

## Rehabilitation and Compensation of Migrants after Partition

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### Abstract

*After the 1947 partition of India, a huge population migrated on both sides. This was a very big challenge for the government to rehabilitate the refugees. Many persons lost their employment therefore the government has to reemploy them with compensation. The situation became more alarming due to meager funds available with the government of that time; this situation has been discussed in the present paper for the migrants of Punjab.*

**Keywords:** Compensation, Rehabilitation, Refugees

### Introduction

Rehabilitation and Financial Assistance to Displaced Students and Trainees

Imparting education was a very important part in the rehabilitation program. The government of India helped students to continue their studies by providing funds and facilities. Government expanded the capacity of the existing institutions, introduced double shifts and started new schools and colleges. Financial assistance was granted in the form of loans to students attending colleges and technical institutions, scholarships and exemption from the payment of fees was also sanctioned for the purchase of books, etc. A scheme to give grants and loans to them were sanctioned by the government as long ago as January 1948. Under this scheme relief to students of colleges and technical institutions took the form of loans on the following scales.[1]

**Table-1** Loans for College and Technical Student

Intermediate	Rs. 40 per Month Plus Tuition Fees
B.A., B.Sc.	Rs. 50 per Month Plus Tuition Fees
M.A., M.Sc.	Rs. 65 per Month Plus Tuition Fees
Agricultural	Rs. 70 per Month Plus Tuition Fees
Law College Students	Rs. 80 per Month Plus Tuition Fees
Medical Students	Rs. 100 per Month Plus Tuition Fees

Relief to school students was given in the form of grants for the purchase of books, apparatus, and stationary including exemption for school and examination fees. In the case of 9th and 10th classes the examinations limit for a grant was fixed at Rs. 75. In the case of 5th and 6th middle classes at Rs. 50.[2] This relief was given for the completion of the stage of studies or training which the

student or trainee was pursuing at the time of partition and not for higher studies beyond the present course. The loans were repayable within four years from the date of the payment of the last installment and they have to bear an interest at the rate of 2%. In deserving cases the period of repayment was extended to six years.

### Re-employment to Employees

As we have seen a large number of refugees were formerly in government or private services. In the early days of the partition, there was no co-ordination between different ministries and government agencies in providing employment to the refugees and this resulted in confusion and delay. The government of India and east Punjab government made efforts to adjust displaced employees in suitable jobs. The central government entrusted this work to the employment exchanges under the control of the directorate general of resettlement and employment in the ministry of labour. Regional director of resettlement and employment, east Punjab in coordination with district employment exchange, did pivotal work in this direction.

It is estimated that 1,74,584 displaced employees from west Pakistan got registered in east Punjab, out of this 61,394 were placed in various types of employment.[3] We cannot of course over look that there were a large number of complaints against the whole process of employment and favoritism that was routine in most departments.

The employment exchange placed the displaced persons in various kinds of jobs and employments such as teachers, clerks, nurses, typists, doctors, inspectors, unskilled worker and factory labourers, farm labourers etc.

## Compensation

The rehabilitation process was incomplete unless compensation was granted to displaced persons against their properties left behind in West Pakistan. It was estimated, after much pruning and scrutiny, that Hindus and Sikhs displaced left a property of worth Rs. 600 crore as against evacuee property in India worth Rs. 100 crore only.[4]

Government of India conceded for the first time in July, 1950 regarding the entitlement of compensation to the displaced persons. It also referred to three resources from which compensation could be paid.[5]

1. The Muslim property left in India
2. Difference in the value of evacuee property in India and Pakistan that India would get from Pakistan
3. The contribution of the government of India to the evacuee pool.

The government of India could not decide about the policy regarding compensation without any satisfactory agreement with the government of Pakistan. Simultaneously a series of inter Dominion conferences were held between India and Pakistan. The government of India suggested that the two government should agree upon the basis of valuation of property on the two sides. The debtor country then should pay to the creditor country the difference in value of evacuee property according to the agreed arrangements. The government of Pakistan, however, did not accept the proposal.[6] In early 1950, the claim Act was passed and displaced persons were invited to present claims in respect of immovable property that they had abandoned in West Pakistan.

The final compensation scheme, visualized the payment of compensation to over 4.5 lakh people. Under the scheme, the government of India acquired all evacuee property value at Rs. 100 crore and contributed Rs. 85 crore in the shape of government built property which had been constructed for the displaced persons.[7] A "Pool" was thus created to be utilized to compensate displaced claimants for the immovable property left behind by them in Pakistan. The properties to the value of Rs. 1,000 each which accounted for 90% of the evacuee property and 97% of the government built property were declared allotable. They were sold to displaced claimants and non-claimants at the "reserve price".[8] The loans advanced towards their purchase were adjusted against their claims.

The scheme also laid down priorities in the payment of compensation as follows:[9]

- i) Maintained allowance grantees
- ii) Inmates of homes and infirmaries.
- iii) Case doles grantees.
- iv) Widows with verified claims in their own names.
- v) T.B. patients
- vi) Disabled persons
- vii) Minors who were orphans
- viii) Residents in foreign countries
- ix) Cancer patients
- x) Women who become widow were subsequent to the filling of claims.

xi) Claimants who themselves or their dependents were suffering from mental disability.

xii) Students having verified claims.

xiii) Claimants whose children were studying abroad

xiv) Claimants whose children were studying in medical colleges engineering college, architectural or technological institutions in India or in national defense academy.

Full compensation, obviously, could not be paid because there was vast disparity between the property left by the non-Muslims in the west Pakistan as compared that of the departing Muslim in east Punjab. A system of "graded cut" was introduced by which smaller claimants were ensured larger compensation. For example persons with claim up to Rs. 2000 received as much as 66% of this claims; while persons with claims up to Rs. 5,000 received as much as 55.6% to 50% of this claims; while persons with claims up to Rs. 20,000 got 33% of this claims and further a claimant for over a lakh of rupees get only 11.1% of his claim. Maximum limit to claims was Rs. 2 lakhs. The cash payment, however, was to be made up Rs. 10,000 and for the remaining amount evacuee and government build property or plots were allotted in lieu of verified claims in accordance with a compensation scale. The displaced persons without verified property in accordance with a compensation scale.[10] The displaced persons without verified claims were given the right to purchase evacuee or government built property.

The rehabilitation and urban resettlement of refugees raised a number of other complicated questions regarding moveable evacuee property and assets. With regard to the transfer of savings, banks deposits and accounts, payment of pension, assets of trusts and operation of safe deposit, the government of the two dominions entered into a numerous agreements. In pursuance of these the west Punjab and east Punjab government decided to permit non-Muslims who had lockers in banks and safe deposit in Lahore to have access to them.

The above account shows that the urban rehabilitation was difficult task, keeping in view the constraints of the government and the prevalent situation. The government paid attention in distributing evacuee houses, shops, and business establishments, giving vocational training, abducted women and paying compensation. New houses tenements, plots were created and mud-houses were built in various townships created for rehabilitation purpose. New townships created at places like Nilokheri, Faridabad, Jullundur, etc. Financial assistance in the grants and loans were also provided. Attention was also paid to reach and restore the abducted women and rehabilitate destitute. Lastly, concentration was also centered around the issue of compensation. It was distributed of graded scale giving preference to the more needy ones.

## Rehabilitation of Women

The rehabilitation of unattached woman and children was essentially an urban phenomenon, and the peculiar nature of the groups required a different way of handling their rehabilitation. A majority of them were illiterate and did not possess any hereditary skills with which they could earn their living. They represented the most helpless

victims of the tragedy of the partition who needed urgent and immediate relief.

Women, on both sides of the borders suffered enormously both during and after the partition carnage. Some 100,000 women abducted, mainly in the Punjab.[11] These were Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women who were raped by men of religion different from their own. Many were killed, many were sold into prostitution. Others were sold from hand to hand. A number of abducted women were taken as wives and married by conversion; still others just went missing. Many among them witnessed the killing of their near and dear ones before or after suffering sexual assault.

Following the position of country the Indian government directly assumed responsibility for two groups of women, the first were those who had some how been separated from their families, picked up while fleeing to safely, taken hostage, or kidnapped; these women were called “abducted”, the second group composed those who had been displaced, disputed widowed, these women were collectively described as “unattached”.[12]

The government of both the countries raised the issue concerning abducted women in various meeting held between the two. In the meetings of the two Prime Ministries at Lahore on September 3, 1947 it was decided, “Both the central government and the government of west and east Punjab wish to make it clear that forced conversion and marriages will not be recognized.[13] Further, women and girls who have been abducted must be restored to their families, and every effort must be made by the Government and their officers concerned to trace and recover such women and girls”.

Refugees’ organization of the East Punjab created a separate section, under the charge of a prominent lady social worker. The function of this section was recovery and restoration of Muslim abducted women from the East Punjab reception and restoration of Hindu and Sikh girls recovered from the West Punjab and the general case of women and children living in the camps.[14] Comparative statement for recoveries from 6-12-1947 to 31-10-1952 is given below:

**Table 2** Pakistan

No. of non-Muslim women and Children recovered during period	
A. Punjab (Pakistan)	5,616
B. Other area in Pakistan N.W.F.P	459
Baluchistan	10
Sind	56
C. States	
Bhawalpur	592
J. & K : Persons	1593
Recovered after	21-01-1949

**Indian Union**

No. of Muslim women and children recovered in the period	
A. Punjab (India)	11,129
B. Other area in India Delhi province and other neighboring area	64

C. States	
Patiala and East Punjab State	4934
J. & K. Persons	482
Recovered after	21-01-1949

For the restored abducted women and children arrangement continue to exist on the same basis as they were organized during the year 1948 when a large number of Hindu and Sikh abducted women were restored to us from the West Punjab. The recovery during the year 1949 from the West Punjab was comparatively very small. For the recovered abducted Muslim women, transit camps were set up at Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepore with a base camp at Jullundur.[15] The government had accepted the responsibility for the care and maintenance of those “unattached” Hindu and Sikh women and children who had lost their parents or guardians in Pakistan.

In Sept. 1947, the government of India set up a women section in the ministry of relief and rehabilitation Rameshwari Nehru, who had been looking after the evacuation of women and children from West Punjab during the worst disturbance, took over as honorary director of the women section in November 1947, responsible for the care, maintenance and rehabilitation of uprooted women and children from Pakistan. Rameshwari Nehru recommended that the victims of a struggle be regarded as a victim of war, they should be classed in the category of war widows and war orphans and treated as such.[16]

The women could be classified into two categories:

1. These whose husbands, son and other bread earners were killed during riots,
2. Those who, though unattached had still some relatives alive; but being out of job, they could not take up the responsibility. The responsibility for the 1st category, Mrs. R. Nehru emphasized, should be taken entirely by the government and of the 2nd category, only up to the time till their relatives became self-supporting.

The government opened a number of homes and infirmaries to accommodate these women. Between 1947-50 eight “homes” and “infirmaries” were established at different places.[17]

**Table-3** Women Houses and Infirmaries in Various Places

Name of home/infirmary	Name of organization running the homes	Sanctioned population
Seva sadan Jullundur	Punjab Government	250
Gandhi vanita ashram	-do-	1500
Mahila ashram Hoshiarpur	do-	1500
Mahila ashram Karnal	do-	1500
Mahila ashram Rohtak	do-	1500
Infirmary Rewari	do-	Not available
Infirmary Khanna	do-	do-
Jainendra gurukul Panchkula	Jian community	1000

The expenditure was met from the grant made by the government of India which was calculated on the basis of the number of inmates residing in these homes at the rate of Rs. 25 per adult had per month. Private institutions provided care and shelter to such women and children.

The functions of the state woman sections were to formulate scheme for the rehabilitation of women and children, establish homes for them, run production and training centers, organize the sale of articles produced in work centers, run schools arrange for the adoption of orphaned children, give financial or other aid to women, assist in finding employment and finally arrange marriages for them wherever possible.

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- [4] *The Tribune*, 16 December, 1952.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] S.M. Rai, *Punjab Since Partition* (Durga Publication, Delhi, 1968), p. 190.
- [7] Rao, *Story of Rehabilitation* (Delhi 1967), pp. 112-125.
- [8] By "Reserve Price" means, the price fixed by the govt. for the purchase of the govt. built property.
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