

The Submerged Speak

Oral Testimonies of Tarbela Affectees



Sungi Development Foundation

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Many people have been involved in gathering, translating and preparing the interviews for this booklet. But we owe the greatest thanks to those who freely gave their time and their stories.

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Acknowledgements

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Editorial Note

The interviews are only a selection from those originally gathered. Extracts have been chosen for interest and to represent the range of concerns, views and experiences of everybody affected by the dam, mostly in terms of displacement. They have been edited, primarily to remove repetition but an effort has been made to stick as far as possible to the original words used by the narrators. The phrase 'original words' is slightly problematic because the interviews have been translated by people with varying levels of professional experience and in some cases from a local into a national language and then into English. Like in all translated works, there are chances of misinterpretation here.

All local terms, botanical or otherwise, have been italicized. Round brackets have been used for the translated meaning and interpretation and square brackets indicate "inserted" text for clarification. Three dots have been used where there is a gap in the text. An introduction by the editor appears in italicized form at the beginning of each interview. In the text certain sentences have been italicized for emphasis. The catch lines appear as **bold** interspersed within the text. Each interview starts with the name, age and present place of residence of the narrator.

Introduction

Development at times brings in its wake mass displacement. If it's a project as big as Tarbela Dam in district Haripur, NWFP, Pakistan which needed about 82,000 acres of land for its construction and had a reservoir area of about 260 kilometres, the magnitude of displacement can be well-imagined – 96,000 people were displaced from their villages according to a conservative estimate.

Ironically, such people do not figure in the working definition for Internally Displaced People as it appears in the UN Commission on Human Rights Report issued in 1992 by the then Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. It calls the internally displaced people

Persons who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who are within the territory of their own country

What it does not recognise is that the evacuees from 120 villages at the time of construction of Tarbela Dam *were* forced to flee their homes in large numbers, there may not have been an armed conflict but there *was* a systematic violation of their human rights and for them there could not have been a bigger man-made disaster. But from the perspective of UN, and also as part of our general understanding, dams are not supposed to be understood as a disaster. Two, there is the issue of sovereignty involved – and the underlying assumption that a state is the best judge of the development initiatives it wants to pursue.

States no doubt are the ultimate arbiter of all development initiatives. And that is precisely why states need to make sure that the displaced people are adequately resettled and compensated -- in order for them to move on with subsequent projects without inviting opposition. In this case though, the Tarbela affectees – for this is what their identity has been reduced to – felt a sense of loss in resettlement and all, especially at the hands of government's executing agency, Wapda. Obtaining consent of people to leave their land is something difficult, under all circumstances. Logically, thus, it

was not even attempted. The sad part is that they were not taken into confidence while taking decisions about resettlement.

These are the themes emerging from the oral testimonies of the displaced people who were served notices of evacuation under the Land Acquisition Act 1894. They were promised alternate land in Punjab and Sindh as well as compensation money for their houses and land, residential townships were to be developed to house them.

In the absence of a national resettlement policy, these and other criteria were discussed and decided at the 1967 meeting held under the President Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Over the next more than two decades, the displaced people faced many difficulties regarding the compensation issue and possession of these allotted land, fighting court cases, mostly against the violations of the criteria set by government itself. There still are many outstanding issues and claims regarding resettlement which need to be worked out.

Tarbela Dam project, according to some reports, paid off its construction cost after the first eight years of its operation but the claims of majority of compensation cases remain undecided. A special Tarbela Dam Commission constituted in 1998 for this very purpose could not address the problem to the satisfaction of the majority who rejected the report of the Commission.

The present work aims to bring to people's notice the collective and individual experience of affectees settled in these townships in NWFP as well as in Punjab and even Karachi. They were picked up randomly by Sungi and SMT (Social Organisation for Tarbela Affectees) giving due consideration to their caste, ethnicity, profession, landholding status, location, age and gender. The interviews were conducted between 2001 and 2003 by a team of interviewers who were especially trained for the purpose. 60 narrators were selected, only one third of whom are a part of this booklet. There are a lot more interviewees selected from Khalabat Township Haripur because of its size and easy accessibility by the interviewers.

The narrators highlight realities which take us to a world which is no more, which was *home*, and bring us back to a life thrust upon them, which is still alien. Home in dreams even today is the village they were forced to leave.

Themes

'Home in dreams'. This is the predominant thought in every narrator's story, as they recall their erstwhile village. The interviews were conducted separately, in different provinces, in the new abodes of the affectees and yet they generated similar responses. It was a rare experience for majority of them to recall those memories at such length. This had a cathartic effect on some, while others could not bear the weight of those painful memories and lost their cool. Noteworthy in these interviews are the vivid and visual descriptions of displacement recalled by the narrators -- leaflets being dropped from planes, water coming into their houses, chaos, animals escaping, snakes, losing possessions and so on.

Displacement did not mean physical relocation only. It meant **a life away from their environment** – mountains, rivers, forests and land – that sustained them. The local economy **and their livelihood** depended on this environment. The boatmen, the farmer, the gold extractor, the fishermen, the shepherds, the singers – they all knew no other skill but their own. Is there a compensation possible for the way the air smells and the way the water tastes in a particular area? This is what makes them sad, angry and helpless at the same time.

Interviews with the younger generation, even those born in the townships, reveal that they too identify with the homeland of their parents. They have a graphic sense of geography of their own village as well as the names of adjoining villages. The new places where people of different castes, professions and linguistic backgrounds live together fail to give **a sense of cultural identity** to the younger lot.

The local economy revolved round **agriculture** and naturally everybody was a beneficiary, directly or indirectly. The **self-sufficiency** that most of the narrators recall so nostalgically owes itself to agriculture. The dealings were mostly in kind rather than cash, keeping the worries off most minds. It is understandable that whosoever was associated with agriculture, be it as a sharecropper or owner, remembers the **village life that ensured food and shelter** for them. As for the landlords, they too have been most vocal in campaigning for compensation.

Because they lost most – their land and their social status which was determined by land ownership.

People who were not associated with agriculture may feel a sense of freedom in their displaced lives, especially those who were at the beck and call of the feudal lords as messengers or whatever.

Health is another area that has been touched in various interviews. Rural life signified health when people did physical work and had not even heard of any of the modern diseases. They did not have health facilities, true, but did not need them most of the time. Many of the older people could not adjust to the new realities and became ill and died soon after displacement. Hence the remark of a narrator that the average age has declined by 30 to 35 years after evacuation.

The employment opportunities that this hydropower project promised did not come to people who had lived in the region. The new areas where they were forced to move did not have any possibilities either. This was modern life with new demands, where utility bills and taxes had to be paid. Isn't it ironic that those who had to give up their homes to ensure the provision of water and electricity for their countrymen have to now pay for it and pay it through their nose?

Among these wider socio-economic changes is the **increased relationship with the monetary economy** which most people find hard to cope with. The sense of security associated with the earlier system which allowed them to deal in kind operates no more.

The older generation that survived the crisis managed to bear the burden. The youth unfortunately took to drugs and nearly every household has an addict in these townships. With no river and no land to cultivate, the majority has been rendered irrelevant in the new life. Little wonder then that **lack of employment opportunity** and **drug addiction** remain such recurrent themes.

There are times when people while speaking about their lives discuss happenings that have got nothing to do with the displacement or dam. Sometimes their views become **social**

comments on women's education, for example. Women emancipation is another theme debated by most narrators, though most agree that people now favour education for women as opposed to the past. Women certainly have lost the **social and cultural environment** that was characterised by visits to river, shrines and village fairs.

Most narrators agree that there has been an improvement in education facilities which, though gradual, have come about regardless of resettlement.

It is not just economic hardship but also the social and cultural impoverishment, the loss of flora and fauna, that haunts the displaced people. A sense of these themes may be conveyed in the summarised interviews that follow.

Partner and Project

The Tarbela Oral Testimony Project (TOTP) was developed to amplify the voices of communities and people displaced as a result of Tarbela Dam. It is a part of Panos international Oral Testimony Project (OTP) on development-induced resettlement. The OTP worked in partnership with the SUNGI Development Foundation of Pakistan to implement the project. Social Organisation for Mutasireen Tarbela Dam (SMT), a community-based organisation based in Haripur and working for those resettled by the Tarbela Dam, served as a local partner and coordinated the testimony collection.

Advocacy work regarding the outstanding claims of Tarbela Affectees was a starting point of Sungi's advocacy initiatives. Sungi has been actively taking up their demands at many national and international forums. Sungi held series of meetings and intensive dialogues with the World Bank representatives and Wapda. Sungi in collaboration with Tarbela dam Affectees sensitised a diverse range of civil society groups, parliamentarians, government functionaries, international financial institutions and media on the issues of displacement, resettlement and environmental degradation produced as a consequence of such mega project.

SMT was established in 1996 by group of affected people of Tarbela Dam as a common platform for affectees to struggle for their just and right claims. It focussed to mobilise local people to lobby with the movement for tyheir long standing claims. Afterwards SMT expanded the scope of its work and started work on overall development and well-being of affected communities focusing womenfolk. SMT is an active partner of Tarbela Oral Testimony Project and is involved in the project since its inception.

A Poem

We are leaving this village
As WAPDA has asked us to do so,
Please inform WAPDA
That even though we are leaving
We will remember Tarbela forever.

I wonder Tarbela will be destroyed like this
Tarbela will also cry when we will go
The mountains will cry on our situation
When we will leave

If you are to live in this world live somewhere in Tarbela
There is no place to live anywhere else
When we constructed the houses the lightening started
And destroyed our house

We are leaving this village
As WAPDA has asked us to do so,
Please inform WAPDA
That even though we are leaving
We will remember Tarbela forever

Chan Bibi of village Dheri

Testimonies

1 Chan Bibi, 70, Khalabat Township

Chan Bibi is most unhappy about the separation from her land and people because of this dam. She thinks that they lost their way of life and did not become modern either. This is no justice. She wishes the dam to be destroyed so that she can go back and live in her village once again.



We had been hearing about the dam from here and there but no one informed us as such. Besides, we were quite confident that with our village being so high we would not have to evacuate. When the aeroplanes threw the announcements for evacuation, I was busy levelling my courtyard. Thereafter we knew that we too would have to go.

One of those days, we went to the graves of our ancestors and cried. As we came back and started making *chapattis* (bread) water came into our house. Our chicken and other animals went with the water. Animals were lost in the water. The people of neighbouring villages stole many of our things. At that time everyone became selfish.

Our roof fell down. With water came snakes that seemed like ropes. There was no place that was dry. It was as bad a time for animals as for humans. My son went and brought a boat from the army camp set up at Tahli, a village near Tarbela. That's how we saved our lives. He went there and talked to the army people. At that time they cooperated with us. Their attitude was good. It was our fault that we did not evacuate in time. If we had done so we would not have suffered.

The village life – livelihood and culture

The village life was good. We produced everything in the fields and did not have to buy anything from the market. Our village Dheri was about two kilometers from Tarbela and a river flowed between the two. Most people were farmers and kept animals.

People were very close to each other and were companions in happy and sad days. The women of our family did not go the fields so we had women from other villages – women from Kaghan spent the winter in Tarbela and went back in summers – who came and worked at the time of cultivation and harvest.

The people were very healthy. We did not use chemical fertilizers and there were no illnesses. We have heard about these deadly diseases only after we came to Khalabut. For the illnesses that we had, we only had a makeshift dispensary in Dheri and we had to go to Tarbela for treatment. We crossed the river in a boat and the boatman was paid in kind at the time of harvest. This was also the mode of payment for *Matiwalas*, the servants who provided water from wells to every house twice a day.

There was a hospital, police station and *dak bangla* (rest house) in Tarbela. Rich people came and stayed in the *dak bangla* and so did the *patwaris* who stayed there for revenue affairs. The baba bought chicken and eggs from the villagers for them.

There were fairs and women used to go to these fairs especially the Eid fair which lasted for eight days. All women went to the fairs meant for women and the only males were the shopkeepers. There was Jaleebi (sweet made of refined flour), other sweets, peanuts and pakoras (a spicy snack made out of gram flour) sold at the fairs.

Life in the township

We had a big house in the village and the government gave us Rs 8000 as compensation. Those who bribed the officials benefited but we were at a loss. We did not get land as compensation since our land was less than four kanals. All our relatives have dispersed. We did not have any employment when we came here – there still aren't many employment opportunities.

There are no employment opportunities. Our kids were from noble families. People who came from outside also brought with them addiction habits. Now our kids have got addicted. No one is addicted to anything in my house. I have just one son, god bless him. But many families have been destroyed due to this dirty habit. In our village we used to grow opium, but no one ever

touched it. They considered it a medicine. I do not know even the names of all these things. Many families have been destroyed and many young people have died due to the problem of addiction.

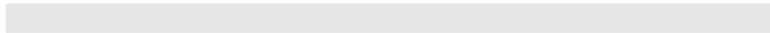
When the people of Kabul started coming here the crime rate has increased. My son was a taxi driver and they abducted him. The people went to find him and came to know that they have a camp where they keep abducted people for ransom. Then they brought him back. Then he died in an accident. I thank God that he died in an accident and not by the criminal people. They took him and said that he should pay them some *lakhs rupees*. But my son said that we did not have money, we are poor people and earn our living by working hard. Then a man brought him to our house, and talked to me. After much difficulty they believed that we are poor and cannot pay the ransom, so they released my son.

In terms of facilities, we now have electricity and gas and better transport but we do not have the money to pay for the bills and fares. We can't go and meet our relatives.

The only field where the situation is better than in the village is that of education. All the girls and boys are either educated or are studying in schools. There is a college here and in Haripur. Technical education is available too. Girls' education is not resented the way it used to be and males know that they have to make their own lives.

There are government and private hospitals and many doctors. The government hospitals charge ten rupees for examination and ask us to buy the costly medicines from the market. If someone has to admit a patient in the hospital, the hospital charges are too much to bear.

We were living honourably in the village. Coming here has destroyed us. We left behind the graves of our ancestors. Our tears have not dried ever since we came here. We ask for justice.



Waheeda Bibi Awan, 19, Khalabat

People could make both ends meet only by means of their income from farming. This was so because we had barter system mostly rather than cash in the village. People could meet their requirements by giving wheat or flour in exchange for whatever services they needed

Akhtar Bibi, 50, Khalabat

Our relatives have been moved away to distant places. They are all scattered. We don't meet one another even in years... only on special occasions...how can one visit such distant places? Who has the time or the money? It makes me sad to reflect about all this. May the curse of God fall on such a government that deceived us, displaced us from our settled life and left us helpless on barren lands!

**2 Islam Mohammad Khan, Tehsildar (Retd)
Wapda, Tarbela**

Islam Mohammad Khan, 60, an employee of Wapda for 36 years has been involved with the Tarbela project since its inception. Once the resettlement work was thought to be complete, he began working in the Nucleus Clearance cell (NCC), maintaining the record of 135 affected villages. Islam is of the view that the Tarbela Commission set up to review the rights of the affected people in 1998 did not include NCC as a member – though they were asked for assistance in terms of information which was duly provided. He thinks the Commission acted arbitrarily rejecting people's claims for petty reasons. Realising the power of a tehsildar (revenue officer at sub-district level), Islam claims to have led a contented and clean life, living frugally with no transport of his own.

I belong to a poor family of village Dargai Jadeed. I passed my secondary school examination in the year 1960. I joined Wapda as a **gardawar** in 1967 and served there for 36 years. My posting during most part of my service was in the Acquisition Branch. My work involved doing assessments mostly. Most of the initial work on Tarbela Dam was conducted while I was there. I have worked with all the Project Directors.

The criteria for resettlement and compensation was decided in a high level meeting presided over by no less a person than Field Marshal and President Ayub Khan in May 1967. A person owning a house in his former village at Tarbela would be allotted land for an alternative house. Similarly a person owning irrigated land of four kanals and *barani* (rain-fed) land of sixteen kanals would be given an agricultural land in replacement.

An area of 23,000 acres each was earmarked for the said purpose in both Punjab and Sindh. The entire area located in Punjab was allotted to 167 families whereas in Sindh only 10, 700 acres could be allotted and the affected people could not take possession even of that. The landless people or land tenants were allotted no land at all.

I did not personally visit the areas where the alternative agricultural land is located because when I took charge, no more allotments were being made.

Resettlement as it progressed

The Resettlement Committee had as its members Land Collector from the Revenue Department while the *tehsildar* and his staff were taken from Wapda. This committee would make an assessment of the property, evaluate its price and issue the award. Notices were then issued to the owners concerned and finally payments were released.

The entire work relating to resettlement was completed by 1st July 1985. It was then that the Resettlement Committee was replaced by the Nucleus Clearance Cell (NCC). Its function was to preserve the entire record about the Tarbela Dam affectees and see to it that all those whose cases had not been decided should be gradually compensated. When the Land Acquisition Collector left in 1985, I took charge of the Cell and managed it till my retirement in 2004.

The resettlement staff of Wapda, to start with, was divided into two groups. One of them was supposed to allot land (this group later formed NCC) and the other group was assigned the task of establishing five hamlets: Khalabat Township Scheme, Darband Colony, Kangra Colony, Ghazi Hamlet and Paihur. The master plan promised provision of facilities such as school, health centers and parks in the new settlements. All the facilities could not be provided because the provincial government – and not

Wapda -- did not use the royalty of the dam for the welfare of the affected people.

Tarbela Dam Commission in 1998 and before

In 1998 Tarbela Dam Commission was established, asking people with claims of alternative rights still outstanding to approach the Commission. They received four thousand claims out of which they entertained only 1774 claims, rejecting others for petty reasons like non-attachment of identity cards etc. which they should not have. Wapda or NCC were not given representation in the Commission and we fail to understand why.

The Commission transferred all these cases to an institution GBTI i.e. Ghazi Barotha Taraqqiati Idara for assessment. That organisation did not involve Wapda although Wapda supplied every information that was asked. We had no say in what they were doing or deciding. They kept the whole exercise a secret.

But even before the formation of this commission, in 1996, Dr Iftikhar Ahmad representing the World Bank tallied the claims with the record of Wapda and fixed the compensation money at Rs.755, 200. This fact should have been kept in mind by the Commission while examining the claims but it was not and Rs.107,000 was fixed as the compensation money by the commission. The government sent provincial Finance Minister Anayatullah Gandapur to the affectees telling them that this was the amount the government was willing to pay them. Those who were poor and destitute accepted the offer. The Wapda was supposed to give its share of 60 million which it paid.

The World Bank had linked the second installment of Ghazi Barotha with the finalising compensation for the Tarbela Dam affectees. The work on Ghazi Barotha project had stopped and the government, keen on getting the money, disbursed this amount. It is also true that there still are certain affectees who have not filed their claims. And since 1998 no claims have been dealt with.

In defence of Wapda

The entire record of the 135 affected villages is lying safe with Wapda; as a matter of fact the NCC was established for no other purpose but this. A *patwari* (land record holder at the local level) takes care of all this record which is lying in his cupboard and is not computerised so far.

I cannot wholly deny the allegations that Wapda officials received bribes at the time of assessments. There must have been irregularities. All I can say is that the lower staff have worked really diligently; in fact the whole staff and officers working on Tarbela Dam have given an appreciable performance. A huge project that affected 135 villages, this largest dam in the world is now giving us both water and electricity and this could not have been possible without these great sacrifices by the people. Similarly on allegations that when the payment of Rs 107,000 was announced some fake claimants were included in the list, I would say again that Wapda was not an accomplice in this.

The other view

Dams are what this country needs in view of its increasing population. They must not be politicised. Tarbela affectees do not always provide the wrong example. People have gained too - their standard of living has improved. A new social change has come.

Haji Manzoor Ahmad, 50, Khalabat

[At Jatto] I made my living out of rearing sheep. We were very satisfied with this state of affairs, because the expenses were just nominal. We benefited a great deal from our animals. Their wool was sold; their dung used as manure; they gave us meat and milk. We used to sell the lambs every year and with that income purchased many a buffalo.



Haider Bakhsh, 61, Ghazi Hamlet

We performed our services [as sailors] at Khabbal and took our share out of the grains...from the *naik* (the feudal lord)... We had

a prosperous time. The private passengers... government officials on pleasure trips would give us cash. We are not in our old profession... Some of our children are working as [unskilled] labour. They bring something in the evening that helps us pass time

3 Gul Bibi, 40, Kangra Colony

Gul Bibi Quraish, aged 40 years, comes from a family of clergy. She was a girl of about eleven or twelve years when the handbills were thrown from a plane asking them to leave their village on a certain date. She was old enough to understand what that meant for her, her family and the village folk: a catastrophe, that forced them to leave everything behind and move on to nowhere. The compensation money, when it did come, was too small and did not match with the enormity of crises they were going through. Nor could it make up for the peaceful, settled and community life they had left behind.

I was born at Hamad Darband to a Quraish family which strictly observed *pardah* and my father was a *maulvi* (a Muslim clergy man). We owned a lot of land in the village and grew grain, vegetable, fruit, everything on that land. We used to have cows and buffaloes that were a source of milk, yogurt, butter and butter oil for us.

Our family maintained a certain dignity because we used to educate people in religion and the Holy Quran. We were respected by everybody, also the *nawabs* (feudal lords). Some of our family were *qazis* (community judges) who were empowered to give verdicts in disputes or to make out of court settlements in some cases. In case of a dispute between a husband and wife, our home was like a sanctuary for women. Our elders would then decide the matter amicably by holding consultation with their families.

Other people in the village had different vocations. We had blacksmiths, carpenters, fishermen, as ours was a marshy land, tillers who would work on other people's land and take half the yield. The businesses in the village were only small shops – cloth or vegetables -- run by the villagers. The dealings were not in cash but in kind. All these classes lived in perfect peace and

harmony. The relationship between the feudal lord and the tiller was not that of a master and a slave, each lived a free man in his house.

At Hamad it was rare for anyone to fall sick, let alone have major diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, asthma. All this is because of adulterated food.

Women's life in the village

The women were not encouraged to step out of the house even if it was for getting educated. There was no school for girls in our village and I got my primary education at Sher Garh, a nearby village. The activities of women were limited to sewing, knitting, cooking and if the need arose, they earned out of these skills. Some women could work as domestic servants within the village.

Women were respected. A healthy tradition in the village was that a widow and her children were financially supported. She was held in high esteem if she did not want to re-marry but she was facilitated if she wanted to, this being an order of God.

As for men, they had to toil all day for their families. In the evening they would relax on the bank of the river, under the shade of trees, take a bath and gossip. They had more peace of mind then.

Leaving the village

It was like a calamity. It was like doomsday. How could we be asked to leave a land that was ours? Everyone was crying. It was not just the pain of leaving the village; it was the uncertainty of what lay ahead, no abode in minds and no jobs to look up to.

We did not react against the people who had inflicted this pain on us because we never saw any. A plane had thrown handbills saying that water would be released on a particular date. I do not exactly remember the date but they released water many days before that date. People had to flee in panic leaving their belongings behind.

We rescued our household goods with the help of boats. The government did not provide any transport and people made their own arrangements. In their efforts some of the goods sank and the cattle got drowned. Some of them lost their own lives, carried away by water or stung by snakes.

We were not leaving the house out of our own volition, we were leaving in utter helplessness...In the beginning we were very sensitive about leaving the graves of our ancestors behind but gradually we accepted it.

After carrying most of our belongings to Darband, we went to Shergarh by bus and had the goods transported there. We stayed at Sher Garh for three four months. And then we moved to Kot Najibullah where we resided for three four months in a rented house and then on to Khui Kahan. Then we started building this house for which the government gave us a meager sum of Rs. 5000. The land was of course allotted by the government. So we had to finance the building of house out of all the limited resources that were left with us.

The government did not bother to find out the fate of those homeless people, what to talk of arranging rented houses for them. The people living across the river in Hamad state suffered the worst – they received neither any land nor any compensation for the land they lost. Only Rs.5000 as compensation of a house.

Life after displacement -- Kangra Colony

When we came to Kangra Colony, five to six households lived in a single house. Gradually we purchased land and built additional rooms, one at a time. It was not a pleasant beginning -- not just the first day but a long time after that.

Twenty-seven years later, we are still not short of problems. Apart from the two major problems of water and electricity that remain suspended for hours, we still don't have a high school for children. The girls only have a middle school that does not have electricity or furniture and the girls sit on floor mats in this day and age. We are especially hesitant to send our daughters to schools at other places. But the biggest problem is unemployment -- people are qualified, educated, living in cities and yet not finding any work. The road has been in a very bad condition for a very long time. The sanitation system is virtually non-existent. Pollution is very high while the village environment was clean.

Differences between the village and urban life

This is a life full of hardship compared with the peaceful and comfortable life of the village. Obviously life too has moved from childhood to the stage of adulthood which itself entails difficulties. The real hardships, one feels, start after the marriage. We know not what the future would bring to us. But everybody says that yesterday is always better than today. What there is in tomorrow for us, we don't know. I think that every time is a good time, this one as well as the one that is gone.

But never before in my family had a woman worked in a factory as I have to. I go at 7 in the morning and return at 5 and there is no one to look after my invalid husband and three boys. There are so many women working in factories. Our factory provides a pick and drop facility but others don't and most of these women have to travel by a local bus, which is a real ordeal. Labour laws are not followed and they work under unfair deals.

The government has taken such a big river from us and now we do not get water even at a price. Not a single drop of water falls in our tank unless we turn on the motor. And the exorbitant electricity bills! How can we say that we're lucky that Tarbela Dam has been built?

Social change -- yes

A positive social change has come in terms of the treatment meted out to women. Women were treated rather harshly in the villages but people have become more civilised in the new social environment. A lot of this enlightenment, understanding and wisdom is owed to education. Now a woman is given her rights. There are many facilities available in urban life, schools, better medical care, and employment opportunities. In the village there was no standard of life.

The village children too were subjected to undue restrictions. They were not allowed to speak before their elders, which was unhealthy. Discouraging them affected their personalities negatively.

Going back to Tarbela if it's inhabited again -- No

No what are we going to do there. Time does not permit us to return. We are now used to this new place. We have become

used to the comforts like transport, electricity, water and gas. We are a part of this new life.

Taj Baro, 50, Ghazi Hamlet

Our language Hindko spoken by majority in the village too has undergone some change as it has absorbed words from some other languages. Our language [the language of adults] is still Hindko; we can still recognise a person coming from Tarbela from his dialect.



4 Ahmad Saeed Khan, 55, Khalabat Township

A member of the municipal committee, Ahmad Saeed Khan has been protesting for the rights of the displaced people from the initial days. He is unhappy with the formula worked out for compensation as well the role of Wapda and government. He is still sad over the loss of social bonding, cultural values and standard of life that displacement brought in their lives.



I still dream of those orchards, streets and fields that we left behind. Even though we've been living in this township for more than 27 years, we do not dream of it as our homeland.

The initial surveys that examined three possibilities – Bhasha, Tarbela and Kalabagh – did not approve of Tarbela Dam and wrote that it will not be as beneficial as the other two. Dr Rashid Tahir Kheli, the ex-vice chancellor Peshawar University, a geologist by training, also opposed the construction of this dam in his thesis. And yet President Field Marshal Ayub Khan went ahead with the project. The administration or Wapda did not take

any local people into confidence. Only those who were in possession of four kanal irrigated and 16 kanals of rain-fed land before 3rd May 1967 had the right of compensation.

We protested with all our might for our rights. It was army general Yahya's rule and no one listened to the protests of poor people. At one point people even burnt the cars belonging to Wapda. The common people had started a *jail bharo* (getting arrested for a cause) movement. They refused to allow any measurement of their land and boycotted the whole process. People kept protesting and when the local police was unable to control them the army was called in. An army court was set up in Haripur which sentenced people. I too was jailed for six months. We are still demanding compensation after so many years. Our demands are still the same – including an 85 percent increase in payments. People even went to the courts with cases of delayed payments or demanding enhancement of payment but the red tape associated with judicial system was such that whatever payment they received was spent in the courts. It is said, "justice delayed is justice denied" so it is true in this case. At least the government should have followed the policy, which they had made for compensation. It was our right.

Relationship with host communities in Sindh and Punjab

The land earmarked in Punjab and Sindh was almost equal but people have not been able to acquire an inch of land in Sindh, despite having submitted money. In this connection we even met with the former Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo (late) who was honest in admitting that we will never be able to get any land in Sindh.

As a matter of fact wherever the affectees went, they were not accepted by the local people wholeheartedly. At places they have not been able to occupy the land allotted to them. The local people considered us a burden, we got no help from them or the government and did everything on our own. Sometimes the rifts with local people turned to disputes leading to deaths of people on both sides.

When the landowners got nothing, what could the tenants have got? The tenants have got nothing from government whereas in the villages, hundreds of landowners would keep thousands of tenants who thus earned their living honourably. The evacuation

has disturbed our culture totally, we cannot think of implementing the *jirga* system (communal assembly) of our ancestors here because people of all castes are mixed up here. Now if we work hard for even 100 years we will not be able to achieve the same status, which we had at that time. It means that the landlords have become landless after the construction of the Tarbela Dam.

Wapda has not promised a single facility that it promised at the time of displacement. We have very talented youth but there are no job opportunities. These unemployed people take to addiction. We used to grow opium apart from many other crops and it was a cash crop, yet we did not have a single man who was addicted at that time. Some of the factories set up in the township in the early years were closed down after five years or so. The owners declared them bankrupt and ran away with government money. The civil hospital does not have any facility and people have to go to Haripur. The water available at a cost is unclean. The schools are overcrowded.

NWFP is getting billions of rupees as royalty from Tarbela. If it uses only 5 per cent of that royalty on Tarbela affectees, most of their problems can be solved. We had our own culture and customs. We had a set way of life. All that has been disturbed badly. Tarbela had many natural resources. Here there is nothing. We have still not adjusted to the city life.

Chan Bibi, Khalabat Township

Two of my cousins helped me in collecting my luggage and bringing me to Khalabat. My husband was in Lyalpur at the time of evacuation. I was not in my senses when we reached here. I was in a state of shock. Did not know where everything had gone.

5 Taj Baro, 50, Ghazi Hamlet

Land tenants in their village Kyya, Taj Baro, thinks they were quite well-off in the village. In the village the Pathan family gave them a house to live in, land to till, one third of the crop which was more than enough for their needs, and took great care of the tillers. The government not only turned them out of their house, it did not offer an alternative living place nor an employment. Here,

unlike the village, everything has to be purchased, even the water.

Our region was picturesque, with the river on one side and the mountains on the other. Today, if all your children are earning, well and good. Otherwise you have nothing to eat. In the village we used to grow all kinds of fruits and vegetables – onion, tomato, spinach, various potherbs, melons, watermelons, you name it. But people would not sell them, they would just share it among themselves. Today, even a brother would charge money from his brother. Our region had a capacity to absorb the poor without much difficulty. Thus our days passed in peace and prosperity.

Right in front of our village flowed the River Indus. Apart from giving our village a beautiful setting, the river was very beneficial for us: we went there to catch fish, we would also catch the wood floating in the river that served as fuel for us. In the evening all the women, rich and poor, would put on *chadars* (large sheets of cloth used to cover the whole body) and go to the river, where they would wash clothes, bathe and return after sunset.

My father was an agriculturalist who, like many others, cultivated the land owned by rich Pathans. Our job was to first plough the land and sow seeds. We did not have to water the crops, at least in the major crop of wheat. At harvest time, the owner took two thirds of the crop while we were entitled to one third of it. This was also the ratio for the vegetables grown in our village. Our house was *gharrahan* (built on a land owned by the Pathan family). It was customary for the poor to get such land so that they could construct a house to live in.

Of course these people then worked in the Pathan's fields and the women worked in their houses when needed. Thus the days of life passed easily, despite the fact there was more poverty in the village.

Other crops that were grown were maize and opium. If there was no rain then water was needed for irrigation, we used a Persian wheel (*rahat*) on the wells run by a bull. Women would help in the watering of land. Similarly harvest, and almost every activity related to cultivation, was collective; everybody was ready to help each other. Domestic animals reared were cows and

buffaloes which were a source of milk, butter, butteroil and yogurt, camels for carrying goods and donkeys for carrying water. People also used to keep hens and goats. In the mornings these animals were set free to roam around and graze and they would return home in the evening satiated.

The water there was sweet. Men, women and children would all go to the wells to bring water. We hired the services of *khadim* (a servant) whose duty was to supply water inside the houses. He was paid a share in the crop. Boats were used for going to other villages. Such fun it was being there; there is no such charm in life now. The only problem was that the land was not ours, and we didn't have any place to build our own house.

Displacement when it came

We came to know only through the people that we might have to leave our village. In the beginning we would not believe it. When the village elders got to know it, they went to the office at Ghazi to know the exact date for evacuation. There were others who did not believe it till the end and it was only water entering their houses that forced them to believe it. They had to escape in panic on boats, first taking refuge on the mountains and then to some other place where they settled. We did it relatively peacefully, two months before the water came. Others lost their cattle, poultry, household goods. It happened because they were not ready to accept reality, they would say it was not possible, as man could not confront God; how could one block the flow of water, they would ask. But they saw later, with their own eyes, the water entering their houses.

But we were angry; angry because while others had some place to go to, we had none. That was a time when everyone was grinding one's own axe. No one bothered to take care of others. Even the Pathans didn't bother to think of helping us. We were among the poor. Everybody took care of only himself. The poor found no relief.

Life after resettlement

In a sense we were doubly affected. Firstly we left our houses there, and secondly there was nothing for us here. Those who possessed some land at least would have had some compensation, but we have been in real difficulty.

But it did not affect us much since my husband was a *naib Subedar* (a military rank) in FC (Frontier Constabulary) and served there for thirty years. But others who earned their bread and butter from cultivation were unemployed at the new place.

These are two real problems that we continue to face. Everything has to be purchased and there are no employment opportunities. We were quite well-off in the village. Now if all the children earn something, well and good, otherwise we have nothing to eat.

We were displaced and found nothing in return. Only a compensation of Rs.1,100 for the land of the Pathan's on which we had built our house. What use was that money? And we came to a place where we have to pay for electricity and water. We had given such a big sacrifice in surrendering our houses and all that we had; the government should at least have bothered to consider free electricity and water for us.

What was more, these worries bred a number of diseases. In our village there was no doctor, no hospital and no major diseases. Here, after we came, my father fell sick and remained bed-ridden for a year and half and died. Then my mother-in-law remained ill for five years. I too have undergone two surgeries and am ready for a third one. My son who is a driver has spent two lakh (0.2 million) rupees on my treatment. So we've been overtaken by these difficulties ever since we left our village. *My children are not trained to work in the fields and even if they were, there are no lands to work on around.*

Having come here we felt relaxed with a hope to find some facilities, but the hopes were frustrated. No one has a sizeable quantity of land here. The children are all unemployed.

Positive changes since resettlement

The social environment is very different. At Tarbela there was strict observance of *pardah*. A woman coming out of her house was supposed to cover all her body. Now people have adapted to the new conditions and live according to the demands of the city.

The displacement has been most productive from the point of view of education. There was only a primary school for boys in our village and none for girls. The boys needed to go to Haripur

to go to high school. Because there was no education in the village, the choices available to people were limited. They could only work around land and cattle. So the girls from that time were mostly uneducated. I was myself uneducated but I made sure that all my three daughters were educated.

Also, people had little civic sense in the village, they quarrelled on trivial issues. In those disputes, people died of injuries inflicted by clubs; firearms were unknown to them. Now they have developed a sense of how to resolve their disputes through dialogue. They have made progress in life and it's the same people of Tarbela who are now working as judges, lawyers and pilots.

Village people went for marriages in exchange and the girls lived under oppressive circumstances, their consent was never sought. They were married to incapacitated persons, deaf or blind people or men who were much older in age, as happened in my case, or drug addicts. Boys too were not asked and the marriages were arranged by the family elders. That situation has changed. Girls and boys convey their unwillingness to the parents. That is a useful change.

Gulnaz, 40, Khalabut Township

Our village was our identity and that is now under the Tarbela Lake. Wherever one goes, one wants to return to one's area of origin. We cannot do that because we have lost our area forever. Our identity is now only as 'affectees of Tarbela Dam'

6 Noshad Khan Tareen, 47, Khalabut Township

A Pathan by caste, Noshad is presently working in a foreign country. He was a young student who also looked after the family shop in the evening when the orders came for evacuation. He has a clear sense of how the village economy worked to people's advantage, how people perfected the indigenous irrigation and transportation system and how the dam destroyed all this by snatching away their means of livelihood and their entertainment opportunities without providing them an alternative half as good. He is saddened to see how this displacement has

affected his people psychologically. Although he was allocated land in Punjab, he returned to Khalabat among his people

Our village was called Tarbela Jatto, a picturesque village indeed. A plain surrounded by mountains, the River Sindh (Indus) flowing at a distance of 1.5 to 2 kilometers in the west, a road in the north and another one passing through the village...it had its own post office, the telegraph and telephone facilities, a hospital, a veterinary hospital and a police station, too. It had all the amenities of life we could think of.

The community, with its own efforts, developed small irrigation dams on the River Seeran and used the stored water in the entire region including Gojra, Tarbela, and Chaharr. On the lands irrigated by canals everything was cultivated including rice, tobacco, onion, and sugarcane. People inhabiting this part of the region depended mostly on cultivation. Only 15 to 20 percent were in service. Besides farming, our family also had a shop and a mill.

Education, food and crops, land tenancy and pastimes -- self-sufficient is the word

The region was self-sufficient in vegetables and fruits. It was only some out of season vegetables that came from outside the region. The indigenous fruit included loquat, guava, peach, plum, and apricot.

Water of River Seeran entered our village in two different rivulets -- one of them was called kattha, the other Rangeela kattha -- and these provided the irrigational water. Before splitting into two courses, this water ran around one dozen watermills.

A canal system had been developed by the local population with their own collective initiative. It did not require any expenditure on electric power.

Numerous Pathans with their various clans such as Tareen, Shorakhel, Khichikhel, Shakhmeli Khel, Gujar, Akhun Khel lived there. There were people of other castes such as *Dooms* (a family of singers) and *Nayees* (a family of barbers). It was quite diverse and they all lived together in harmony.

I can recall the grandeur of the high school building. Even till today, I don't think that any of the school-buildings in the NWFP,

from Peshawar to Kalam, is in any way a match to that school building in its beauty. The school had all the facilities such as lawns and drinking water for the students.

Students from all the neighbouring villages came to this school. Those who couldn't come to the school from their respective villages, because of lack of transport facility, were lodged in a hostel. The standard of the school was quite good: we had excellent teachers. The village had a primary school for girls. Thereafter they had to go to Haripur. The level of female education, compared with that of boys, was lower. Obviously it was because their school and college were at Haripur and people did not like to send their daughters to hostels

Another thing I still remember is a public meeting in the school. I do not exactly remember the name of politician who was speaking on the occasion. The Tarbela Dam was then being constructed. I still remember his words, "It would ruin your coming generations." I wondered what that man was saying. But now, at the age of 46 or 47, I clearly understand the wisdom contained in what he said. Today we are all scattered... disintegrated... having no communication with each another. Our coming generations have been affected by this dam. That man was right.

As for the food habits, it was a period of real austerity with no luxury. In the evening the seeds of maize were roasted. The wheat grains were mixed up with *gurr* (a raw form of sugar) for eating. The food was simple. People were healthy. The record of the period 1960 to 1972 would testify that only a few people suffered from any major disease. They lived long, as my paternal grandfather died at the age of 105 and the maternal grandfather at the age of 100. Even my father died at the age of 80.

Drinking water was supplied by a number of wells in the village. The underground water level was high because the River Sindh flowed very close to us. The water was transparent and the laboratory tests verified its suitability for health. Never did any doctor advise us to boil that water before use. *Here at Khalabat Township, water is deeper with a high quantity of lime.*

People reared buffaloes, cows, sheep and goats, camels, asses and horses. *There was not a single milk shop in the entire region*

and the milk, butter and yogurt was given to one another without any cost.

There used to be a number of games. A Club by the name of Shaheen Club -- still existing at Khalabat -- had a hockey team, a soccer team and also a volleyball team. *Kabaddi* was a favourite and once or twice every month the villages far and near held their *Kabaddi* matches. The next most popular activity was the races of the animals; one was called '*thingori*' yet another was '*chakkar*'. The most common was the bullock-cart race. Almost all the diverse games were played. In the absence of telephonic system, emissaries were sent to various places -- as far as Ghazi, Chhachh and Mianwali -- to invite good players of the game.

Other pastimes were sitting together in *hujras*, making bonfires and enjoying the warmth of the fire. A round of *huqqa* and *chilam* (kinds of smoking pipes) circulating from person to person, used to be a great pleasure. Our senior citizens did go to watch the *kabaddi* matches but not to play. They used to be very fond of this community sport. They didn't play but it gave them an occasion for their mutual gossip.

One fifth of the produce was our tenant's share. The carpenter and the mason of the village, the *khaadim* (servant) of the mosque who also provided water in our houses, *naees* (barbers) who circumcised the male babies, shaved and cut hair -- they also served as messengers at the time of a wedding -- all got a share in every crop for their services.

Collective work in crops

The work relating to the harvest of wheat, *Gaa*, means separating the chaff from the grain. As we invited the family or the whole clan at the time of marriages, we did at the time of harvest, too. They came with their pair of bullocks. The drum was beaten...we had to arrange for it...work and entertainment went together...the food was arranged by us. Similarly the harvest of maize, a night time activity, was celebrated by offering *halwa* (a kind of local pudding). All work was done voluntarily with the spirit of mutual cooperation.

Sugarcane was not a cash crop in those days. Tobacco was also cultivated for personal use. Rice was grown but was confined to

the areas where water was abundant. Where we really excelled was in the onion crop, known all over the North West Frontier Province. The yield of onion was around three hundred fifty maunds per kanal which is a record in the history of Tarbela. This is something, which can be verified from the record of agriculture department. Tarbela had the best land not only for onion but also for all other crops. It was the time when a family in possession of minimum two to three kanals was quite prosperous. The income per kanal works out to Rs. 100,000. One in agricultural profession at that time was far more prosperous than one is today.

Tarbela – a magnificent fishing resort

Tarbela was a place known for its fish because it was the point of convergence of three rivers -- Sindh, Seeran and Daurr. At Tarbela the cold water of Sindh and the warm water of the other two rivers ran side by side; one could distinctly see the three rivers flowing side by side. Passing through Paharr (mountain) they finally merged into one another completely by the time their water reached Tarpakhi. The cold-water fish of Sindh liked to play in the warm water of Seeran where it fell an easy prey to the anglers in very large quantities.

The Wah factory had given employment to a large number of Bengalis. Every method of fishing, such as the line method and the string method, were employed by the Bengalis which we learnt from them. The site really bristled with anglers as if it were some funfair. Mhasher, a delicious fish found in large quantities was the most popular among the anglers. The trout also reached this resort sometimes.

Evacuation notices, displacement and life at the township

I was a student of grade eight. Earlier a survey was conducted; measurement of lands and buildings was carried out; and their costs worked out. But the compensation announced was very low. It led the people to oppose it and protest against it. Later the Wapda authorities compromised with the people. The whole exercise of measurements started again. They received illegal gratifications from the people for slightly higher payments. Still the amount of compensation was very low. The arid lands were acquired at Rs. 1100 per kanal and the lands irrigated by the water of the two Katthas at Rs. 3000 per kanal.

At the time of leaving the village, everybody was crying. No words can describe the spectacle of a submerging house before the eyes of its inhabitants. I stood there and stared helplessly at the house where I had passed my childhood, played with my boyhood friends, where my father and grandfather were born. The water entered the *hujra* before my eyes. I could see the past on the screen of my mind. How the *jirgas* used to conduct their meetings there; how we as children used to play, and sit together and sing songs round the grave inside the premises of the same *hujra*; how my uncle was married and all the various functions were held there.

It was a great sacrifice by our people. But what did they get in return? Unemployment? Those who were more than 55 or 60 years of age at that time could not survive beyond two to three years after they left that place. I lost all the old people in my family as they couldn't adapt to the change forced upon them. This is a very different world.

One can conduct a survey of Chandni Chowk here at night and see how the unemployed young people are taking drugs; most of them heroin; some are taking *charas* (hashish).

People who brought their livestock with them were hoping to find new pastures here. But the villagers here did not allow them access to their *charagahs* (pastures). There was a lot of squabbling and disputes arose. After a resistance of two to three years we began to sell our animals. They are the people who sacrificed everything, and let the graves of their ancestors be submerged for their nation and that is how they have been rewarded!

We have not been able to assimilate in the culture of Punjab. You need time to understand the nature of the new land. The limited amount the settlers had in their hands was wasted away in their futile attempts to cultivate these lands. Thus our people went down in financial terms. They lost heart and started selling their lands. Many of them decided ultimately to come to Khalabat Township. Here again problems waited for them.

The women here they are confined in their houses, anxious all the time about the days to come. They used to contribute their useful work to the farming practices and looking after the

animals. Here they have nothing to do. Having livestock is not feasible; one cannot rear a goat here. And the farming? It's left behind! There was a social life in the village where women participated in the Eid fairs and various family functions and forgot their worries whatsoever. The life here is altogether different. So 80 to 85% of our people of either sex are psychologically upset.

7 Gulnaz, 40, Khalabut Township

Gulnaz, Principal of a private school Jinnah Public School Khalabut, who was fifteen at the time of evacuation, was quite excited to leave Jio Mohalla at Tarbela and come to city which she thought would have more facilities. But she was proved to be wrong. Looking at the huge mass of people who are unemployed, a great majority of them, especially youth, becoming addicted to hash or heroin forces her to remember her village

People co-operated with each other in the village. That co-operative atmosphere is missing here for the simple reason that people from at least 84 villages have come and settled in this township, each having their own ways and customs. Women in some sectors strictly observe pardah while others do not.

I am working as head of Jinnah Public School and am also studying homeopathy. That's a good change that has come about. Girls and boys are being educated and women are allowed to work. There still aren't as many girls as boys in schools because of the stereotypical attitude of people that girls would get married and go away while the sons would serve the family. Then there is the problem of poverty also that prevents girls from attending school. The positive attitude about women is because of education becoming more widespread as well as the role of media.

The unemployment ratio is very high in Khalabat. The frustrated youth have taken to addiction or crimes. *The only jobs that were available here were shop-keeping.* The people who were allotted land in Punjab had to face a lot of difficulties. Then the land allotted was not fertile and most people did not have much money to buy the tools and install the **tube wells**... Some of

them could not face the problems and they sold their lands and came back. Most people were not able to occupy the lands as the local people created problems for them. They were even unable to settle in this place.

We cannot say that this area belongs to us, or we own this land. Wherever the person is born one is identified with that land but we have lost our identification after coming here. Our ancestors were born and raised there so we used to love that area and said that it was our own. Now we only can say that our village is under this Tarbela Lake (*she said this with watery eyes*). We tell our identity like this.

We are not as much affected as the people who have settled in Punjab and Sindh. They are aliens there and they will never be able to own those areas. They have not been able to build any relationship with the area. Wherever one goes he wants to return to the area of his origin but we have lost our area for ever.

We want the government to do something for the area; there should be some job opportunities and some recreation facilities so that the youth do not get addicted to drugs. If the youth will be happy the country will progress.

Noshad Khan Tareen, 47, Khalabut Township

Earlier on, people owed nothing to anybody...they had no anxiety...they had land which kept them busy...their health was much better and they lived as long as a 100 years...now having lost their original lifestyle they have become neurotic...now they die at the age of 50 or 55. In my own family the life span in the last thirty years has reduced by 30 to 35 years

Dil jan, 50, Osman Khattar

I had never thought of becoming a lady councillor. A person in the village asked me to contest the election because I was popular. Now people say, "You have not done anything for us. We voted for you because we wanted you to do something for us." The government has not given me or other councillors any money. What can we do? When I meet people I feel very embarrassed. I pray to God that He may help me so that I could do something for the poor people

Firdaus Kausar, 35, Chak Syed, District Jhang

The government gave us land in the Punjab province. In the beginning the treatment of people was not good...they were not willing to give us possession of the land which they were cultivating for free...they were ready to kill and die...We had to take the help of the police... Now thank God there is no such insecurity... But at heart these people have not accepted us

Maqsoodan Jan, 80, Saraee Gadaee

The lifestyle as a whole was ideal. When the women went to the riverside for washing clothes and bathing, complete privacy was observed. The shrines of our saints, all decorated with flags, were so divine and wonderful

8 Maqsoodan Jan, 80, Saraee Gadaee

Maqsoodan Jan belongs to a family of hereditary singers who sang and performed on the weddings. Not all the women of the family sang, Maqsoodan Jan being one of them. But her husband was an 'artist'. According to her account, life at Tarbela as was not all that blissful. An easy life materially speaking, the family was literally shackled – the males being at the beck and call of the Khans who used them as messengers any time of the day or night. And if they disobeyed in any way, they were punished too. She disagreed with the jirga which she thinks was a system of coercion. The life after displacement has been an unending saga of suffering, she lost her sons and husband, the only relief being that it was not inflicted by the Khans and they are free people

I was 50 when we resettled here leaving our village Tarbela Jatto. Jatto was the centre of Tarbela. We are Karamkhels. My husband was a musician who played music at the wedding parties to earn his living. It was not his hereditary profession. He had opted for this profession because of his interest in music and did this for thirty years.

It was easy to survive at Tarbela with his income. Now it's difficult to make both ends meet. Tarbela used to provide employment to everyone. Saraee Gadaee cannot do that. With our few belongings, we shifted to Gadaee which used to be an

open plain. The major attraction being the availability of trains -- every train touches this station. Our sons would go for labour and return straight home.

A life of poverty ensued

We are passing our days only by borrowing money. A son of mine died three days after we shifted here. My husband died after we had settled here. It happened after another of my sons had an accident. No one came ahead to help us when my husband died. Nor was there any practice of helping the poor in my former village. There it was the domineering Pathans and the poor were not helped at all. Here it is the same. No one helps one another. Make your own bread and butter!

The house that we had built in Jatto was on someone else's land. He came and asked us to vacate. So we decided to leave. When the dam was constructed, we were given 300 rupees as the cost of construction of that house.

Women's life, food, customs and creeds

Women belonging to Tanoli tribe used to come our village to clean wheat and maize. We purchased *saag* (pot-herbs) from them. Life at Tarbela was great – with no dearth of water. We used to clean the grains and sent for the miller who would carry it to his mill and return it in ground form. And if ever we complained that the flour was less in quantity the miller would immediately consent not to take his share the next time. The millers used to take a certain share out of the flour they ground. The Tanoli women would become rich as they drudged; we were not allowed to go out and therefore remained poor.

People in Tarbela would pick up fights even while they were playing. And they gave handsome beating to one another.... the re-enforcement often came from their homes where the women supplied the respective sides with clubs used for threshing maize. The incident would end after the intervention of the police.

In the village the children used to be very enthusiastic about religion. Everybody was a practicing Muslim belonging to the same creed. We came to know about other creeds only after coming here.

It was so nice to live at Tarbela! One would purchase two to three maunds of onion in the season and the whole family would use it the whole summer season. A single radish would weigh 12 to 14 kilograms. Tarbela was rich in all kinds of vegetable... radish, turnip, *methi* (fenugreek used as a potherb), spinach, potato and cauliflower too. Seeran flowed among villages like Kaya, Khabbal, Dheri and Murti and we could go there by boat. Wood was brought in our street and we could buy a bundle for only rupee one. That time is gone.

I still wish the land of Tarbela were not covered by water, and [we could] go back and start living there once again.

Ceremonious weddings

Dresses were exchanged as gifts. *Mehndi* (application of henna before the wedding day) from both sides used to be one of the ceremonies. The bridegroom's procession was very interesting... the *nayee* (the village barber) would carry the gas-lamp on his head... everybody in the procession would stop here and there and dance in a circle. The wedding feast was supposed to be sumptuous, depending on affordability. It did include rice and some 'curry' dish. *Meerasis* (professional singers and dancers) used to visit the *hujras* and their women danced and we watched their performance from the roofs of houses without any restrictions.

My husband performed with a group of eight to ten artists. When they performed they were generously rewarded in the form of *beilein* (small sums of money showered at a dancer by the spectators). The members of the group would distribute the collected amount among themselves. His share was usually Rs.200 to Rs.300. The group didn't receive any payment from the host family for the performance at their marriage.

The only consolation – this a life of freedom

The *jirga* (the community court) of Pathans was very effective. It held its meetings at Tarbela at the stipulated dates whenever an occasion/dispute arose. They upheld the principles of justice but what they did with poor people were blatant acts of highhandedness.

The one improvement is that we got rid of the repressive attitude of the Pathans of the village. The Khans were the leaders, the elected leaders. *At the election time, all the people were asked*

to come to a certain place and the leader would threaten them and direct them to use their votes in favour of a certain person that he named. The people had no choice except to yield. We lived in their house and had we resisted we would have had to vacate their house. So we cast the vote as they asked us to.

Our problem was that they would send us on various errands or to carry messages concerning their marriages or deaths. The fear of them asking us to go to such errands always haunted our minds. Our male members had always to be at their beck and call, wishing for the day of liberty. They were paid a paltry sum in return. Once three men from our family were sent ten miles away to communicate a certain death message at night. That was a time when there were no communication channels like telephones and public transport. If they refused they would hold them captive in the *hujra* and beat them. Once my son took a corn of maize from their fields. They enchained him at the *hujra* and gave him a severe beating. Then someone informed us and my husband went there and offered to pay the price of the corn of maize and then they released him. Those memories of torture are still alive.

We had to leave our homeland with our hearts broken. Yet we say it was a blessing in disguise as we got rid of their bondage. There was no regular salary for the services performed. We were expected to show respect to their women. They insisted that my husband should send his wife for their dishwashing but my husband wouldn't let me go out of house and be disgraced. He would rather go himself and carry out their orders. Although we are all disintegrated, we have no fear of anyone sending for us.

Mohammed Ayaz Khan, 62

We owned land in Khalabut, the name of our village in Tarbela. We cultivated crops, ate them, lived on their earning for the whole year. Now we have become share-croppers on government's land. This Khalabat is like hell, we are trapped in the billing and taxation system with no alternative employment system to sustain us

9 Ilm Din, 60, New Makhan Colony

A mason by profession, Ilm Din was also a small landlord prior to resettlement. He was about 40 years old when they were displaced from their village in Tarbela. He mentions the worries of today, as if he and others are in an anxious state in their new environment. Quite categorically he states that the land compensation, wherever received, did not take account of the productivity of their fields – Tarbela was a fertile area. The collective enjoyment – in hujras and melas -- that was the hallmark of their lives is not possible any more since everybody is caught up in economic woes

The name of my village was Jatto, leader of the whole Tarbela. Most of the people were agriculturists. The people who had small landholdings used to hire land from other people for cultivation. The people who did not own land would also hire land and cultivate for their living. Being rich or poor was not an issue.

We were masons and were able to find work over there because there were few masons around. We got the wood from the jungles in the mountains around without having to pay anything for it. We were not dependent on the masonry work for our sustenance because we had land and we cultivated and produced everything on that. Our masonry work only helped in making us better off.

We are still doing the same work. When we came here the colony was under construction and there was work for us. Those who worked as farmers did not have an alternative job. Their children are young now, all addicted to heroin or hash, as they couldn't get any job. Even we don't have any work now.

The few semblances of identity retained

We migrated 26 years ago and are living here for that long, but we are in tension all the time. Everyone is worried and they do not have time to interact with each other. The gatherings have finished. We have lost our recognition. No one knows who we are. We have been ousted from our houses. No one respects us. We have lost our culture as well.

We have lost our identity. Some have gone to Peshawar, some to Punjab. Nobody knows who we are and what we were. We have all lost our identity. Some have maintained their identity by making *hujras* in their new homes and enjoy the same kind of sittings.

In the village, there were many *hujras*. Some of them were just simply big rooms with cots. Others were decorated with decoration pieces etc. People offered their *hujras* for guests of marriage to stay in. Guests were served food in *hujras*. In the morning all went to their work places. In the evenings, all the people came to the *hujra* to chat, sing songs and play games.

The natural resource called fish

My father was very fond of meat. One Tuesday, which was the weekly meat ban day, my father wanted to eat fish. There was no fish available in the market or at home. He asked my brother to go to the river and try to catch some fish for dinner. After two hours he came back with four large fish on the shoulder. We all felt very happy.

There was no restriction on the catching of fish. The nets with small holes were not allowed as people thought that it would be cruel to catch small fish for eating. The river was available to anyone who wanted to eat fish. Now this freedom is no more available to us. Thereon police guard the lake now.

The unresolved issues of ownership and compensation

Most of the people who got allotments in Punjab were not able to occupy their land. So the people had to go to courts and it took about ten to twelve years before many of them could occupy their allotments. We have not been treated in a good manner at any level. No one thought about the people who left their homes and the graves of their ancestors for the development of this country.

Those who were rich and influential got the allotments and even more than their justful share. But the middle class and poor people did not get even their 4 kanals of land. I had a right to an allotment, but was asked to pay Rs.2500 for that. I was unable to pay at that time as my father was suffering from paralysis. After his death I again tried to get land but then they asked for six to eight thousand rupees. I did not give it, thinking that I could buy

land of my own with that amount. Then I did not follow up my case. The government acted cruelly. Wapda was the organisation that forced most people to run from pillar to post in filing the claims.

Now if you want to enter a claim they ask you for so much money that an ordinary person cannot afford. Then there are numerous visits to the office in Ghazi while most affectees are in Khalabat; they should open an office in this township. But they do not care about these things.

The payments should have been made at the time of migration. Some people, who had received their payment beforehand, had spent their money...I think it was 1970 when people received the payments, and they migrated in 1974. At the time of migration those people did not have anything, so they started roaming around uselessly.

Evacuation

At the time of evacuation they just said that we had to leave. Otherwise they would use force against us. They opened the gates for water when people were still in the valley. Everyone was looking for shelter. Women who had never been out of their houses were wet with water and were looking for shelter on trees. They have been very cruel with us.

Advice to the government

If the government is concerned, it should set up an organisation for the affectees. It should allot land to those who do not have land. This organisation should be run by people who are not susceptible to corruption. In Tarbela there were many poor people who used to live in other people's houses but did not have to pay the rent. Those people are forced to live in rented houses at this place. The government should at least give these people a house of their own.

Linguistic change

The local language of the area was Hindko (local dialect of Punjabi). We want our kids to learn our own language but they have learnt Punjabi. Our children talk *Kaan Taan* (the Punjabi words for myself and yourself). But one has to change with the time. We are old now and do not know when we would die. Now our children have to live with these people.

Muhammad Ali Gauhar Khan, 58, Toba Tek Singh

The false hopes that WAPDA had raised in our minds, and the promises they had made to the people, none of them have been fulfilled. WAPDA earns millions of rupees in a day; they should earmark a part of it for the welfare and well-being of those affected by the dam on a permanent basis, whatever place they may be settled at



Mohammad Iqbal Khan, 70, Khalabat Township

Everything was decided without any consultation. These [Wapda] people never went to see and assess the lands of poor people. Whosoever went to the office and bribed the relevant people got everything, and got paid on the spot

10 Mohammad Iqbal Khan, 70, Khalabat Township

Iqbal Khan is affected by the construction of Tarbela Dam in more than one way. Not only did he lose his many houses, agricultural land and shops because he chose not to 'bribe' Wapda, as a driver with the resettlement staff he had the chance to



closely monitor the irregularities committed by Wapda officials. He eventually left his job in protest. Rivers, he says, were the biggest [source of] wealth for them. As such people did not need jobs, and chose to stay illiterate. Ousted from their homes and natural habitat that provided them everything they needed, should they be blamed for thinking their new abode as hell?

The dam was being constructed for the first time in our lives; people did not know anything about it. These cruel people promised us jobs, free electricity and water at the new place. They said they would send us abroad. "We will give you so much in return that you will never recall your village."

Tarbela was a beautiful valley. River Indus and Seeran provided water to our lands. There were small canals everywhere and we had fruit trees that gave us maunds of grapes and what not. Where there was no canal water there were wells of cold sweet water. There were *jinders* (water mills to grind flour). Many people earned their living out of them. People who did not own land earned their living honourably. There was no tax on anything. There the land was so fertile that everyone was fed out of that. It was heaven.

Measurements, payments, allotments

When the measurements started, we noted that nothing could be done without bribery. Poor people did not have any money to pay them, so all of us swore on the Quran that no one would give bribe. I told them that I had 12 or 13 kanals of land, 12 houses and 8 commercial shops. All this was valued at Rupees 80 thousand only. The Wapda people expected me to pay them something but I refused.

People had sworn that if their demands were not met by Wapda, they would not participate in the valuation process of their property. The people who offered bribes got higher prices for their lands, but the people who refused to do so were at a loss. We were young at the time, unhappy about this injustice and about leaving the place where our ancestors were buried. At the height of our anger, we burnt seven cars belonging to Wapda. Then police and army interfered with tear gas, and baton-charged us. People were arrested. It was not fair. The police and the army were beating people.

I was a driver in Wapda and saw everything with open eyes. Only ten percent of people who bribed the authorities were able to get their payments. The remaining ninety percent poor and illiterate people who did not have access to their offices got nothing. I am telling you what I have seen. My one and a half acres of land was declared as barren.

They never went into the field. I had worked with the Security Officer and the Movement Officer, who was a retired major of the army. I had also worked with two collectors. I saw everything, which others could not. The poor kept standing outside the office for days on end but were not given time for appointment. People lacked awareness, and could not raise voice for their rights. Wapda people never went into the field. They only recorded their field visits for the sake of TA (travel allowance) and DA (daily allowance). I took the wives of these officials to Landi Kotal where they bought expensive clothes. We were given Rs 20 in the evening so that we should not object.

From heaven to hell

This is hell for us. In our village we got water free of cost, but here we have to pay for it and the bill increases every six months. Wapda people made false promises with us. We have to pay for electricity but this electricity is ours. Can't the government

see our situation? They should have developed the resettlement plan according to our wishes. We had wells, mosques, *hujras* (meeting places) and fertile lands, which these people have bulldozed. Now we don't have anything. The water is not sufficient even with three tube-wells. If someone is unable to pay the electricity bill, they send police to our doors. If this is not hell then tell us what is?

These cruel people have disintegrated us. They spread our relatives all over Pakistan. Some were sent to Punjab, other to NWFP and Sindh. Real brothers have been separated. Who should we fight against?

When opium was grown freely, the person who had two kanals of land cultivated about 8-10 kilograms of opium. The government purchased this opium from people who were thus able to earn a lot of money. Nobody was addicted to opium at that time. They just grew it and sold it. People said this is poisonous, and it kills human beings. In Tarbela there were many employment opportunities and people from surrounding villages came there to earn a living. When we were forced to leave that place, our youth started robbing and stealing out of frustration. Others who were unable to bear all this got addicted. First they started eating opium and then heroin.

Now we see Tarbela in our dreams. In this new place there are not even 15 people of my age. All of them are dead. Young people are addicted due to the frustration of unemployment. Everyone is dying.

We are doing nothing to get our rights. Just working hard to earn our living. With this new organization SMT (Social Organization for Mutasreen-e-Tarbela) we have some hope that someone will definitely help people who neither got money nor land. Many cases are still pending in the courts. These courts are also corrupt and they only favour the rich.

Life goes on

I have kept some cows not as a need but just to keep myself busy. I grow some vegetables in the neighbouring plot as well. These are all my pastimes.

If the lake dries and the old village is there, we would prefer to go back to our own village. We will not accept even gold for that land.

Shahab Bibi, 50, Khalabat

We have the facility of education; everywhere there are schools for girls and boys. I only ask the government: why should we get education? Neither is the education free, nor are there any jobs available. Fees, uniform, books, notebooks, pencils and pens etc. – only the rich can afford education at this cost

Mohammad Riaz, 36, Khalabat

Now we know their language, but they do not know ours. Their language has overpowered our language, as we were in minority and they the majority

Qurat ul Ain Shah, 22, Hundkaya

The substantial change that has come about is in the thinking of girls. They want greater freedom. But men are still narrow-minded. They have not changed at all. They have rather become more coercive. They don't want us even to listen to the radio or watch the television and would have them switched off. They claim that because of these the girls are becoming independent and rude.

11 Qurat ul Ain Shah, 22, Hundkaya

Qurat belongs to the influential Syed family held in high respect by those in Tarbela – and even now – due to their renowned generosity towards the community, and their strong tradition and family rules. Although Qurat was born after her family had moved to Hundkaya, she gives a vivid account of the changes experienced by her community: “I could describe all the events as if I myself had been there. I can feel all that. What I have heard, really, runs like a film before my eyes, even now.” A beautician by profession she is quite sensitive towards women issues and angrily describes men's resistance to change.

It was my father who was born in Kaya, Shahgai Khabbal. The village of Kaya was at some distance from Shahgai Khabbal and one had to cross the mountains to reach there. Since our village was adjacent to areas like Mardan, Topi and Sawat, it fell under *Ilaqa Ghair* -- tribal area with no direct control of the administration. As such, it was a shelter to a large number of fugitives. Those who faced any kind of oppression and escaped, would come under the protection of the Shahgai Syeds. People had great faith in our ancestors, especially my father's grandfather. Even today they hold us, the Syed family, in great awe and respect. They still entrust their belongings to us.

A major role the Syed family played was to bring about reconciliation, ending the conflict among various tribes.

Community collectivism

Our men extended all possible cooperation to the poor. The poor people were given houses to live in. In case of a marriage in their families, our people would slaughter a cow to serve as the meal. The poor were helped by all means. In case of the marriage of a girl, they had ornaments prepared by the jewellers, wood was given for furniture and cotton for quilts.

The Syed family was so nice to other people that no one can speak ill of them. You can speak to any of our land tenants even now and ask about us. When the Wapda informed us about the dam, my grandfather transferred the ownership of the houses to the poor people who lived there so that they could have the compensation.

At the time of evacuation, they said that they won't leave that place unless the *Ba Jis* (the local term used for male members of the Syed family out of respect) left. They loved us that much.

After displacement, some of them came with us, many others shifted to Karachi in the pursuit of a better future of their children. Their new generation was averse to the drudgery they lived in. They found new employments for themselves.

Land at Hundkaya and before

Our people came here seeing that the river flowed nearby, the same as it did at Shahgai. Nearby there were shrines. They expected similar fairs to be held near them. They expected to

find fertile lands being on the bank of the river. We still own our lands there. We purchased our property here spending our own money to the tune of a little more than Rupees three million. It includes forests, land irrigated by canals and that irrigated by wells, as well as arid. We owned the whole of the village of Shahgai. We did not receive half of what we owned there as compensation. Our claims for the same are still in court.

At Kaya we had more of *Chahi* land (the land with Persian wheels installed on it and which is made fertile with the help of wells and bullocks.) There was more of *Nehri* land at (canal fed) Shahgai. The most common and the most important of crops was opium. Besides that, maize, wheat, and among vegetables, peas, turnips, radish, carrots were also grown.

The land tenants were paid one third of the produce. In vegetables, they took as much as they could carry. There was no access to the market. Only a part of it was transported to Tarbela, the rest was taken by the people free of cost. Even now in this very village, we follow the same practice. In our lands, even today, at the time of throwing the seed, the first share is for sparrows, the next for needy, then for travellers, and then finally our own. People still think that what God has blessed us with includes the share of all people.

Opium was not banned in those days. The government allowed us to continue growing it at the new place. It was classified as a drug and as such it was precious and brought people a lot of monetary return. It was purchased by the government, or mostly by the people of Kabul, basically outsiders. My father says that Kabulis of Swat were the major buyers. Besides, the Pashto speaking people also purchased it.

The people carried the opium produce to the market. If they wanted to hide it from the government to sell it in the black market, they would cross the river with the help of a *Mashk* (an inflated goat skin) or *Shinai*. *Shinai* was made up of leather, sewn like a balloon attached with wood. You could call it a mini boat. The people who knew how to swim in that dangerous river would fasten it with their belly and swim across the river. They wanted to avoid the possibility of the government intercepting the boat.

How women's life changed

The Syed women had to strictly follow the Pardah restriction. They could only go to a few Pathan houses, surrounded by other women. . The poor women would keep the Syed family women in their centre while moving, the Syed women would not be recognized by outsiders. But there has been an improvement in their mobility. The change in time brings about a change in social practice, too.

Generally women did not face much restrictions even then. They used to go to the river for bathing. The village fairs were not very frequent. They would gather in marriages and pay visits to one another's houses. Baking bread in the *tandoor* (an oven meant for baking bread) and *Kashida Kari* (embroidery) were some of women's collective activities.

A terrible custom of the past at some places was to send the girl as bride without conducting *nikaah* (matrimonial rites). This was against Islam. The family did it out of fear lest the girl should express her disagreement to the marriage being imposed on her. And then it was only after eight or nine days that they would go and get the *nikaah* performed. Another custom that I have noticed even today, because of my closeness to the bride as a beautician, is that a male attorney speaks and signs on behalf of the bride.

We, the Syed family, don't permit marriages outside the Syed family. *If a girl does not find a suitable match within the family, she would not marry.* She would practice celibacy. There have been many who have died unmarried. It is unjust because parents cannot support you throughout life. *In our family a woman is an oppressor and a woman is the oppressed.* It is women who do not let the girls marry out of their choice outside the family even if it is a reasonable suitor. They quote the examples of their sisters and aunts in the past that stayed unmarried. The thinking of the men would have changed had there not

As for education, female education was a rarity in those days. Even in the present times I received my education because I used to live with my maternal grandmother. When my mother got ill and I came here and got admission in the high school, my uncles came and advised that I must not be educated or sent

back to Peshawar if I wanted to be educated. *The thinking of these people has not changed at all.*

Makhan Jan, 60, Malir Karachi

It happened a long time back, about 20 to 25 years ago. An old woman died in the house adjacent to ours. Her funeral service was performed the next morning but I did not know it before 7 o'clock in the evening. It hurt me so much that I bitterly wept.... I



I thought that I must also die one day, with none of my own people around. No one would even know about it. That night I could not sleep. But now, I am used to all this.

12 Mohammad Riaz, 36, Khalabat

Mohammad Riaz is a clerk by profession but had agriculture as his family profession in his former village. Although he was a young boy of ten at evacuation, his knowledge of the agricultural practices in the village is amazing

My village was called Laloo Gali. Our family profession was agriculture. We came to Khalabat Township in 1974 after evacuation. My father was employed in Karachi. We were agriculturists. My uncle had given our land to tenants and they were the ones who cultivated our land.

I am a government servant. I work as a clerk in Pakistan Post office. My father left his job as a driver in Karachi Port Trust at evacuation and now runs a small sawmill.

Agriculture back home

We had about 20 kanals of land in Laloo Gali. This was given to the tenants – relatives -- who cultivated it and gave half of the yield to us. All the land was rain-fed though a few people had wells of their own to water their land. The whole area used to cultivate corn and wheat. People who had wells grew vegetables, especially onion.

In our village and nearby villages ploughing was done with the help of oxen. The farmers went to the fields early in the morning. They worked the whole day long to prepare the land and cultivate the crop. Then they threw seeds in the field and then used a *metra* (a one foot wide and 4-5 feet long piece of wood) for levelling the land after ploughing and to cover the seed in soil.

Unlike the present times when there are advertisements saying that seeds provided by the government should be used, farmers used their own seed. They kept some of wheat and corn as seed and in the next season used the same as seed. The remaining yield was either eaten or sold in the market. The money earned was used to buy other necessities of life. If someone did not have any seed left, he borrowed it from other people.

The concept of good and bad seed is new. At that time whatever was the yield, people kept some of it as seed. The land was fertile. The yield of crop was good. Probably because animal dung was used as manure in the fields. The only need was timely rain. There was no regular irrigation water arrangement in our area. Most of the lands were rain-fed, except for two or three families who used the water from their wells for irrigation.

Harvesting was an interesting procedure. They called it *ushar*. Some ten to fifteen people gathered in the fields of the person whose harvesting was to be done and worked together. In the same manner crops of all people were harvested turn by turn. The person, whose harvesting was done, served food and water to the people who worked in his field.

In our village women and men worked together. *Sometimes women worked more than men -- looking after the house, animals and even crops, it was all women's work.* My mother and grandmother worked like this. I vividly remember them working so hard. Women were permitted to go out of the house. It was because everyone knew each other.

Women went long distance to fetch water for the family. The utensil used to fetch water was called *dola*. Some people used donkeys to fetch water, but generally it was the women's duty.

There was a *Lohar* (ironsmith) who was responsible for developing all the tools for field operations. He and the village barber were very important people. The *lohar* was not paid in the shape of cash, he given share from the crop harvested. There was a measurement called *Odi* equivalent to 5-6 kgs of wheat or corn. Every house in the village gave the *lohar* an *odi* at the time of harvest. The basic tool was the plough mostly used to prepare the land. If someone's tool broke, all he needed to do was to cut the wood and gave it to the *lohar* and he prepared a new plough for him.

Now with modern technology, human beings do not have to work that hard. At that time the person who was very hard working could just prepare one kanal of land for cultivation in the whole day. But now with the help of tractor this work has become easy. Now there are many kinds of ploughs. Now the work is done in hours.

Staying back or going to other cities for work

Most of the people in our village worked in the fields as farmers. It was only after 1970 that they started looking for jobs in different cities. It was then that fruits of scientific advancement had made its way into the villages as well. People started looking for jobs as they wanted to earn money. They became aware of the fact that without money they are unable to buy the facilities. Although the food was enough and no one had to worry about the food, but there was no money.

As every family was blessed with at least three or four male members, some stayed back while others went out of the village to look for jobs so that they could send money home and help them. People mostly went to Karachi.

How has life changed

There was only one bus that started in the morning from Darband (40-50 kilometres from our village) and went to Haripur (50-60 kilometres from our village). Then in the evening the same bus came back from Haripur to Darband. People who wanted to travel from one village to another travelled on foot generally. Here it is just like a city; we step out of the house and get a bus just in front of our house. There is no problem here.

When we came here we spoke the Tanoli language, which is quite different from the language spoken in Tarbela. For example we say "takta" it means calling someone and the people here say "kookata". The meaning is the same. We spoke our own language when we came here, but then people started making fun of our language. So we had to learn their language to communicate with them properly. In Tarbela the environment was basically rural. There was no electricity, and no tap water. *I still remember that when we came here we saw the switches to put on the light. I asked my mother as to how come with one switch we put off the light and not blow it off like we used to do with kerosene oil lamps?*

Here there are a lot more facilities. *I think that if the villages also have roads and electricity, village life would be much better than life in the cities.*

I felt very strange when we came here. In the village, all the people belonged to the same caste and lived like a family. Here there are different people who have their own customs. We had many difficulties in mixing up with them.

13 Makkhan Jan, 60, Malir Colony, Karachi

Makhan Bibi belongs to a prominent family of feudal lords who did not get full land compensation -- in fact got only a fraction of it. A widow, both of whose sons are addicts, she migrated to Karachi soon after displacement and as such suffers more than those who got settled in the townships in their home province. She cannot call this city her own even after 32 years and feels alienated as ever. The stress wears off though whenever there is cricket season, a game she loves to watch on television. Her favourite cricketers are Imran Khan, Waseem Akram, Inziamul Haq and Shahid Afridi

What should I tell you my daughter, and what should I not? After coming here we have found ourselves so helpless that sometimes we think that it's a nightmare, and no sooner than we shall open our eyes, we would be at our own village. We would return to the same old life... Even after a lapse of 30 to 32 years we feel like guests here that are bound to return after a few days.

My village was Jatto Tarbela. We owned vast lands at Bailee, Musa Khel, Beer and other places.... maybe seven hundred and fifty kanals that included *shamilat* (the village common), most of it cultivable. These lands also included four *jinders* (water mills meant for grinding flour). They were all *prandiala* (fertile). Only some of the land located at Beer was barren.

Our lands produced wheat and maize, but we also cultivated opium that brought a much higher return... It was cultivated with the permission of the government. Those were the times of austerity and limited needs. People were not greedy. The grains of wheat and maize were used at shops for bartering anything we needed -- sugar, tea and other provisions. Even a child would go to shop with just a handful of grains and get any of the eatables he liked. Cash was something unknown there.

In modern times a house must have a colour television, a refrigerator, a VCR, a dish antenna and a tape recorder and so on. All this cannot yield peace of mind. One becomes so restless and dissatisfied; everybody has – what the doctors call – tension. It is only the race for money that causes tension.

The house we are living in was built with our own money. The government only paid us Rs.10,000 that we had consumed by the time we reached here. We're still hoping to get back our land. They have issued us slips that indicate that we would get 100 kanals of land in Punjab. It's still something promised: we have not so far received it. It is most unjust.... We are asking the government for what is our own right. They have mis-classified most of our land as barren. The entire land at Beer has been placed in the category of barren land in the official record. The factual position is that out of a total area of 100 kanal, 40 kanal was barren; the rest of it was fertile. But this is the authority and discretion of the government.

A world of difference between Karachi and Haripur

Only some paternal cousins of my husband are in Karachi. There are some people from our native village in the neighbouring street. The rest of the family is at Khalabat Township, Haripur. It is on account of this perhaps that I feel lonely. This abominable dam has displaced all of us and thrown us at such diverse and far off places, just like grains of rice dispersed in a farm. Those who are living at Haripur are also living in hardship. They have

neither jobs nor facilities. Life at the village was very different; a real pleasure.

We go to Haripur only occasionally, when there's a funeral or a wedding. The joy it gives doesn't let me sleep two days before I have to leave.

Here in Karachi most of our neighbourhood consists of people from our native region. Some of them are Punjabis, there are Muhajirs too. We have been here for long so we have social contacts. We visit one another. And we also mutually share the occasions of joy and sorrow, provided we know about it. But this interaction is not as strong as it used to be in our village or even at Haripur...

The village certainly lacked in health and educational facilities. I am a supporter of education for girls as they have to take care of a family. If I had been educated to a higher level I wouldn't have been exposed to so much of difficulties after the death of my husband. I would have handled the situation more successfully.

Karachi is a city where no one knows us. Only he who has money in his hands is respected. There are no values, and the values and respect that we lived with there are non-existent here.

Her sons have become addicts

When in ninth class, my elder son became an addict as he kept a bad company outside the house. He had gone under the influence of these gangsters in the very beginning and as a result developed an addiction for drugs. The father was already dead; who could have controlled him? It was not possible for me to go outside to look out for his activities.

I advised the younger son that at least he should continue the studies and not behave like his elder brother. But he (the younger brother) also left school...he wanted to learn a skill. He could do nothing. He did not complete his education, nor could he learn any skill. These are the things, my daughter that keep me perturbed. This city has certainly not had any positive impact on my children. I am alone, without my husband, in a city away from my native place. Who is there to give affection to these children? So they could achieve in their lives as I had wished.

When all is said and done, I suppose their upbringing would have been better in the village, at least some uncle would have been there to look after them.

My elder son was an addict for a period of 14-15 years. He used heroin. We've had a great deal of treatment, but ultimately he quit it of his own will... He really hurt me for such a long time. He would lie unconscious the whole day after using the drugs. He would spend as much as 200-500 rupees a day on drugs and then lay senseless. The jobs are not available; that's also true. That is what makes many indulge in drugs. What should they do when they look at the hunger and poverty in their homes and find no-one to take care of them?

It was like dying every night when he used drugs sitting in front of me. I feared every night that he could die any moment. And as he lay senseless after inhaling the drug I would begin to curse him again. His addiction has broken my heart. I have lost all hope.

I had not lost heart when I became widow in the bloom of my youth. But now I have become despondent.

Longing for her village

I love the people of my village, the very name of my village! I cannot sleep the whole night if I hear the name mentioned on television. It is true that Tarbela has contributed to the country's development. But nobody bothers to think about the multitudes of people who would never forget their village.

*I miss my village very much. I don't feel adjusted here, even after a stay of 30 or 32 years. I would love to return to my own village and to live with my people. I'm sick and tired of living away from our own people. I wish to have land as compensation close to our own people at Khalabat Township... I want to have my grave in my own soil where someone should at least raise hands and pray for my soul to rest in peace by reciting *fatiha* (a *surah* of the Holy Quran).*

I just close my eyes and find myself in my village, where I see that it is evening time. I sit under the roof and watch the children playing *kaudi*, and men ploughing in the fields. I also see the sports in the street among them; *akhrote* (children playing with walnuts) and *gili-danda*. I watch women baking bread in the oven

at sunset. Then I see at the nightfall all my *sahelian* (girlfriends) playing *aankh machuli* (hide and seek) and absorbed in listening to the stories from an elderly women. The next moment I open my eyes and find myself in this rotting city of Karachi, the same that people call the city of lights. I could not, though I have been looking, find the light anywhere in this city of lights.

Displacement notice and the compensation issue

It seemed as if an angel had blown the doomsday trumpet in my ear so harsh as to tempt me to kill the person who brought the news. It was as if someone most dear to us was dead. There was such a lamentation and the whole atmosphere was clouded with such sorrow that words fail to describe. Even the animals were sad. How could one afford to quit a happy and prosperous home and village? First no one could believe it, or rather didn't want to believe it. But a decree of the government is but next only to that of God. How could one have resisted it? The people were kissing the walls and crying.

The greater injustice came when, after surrendering our village and lands, we didn't get anything in replacement. Had we got lands similar to ones we left behind we wouldn't have suffered this much.

We have been making efforts right from the beginning to get these lands but our efforts have not borne fruit. Those who were influential, the community leaders of the village, easily succeeded. We are still living in hope with the slips indicating that we would get land in Punjab.

If we get the land, we'll cultivate it, grow crops on it. I would quit city life and settle at my lands in a humble mud cottage. I shall rear water buffaloes. It would be an escape, at least, from the polluted atmosphere of the city. I would grow a variety of vegetables. This is what my sons also wish. They say they would start farming in case they get the land and think it is going to be respectable. It will at least give us some identity. God also gives grain to those who make the furrow.

Doing this interview is like gaining my heart's wish. I have given vent to long pent up feelings. I feel happy and relaxed and shall certainly have a peaceful sleep tonight. Otherwise, no one likes the company of old people like us. No one wants to listen to us.

Muhammad Iqbal Khan, 73, Landhi, Karachi

At Jatto, there was a strong relationship between owner of the land, the land and the *hali*. The *hali* or land-less worker would not have the feeling that the land was not his own... they also had houses to live.... Apart from meals, and other assistance the *halis* received one fifth of the produce at harvest... Fertilizers seed and other overhead charges used to be the responsibility of the landowners

**14 Jan Muhammad, Abdul Akbar, Said Gul
Zarkash, Khaloo village**

Land compensation is not an issue for these gold extractors or keeri walas who lost their livelihood because of the construction of Tarbela Dam. Their source of income, River Indus, has been taken away from them. These people used to collect particles of gold out of the sands of the river over the entire stretch from Basham, where the river starts, to Kalabagh – the Indus being the only river that carried a remarkable quantity of gold. The sand accumulates in the bottom of the Lake and fails to cross the dam. Down the river from Tarbela, the Ghazi Barotha canal has been constructed that has changed the river's direction.

It has been disastrous for the zarkash workers known as keeri walas. Now these people are scattered over a large area of the North Western Frontier Province in groups. One large group is settled on the river Indus at the village of Khaloo. They were all sad on having lost the company of their beloved river. A senior member of the community and two others tell their tale

We have been living at this village Khaloo for more than 35 years. There are around 250 to 300 *zarkash* (gold extractors) households here. All of us extracted gold before the Dam was built. We worked along the river from Basham (Kohistan) to Attock. We could collect about 40 grams of gold every day, sometimes even more. This flat basin, you have seen, is actually an apparatus useful in carrying out tests on sand to verify the quantity of gold. It helps us find the right place to install the machine. One cannot do it without proper training.

We set out with this testing apparatus in the morning. When the river recedes after rising it brings a lot of sand. That is the time when best results are achieved. In the evening the sifted mixture, consisting of only the fine particles of sand and gold, is placed in

this basin and is further rubbed. Then mercury is added to it and the particles of gold stick to mercury. It is converted into a ball and thrown into the fire. The fire consumes the mercury and there remains a brick of gold that we sell out to jewellers in the market. Further treatment is given to it by the jewellers who put it in an acid and obtain pure gold.

We used to sell it at the rate of Rs.6,000 to Rs.6,500 per *tola*. But now the situation has changed because the gold extracted out of the existing sand finds a lower price in the market.

The construction of the dam destroyed all our business. We are left to do simple labour, which is not available at all times. We cannot make both ends meet with that meagre income.

The four sons that I have are all unemployed. They may find labour sometimes and may not find it at other times. Hand to mouth, they spend what they earn, and are again looking for fresh work the next day. Actually we should have had a right to employment in the projects of Tarbela and Ghazi Brotha. But those coming from outside have got the jobs and we have been totally ignored. The authorities did not bother to contact us. We wrote to them but no one responded to our many applications. Besides, we lacked adequate resources to follow up the matter. Our work has now quite finished because it is gravel, not sand, that the river now brings with it.

(Abdul Akbar) There are times when this place goes under water and dries up at other times. We go to Kalabagh for two or three winter months which increases the expenses to a level that the work does not remain cost effective. We cannot steal or commit frauds, our electricity connections have been disconnected because of non-payment. Only if they could employ one person from each family in the Ghazi Brotha and the Tarbela Dam, it would bring prosperity to our homes.

(Said Gul Zarkash) Some of our people who were settled at Mian Dheri changed their profession – they adopted agriculture. But these 300 families living here are still in trouble. They are in a real crisis because of the non-availability of alternative employment. Our greatest problem is unemployment. Six of my sons are sitting jobless at home. They sometimes find labour work where they are supposed to help a mason in building a house. But it is not regular. So we are living in uncertainty. Our

children have no skills other than their own work. Our daughters do household chores at the house of the Khan family. One has to when one is hungry. There is no other choice.

About 10 to 15 girls work at Gadun Amazai, in a factory that manufactures syringes. If the travelling expenses are excluded, their total income works out to Rs.2,000 or Rs.2,500 in each case. Even this is a lot for these families.

We never made an association to take our petition to the higher level in an organised manner. It was always at an individual level; all our efforts failed.

We had already been deprived of the opportunity of working over a large area along the river Indus as a result of the construction of the Tarbela Dam. But with Ghazi Brotha Dam, all opportunities have ended altogether. I was an employee of a Zarkash company stationed at Lahore but the present state of affairs has discouraged even them. Other rivers do not have gold in this proportion. On a day of good return our family of seven would have earned Rs.2,000 to Rs.3,000 but now we don't even earn Rs.200, altogether.

Tameel Begum, 45, Khalabat

People used to catch fish from the river and distributed it among themselves free of cost. There were no special people for fishing. There was so much fish in Indus River that even the children could catch it

Tameel Begum, 45, Khalabat

It seems we have never seen any happiness...happiness here could only be bought with money and we do not have money, neither is there an opportunity to earn some reasonable money

**15 Haji Muhammad Rafiq Khan, 64, Rafiqabad,
Swabi**

A landlord in Kaya Tarbela, Muhammad Rafiq has almost set up an entire new village which the people, because of the services he rendered for them, have named after him. Rafiqabad is not what Kaya was – the ideal village where people despite being illiterate were prosperous. They have been deprived of their homes, customs, climate, not least their identity. With

displacement, they lost their dignity and self-respect. According to Haji Rafiq, more than anything else, it is the plight of Tarbela affectees that forces people to oppose Kalabagh Dam and other dams.

The inhabitants would get firewood and timber from the mountain on one side of the village and fish from the river on the other side. Many of the people sailed boats, the only means of transport for the village....A very large quantity of precious timber was passed on floating through the River Indus...It was released from the mountains of Darband and Kala Dhaka with the Attock Bridge as its destination from where it was supplied to various parts of Pakistan...This timber that was owned by the government, was a permanent source of income for our people.

We did observe the survey that was conducted but ours being a tribal area, the information about the dam was very sketchy. *Our people believed that no one could block a river as powerful as the Indus...*The dam authorities did not contact them, nor did they tell them anything about the purpose of the dam...They just sat in their offices and unilaterally made assessments about the cost of our lands...They didn't bother to even examine the quality of the lands; they obtained no willingness from the people...The common poor folk had no access to them... Only a few, that could understand the reality, got their lands assessed at a value slightly better after bribing the officials...The simple, illiterate, poor people suffered a great deal. The common people had lost their bread and butter because of the dam, as the water had submerged their fertile lands. They had been deprived of their homes, their identity, ways and customs, everything even their climate. They were shedding tears on their helplessly miserable plight.

*A culture of ours, a whole civilization submerged under the water and there was no one to commiserate...*The government should have settled all the affectees at one place. If a brother received alternative agricultural land in Punjab, the other was made an allotment in the province of Sindh, and the third in NWFP. It divided our families. A brother, a father, a mother – all were cut off from one another, unable to participate in marriages and funeral. They're desperate to see one another. This is how the dam has rewarded us!

The hurdles in disbursement of compensation forced us to stay put till the time that water swept the entire region. Had there been no mountain to climb at, all the village inhabitants would have drowned and died.

The Wapda provided some launches (motor boats) much later that rescued the people sitting on the mountains and moved them to the other bank. It was like a doomsday. The eyes of every man, woman and child were moist. Our pardah-observing women had been forced to come out. This dam really destroyed us... *As for getting settled in Punjab, our problem was that we were considered Pathans when we went to Punjab, and Punjabis when in the NWFP Province as we spoke Hindko.*

The country today is in dire need of electricity and power. But the dams need to be constructed after proper planning, ensuring that the rights of the people are not denied to them. Their consent needs to be obtained. The affectees rather need to be given the right of ownership of the dams thus constructed. This is the road leading to success; otherwise the construction of the dam will generate further unrest. On one side Tarbela has been so useful by providing electricity and irrigational water for the barren lands that have been brought under plough; it has contributed to the progress of the country. But at the same time, the people, who sacrificed all they had, have been left on the rocks and have been denied even their basic rights.

We do not expect anything from the government. The 1998 Commission on Tarbela was not properly represented. Now a ray of hope has emerged in the form of SMT, the social organisation that is working for the rights of the affectees. Who could give a better account of all this than my heart? My father's grave went under the water when I was seeing it. Words fail to describe how I felt; a WAPDA official could not have the capacity to perceive it.

Glossary

Maulvi	clergy
Qazi	community judges
Kanals	a land measurement
Barani	rain-fed
Naik	feudal lord
Chadar	large sheet of cloth used to cover the whole body
Ghena	kind of loan, a gharrahan house is one built on someone else's land
Rahat	Persian wheel
Zimindara	vocation of cultivation
Khadim	servant
Naib Subedar	a military rank
Hali	tenant
Jirga	community assembly/court
Chapattis	home made bread/ <i>rotis</i>
Matiwalas	servants who supplied water from wells to every house
Dak bangla	rest house
Jinders	watermills to grind flour
Bela	forest
Jaleebi	sweet made of refined flour
Pakorras	a spicy snack made out of gram flour
Doom	a family of singers
Nayee	a family of barbers
Kabbadi	a kind of wrestling very popular in the rural areas of Pakistan
Thingori	an animal race
Chakkar	an animal race
Gaa	process of separating chaff from wheat grain
Halwa	a kind of local pudding
Gurr	brown sugar crystals
Belnaa	a kind of press used for crushing sugarcane
Pahaar	mountain
Charas	hash
Charagahs	pastures
Saag	pot-herb
Methi	fenugreek
Mehndi	henna
Meerasi	professional singers and dancers
Beilein	small sums of money showered at a dancer by the spectator
Kaan taan	the Punjabi words for myself and yourself
Quran	Muslim holy book
Hujra	meeting place for males
Metra	a one foot wide and 4-5 feet long piece of wood

Ushar	local harvesting procedure
Dola	a utensil to fetch water
Lohar	ironsmith
Odi, udi	a measurement equivalent to 5-6 kg of wheat or corn
Ilaqa Ghair	a tribal area with no direct control of administration
Ba Ji	local term used for male Syeds
Chahi	land with Persian Wheel installed on it
Nehri	canal-fed
Shinari	leather sack used as a mini-boat
Mashk	an inflated goat skin
Tandoor	oven meant for baking bread
Kashida kari	embroidery
Nikah	matrimonial rites
Shamilat	the village common
Prandiala	fertile
Khashkhash	poppy seed
Dhodhay	poppy pod
Traviaan	aluminium vessels
Fatiha	a surah (verse) of the Holy Quran
Zarkash, Keeriwalas	gold extractors

The Submerged Speak

Oral Testimonies of Tarbela Affectees



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Design and Layout

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