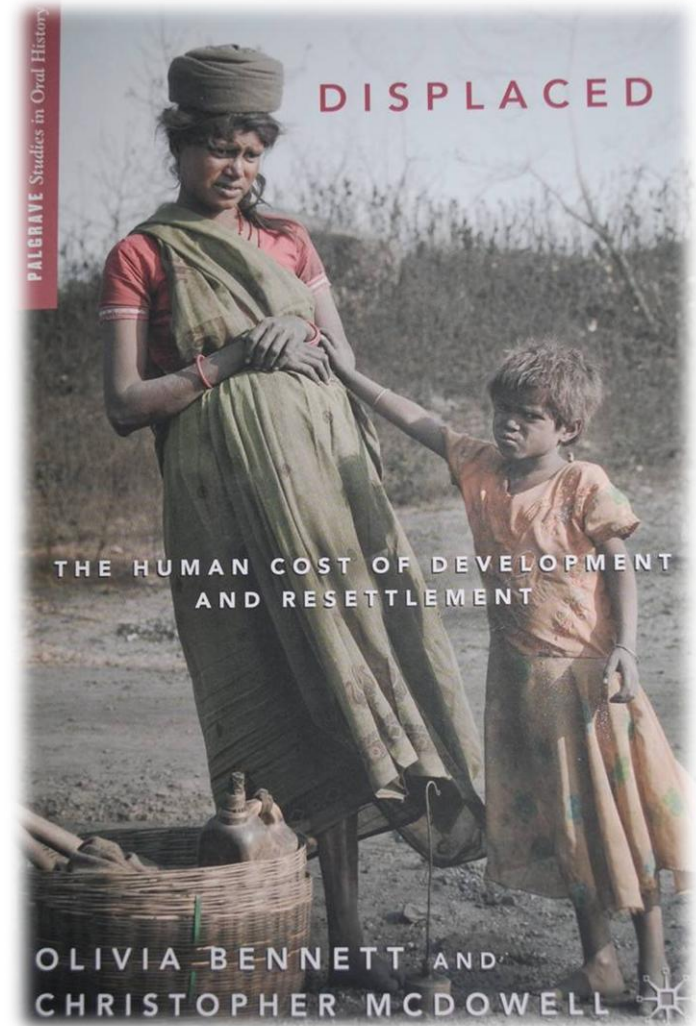


“ For several decades policy makers, practitioners, and academics alike have called for a refocus on ‘people’ in development. This book does just that by giving voice to those affected by development-induced displacement. I predict that this will become a major work in the field of development studies.”

Dawn Chatty, professor in Anthropology and Forced Migration, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford

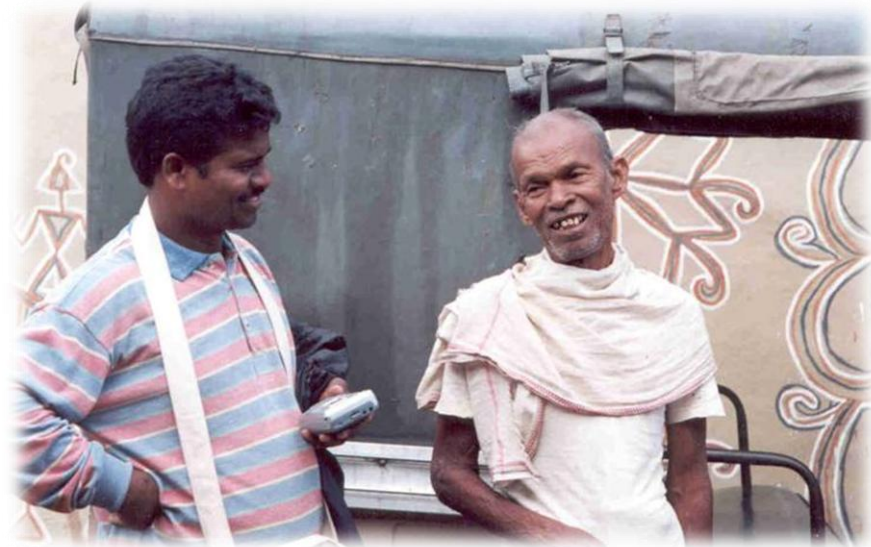
“ For policymakers in particular, this book should be compulsory reading.”

Hari Mohan Mathur, visiting professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi



Oral testimony - our approach

- Training in recording in-depth interviews
- Community members as interviewers
- Men and women interviewers and narrators
- Communicate testimonies to local, national and international audiences



Oral testimony is about **open** and **sensitive listening**

It is only through open communication and listening that we will create **sufficient understanding** of the less visible aspects of individuals' and communities' lives

and similarly the **less tangible impacts of resettlement**



Perception, values and multiple truths



Place

Land

Money

Livelihoods

Significant attachment to land and place

- “we worship nature”, Somar Soren, **India**
- “our life here is the soil...” Motseki Motseki, **Lesotho**
- “I still dream of those orchards, streets and fields. We are living in this township for more than 27 years now but we never dream of this area. We will always remember that place.” Ahmed Saeed Khan, **Pakistan**



Land values

The [LHDA] tell us that they will compensate us... they say that, on the matter of our fields, an acre will be so much. Now, an acre – we do not know [what it is]... because we have not been shown it. Now these are not things that we can trust because we have not been shown how much an acre is.

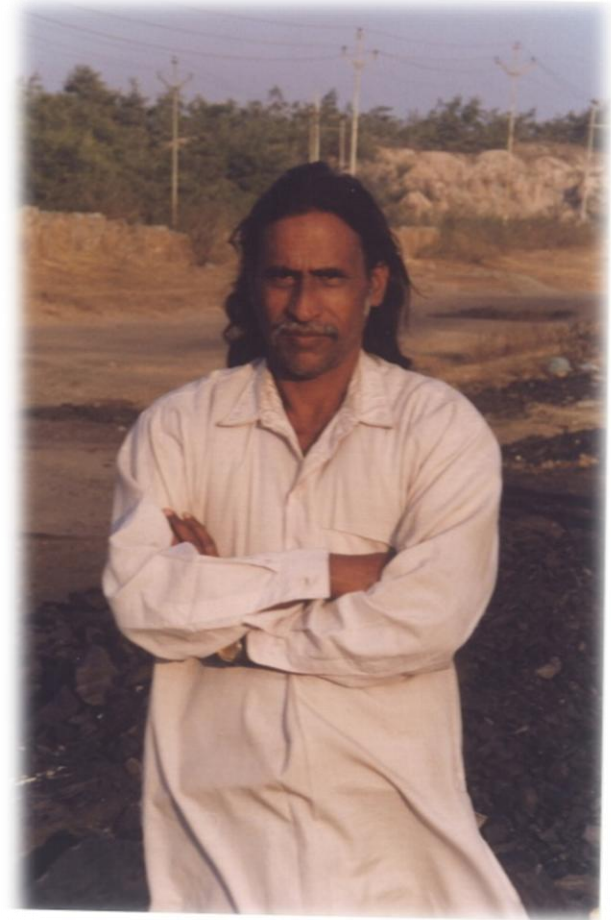
‘Malibuseng Mosotho



Employment: “like slaves working for others”

Earlier we were farmers and potters...masters in our own professions, now we are like slaves working for others. We earn money by any means we can, just to survive...since we had to leave our traditional jobs... We used to work with our own hands as and when we liked but now we have to obey [our employers]... If it is day or night we have to obey.”

Sadhan Prajapati



Crises of identity

*We were moved in 1992
I had over 200 head of
Cattle and by 1993 I was left
with only 5...So I started
doing something contrary
to my culture to earn a living.*



I became a farmer. This made me become a very inferior person in my community because I had violated its norms and culture... I am not called...to any of the community's festivals or gatherings. [Those] who still have livestock have no respect for me."

Roba Dokota, Orma pastoralist

Powerlessness

“

*We could do nothing, we
were just part of the
planning*

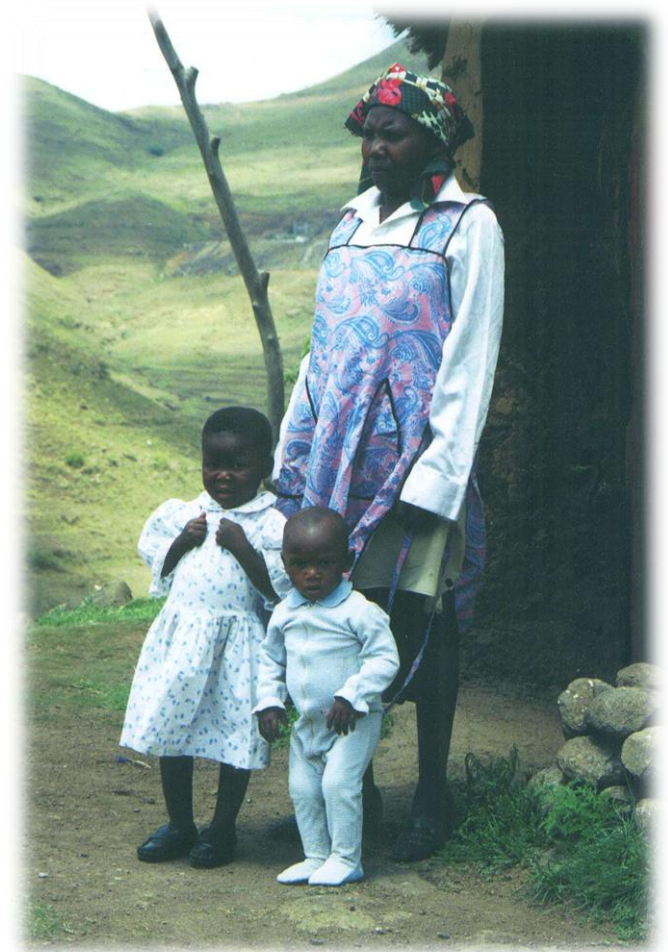
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Lipoho Bosielo



Losing control of future and past

“*The children of my children will be born when the money is already finished. Even these children of mine, when they grow up they will find it is finished... Some of them will not find education, judging by the amount of money that must be paid to schools*”
Leronti Moubane Chala, Lesotho



Lack of information

“Due to lack of knowledge and information, we did not know on what basis CCL gave their compensation... If we had been able to make enquiries we would not have been cheated like this... The land was going and jobs would also go [unless we agreed] so we thought to take whatever we were offered.

Anjlus Bek, India

”



Breaking the threads

“

Displacement is like a cancer. It completely twists and breaks the structure of society.

”

Devilal Hembrom, 26
years, Jharkhand, India



Not a homogenous group

“

They say it is because we are careless with the use of money. But we are not the same.

”

‘Matsapane Tsapane,
Lesotho



“Now we cannot say that this area belongs to us... We have lost that. Now we can only identify ourselves as affectees of Tarbela Dam.

Gulnaz

”



“So there was one improvement [since resettlement] – we got rid of the repressive attitude of the Pathans of the village.

Maqsood Jan, Pakistan

”

Compensation is a right not a favour

“

We did not volunteer to come here... You are resettled whether you like it or not... [so] the project should fulfill the resettled people's wishes.

‘Matsapane Tsapane, Lesotho ”



Getting it right



“

They did a wonderful thing really. LHDA people exhumed their graves and resettled them here where we are... It was done properly... Although the exercise was painful, we were satisfied because they were now with us, and that pain has since left us.

‘Matakelo Motseki, Lesotho”

Getting it right

- Sensitive listening
- Investing in more equal communication negotiation processes
- Flexible packages
- Long-term support
- Involvement in the process
- Restoring a sense of agency
- Training for those implementing resettlement



3 things to take away...

- Its about people
- Perceptions are important
- Restoring a sense of agency will support adaptation to changed circumstances.





Oral Testimony works

www.oraltestimony.org

Oral testimony. . .

Oral history in the development context:

- Multiplicity of views
- The inclusion of the marginalised
- Careful documentation and archiving
- Emphasis on community involvement
- Intention to reach out to wider audiences to stimulate debate

