

**ONGC's Discovery of Impacts and Continued Activities with the
Displaced
A Case Study**

Sector – Industry

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1.0 Background

Surat has been an important business and commercial center since the Mughal period and later with the arrival of Dutch, British and French. They established industries, initially textiles and later diamond and gem polishing, which continue to thrive. However the prosperity of the city declined with the emergence of Mumbai as a major growth center during the British. After a considerable period of stagnancy the region slowly began to revive. Using natural gas feed stock from the Bombay High, the Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO) was the first to establish a fertilizer plant near Hazira in the early eighties. Soon after ONGC Ltd established a gas-cracking plant and began the distribution of a wide variety of petroleum products. This region has become an industrial area with the coming up of several industries along the River Tapi viz. Reliance, Essar, NTPC and several others¹.

The case study explores how an industry, which acquired lands discovered the implications of its acquisition years later and initiated ameliorative action and how it continues to work with the communities from whom land has been acquired by understanding their genuine problems and issues emerging over the years, post R&R period.

When initially the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation acquired lands for an industrial estate in the region in early eighties the compensation amounts were a mere Rs 6500 per acre and as more and more land was being acquired by companies the compensation amount per acre went up to nearly Rs 300,000 per acre. The ONGC Ltd was among those who by the then standards provided a 'handsome' compensation and also provided job to one individual from each family from whom the land was acquired. This was considered an important step in the process of acquisition, which was not earlier in place. While subsequently there were some complaints about the conditions of the people, the fact that ONGC's response was far better than those others who acquired lands these voices were muted.

While on the face of it, exchange of land for 'handsome' compensation and also provision of occupation would seem to conclude the issue of land acquisition and resettlement and rehabilitation, it cannot be denied that land acquisition from farmers who depend on their lands for livelihood, this marks the beginning of the process and consequences may have different dimensions altogether. For some, industrialization comes as a boon whereas for others it is a departure point from their present form of lives.

In 1994 a study² pointed out that in the context of the region that 'strikingly enough the compensation amount has not been used for any productive purposes' and further that 'they were getting alienated from the production process and nature and feel insecure'. It also pointed out that

¹ The region has become a veritable hub for several industries with the raw materials and fuel availability along with port facilities.

² Socio-economic and Demographic Survey of Project Affected Families of NTPC project Kawas, CSS, University Campus, Surat, 1994

'brothers fight over the compensation money and the limited jobs in the industry'. Added to this was the fact that in the entire region the villagers live under constant anxiety and tension that the government may at any moment appropriate their lands and throw them out.

Subsequently a study³ in 2000 pointed out the impacts on the livelihoods - 'main activities in these villages were agriculture and fishing. Both these activities have been adversely affected as a result of land acquisition. Even in the case of cash compensation, some were left out as they were working as agricultural labourers and land was not in their names.' The study also pointed out the rampant unemployment among youth resulting in frustration and increased consumption of alcohol. Women were the worst affected and even firewood became a big issue - 'earlier they used to collect firewood from the vast area available and also make cow-dung cakes to be used as fuel. But now various industries and their compound walls prohibit'. In addition, with the loss of grazing lands and consequent lowering of the cattle population, they hardly have an opportunity to produce cow-dung cakes.

The industrial region comprising Hazira and other industries has had its impacts over the people after the process of land acquisition, compensation and additional benefits such as providing basic infrastructure and community centers were completed. ONGC recognized that despite its efforts, when it was pointed out that;

- The acquisition of common lands for the project resulted in loss of community control over management of resources and it turned out to be a process controlled by people with financial powers/resources;
- Composition of compensation package has not helped the integrity of the community groups and the families. One job per family member meant more disruptions in the family structure and fallout on the elderly was severe and that
- ONGC should focus on continued intervention with the affected people in the region.

Keeping this view, a situation assessment was facilitated by the ONGC with the help of Anugraha⁴ to look forward to the intervention measures for socio-economic development of the elderly, which was a group that was involved in decision making at the time of acquisition. A survey of 533 households was carried out to assess the situation and identify interventions are needed for the elderly.

3.0 Learnings and Further Action

One of the significant learning from the study was that nearly 89 percent of the households reported that they were no longer being supported by the earning child which was a sad reflection of the

³ Women Participation in Income Generation in Hazira Area, Akash Acharya and CSS, University Campus, Surat, 2000

⁴ A research study on intervention strategies for socio-economic development of elderly in the rural areas of District Surat, Gujarat, 2001

family relationship. The most humiliating experience was the need to work in menial household occupations in the colonies of industrial employees. The trauma of changed status from being an independent peasant to an asset less worker was accentuated by the fact that their own people who were privileged enough to get a job treated them disgracefully.

The situation of a relatively rich son living in the precincts of the industrial township and impoverished family with destituted elderly living in old settlements is hard to believe. The burden of leading a new lifestyle has weighed heavily on many to abandon or disown family members so that they are not dependent. This is the worst that could happen to an otherwise close-knit kinship groups and joint families of the past.

The loss of economic freedom and poor incomes meant low priority to maintaining health with a result that over 70 percent reported of weak eye-sight, nearly 60 percent with joint pains and almost 30 percent complaining of hearing loss. Another common problem was with the changing food habits as most of it was dependent on market, there is a surge in gastric problems and loss of appetite and the belief is that this trend began with the industrialisation of the region. However the most prominent was the unmet psycho-social needs. With advancing age, older persons were found to surrounded by notions of declining self-worth and self-esteem.

The interventions in the context of the region were identified in two phases; one being the immediate plan focusing over a year, so that the results of the study were made operational and the second building a dedicated system of providing support.

Immediate Actions

- 1) A series of Health camps and focused attempt at undertaking cataract operations in the region. Over the 2002-03 several camps were organized and free operations were conducted. The health camps continue to be an activity that the ONGC supports.
- 2) The survey had identified nearly 200 destitute families. Basic rations and medicine and clothing were provided for a period of one year. This enabled several families to recover from stress situations and find mechanisms for dealing with the situation in the long run.
- 3) Identification and support to local institution for continued support.

Continued Action

At the conception of the programme it was felt that a holistic approach was necessary to determine the outcome of the effort and ONGC, Local Government and Elderly & community have to be involved in the process. Specific activities were identified with each role player.

S.No.	Role Players	Specific Activities Identified	Outcomes
1	Corporate Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience sharing with social workers • Developing a system of voluntary efforts to 	Building corporate-

	(ONGC)	<p>address social concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing joint and collaborative programmes with local community groups 	community platform for initiating social activities
2	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration and timely receipt of old-age pensions Ensuring basic food security, particularly for destitute through public distribution system (PDS) Sensitizing about particular health and economic needs of the elderly across departments 	Sensitizing about elderly needs and convergence with existing programmes
3	Elderly and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Support like community orientation, awareness, SHGs, Day Care centres and Advocacy Health & Information Support Economic Intervention – to initiate feasibility on income generating activities 	Formulating different programmes

4.0 Current Programmes⁵

Currently Lok Vikas Sansthan, a local NGO is being supported by the ONGC and closely works with the industry, the State and the community to continue the process. It has particularly focused on income generating activities involving women.

During the course of these activities the organisation discovered several young widows who have also been involved in the process. Currently over 400 families are involved in the programme, which includes dressmaking, pickle and other food items. ONGC enables finding a market for these products some of which are used in its canteens itself.

The advocacy tasks are enabling the elderly to obtain their basic needs.

Periodic health camps are also held to provide specific support needed by the community.

ONGC plans to continue the programme and involve other needy without discriminating as to from whose acquisition the family has been impacted and thus finding a way to forge alliances with other companies in the region to join the process.

Recently Lok Vikas Sansthan has tied up with Reliance Industries to focus attention on HIV and other health issues extending to all the affected people in the region.

This initiative by ONGC portends a process where a corporate could along with a hand-holding institution can consistently focus attention on the affected and bring together all industries which are benefiting from the activities in the region to contribute.

⁵ Discussions with Mr Velchamy, ONGC and Ms Sonal Shroff, Lok Vikas Sansthan