

BOOK REVIEWS

LAND ACQUISITION, DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT IN GUJARAT: 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo & Shashikant Kumar, Sage, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 304, Rs. 895/- Hardbound.

Action-oriented knowledge requires relevant data. Organisations such as the Anthropological and Archaeological Survey[s] of India, NSSO and Census of India have been building massive data archives to help advance the frontiers of knowledge and action. It is indeed very shocking as to why we have data archives, data banks and data bases of some and not of other fields or areas having life and death consequences for the most vulnerable sections of our society. This raises a deep suspicion about some latent social and economic biases at play. How can effective policies be made at regional or national level in the absence of authentic and dependable hard data sets?

Lobo & Kumar argue that we are living in an age of rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and ever changing scenario of technological advances. Today, development has become a *mahamantra*. We are gripped by the virus of infinite consumerism, having serious bearing on finite resources of the earth. Growth of the towns, cities, metro and mega cities, industries, mining, infrastructure, tourism, defence, water projects, canal networks, transport and communications have put the land under unprecedented pressure and have rendered it scarce. The state-regulated processes of acquiring land have uprooted its owners and occupants since generations. Exact status of these twin processes of land acquisition, on the one hand, and displacement, on the other, is yet to be adequately estimated and known. The authors state that there are no centrally, archived authentic data sets on this vital aspect, especially in ".....an age of sophisticated and advanced information technologies, statistical and managerial skills and research resources". They have rightly inferred that this data deficit and neglect is nothing but a case of patently callous mindset of policy makers and development planners towards the splaced victims.

The World Bank's estimate shows some 10 million people world over are displaced every year. Data from the studies in eight states show that some 60 million persons are displaced directly or have become project affected people during 1947-2000. These studies report that the official figures on displacement are underestimated. The sociology of the displaced is more distressing. Some 30 per cent displaced are tribal, although they form only 8 per cent of the national population. Displaced Dalits form 22.4 per cent against their being 14 per cent of the country's

total population. Other rural backward classes and castes constitute the bulk of the displaced population.

The core objectives are: (i) to estimate the exact quantum of land acquired by the State through Land Acquisition Act from 1947-2004, and (ii) to trace the processes and analyse their impact on families affected or/and displaced by the development projects. The specific aims are: to enumerate and estimate the displaced families; to create data base on development projects and displacements caused in Gujarat in different sub-regions; to obtain a comparative idea of differential terms of references regarding DP/PAPs of various development projects; to study the impact of displacement and deprivation on affected persons/communities in terms of time and space; to profile effects of displacement; and, to make policy suggestions to remedy the situation of the DP/PAPs.

The study employed a three-phase methodology. First, they collected data on total land acquired in nearly 60 years by sieving through some 80,000 Government of Gujarat published Gazette Notifications for creating a region and time-wise data base. This is a methodological feat and an empirical marvel, as land and compensation data are usually a researcher's nightmare. The authors made extensive use of the Right to Information Act for collecting data on compensation from 25 Collectorates and land acquisition offices. Secondly, they collected data on village-wise land acquisition and compensation; the quantum of government land transferred for various uses in the district, talukas and villages; and forest land transferred for various uses by Forest Circles. Finally, household information was collected through the schedule at sample sites under different projects of different categories in different regions. The survey was done by field observations, group discussions and primary investigation. The primary survey covered 139 sites across the state and interviewed 2184 households. The conclusions drawn from the primary survey became the basis for evaluating individual projects.

The study is presented in 12 chapters, 61 Tables, 7 maps/figures, 18 boxes and 21 Annexures. Ghanshyam Shah's Foreword summarises the argument of the book well. The first chapter discusses the meaning of development, status of displacement in India, rehabilitation issues and the plan of the study. Regional characteristics and development projects in Gujarat are profiled in the second chapter. Land acquisition and displacement trends over time and space are mapped and revealed subsequently. Chapters 4, 5 & 6 narrate various kinds of displacement and deprivation by

different projects. The next two chapters present data on the total land acquired, families displaced and affected and compensation paid. Chapters 9, 10 & 11 profile the background of DP/ PAPs; highlight the painful process of uprooting or shifting and the impact of displacement. The study concludes by summarising the findings and discusses policy issues and suggests actions.

Lobo & Kumar deserve rich appreciation for arduously generating a goldmine of data sets on this subject and then incisively analyzing them. They wish the NGOs, advocacy groups, policy planners, rehabilitation administration, research institutes, media and the legislators use their study for advocacy of a humane policy on rehabilitation of the displaced persons and families. The book is an excellent addition and it will have a long shelf life.

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