

Book Reviews

LAND ACQUISITION, DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT IN GUJARAT 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo and Sashikant Kumar. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009, pp. 304 including Bibliography, Annexures and Index. Price Rs. 895/-.

The book under review is perhaps the first ever comprehensive analysis of land acquisition for development projects and its impact on the people from 1947 to 2004 for an entire state of Gujarat. Earlier, Fernandes and Raj (1992) had attempted it only for tribal areas of Orissa. This study authored by a prominent sociologist and a planning consultant in urban and regional planning is certainly an outstanding contribution to this much-studied subject for its chronological, geographical and demographical sweep, detailed analysis and data based findings and recommendations. The analyses, field observations and statistics particularly focus on the marginalized sections - tribals, Dalits, backward castes, women and children - who are often left holding the dirty end of the 'development' stick.

The study has been presented through twelve chapters, detailed statistical data, summaries of various policy guidelines, and other documents issued by international institutions, etc., as annexures, a bibliography and index. The Foreword by Ghanshyam Shah also discusses the emergent issue connected with the new rehabilitation policy launched by the Government of India in 2006, particularly the aspects affecting the Scheduled Tribes. The text also presents salient observations through a number of boxes, maps and tables.

The first three chapters - 'Introduction', 'Regional Characteristics and Development Projects', and 'Trends in Land Acquisition and Families Affected' - present the Gujarat scenario, with a background of the national scenario, issues related to development, law on acquisition and displacements, followed by the over-all data in this regard, relating to the state. The regional and district-wise comparisons in respect of various indicators of development like poverty, education, etc. presented here are quite revealing. In fact, over the decades, the type of development and its spread has been far from uniform in all the four regions of the state - north, central, and south Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kachchh in spite of rapid urbanization and industrialization here. This situation called for the type of in-depth study the authors have presented. The objectives of the study and its scope have been set out in this perspective in the introductory chapter, along with its methodology.

A word about the methodology of the study, as it covers almost six decades of the characteristics of Gujarat in the areas of development, displacement and deprivation, through district and

taluka-specific projects, it has collected and made use of an enormous body of data - secondary and then primary - in three phases. Phase I was a study of all the available land acquisition notifications in Gujarat and its computer entry and analysis; Phase II of the study was a perusal of land acquisition documents and secondary information on various projects from a variety of sources; and in Phase III household information was collected through a schedule at sample sites of different projects belonging to various categories in different regions. Primary investigations into the project-wise/location-wise/household wise land acquisition displacement and deprivation process and changes before and after displacement. This picture was achieved through the primary survey and field observations and group discussions and extensive field evaluation of individual projects concerned in selected villages in project areas. The survey was taken up between November 2005 and March 2006. A total of 2184 households falling under a large number of projects grouped into 3-4 major categories - water resources, industries, non-hydel projects, mines and other developmental initiatives like transport, urban development, environment, HRD, tourism, etc. were surveyed.

A notably significant part of the methodology followed for the study is the effective and intensive use of the Right to Information Act, as:

Data on compensation was difficult to acquire until the promulgation of the Right To Information Act in October 2005. We were fortunate enough to be able to utilize the Act to collect informations for the Phase II of our study. Official data was essential for a comparison of land acquisition and compensation paid under various projects. After persistent efforts for information under the RTI, we received data from the selected districts and projects. The data was solicited in a common format, allowing us to process it in a planned analytical framework" (p. 26). Annexure 1 lists no less than 106 offices from where the secondary data, as above, was collected for periods ranging from 1968 to October 2006 as required in different districts. The methodological importance of the extensive use of this important law for collecting reliable secondary data has to be noted and appreciated as it demonstrates how the use of RTI Act can contribute to compliment and refine our research methodology. Thus far the use of this law has been almost confined to journalists and social activists.

The next three chapters present the scenario of land acquisition, setting up of project, rehabilitation situation, etc. in respect of two important sectors, viz. 'Water Resource Projects' and

'Industrial Projects' and also 'Other Projects'. The water resource projects in Gujarat were numerous and the study points out that 'it seems clear that their benefits have been greatly exaggerated and the negative impact on the oustees and project affected people are under estimated' (p. 67). During 1947-2004 these projects acquired more than 20 lakh hectares of land displacing 1.5 million people. Significantly, these included 'productive lands that are submerged or acquired which subsequently benefited the agricultural lands of developed regions' (p. 69). Project wise and region wise data presented here throw up these findings and the case studies document how tribals have experienced 'an immense impact on their livelihood'. However, with the completion of Sardar Sarovar Project the state has achieved the development of irrigation in 78% of its cropped area. In the case of industrial projects, the state has tremendously improved its position in Net Value Addition through manufacture. The oil related projects have, however, caused a declining availability of agricultural land and considerable damage to the environment.

Chapter 7 to 11 cover the situation related to 'Deprival by Development Project', 'Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Monetary Compensation', 'Background of the Displaced and Deprived Respondents', 'The Process of Displacement' and 'Consequences and Impact on People'. The data on deprival significantly points out that through the details of revenue lands acquired were available, information relating to forests lands transferred prior to 1982, other governments land provided to the projects and Common Property Resources (CPR) laws was difficult to obtain. However, through the RTI law some information relating to CPR could be obtained but large areas from CPR lands had been transferred to the forest department in early 1980s. Apart from such CPR lands, the SEZs in the State would also acquire vast areas of which CPR lands are likely to be around 60%. The emerging situation in this light is that the 'project deprivation of the state's tribal and Dalit families shows a 'negative impact on their development' (p. 157). Further, the field investigations of the deprived and displaced tribals in certain project areas revealed their acute deprivation levels and stagnation in the absences of land and suitable compensation, monetary compensation being based on the market value of land rather than the livelihood requirements of the affected people, and the law does not provide for any laws for land as compensation. This conclusion has been documented through data mostly obtained under RTI Act and presented in the next Chapter. The background of the displaced and deprived respondents (Chapter 9) reveals that the tribals are most affected by water resource projects in their livelihood. Specific data relating to changes in occupation has also been adduced to establish this point. Provision of employment as a measure of rehabilitation was extended to just 3% of the affected

household, and there were complaints of non-transparency in the determination of compensation, etc. by the project authorities. A better aspect of the in fact, 'project officials in the surveyed projects sites were found to be negligent, indifferent and un-cooperative' (p. 225) consequences of displacements has been that basic amenities for education, health, drinking water, etc. were found to have changed positively in 'almost all the villages surveyed'.

The last chapter 'Development-induced Displacement. Policy Issues' discusses the policy issues in Gujarat in light of the model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement as developed by Michael C Cernia of the World Bank. Briefly the issues are:

- (i) In Gujarat 2.5 million people or 5% the state's population have been displaced or affected and more will follow. Therefore, the state needs to balance the land utilization for the agricultural as well as industrial uses.
- (ii) There has been a gradual shift in the pattern of land utilization which is leading to powerlessness of the weaker sections. The policy on R&R should take into account long term fallout of this trend.
- (iii) The regional/sub-regional imbalances should be minimized through R&R policy. Similarly, the condition of the social groups most affected and gender related problems have to be taken care of.
- (iv) The inadequacy of compensation needs to be remedied.
- (v) The land acquisition law has to be made more liberal and sensitive to all such issues, and this may also involve looking into certain basic legal concepts which are supportive of this law which need to be modified. This approach which also 'smacks of the *terra nullius* (literally no one's land or unoccupied land) resulting into expropriation of tribal lands' has to be modified to *be* supportive of tribal customary laws.

The chapter deals with a suggested policy framework for the state emphasizing the need for urgency in adopting a changed policy. The interlinked risks in Cernia's model include 'joblessness' and remarks that such a risk is high in both urban and rural displacements for those employed in enterprises, services or agriculture and 'creating new jobs is difficult and requires substantial investments' Obviously, the case of specific groups like tribals, Dalits, and women is likely to be still more difficult in this regard. However, the issues raised and discussed by the authors of this excellent analytical study while mentioning the high deprivation of such social groups including women simply make broad suggestions that the 'policy should consider the R&R specific to the different social groups

affected' (p. 235) or 'displaced to affected people should have the first preference of the benefits accruing due to the project' (p. 240) and incorporation of a people-centric approach in the policy is necessary. Since the study is also empirical its authors could have gone into the potential avenues for creating alternative avenues for employment through, for example, the type of skills that can be created among the affected people by the state or private enterprises. In the present scenario of globalization, privatization and industrialization such efforts seem unescapable for these social groups, and even the tribals can hardly continue to sustain themselves on achieve sustainable rehabilitation development entirely on the traditional means of livelihood and economy. An appreciative mention has been made of 'significant changes in its R&R package' by the irrigation department but its approach or benefits have not been detailed. Some more attention to this aspect would certainly have made this study for more useful for the civil society, NGOs and government functionaries. None the less it is an extremely well presented, in-depth transprehensive study of the Gujarat scenario which is must read for all these interested in development processes and their consequences.

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