

“We Want to Live Together and Die Together” Narmada River Valley Trip Report

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Introduction/Executive Summary

The reservoir of the Sardar Sarovar dam, which is being built on the Narmada River in India, will submerge 245 villages and displace over 43,000 families. Each year, the rains of the monsoon season add more water to the reservoir, permanently submerging villages and towns. This process will continue until the reservoir is full.

The government is legally mandated to provide “resettlement and rehabilitation” to those displaced by the Sardar Sarovar Project. The legal requirements have been criticized because not all families will receive compensation and the compensation is inadequate to maintain families’ pre-displacement standard of living, even though many of the families’ pre-displacement standard of living is already at or below subsistence level. Even these inadequate legal requirements are not being fully implemented.

This report investigates the adequacy of resettlement and rehabilitation offered to those who will be or have been displaced by the Narmada River Dam. It also explores the immediate impact of the monsoon on the lives of families who were affected during the 2006 monsoon season. When asked about the resettlement and rehabilitation program, interviewees raised concerns specifically with regard to land, cash compensation, and employment.

Within the context of this subsistence agriculture region, land is a critical component of providing economic security for many families, yet land offered as part of the resettlement package is inadequate in quantity, quality, and location. Many families do not receive enough land because it is given only to men who were over the age of 21 at the time of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award, many years before families were displaced and many of the men excluded from the award are now adults with families of their own to support. Many resettled families receive two hectares of land even though they owned more land in their original village. Families found the land uncultivable and useless, robbing these farmers of their only source of livelihood. As Bhima of Parveta observed with regard to the uncultivable land, people are being given land just for the sake of it...not really for cultivation.

Indeed, the difference between the land in the reservoir area and that in the resettlement areas was visually striking. The resettlement village of Parveta was surrounded by grass-choked lands the color of hay. Bhitada, a village that is lingering as long as possible on the banks of the Narmada River before moving to the barren resettlement colonies, is vibrantly green and full of growing crops in those areas that are not yet flooded.

The location of the land is also inadequate in two ways. Some fishermen complained of receiving house plots so far from the place where they fish that it was impractical to keep the land. Even more prevalent was the concern that villages and individual families are separated into different resettlement sites. Interviewees raised this concern with remarkable frequency. For these tight-knit communities that have lived together for as long as they can remember, forcible separation from the rest of the village is distressing and unacceptable.

Individual families are also separated. For the years prior to submergence, parents who receive resettlement land may go to another state, while their adult children who do not receive land stay in the original village to delay landlessness as long as possible. Even in families in which both the parents and the adult children receive land, families are frequently separated into resettlement villages that are far apart.

The government promised employment for resettled adults who do not receive land, such as those adults who were under 21 at the time of the NWDTA. However, the government has broken this promise. Landless adults now must search for day labor at 25 Rupees (approximately 50 cents) per day.

Cash compensation has been controversial. Some argue that it is critical that the government give only land compensation and not cash compensation in exchange for land. Many recipients have spent their compensation on household expenses years before displacement. Corruption has also diminished the amount of compensation families receive when cash disbursements are involved.

Families are dealing with these inadequacies in different ways, depending on the submergence status of their land. Families are returning from resettlement villages to their original land or never leaving their land, and staying on their land as long as possible until it is submerged. After submergence or resettlement, farmers that were interviewed are seeking day labor or selling fruit. Fishermen hope they will be able to continue fishing, but they are concerned that fishing may become restricted in the future.

The monsoon season escalates the urgency of these resettlement and rehabilitation issues for all communities in the region, bringing flooding to communities at all phases of submergence and resettlement. In communities that are currently on the banks of the rising reservoir, homes and fields have been permanently submerged in the 2006 monsoon. After years of anticipation and uncertainty about when submergence would occur, these families have abruptly lost their livelihood and virtually everything they own.

Communities that are far from the reservoir are also flooded. The rising reservoir means that the Narmada rises higher far behind the reservoir. Communities that will be completely submerged in the future already experience flooding of bridges over the river and lands next to the river. Most surprisingly, even resettlement communities that are designed to protect families from the flooding of the reservoir are not immune. Komboiya Kuva, a resettlement community built on flat land between two canals, flooded in the 2006 monsoon season and its residents were forced to sit in water for ten days. Because this is the community's permanent "safe haven", they will continue to be flooded every year in this location.

Beyond the inadequacies of specific resettlement and rehabilitation policies and their implementation, as recounted below, people of the Narmada River Valley lamented the way in which this "economic development project" is turning land-holding farming families into impoverished day laborers and making those who were poor even poorer. Although many of these individuals are subsistence farmers, they were richly endowed with resources to meet basic needs. Villagers reported that fertile and unlimited land, as well as abundant water, generated reliable food stores year-round. The land also supplied traditional medicines, but now, displaced people must pay for health care.

Just as remarkable as the dramatic transformation of these communities economically, is the strength of the movement against the dam, in spite of numerous setbacks. Narmada Bachao Andolan members are defiant and proud. They remain determined to find justice for their communities.

This report is based on interviews conducted in the Narmada River Valley from August 9-18, 2006. The time period coincided with the 2006 monsoon season. The interviews represent the experiences of residents of resettlement sites, villages next to the reservoir that face imminent submergence into the reservoir, and villages that will be submerged in the future.

The report is written in the transcript style. Interviews are introduced in the first person. The following sections are rough transcripts of the words of the interviewees themselves. Bilingual Hindi-English colleagues, who were also visitors to the area, provided translation. In some cases, local translators translated tribal languages into Hindi. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) facilitated the visit.

Resettlement Area: Parveta and Komboiya Kuva Resettlement Villages, State of Gujarat; Meagam Village, State of Gujarat

I visited and took a tour of Parveta Resettlement Village in Gujarat. While I was there, nearly two-dozen village leaders and others gathered to discuss their concerns. For the most part, Bhima spoke on behalf of the group during the interview, with occasional contributions from Naran. During my visit, Rajji and Bikram Deva visited Parveta and I interviewed them together.

I also had the opportunity to interview a resettled man while we were both in Badwani. Ram Singh was resettled from Rajgaht in Madya Pradesh to Meagam Village, Basavati, in Gujarat.

Bhima and Naran Speaking on Behalf of Village Leaders and Others at Parveta Resettlement Village

The residents of Parveta come from Bagdia, which was a large village located eight kilometers from the Sardar Sarovar dam. Bagdia is one of six villages that were displaced by the presence of machinery and infrastructure for the dam in 1965. Machinery, helipads, and other dam-building infrastructure are on the land to this day. The other five villages affected were Kothi, Kevdia, Navagaon-Lembdi, Nembdi, and Ghoda.

In 1965, people in these villages were not informed of the dam-building project. Government officials told them only that they need to acquire other land. Bhima was not yet born in 1965, but he learned this story from his father, Karsan, who is still alive.

In the 1990's, residents of the villages were given notices to vacate their homes and lands. The residents have been told that, if they do not vacate their property, bulldozers will be used to demolish the homes. The government provided no basic facilities, such as electricity or water.

Bhima described the economic status of the villages before they were displaced. In the words of one NBA slogan, "In our village, our rule; everyone has plenty of land." Villagers even cultivated crops in the banks of a small river. Traditionally, in adivasi culture, sons begin to become independent of their families at the age of 6 or 7. At that age, a boy can obtain access to his own land.

According to Bhima, people in Bagdia were as rich as the people in the cities. Every household had 100-120 chickens and 50-70 goats. Whenever a household needed cash, it would sell an animal, so the people of Bagdia never fell short of money. Bhima said “the villages were so rich that even if a small boy wants to build his own life, he can sell crops and goats; he is able to stand on his own feet.”

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Just like other communities in the area surrounding the dam that will lose their homes under the reservoir, these villages lost their homes, lands, and livelihoods. The presence of machinery on the land destroyed crops under cultivation and bulldozers demolished homes to make way for roads.

Under the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award, submerged villages receive compensation. Because these six villages would not be submerged, the government reasoned, the villagers were not eligible for compensation. Indeed, when the villages asked government officials why they were not being compensated for their losses, the government responded that it was because the villages were not under submergence.

The government did pay some compensation. The government paid for the destruction of crops, but not for land. All landholders were given 36,000 Rs regardless of how much land they owned.

Before the dam was constructed, the government said that it would give everything in resettlement and employment, but when the residents of Bagdia arrived at the resettlement villages, the government did not fulfill its promises.

The land at the resettlement sites is uncultivable. Bhima said that people have been given land just for the sake of being given land. He provided several examples of situations that make the land uncultivable.

There is a grass that grows on the land, which is impossible to eradicate. Land plagued with this grass cannot be cultivated because the grass continues to grow on the land when farmers try to sow other crops. Additionally, the grass often grows only a few inches, resulting in sharp stalks just the height to cut into people’s bare feet as they work the land.

Farmers had to pull the grass from the fields. Farmers asked for compensation from the government to remove the grass. The government gave them 5000 Rs, but this was not enough money to hire the machinery and labor to clear even one hectare of land. When farmers remove the grass from their fields, they feed it to cattle, but they consider it useless.

Some of the land is almost constantly flooded or “waterlogged.” The government officials showed the land and offered it to villagers during the summer when the land was not flooded. It was not until farmers had already relocated that they discovered that the land is “waterlogging land.”

Bhima listed two additional hurdles to cultivation. Some of the land is so full of rocks and stones that it cannot be cultivated. Other land plots are ten kilometers from the house plot of the recipient. Sometimes the land is on the other side of the massive reservoir.

Bagdia farmers complain of a financial domino effect from the uncultivable land, because of debts incurred. Farmers took loans from the bank to purchase the supplies they needed to cultivate crops.

When they found the land was not cultivable and they did not harvest a crop, they could not repay their loans.

Farmers complained to the government about these debts. The government said that it is not the government's problem, and that they should complain to the taluk. The taluk said to complain to the project people. But none of the authorities addressed their concerns.

The interest of the loans has doubled. The interest at first was 20%, but now it is 40%. The bank has issued a notice to borrowers to repay their debts, but borrowers ask the bank how that is possible when they have uncultivable land.

The amount of land given to families is also insufficient. The amount of land is not proportional to the size of the family. Only the main landholder receives land, and in some cases the person who receives land is a minor. Bhima reported that some people returned to Bagdia because only the father in the family had been given land.

Families are sliding backwards in economic status. Individuals who go for day labor earn only 25 Rs (approximately 50 cents) per day. Some people belong to the Patel caste, a landholding caste. After resettlement, they are no longer landholders.

According to Bhima, people were self-reliant in Bagdia. It was not necessary to go into the village and visit the market. The land provided all necessities, from salt to medicine. Farmers were able to increase the productivity of their land by making their own natural fertilizers from ingredients collected in the village. Villagers even made their own oils; the oil could be extracted from a local plant after it was soaked in water.

In Bagdia, people had access to a wide variety of medicinal herbs. Some were cultivated and others were collected from the banks of the Narmada River, where they grew plentifully. The bud of one plant could cure high fevers. An herb that could be found in Bagdia allowed snakebite victims to recover.

Bhima told the story of Sankarbai, a 75-year old elder who was present at the gathering. Sankar has never been to the hospital and he has never been sick. He cured himself with Ayurvedic medicine.

The transition from traditional to modern medicine has been dramatic. Since the residents of Bagdia have moved to the resettlement site, they are dependent on hospitals, modern medicine, and the money it takes to purchase these services. Unless there is a doctor to prescribe medicine, villagers have no access to health care.

The herbs that people collected for medicinal use in the village are very rare in the area around the resettlement site. In the resettlement villages, if a snake bites someone, they die. In Bhima's view, pharmacies are killing them.

The disintegration of Bagdia as a community is so troubling that it is the first issue that the residents of Parveta raised, before they discussed any economic issues such as the failure of crops at resettlement sites. Naran reminisced about the market where people would gather and see each other each week. Now, each village is spread out over 35-40 resettlement sites. Even families have been torn apart, with parents and their adult children relocated to different resettlement sites.

Bhima and Naran estimate that hundreds of families currently live in Bagdia. Some families never left, while others returned to Bagdia due to the inadequacy of resettlement land and the separation from their family and other villagers. These villages are still in the same place, even though the government acquired the land.

Monsoon

Sections of Parveta flooded during the monsoon season, even though villagers have been relocated to villages where they are meant to be protected from flooding that would occur adjacent to the reservoir. During my tour of the village, I visited and photographed Ramanbhai's house. His house flooded approximately a week earlier, while he was away. The walls of his house were still wet up to several feet above the ground, with a clear horizontal line between the dry and wet sections of the wall. Unlike the immaculately swept hard mud floors of the other houses in the village that form a smooth and comfortable walking surface, Ramanbhai's floors had been transformed into sticky quagmires of mud.

Raiji Deva and Bikram Raiji, of the Komboiya Kuva Resettlement Village

Raiji Deva, approximately 65 years old, and his son Bikram Raiji, approximately 40 years old, live in Komboiya Kuva Resettlement Village. They are originally from Gadher. Komboiya Kuva is about 5 kilometers from Parveta, which is about 1.5 hours walk.

Raiji Deva was told that he would have to move in 1980. It was then that he learned about the dam project and that his house and land were going to be submerged. At that time, his house and land were surveyed and he was told to evacuate. He was given no advance notice.

In Gadher, they grew ten types of crops. The land was so productive that they had to take the produce to market in trucks.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

From 1980-1990, the government built the resettlement site. The government started resettling people in 1990-1993. Raiji Deva moved to the resettlement site in 1991 or 1992.

Government officials took people of Gadher to see the land they were offering. Almost all of the men of the village went to see the land. The land was on the banks of the Narmada, where there was salt. When they saw the land, the villagers immediately told the government officials that the land was uncultivable and asked to be shown and offered cultivable land. The government officials told them to find land and the government would buy it for them.

The land where the community was finally resettled is so poor that, even though it has been cultivated for 10-15 years, it still only produces 10 kilograms of crops. Like the land the community was originally offered, the land is uncultivable; it is both waterlogged and has grass. The land is filled with water nine or ten months out of the year because of the adjacent canals. During the two to three months a year that it is dry, it is filled with grasses and it is impossible to cultivate.

Sometimes, they spend a lot of money taking out the grass. It costs 5-6000 Rs to hire a tractor and laborers to try to remove the grass. Then the government opens the canals again and the land floods.

The government promised that landholders would be given land and that sons without land would be given employment, but the government did not fulfill these promises. Raiji Deva himself has one son and two daughters. His son was offered neither land nor employment. Raiji Deva received what the government claims is two hectares, but it is actually less.

Bikram Raiji is a day laborer. He goes to different places in the region to work and earns 25 Rs per day.

The government also promised that there would be proper roads and electricity. The government did provide roads. However, people could not walk on the roads because they were filled with pits.

Raiji Deva and Bikram Raiji accuse government officials of a corruption scheme that is reducing the amount of compensation received by resettled villagers. Raiji and Bikram shared their own story. According to the two men, their family was entitled to 45,000 Rs and free building materials, such as stones and roofing, to build a house. Raiji and Bikram were slated to receive the 45,000 Rs in three installments.

The government took about 22,000 Rs of the 45,000 Rs. Of the 22,000 Rs withheld, officials took approximately 10,000 Rs for stones and 7,500 Rs for metal roofing. Beside the fact that they were supposed to receive the materials for free, Raiji and Bikram implied that the prices they were charged for these materials were also inflated, compared to the prices they would normally have paid to obtain the materials. In addition, they had to sign a paper saying they had received 45,000 Rs.

We reviewed a list of amenities that are mandated by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award. Gadher has a primary school, dispensary, and children's park. However, it does not have a Panchayat Gar (meeting place for leaders), seed store, pond, or well. Theoretically, the resettlement site has drinking water. In fact, motors power the water source and there is only electricity at the resettlement site about half the time. There are two hand pumps that the village uses for some of their water supply.

The residents of Gadher have been resettled in 40-50 locations. Raiji explained that the villages have been mixed in the resettlement sites. In other words, each resettlement site's residents include people from various villages.

Monsoon

Ten days before the interview, heavy rains began which flooded the resettlement village. In Gadher, there was never flooding. The land was at an angle, so the water runs off the land. The Komboiya Kuva Resettlement Village was constructed on a flat piece of land between two canals. There is nowhere for the water to run off, so it flows into the village.

Water ran into the houses and the houses were still flooded at the time of the interview, ten days later. There are over 50 houses in the village and around 20 were flooded. Food in the village is also flooded.

Murji Rama, a man in his early to mid-50's, died from a cold. Murji Rama had three sons, aged 18, 30, and 40, who work as day laborers. There is no crop left in the house and the members of his household are struggling for food.

Another ten people or so are visiting the hospital every day. These individuals are suffering from respiratory illnesses. People's skin is also numb from sitting in water for days.

Ram Singh, Resettled from Madhya Pradesh to Gujarat

I interviewed Ram Singh when he visited the Badwani office of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Like the others from resettlement villages, Ram Singh reported that he had received uncultivable land through the resettlement process. However, he also told a troubling story of conflict between resettled and established villages in the resettlement area around 1996.

For Ram Singh, this is also a frustrating story of a downward shift in societal status in class- and caste-conscious India. In Madhya Pradesh, Ram Singh's community recognized him as having a high status. The Gujaratis in this story perceive resettled villagers as having a lower status than themselves, regardless of the individual's status in their original village.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Ram Singh was cultivating grass for cattle. A woman from a high caste, landowning family asked Ram Singh if her cows could graze on his land for a day and he agreed. After the woman grazed her cattle for five consecutive days, Singh complained. This led to an incident in which a group of women beat Singh with sticks and stones. Not yet satisfied, a group of five men and women returned to take Singh to a well and tied him up to drown him. Singh was able to talk his way out of the situation by reminding the group that he has many relatives in the nearby resettlement colony and there would be consequences.

Singh reported the incident to the leader of his resettlement village, who summoned the woman and told her not to repeat this behavior. Singh subsequently reported the incident to the police. It was necessary for Singh to repeatedly petition the Gujarati police before they took action on his behalf. Finally, the police rounded up the group to the local jail and then released them within an hour. Ram Singh was present when they were released and they taunted him. After a sleepless night, Singh called a local government official to say that his life was in danger. Officials came to his house in vehicles and rounded up the group again. This time, the official sent the group to prison in Baroda.

Ram Singh asked the officials to tie up their hands and feet and take them around the village, and then keep them in jail for 21 days. The officials complied with these requests. After their release, the Gujarati group was required to sign a paper almost daily for three months indicating that they were behaving well toward Singh.

Current Submergence Zone: Kakrana & Bhitada, State of Madhya Pradesh

Part of Bhitada, a village on the banks of the Narmada, was submerged during the monsoon season of 2006. The water had receded temporarily when we arrived. I visited the village for two nights. No translators were available to translate from the local language to Hindi, so I did not conduct interviews in Bhitada.

En route to Bhitada, we spent one night at the Kakrana School. At the school, I interviewed teachers and administrators. The lands of one of the teachers, Mousar Singh Kharat, had become permanently submerged during the 2006 monsoon.

Mousar Singh Kharat, of Kukudia Village

Mousar Kharat comes from a family with a father and three brothers. The family owns seven hectares, which Kharat shares with his two brothers.

Mousar Kharat is 23 years old. Eight people live in Kharat's household: Kharat and his new wife, his two brothers, the wife and two children of one of his brothers, and one more relative. The children are 10 and 14 years old.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

The elders of Kukudia have been given rehabilitation. Kharat's father was allotted two hectares in Shalepur Shangdi, Gujarat, to compensate the family for their loss of seven hectares. Because none of his sons had reached legal adulthood at the time of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award, the father was the only member of the household who received land. As a result, four families will depend on only two hectares of land. In Kharat's words, "the government said to share two hectares between three sons and a father, but we said 'how can we?'"

In addition, the land in Gujarat is uncultivable. Most of the time, the land is too dry. However, it is also seasonally flooded.

Government officials told the family in March or April of 2005 that they would have to give up their land in Kukudia in September of 2005. However, the family decided not to vacate the land until it is submerged completely.

The parents of the family live in Gujarat, while the young adult sons and their families remain in Madhya Pradesh. It is exceedingly rare for the sons to be able to visit their parents.

Monsoon

Mousar Singh Kharat's home and lands were submerged on August 8, 2006, six days before I interviewed him. The water in his home is up to mid-thigh level. It is not possible to enter the front door. They use a floating board to get to and from the house. The family will have to move the house.

When the family saw the waters rising near the house and it became clear that the house would flood in the monsoons this year, the family moved their belongings and stores of grain to the house of relatives in the village who live on higher ground. Due to the floods, Kharat's crops have vanished. The loss of the growing crops will start to have an impact on the household's food security in the summer.

Now, Kharat and his brothers will sell fruit from carts for their livelihood. When asked what impact this change from being farmers to selling fruit would have on the food security of the family, Kharat replied that it will be difficult.

Growing our own crops is good for our livelihood. The crops can be stored as food grains, used to feed livestock, and some of it can be sold. If we are selling fruit, we have to buy the fruit and then go into the larger villages to sell the fruit. Sometimes we will make money. Other times, we will take a loss.

Bhitada

No Hindi or English speakers from Bhitada were present during my visit. Therefore, it was not possible to conduct interviews. Therefore, I am reporting my own observations. My understanding of the situation in Bhitada was augmented by interviews conducted by my traveling companions on a visit they made to Bhitada the previous day, when Hindi speakers were present.

Monsoon

People travel to and from Bhitada by power-boat, through the reservoir. The landing point for boats had been completely submerged. Because the land had been underwater for days, it was a muddy quagmire which is difficult to traverse because the mud is so sticky.

Even our short visit illuminates a couple of the health risks posed on a daily basis to villagers due to submergence. First, because the mud is very sticky, it is not possible to walk with shoes. However, the mud is full of tiny stones, thorns, and other organic materials. I personally suffered a painful infection on the bottom of one foot for several weeks following my visit to Bhitada.

Second, animal habitats have also been disturbed by the monsoon flooding of the reservoir and crocodiles and scorpions are moving closer to human settlements. Under normal circumstances, scorpions and crocodiles are rare close to the villages. As we crossed the mud from the landing to the village, a British visitor and a local villager a few feet ahead of me stepped immediately next to a scorpion, but escaped harm. However, a villager nearby had suffered a scorpion bite since the beginning of monsoon flooding. The team visiting Bhitada the previous day photographed a crocodile close to shore.

In Bhitada, I observed both houses and crops that had been submerged. The devastation of crops was dramatic. Large tracts of corn crops had been completely flattened by the floodwaters, or stood dying. I visited two homes that had been completely destroyed, with only the support beams and roofs standing. One of the homes had not yet been cleaned. It was a chaotic mess of families' belongings and wreckage displaced by floodwaters.

During my visit, the extended family whose houses had been destroyed was disassembling the houses to build a new house on high ground. This location would keep them safe from floodwaters longer. However, the location requires a steep climb to return home from going to the fields, fetching water, and accessing village amenities.

Future Submergence Zone: Chikhaldia, State of Madhya Pradesh

During part of my visit, I stayed in Badwani, a small town in the future submergence zone. During my visit, I made two day-trips to Chikhaldia. Chikhaldia is around fifteen minutes by bus from Badwani. In fact, I heard it described as a suburb of Badwani. Unlike other villages I visited where the villagers are non-Hindu indigenous people, Chikhaldia is a Hindu village that operates under the caste system.

During my visit, people were sitting in ongoing satyagraha (nonviolent protest) for a month in locations throughout the submergence zone, including Chikhaldia. At Chikhaldia, the community kept the satyagraha meeting tents occupied 24 hours a day. One evening, a group of Chikhaldia fishermen spoke with me in the satyagraha tent. I also interviewed Sita Ram, of Kadmal Village, and Ranaveer Singh, of Semalda Village, who were visiting to participate in the satyagraha.

Mansaram, Madu, and Guddu, of Chikhalda

Fishermen do not own land and belong to a lower caste than landowners. Chikhalda fishermen Mansaram, Madu, and Guddu shared their stories one evening in the satyagraha tent.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Mansaram is approximately 44 years old. Mansaram has a house in Chikhalda and received 72,000 Rs of compensation four years ago. He has already used all of the money. The land plot he received was six kilometers from Chikhalda. It was too far to come every day to fish in Chikhalda, so he returned the plot. Now, he does not have anywhere to go after submergence.

After submergence, Mansaram will continue to fish. He has not taken job compensation. He said that he cannot cultivate, because it is not his profession, and that he will continue fishing at any cost.

Madu is approximately 50 years old. Madu has a house in Chikhalda and received 100,000 Rs of compensation for the house four years ago. He has already spent the money on regular household expenses.

Madu agreed with Mansaram that he will continue to fish.

Madu's request to the government is "Please do not stop the fishing." Fishing was restricted near the site of the Punar Sar dam. The fishermen of Chikhalda are concerned that the government will also restrict fishing in the Sardar Sarovar reservoir.

When the village moves, he will move with the rest of the village. He expects the village to move to Narmada Nagar, which is five kilometers from Chikhalda.

Guddu is approximately 37 years old. He has fished all his life, since the age of eleven or twelve. He has five children. Four are girls and one is a boy. Women and girls do not fish. However, his son, who is now only seven years old, will fish.

Guddu received 66,000 Rs for his house and did not take any job compensation.

He agrees that he wants to be with the others.

Sita Ram, of Kadmal Village

Sita Ram, approximately 65 years old, is a movement leader who was one of the first to challenge the Sardar Sarovar Project. Over twenty years ago, he was involved in the Nimad Bachao Andolan, a movement that predates the Narmada Bachao Andolan by two years. The group held protests and rallies.

At the time, the community was not thinking about resettlement and rehabilitation. They were only thinking about fighting the construction of the dam. In Ram's own words, "the illiterate people stood up and I stood up with them."

Kadmal Village learned about the dam when it was proposed. The community did not know then exactly which areas will be under submergence and how far the destruction would extend. In fact, they do not know to this day. They have just been told they will be submerged.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

From the time that the government first approached the community and told them that their land would be under submergence, Sita Ram's position has been that people should receive land as compensation for their land rather than cash compensation. However, nobody in Kadmal has received land for land.

Some individuals have received house plots and nobody has received land for cultivation. The land for the house plots is uneven and they have to spend money to level the ground. Nobody from Kadmal has moved yet to the resettlement site.

Some people have accepted cash compensation, but Ram has not accepted compensation himself. Of the people who received cash compensation, only about five percent have purchased land. The rest spent the money drinking, buying vehicles, etc. They did not buy land because the compensation is not enough money to buy land.

Ram shared the story of his own household. He has one son and four daughters. His two elder daughters no longer live in the household.

About 15 years ago, the land revenue officer informed Sita Ram that his land would be under submergence. Eventually, Ram's land was acquired. Officials have told him that he has to leave his house, but not when.

Ranaveer Singh, of Semalda Village

Ranaveer Singh was interviewed in Chikhalda. Singh is from Semalda Village, another community which will be submerged in the future.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Singh has been investigating corruption in the resettlement and rehabilitation process. In one example of such a scheme, a land broker goes to the government office responsible for acquiring the land of project-affected families. The broker claims to be the head of household of a project-affected family on the roster, and receives the family's compensation. The actual project-affected family does not know that this has happened until they go to the government office themselves to receive compensation for their land, and learn that their land has already been acquired.

Conclusion

Several major themes emerged from the interviews. Dam affected people raised concerns about the impact of the dam on their communities, flaws in the implementation of resettlement and rehabilitation, and a fierce determination to continue to protect their communities.

One of the remarkable qualities of the conversations recorded here, outside the strict parameters of the issues of relief and rehabilitation, was the strength of the anti-dam movement. Interviewees are

courageously facing the future with determination to hold their families and communities together, rather than seeing themselves as helpless victims of a development scheme gone wrong.

Sita Ram said “I will not leave. I will submerge, and my wife and children will submerge with me.” Mousar Kharat, the teacher, told me “I have involved myself all my life with this struggle and I am teaching the children to struggle for their rights. For farmers, it has become part of life. If the crops are flooded, so for my livelihood, I will have to sell fruits.”

When I asked Raiji Deva for his permission to use his name and words in publications, he exclaimed forcefully “write everything!” His response was typical. Respondents asked me to spread the information about their plight to the world.

The fishermen of Chikhhalda all called out in enthusiastic agreement with each of their colleagues’ statements about holding the community together. Mansaram said that, after submergence, he will continue to bring his boat back every single day to this spot, where Chikhhalda stands today, and he will fish here. Madu stated:

When submergence comes, wherever the rest of Chikhhalda Village goes, the fishermen will go. It has been the traditional way, for generations, that people have been living together in the community. Hindus and Muslims sit together in the satyagraha. The community participates in festivities together, shares their problems together, fight for the cause together without any distinction between caste, sect, and creed. There are harmonious relations between the villagers. We are fighting for the cause. So many people come to the Andolan. There are fishermen and landholders. We want to be united. We want to live together and die together.