

Gendered Impact Of Land Acquisition On Women Workers In Rural Areas

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The gendered impact of land acquisition on women workers in rural areas is a critical issue that has often been overlooked in policy discussions and development strategies. This study aims to explore the specific challenges and consequences faced by women when agricultural land, their primary source of livelihood, is acquired for industrial, infrastructural, or commercial purposes. Women in rural areas, particularly those from marginalized communities, rely heavily on agriculture for their income, food security, and social status. The loss of land not only disrupts their economic security but also exacerbates existing gender inequalities, as women are often excluded from formal land ownership and decision-making processes. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups conducted in select rural regions. Key findings reveal that land acquisition disproportionately affects women workers by reducing their access to employment opportunities, increasing vulnerability to poverty, and limiting their social and economic autonomy. The displacement caused by land acquisition further affects women's access to essential resources like water, healthcare, and education, making them more susceptible to exploitation and marginalization. This research highlights the need for gender-sensitive land acquisition policies that recognize women's informal contributions to agriculture and ensure their participation in decision-making processes. It calls for equitable compensation frameworks that address not only the economic losses but also the social and cultural impacts on women. By advocating for a more inclusive approach, the study underscores the importance of integrating gender perspectives into land governance to mitigate the adverse effects of land acquisition on rural women workers and promote sustainable development.

KEY WORDS: Land Acquisition, Women Workers, Rural Areas.

INTRODUCTION

Land acquisition has long been a contentious issue in rural areas, especially in developing countries where agriculture forms the backbone of the economy and a significant proportion of the population depends on it for their livelihood. While land acquisition is often justified in the name of economic development, industrialization, and urban expansion, it poses serious socio-economic challenges to those whose livelihoods are directly tied to the land, particularly women workers. The gendered impact of land acquisition has received limited attention, even though women play a crucial role in rural economies. This study seeks to address the gap by examining how land acquisition uniquely affects women workers in rural areas.

In many rural regions, women are deeply involved in agricultural activities such as planting, harvesting, and processing crops. However, their work is often undervalued and underrepresented due to patriarchal social structures that prevent them from owning land or participating in formal economic and decision-making processes. Despite their contributions, women are frequently excluded from land titles and property rights, which leave them particularly vulnerable when land is acquired for industrial or commercial purposes. The loss of land often means a direct loss of employment and income, exacerbating poverty and reducing access to essential resources such as food, water, and healthcare.

The adverse effects of land acquisition on women are compounded by the fact that rural women are also responsible for managing household needs and caring for their families. When land is taken away, they lose not only a source of income but also access to the land and natural resources they depend on for their daily subsistence. Furthermore, displacement resulting from land acquisition often leads to social dislocation, disrupting community networks and exacerbating women's marginalization.

This study aims to explore these gendered impacts through a comprehensive analysis of rural women workers' experiences in areas affected by land acquisition. By examining the socio-economic and cultural implications, the study will provide insights into how women are disproportionately affected and often overlooked in policy frameworks. It will focus on understanding how the intersection of gender, poverty, and land ownership inequalities intensifies the vulnerability of rural women during land acquisition processes.

The research highlights the urgent need for gender-sensitive policies that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women workers in rural areas. Ensuring equitable compensation, safeguarding access to resources, and promoting the inclusion of women in decision-making processes are essential for mitigating the gendered impact of land acquisition and promoting fair and just development.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LAND ACQUISITION AND GENDER

The intersection of land acquisition and gender inequality is shaped by complex social, economic, and legal factors that disproportionately affect women, particularly in rural areas. Several theoretical frameworks can be applied to better understand the gendered dimensions of land acquisition and how it impacts women workers.

Feminist Political Economy: The feminist political economy perspective highlights the gendered division of labor and the unequal access to resources, including land. This framework argues that women's economic contributions, especially in rural agricultural

contexts, are often undervalued and overlooked because of patriarchal structures that privilege male land ownership and decision-making. In most rural settings, women are major contributors to agricultural production, yet they rarely have formal ownership rights over the land they cultivate. When land is acquired for development or industrial purposes, this lack of ownership limits their ability to claim compensation or benefits, exacerbating their socio-economic vulnerability.

Gender and Development (GAD) Theory: The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emphasizes the need to consider both men's and women's roles in development processes, focusing on how development policies, such as land acquisition, reinforce or challenge existing gender inequalities. According to GAD theory, women are often marginalized in discussions around land acquisition because they are seen as secondary to men in both household and community structures. This marginalization results in policies that do not adequately address the specific needs and rights of women, leading to inequitable outcomes, such as exclusion from compensation and lack of access to livelihood restoration programs.

3. Social Reproduction Theory: Social reproduction theory focuses on the unpaid labour that women provide within the household, including caregiving and subsistence activities, which is often dependent on access to land. In rural areas, women rely on land not only for agricultural production but also for gathering water, firewood, and other resources essential for maintaining the household. Land acquisition disrupts these activities, disproportionately increasing women's workload and decreasing their ability to provide for their families. This theory underscores the importance of recognizing women's informal economic contributions when assessing the impact of land acquisition.

Rights-Based Approaches to Land Ownership: Rights-based approaches emphasize the importance of legal recognition of women's rights to land ownership and participation in decision-making. In many rural contexts, women are excluded from formal land ownership due to discriminatory inheritance laws, customary practices, or socio-cultural norms. A rights-based perspective advocates for reforms that ensure women's legal right to own, inherit, and control land, thereby strengthening their position in the context of land acquisition. This framework stresses that equitable access to land is crucial for achieving gender equality and reducing the economic harm that land acquisition can cause.

Intersectionality Theory: Intersectionality, a concept rooted in feminist theory, is crucial for understanding the multiple and overlapping disadvantages faced by women in rural areas during land acquisition. This theory argues that gender interacts with other social categories such as class, caste, and ethnicity, intensifying the vulnerability of marginalized women. Rural women, particularly those from lower castes or indigenous groups, often experience compounded forms of discrimination, making them even more susceptible to the adverse effects of land acquisition.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the socio-economic impact of land acquisition on rural women workers

2. To analyse the gender disparities in compensation and decision-making during land acquisition processes
3. To explore the socio-cultural consequences of land acquisition on rural women's social standing and community roles.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Land acquisition in rural areas, often carried out in the name of economic development and infrastructure expansion, has far-reaching consequences on the livelihoods of the affected populations. While significant attention has been given to the economic and social impacts on communities, the specific ways in which land acquisition disproportionately affects women, particularly rural women workers, have often been overlooked. Women play a vital but undervalued role in agricultural production and household management in rural economies. Yet, due to patriarchal social norms, they are frequently denied land ownership, excluded from decision-making processes, and marginalized in the distribution of compensation and resources during land acquisition.

For rural women, land is not only a source of income but also central to their social standing, food security, and ability to perform essential caregiving and subsistence activities. When land is acquired for industrial or infrastructural projects, women's economic security is undermined, and their access to critical resources is diminished. This leads to increased vulnerability to poverty, displacement, and exploitation. Moreover, existing gender inequalities are often exacerbated, as women are typically excluded from formal compensation schemes and lack legal protection due to their limited land ownership rights.

The problem is further complicated by the intersection of gender with other factors such as caste, class, and ethnicity, which intensifies the marginalization of women from disadvantaged communities. Despite their reliance on land, women are often the last to benefit from the supposed developmental gains of land acquisition and the first to bear its negative consequences.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to comprehensively assess the gendered impact of land acquisition on women workers in rural areas.

Research Design

The study integrates qualitative and quantitative data to capture a holistic understanding of the issue. Quantitative data will provide statistical insights into the socio-economic impact of land acquisition, while qualitative data will offer deeper narratives and contextual understanding of women's experiences.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 1 Land Details of the Project

S. No.	Component	Forest Land (ha)	Private Land (ha)	Total (ha)
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1.	Reservoir area	63.5287	36.702	100.2307
2.	Dam complex and powerhouse	13.8682	2.2765	16.1447
3.	Quarry sites	5.9807	2.3590	8.3397
4.	Dumping sites	0.9038	9.2276	10.1314
5.	Underground Notional area	2.4698	0	2.4698
6.	Road, Bridges and Job facilities (including office)	11.3492	0.4061	11.7553
Total		98.1004	50.9712	149.0716

After approval of Detailed Project Report (hereinafter ‘DPR’) by the GOI for the construction of above project land was identified and proposed for acquisition. Requiring Body being Public Sector Undertaking (hereinafter ‘PSU’) of GoI, proposed land acquisition falls under Section I of the LARR Act, 2013. As per the details obtained from SJVNL, the total area of the proposed project is around 149.0716 ha, of which 98.1004 ha. lies under forest land and 50.9712 ha is private land. The reservoir area occupies total of 100.2307 ha, of which 63.52 ha is the forest land while 36.7 is the private land. Both dam and the powerhouse covers 13.8682 and 2.2765 ha. of forest and private land respectively. The two quarry sites at Moin and Koel villages covers 8.3397 ha.

Table 2 Details of CSR Activities

S. No.	Activities	Amount Spent (INR)
1.	Health & Hygiene	72,00,000/-
2.	Education & Skill Development	42,25,000/-
3.	Infrastructure Development	1,71,55,158/-
4.	Sustainable Development	18,01,339/-
5.	Preservation and promotion of culture. meals and sports	7,00,000/-
6.	Miscellaneous- Installation of High Mast LED lights, Celebration of environment day	7,80,000/-

Table 3 Details of CSR Activities- panchayat wise

S. No.	Activity	Amount Spent (INR)
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT		
1.	Nither	17,99,712/-
2.	Nirath	33,19,127/-
3.	Gadej	53,62,519/-
4.	Duttnagar	24,20,000/-
5.	Shamathala	22,20,800/-
6.	Dehra	20,33,000/-
Total		1,71,55,158/-
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT		
1.	Nithar	10,51,339/-
2.	Dehra	7,50,000/-
	Total	18,01,339/-
MISCELLANEOUS		
1.	Nirath	7,80,000/-

Table 4 Public Meeting for social Impact Assessment Management and Mitigation Measures

Indicator	Nirath	Bhadrash	Naula	Neether	Gadhej	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	28	35	61	30	204	85%
No	7	4	5	8	2	26	10.84%
Don't Know	3	2	2	3	0	10	4.16%

Total	60	34	42	72	32	240	100%
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It is revealed from the survey that maximum of the PAP i.e., 204 out of 240 (85 percent) have attended public meeting which was scheduled for awareness of Social Impact Assessment Management and Mitigation Measures thereof.

Table 5 Public Meeting for Project specific Resettlement and Rehabilitation Scheme

Indicator	Nirath	Bhadrash	Naula	Neether	Gadhej	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	25	31	55	25	183	76.25%
No	10	6	9	10	5	40	16.67%
Don't Know	3	3	2	7	2	17	7.08%
Total	60	34	42	72	32	240	100%

It is revealed from the survey that maximum of the PAP i.e., 182 out of 240 (76.25 percent) have attended public meeting which was scheduled for awareness of Resettlement and Rehabilitation Schemes thereof. Some of them have not attended the meeting i.e., 41 out of 240 (16.67 percent). Very few of them were not aware about the meeting i.e., 17 out of 240 (7.08 percent).

Overview of Current Land Acquisition Policies

In many countries, land acquisition is governed by laws that prioritize economic development and infrastructure over the social impacts on affected communities. Policies often emphasize efficiency in land transfer, frequently sidelining the voices and rights of vulnerable groups, particularly women. Compensation frameworks are typically designed with a focus on formal land ownership, which disadvantages women who may lack legal titles to land. The absence of gender-sensitive compensation policies fails to account for women’s contributions and needs during land acquisition processes.

Gender Disparities in Land Ownership and Rights

Women in rural areas often face significant barriers to land ownership due to cultural norms, legal restrictions, and discriminatory practices. This lack of ownership renders them vulnerable during land acquisition, as they are often excluded from compensation and decision-making processes. Existing inheritance laws and property rights often disadvantage women, perpetuating their marginalization in land governance. Many women rely on male relatives for land access, further diminishing their agency and economic independence.

Gender Considerations in Land Acquisition Processes

Women are frequently excluded from formal discussions about land acquisition. Their absence in decision-making processes limits their ability to advocate for their rights and needs, resulting in policies that do not consider the specific impacts of land loss on women. The economic implications of land acquisition disproportionately affect women, particularly in agrarian contexts where their livelihoods are closely tied to land use. Loss of land can lead to increased workloads, reduced income, and diminished access to resources necessary for subsistence.

Case Studies Highlighting Gendered Impact

Case studies from various regions illustrate instances where gender-sensitive policies were implemented successfully. For example, some local governments have adopted participatory approaches that include women's voices in land acquisition discussions and compensation strategies. Conversely, numerous case studies demonstrate the failure of existing policies to protect women's rights, leading to adverse socio-economic outcomes. Women's displacement without adequate support mechanisms often results in increased poverty and social disintegration.

Recommendations for Gender-Sensitive Policy Reforms

Policies related to land acquisition should explicitly incorporate gender analysis to recognize women's unique experiences and challenges. This can be achieved through stakeholder consultations that prioritize women's voices. Addressing legal barriers to women's land ownership is essential. Reforms should promote equal inheritance rights and ensure that women can legally claim compensation and resources during land acquisition. Providing training and resources to empower women in rural areas to navigate land acquisition processes can enhance their participation and advocacy. Support programs should be established to assist women in reclaiming their rights and accessing compensation.

CONCLUSION

The gendered impact of land acquisition on women workers in rural areas is a critical issue that demands urgent attention and action. This study highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by women as a result of land acquisition processes, emphasizing how deeply intertwined these challenges are with socio-economic, cultural, and legal factors. Women in rural areas, despite being key contributors to agricultural production and community sustenance, are often marginalized in the context of land acquisition, leading to significant economic vulnerability and social displacement.

The findings reveal that existing land acquisition policies frequently overlook the specific needs and rights of women. The absence of gender-sensitive frameworks results in inadequate compensation, limited participation in decision-making and continued legal barriers to land ownership. This exclusion not only exacerbates gender inequalities but also hinders overall community development. As women lose access to vital resources and livelihood opportunities, their roles within households and communities are disrupted, contributing to a cycle of poverty and disempowerment. It is essential to advocate for and implement gender-sensitive policies that recognize women's contributions and ensure their rights in land acquisition processes. This includes promoting legal reforms to secure women's

land rights, enhancing their participation in decision-making, and establishing fair compensation mechanisms that reflect their unique experiences and needs.

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