

## Unit Three: Development and Mobilization - Narmada in India (Prof. Rajagopal)

---

### CASE BACKGROUND

As one of the largest infrastructure development efforts ever launched, the Narmada dam projects were conceived in the 1950s and began to be implemented from the 1970s in the western part of India, along one of the longest rivers in India. The project consisted of 30 major, 135 medium and almost 3000 small dams stretching across three Indian states in the Narmada valley. From its inception, the project ran into trouble at various levels—most intensely from the people living in the valley, who organized an unprecedented national and international campaign to obtain better terms for resettlement and even stop some elements of the project. Despite this opposition, the construction of the dams has proceeded, albeit slower than planned, resulting in the forced displacement of thousands of tribal people and farmers, as well as the flooding of ecologically sensitive areas. The violence of these development projects has particularly and overwhelmingly affected socially and economically weaker classes, especially those belonging to India's historically marginalized caste groups. Through this case study, what lessons can we draw about the planning of mega projects in general, and the role of planners in 'Third World' settings? What is the relationship between planners and the intended beneficiaries and victims of the projects? Is planning in the 'Third World' different, and what is the relationship between planning and 'development'? To evaluate the answers to these and other questions, three frameworks—each of fundamental importance to the evolving theory and practice of planning—are applied: planning from below (including planning-as-social-mobilization) versus planning from above; domestic versus international framing in planning and development (or "planning in a global age"), and the role and limits of institutional versus non-institutional politics in planning and development.