

Nasra M. Shah and M. Anwar. *Basic Needs, Women and Development: A Survey of Squatters in Lahore, Pakistan*. Ottawa: International Development Research Center and Honolulu: East-West Center. 1986. 163pp.

This book is essentially the report of a survey carried out to investigate the basic needs of *katchi abadi* populations in Lahore city. Given that about 25–30 per cent of Pakistan's population is estimated to be living in such squatter settlements and with the ever increasing migration to urban areas, this proportion is only likely to rise. Thus, this research is most invaluable for urban planners and demographers in particular, and social scientists in general.

Whereas previous studies have concentrated on examining levels of urban and rural poverty by using macro-level data, this study is based on an originally designed empirical investigation of low income areas. The major aim of the research seems to be the question of whether or not the fruits of development are in fact "trickling down" to the poorest classes in the urban areas. By implication, the answer if in the positive, means that recent development plans in Pakistan have been successful, if negative, the answer draws attention to the failure of development planning to carry out redistributive justice.

Here the two researchers have addressed the research topic through a cross-sectional survey sample of 32 *katchi abadis* which constitute 30 per cent of the squatter population of Lahore. The focus of the survey was to interview at least one married woman for each of the 1541 households sampled and, in addition, 487 husbands of some of the currently married women were also interviewed. Contrary to *a priori* expectations, most of the *katchi abadi* inhabitants were not migrants from outside the city. Thus the mushrooming of *katchi abadis* may not be totally attributed to rural-urban migration. Another interesting finding of the study was that the concept of living in *katchi abadis* is, in fact an old one, as a considerable number of residents is reported living in a *katchi abadi* for over two decades.

Given the importance of educational attainment, particularly amongst females, as an important predictor of development related behaviour, the findings of the survey were quite discouraging. Even though educational levels of younger women were higher than of older women, suggesting improvements over time, only 26 per cent of currently married and 21 per cent of ever married women were found to be literate as compared to a 52 per cent literacy rate for husbands. Only 4 per cent of currently married women had 10 or more years of schooling.

Another important finding was that of the restriction placed by *purdah* on womens' work: only 14 per cent of women who observed *purdah* worked in the labour force as compared to 29 per cent who did not observe *purdah*. Thus, for social purposes women in the sample had quite a restricted position in their households.

In terms of economic measures, the average monthly household income was found to be Rs 1189 which was about half the average monthly income for a Pakistani family in 1982-83. Ownership of durable household items varied considerably across households: interestingly 31 percent owned a TV which importantly meant considerable exposure to mass media.

One important distinction of the *katchi abadis* sampled was those which were to be developed by the Lahore Development Authority and those that were not: here it was found that fewer respondents were exposed to stagnant water in the developed *katchi abadis* but sewerage facilities were not necessarily better there. The LDA has made special efforts also to provide safe drinking water in the developed *abadis*. However, only 9 percent of residents had underground sewerage and only 17 percent had flush toilets in their houses. Nevertheless, electricity was available to most households. Thus, safe water and sanitation seem to be the amenities most deficient in these *katchi abadis*. In terms of nutritional intake most women considered their intake to be sufficient to maintain good health. Information on health status indicates that gynecological problems are the most neglected — and the incidence of infant-child deaths was very high.

The respondents themselves perceived food and clothing as their highest priority need and improved level of living, greater amenities and education of children followed next. The policy-makers, in comparison, perceived that the focus of the development effort should be on health and education, on drainage and paved streets, sewerage and potable water, in that order. They believed that the LDA should provide these facilities to *katchi abadis* whereas no such plans existed with the authorities.

The conclusion of the researchers was that most of the physical infrastructure required to extend basic needs to the *katchi abadi* population was badly lacking and was in fact urgently required. In particular, girls schools, family planning facilities and immunization and gynecological health facilities were urgently needed. Needless to say the enhancement of income of *katchi abadi* residents was seen as a prerequisite to improving the quality of life of the population.

I fully recommend this book to all those interested in the study of problems of the urban poor. It is one of the few books of its kind and addresses the very important issue, the provision of basic needs to the *katchi abadi* population, based on a strong empirical approach. It provides the readers with some important policy recommendations and also paves the way for future work in the largely unresearched area of urban squatter settlements and their problems.