

# Land Acquisition and Gender Discrimination: Impact of Sri City SEZ on Gender Relations

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**Abstract:** *The present paper understands the impact of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) – particularly land acquisition (LA) and Cash Compensation (CC) on gender relations. The study is carried out in Sri City SEZ, Chittoor District of A.P. The present study aims at understanding the structural arrangements, livelihoods and gender relations in 14 villages before the establishment of SEZ. Secondly, how these arrangements have facilitated land acquisition and the consequent changes that have been taking place in the study area are examined. Focus is laid on how men and women reacted toward LA and how CC is utilized between men and women. Further how LA and CC impacted the existing gender relations are examined. Further, the study also addresses how women are getting alienated in the face of differential affluence and profligacy generated on account of cash compensation. It is argued that development projects can alter the traditional power structure and thereby gender relations. Sri City has provided employment to women in diverse sectors and there is a preference for employing them. Employment which is regular, even though not secured, is considered a fortunate thing for the women in a situation of unemployment/underemployment /seasonal employment in farm sector and informal non-farm wage sector. Their long cherished desire for regular income flow, however meagre and discriminatory it may be, is fulfilled by the Sri City. But this employment and also CC did not bring in structural changes leading to empowerment. Women's equality is improved but their status is not enhanced. Discrimination is more acute and explicit at home-front and implicit and camouflaged at the work-place. Some of the deterrents of inequalities, discriminator and subjugation are discussed.*

**Key Words:** *Empowerment, Discrimination, Special Economic Zone and land acquisition.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Secured employment is frequently thought of as a cause for promoting women's empowerment and mitigates gender discrimination. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are considered to facilitate secured 'formal' employment for women, affecting the phenomenon of 'feminisation of labour', in turn effecting women's empowerment and gender equality. It is assumed that there is a direct causal connection between women's wage earnings and notions of liberation, gender equity and empowerment. The existence of intervening factors and their influence on gender discrimination is largely neglected.

In this study, adversity imposed due to land acquisition (LA), is introduced as an intervening context. The question here is whether employment neutralizes or not gender discrimination in a situation where the women experienced the onslaught of adversity (LA)? In this study only local women who were provided employment alone are taken into account. These women previously lived in villages that have been circumscribed for the SEZ. While village habitations were retained, agricultural lands and other vacant lands were acquired. The pointed to be noted here is that women and men who were previously land owners have become landless and workers or employees in the same place.

In this study employment provision to women has been taken as the impact factor of the SEZ. Without analyzing the debilitating impact of land acquisition, effects of employment provided by the SEZ to women would not yield clarity on the dynamics of gender constructions. In other words changes in gender construction cannot be appreciated if the impact of land acquisition and its consequent changes are not taken into account. When Women are employed in the SEZ, they are placed in a dual context of adversity and confronting new livelihoods. This study explores how women confronted the situation of adversity and how women negotiated the patriarchal order of their social environment in securing employment. Further, it is also explores women's experience as workers in the SEZ on one hand and as salaried employees in the family and larger social environment on the other.

This study is conducted in a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) comprising a group of 15 villages during the period of 2010-15. The name of the SEZ is Sri City – A multi product and multi Crore business enterprises. The zone is located in the eastern most part (falling in between two mandals of Sathavedu and Varadaihpaalem) of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. An extent of 6000 acres of land has been acquired by the SEZ. It is one of the most successful SEZs in India. Sri City hosts 165 companies from 27 countries on 8,000 acres, and has the highest density of MNCs in

the country. Products ranging from toothbrushes and cereals to mobile phones, SUVs, metro-rail coaches, optical ground wire and excavators are produced in Sri City apart from several small and medium products like apparels, soft toys, chocolates etc. It employed around 35,000 skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled persons comprising both local villagers and non-local migrant labour.

Sri City Land Acquisition (LA) has started in the 2005 and continued till 2008. The SEZ offers a challenging situation compared to other SEZs and other development projects elsewhere in the country. Typically LA comprised taking possession of agricultural lands and all other land types including village habitations. In Sri City, retention of village habitations have resulted in a situation of prosperity and poverty/destitution side by side. The villagers who lost their lands were found to lament over their plight of working as labourers in the same fields once owned by them. Further, the villagers have been coming in contact with the migrant labourers and their own fellow villagers occupying higher positions.

## 2. Pre-Land Acquisition Socio-Economic Conditions:

The following table provides information on demographic and socio-economic conditions.

**Table: 1**

Sl. No	Indicator	No/extent
1.	Number of villages	15
2.	Number of households surveyed	1326
3.	Gender ratio (Number of Females per 1000 Males)	969.10
4.	Mean Age of the Population	28.52 years
5.	Percent Earners	52%
6.	Mean earners/House Holds	2.07 persons
7.	Old Age Population (60 years and above)	8 %
8.	<b>HOUSEHOLD SIZE</b>	
	1. Single member household	48 (3.6%)
	Male	6
	Female	42
	2. Small households (2-4 persons)	868 (65.5%)
	3. Medium households (5-7 persons)	385 (29.0%)
	4. Large households (8 persons and above)	25 (1.9%)
	5. Total number of Households (Range of Household size)	1326 (1-11)
9.	<b>CASTE, HOUSEHOLDS, POPULATION AND MEAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE</b>	
		HH          Pop          Mean HH size
	1. Forward Caste	244 (18%); 903 (17%); 3.7
	2. Backward Caste	319 (24%); 1296 (25%); 4.06
	3. Scheduled Caste	636 (48%); 2542 (49%); 4.00
	4. Scheduled Tribes	125 (9%); 478 (9%); 3.82
	5. Others	2(0.15%); 7 (0.13%); 3.50
	6. Total	1326 ; 5256; 3.94
10.	<b>LITERACY</b>	
	1. Literates	
	2. Illiterates	57% (Males- 1547); Females (1169)
	3. Mean number of schooling	43%
	Adults	5.25years
	Children	9.50 years
	4. Primary upto High School	
	5. Graduation and above	89%
		7.33%

11.	<b>LAND HOLDING</b>	<b>Extent (Acres)</b>	<b>Mean holding</b>				
	1. Wet land	1342.99	2.10				
	2. Dry Land	1625.78	2.54				
	3. Horticultural Land	194.41	2.26				
	4. Total Land Holders (N=977)	3163.18	3.24				
	5. Landless Households	349					
12.	<b>LAND HOLDING CATEGORY</b>	<b>No. Households</b>	<b>Mean Land Holding</b>				
	Marginal (0.01-2.5)	662 (67.76)	1.39				
	Small (2.51-5.00)	197 (20.16)	3.74				
	Medium (5.01-7.50)	47 (4.81)	6.51				
	Big (7.51-10.00)	31 (3.17)	9.89				
	Large (Above 10)	40 (4.09)	22.22				
	Total	977 (73.7)	3.24				
13.	<b>CASTE WISE MEAN LAND HOLD SIZE</b> Land Holding Category	<b>Broad Divisions of Caste (Number of Households)</b>					
	-----	<b>FC</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Marginal (0.01-2.5acres)	-----					
	Small (2.51-5.00 acres)	116	184	353	9	---	62(67.76)
	Medium (5.01-7.50acres)	59	63	75	--	---	197(20.16)
	Big (7.51-10.00acres)	15	13	19	--	---	47(4.81)
	Large (Above 10 acres)	19	3	9	--	---	31(3.17)
	Total landed HH (%)	21	5	14	--	--	40(4.09)
		230	268	470	9	--	977
		(23.5)	(27.4)	(48.1)	(0.9)		(73.7)
	Extent of land owned/HH(acres)	1126.25	801.38	1232.30	3.25	--	3163.18
		(35.60)	(25.33)	(38.96)	(0.10)		
	Mean land owned (acres)	4.90	2.99	2.62	0.36	--	3.24
	Landless HH	14	51	166	116	2	349(26.3)
	Total HH	244	319	636	125	2	1326
14.	<b>Land Category</b>	<b>AREA UNDER</b>			<b>Total</b>		
		-----					
		<b>Single Crop</b>		<b>Double Crop</b>			
	Wet (Lands under tank irrigation)	1320.01		22.98	1342.99		
	Irrigated Dry (Dug and bore wells)	69.47		49.87	119.34		
	Rainfed	1506.44		-----	1506.44		
	Total	2895.92		72.85	2968.77		
15.	<b>HOUSEHOLD OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Percent</b>				
	<b>Brand Occupational Categories</b>	-----					
	1. Agriculture	761	57.39				
	2. Agriculture Labour and related wage works	1007	75.94				
	3. Livestock Rearing and Dairying	222	16.74				
		253	19.08				

	4. Wage labour in civil construction works	258	19.46
	5. Industrial/Factory Labour	78	5.88
	6. Salaried Employment	77	5.81
	7. Traditional Caste Based Occupations		
	8. Silvi Cultural Operations	66	4.98
	9. Business, small trade and Commission	50	3.77
16.	<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</b>		
	1. Mean annual income (all HH)	Rs. 36000	
	2. Mean range	Rs. 8149-Rs.10,17,333	
	3. No. HH Below Poverty Line (BPL)	43%	
	4. Source of Lowest Mean Income (Rs.6650)	Agriculture labour and allied works	
	5. Source of Highest Mean Income (Rs.67500, Rs.45600 and Rs.25000)	Salaried Employment, Regular Factory Employment and wet land cultivation	
	Expenditure	Rs. 38,052	
17.	<b>POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY</b>		
	I. Poorest of the poor households Rs.11000 or less per year	177 (13.35%)	
	Poor households Rs.21000 or less	390 (29.41%)	
	Total BPL households	567 (42.76%)	
	Total APL households	759 (57.24%)	
	II. Households with food reserve	1012 (76.32%)	
	Households without food reserve	314 (23.68%)	
	III. Households with capacity to replenish food reserve	901 (67.95%)	
	Households without capacity to replenish food reserves	425 (32.05%)	
	IV. Households experiencing periodic hunger	330 (24.89%)	

**Some of the salient features of the villages are:**

- Scheduled Castes comprise a little less than one half of the total households (N=1326).
- Land distribution is highly skewed (Nearly 48% of land is owned by 17 HHs; nearly 68% of households owned less than 2.5 acres of land)
- Illiteracy: 63%; Female illiteracy: 56%; Average Schooling: 7<sup>th</sup> Standard
- Agricultural labour and related wage works comprised major occupation (76% HH). Agriculture: 57 % HH
- Industrial/factory labour and salaried employment: 25%
- Mean and Annual Income and expenditure: Rs.36000/- and Rs.38000/-
- Poverty and Food Security: Total BPL households: 43%
- Villages were isolated and acted as a place for refugees and displaced persons.
- The area was under the rule of feudal lords.
- Marginal political participation till 1983.
- Falls under reserved constituency to the SCs for assembly and parliament.
- MLA and MP are non-locals till date.
- Declining interest in agriculture
- Leasing, Mortgage and sale of land were rampant.
- Caste politics are every day affair

**3. MARKERS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION:**

- Gender Ratio (number of females per 1000 males): 969
- Single member households: 48  
Male: 13%; Female: 87%
- Land holding: Women=14% (HH)

- Joint holding: 9%
- 4. Earners : Male: 49% ; Female: 51% (N=2740)  
 Mean earners per HH: Male: 1.02; Female: 1.05
- 5. Old age dependence : Male: 67% ; Female: 33%

In the SEZ villages male dominance is culturally upheld as a general norm of behaviour. This behaviour is common in all caste groups, though among the Yanadi, male dominance is rather dormant and Yanadi women exercise their individual choices in respect of mate selection, secondary marriages etc.

Gender discrimination was quite visible in the realm of education and employment in non-farm sector. Before LA, girls were not allowed to pursue to education beyond V standard. Some preferences were very rampant. Women were almost confined to farm sector whereas young men were seen employed in factories, mechanical shops, civil works, hotels in the nearby towns and cities. Women had very negligible control on property like land and livestock. Women did not have independent existence or autonomy. In nutshell women were confined to the domestic front and men enjoyed culturally ascribed autonomy and dominance in both domestic and public spheres. However, it is noticed that women earners slightly outnumber males. Even before SEZ, women played dual role.

#### 4. LAND ACQUISITION AND GENDER:

One interesting feature in LA process was that a majority of women were not willing to give away land. Several other women did not protest but remained passive. They participated in protest movements but their voice remained unheard. Even the news channels gave preference to the opinion of males. Compensation was paid mostly to men as a majority of them were land owners. LA has its negative impact firstly on women and children. Once land was acquired, there was period of acute unemployment. Many poor women transmigrated to nearby areas seeking wage employment. But the demand for the labour was very less and hence many women remained in the village itself. During this period women were the main collectors of firewood huge heaps were amassed with a foresight and collected dung and waste organic matter for compost for sale. Young and people aged 25-35 years have showed much interest in joining the Sri City HRD Academy to get trained in housekeeping, nursery, landscaping, computer, tailoring, embroidery and later security. However most the training were stereotypical.

#### 5. WOMENS EMPLOYMENT IN SEZ:

The following table gives the employment particulars (number employed) of women in the Sri City SEZ and zone units.

**Table 2:- Women Employment in Sri City and SEZ Factories**

Employment in	Total persons employed	Number of women	% of women employed
Employment in Sri City SEZ			
Direct (in Sri City)	701	249	35.52
Indirect (in Sri City)	478	398	83.26
Sub-total	1179	647	54.88
Employment in Zone Units			
Direct	1076	579	53.81
Indirect	829	458	55.25
Sub-total	1905	1037	54.44
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3084</b>	<b>1684</b>	<b>54.60</b>

Women in Sri City were employed on permanent basis in several categories of employment namely as security guards, gardeners in the Sri City nursery, apparels, computer operators in Sri Tech BPO and in HRD Academy as tailors, guest houses as take carers etc. This much of women employment in organized sector was not there before SEZ. In fact it was zero before SEZ. It can be seen from the table that a little more than one half of total persons employed



constitute women workers. Women were also employed in the organized sector in SEZ industrial units. There were around 65 industrial units employing women workers. Some industrial units employed exclusively women

About 55% of the total employees were women. Nearly 68 % of women fell in the age groups of 18-25 and 26-35. Most of them belonged to SC (57%) followed by BCs (29%); 84% of them hailed from the SEZ villages; Salary slabs were Rs.1000/- (for 6% of women), Rs.1001-2000/- (for 11%), Rs.2001-3000/- (for 43%) and Rs.3001/- and above (for 40%). Little discrimination was observed in wage structures between men and women workers in Sri City SEZ. Comparatively, women workers outside the SEZ received much less wage than their male co-workers. Women workers in Sri Tech BPO, HRD Academy, Sri City, and Nursery received the equal emoluments. Further the women security guards received higher wages than male security. Higher salary was paid to women security compared to men security guards (about Rs. 400 extra). They were also supplied cycles to reach security spot. Some women were promoted as security supervisor and joint security officer. All these women were trained in horse riding and mob management and cargo management. The Chief Security Officer told that women were more sincere in doing their job and as an incentive they were paid more. To start with, male security received Rs.2100/- where as female security guards received Rs.2500/- per month. In BPO, both men and women operators received a monthly salary of Rs.2100/- to Rs.3800/- depending upon experience and qualifications.

The above account reveals 1. Feminisation of labour; 2. Entry of women into non conventional manufacturing sector; 3. Most of the employment is at low levels mostly as workers using manual labour or skills (in apparels, soft toy making) and operating small machines (mobile parts, leather work). Though wage discrimination is confined to certain manufacturing units (cars, earth movers, railway compartments) in many other manufacturing sectors wages/salaries were equal.

## 6. CHANGES IN GENDER DISCRIMINATION

**Table: 3**

The following statement presents a few indicators and their status during pre- LA and Post-LA.

Sl.No	Indicator	Pre-LA	Post-LA
1.	Male dominance	Cultural affirmation	Negligible change
2.	Child preference	Male	Male
3.	Preference for Education	Male	Male and Female in that order
4.	Child rearing responsibilities	Female and other women	Female and other women
5.	Cooking	Women	Women
6.	Help in cooking from adult M	Negligible	Negligible
7.	Domestic chores	Women	Women
8.	Fire wood(FW) collection	Women	Women : LPG; FW
9.	Water fetching	Women	Burden reduced due to nearby water connections
10.	Decision making	Men	Men and women and to a lesser extent both
11.	Property ownership	In the domain of male	Marginal change and ownership rights to Jewellery
12.	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic chores	100%	Very little change
13.	Age at marriage	Early (below 16-18)	Post pubertal marriages
14.	Dowry	No demand	Signs of increase in the demand
15.	Age difference between spouses	Substantial (around 8-10 years)	Around 4 to 5 years
16.	Literacy	Negligible	Gradual improvement
17.	Skill development	Mostly conventional skills in agriculture and home management	Multi skill acquisition
18.	Employment	Farm based	Industrial employment
19.	Access to CPRs	High	Nil

20.	Access to basic resources for Human Development	Very negligible	Largely improved
21.	Domestic Violence	Occasional	Occasional
22.	Expressional of DV	Abusing and batter	Abusing
23.	Income	Invisible and merged with household management	Visible; domestic and non domestic allocation
24.	Status of the Aged	Low	Low
25.	Status of single women (aged)	Negligible (ignored)	Marginal help

## 7. CONCLUSIONS:

The above account reveals marginal changes. Male dominance is perceptible. Women suffer double burden. However, young girls are showing great interest in skill acquisition. Most of the women and young girls aspire for secure employment with regular income. At the time of the study many women are not concerned about gender inequality, male dominance, gender bias and empowerment etc. They particularly felt that whatever skill they acquired should not go waste.

Job security in SEZ is not guaranteed. Some factories like Devan Agarbatti which employed exclusively women were closed. Some women workers in factories were down sized and some were removed because inferior product quality. Harassment at work place though not very harsh is seen in matters of quantum of work generated and strict punctuality. Promotions to higher levels are not seen excepting in very few cases.

To conclude women employment has a negligible impact on gender relations. The main reason appears to be lack of feeling of ownership either at work place or home front.

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