

MOTORWAY

People's Lives
and the Lahore-Islamabad section



Mujahid Hussain

Motorway

People's Lives and the Lahore-Islamabad section

Mujahid Hussain

© Shirkat Gah 1999

The use of any material from this
publication is to be acknowledged.

Translated by Khalid Hussain
Printed by Shanakht Press, Lahore
Ph: 6315162-6301685

Women's Resource Centre
68-Tipu Block, New Garden Town,
Lahore, Pakistan

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	4
The Lahore-Islamabad section – A Brief Introduction	5
People’s Lives and the Lahore-Islamabad section	6
Case Study of an Individual Loss – Farmer Gulla Waince	14
Case Study of an Individual Loss – Mai Wallaan Bibi	16
Case Study of Collective Loss – Mauza Missan Kaalar	17
Problems Facing Travellers	19

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people helped me put this report together. I am indebted to Malik Sarfraz Ahmad, Mai Wallaan, Gulla Waince, Chaudhry Ahmad Latif, Village Headman Mohammad Ali and Chaudhry Umar Daraz. I also thank Ghazanfar Mehdi, Director General Public Relations of the National Highway Authority. He took a keen interest in my report and provided important data and information on the Motorway project.

Shirkat Gah is grateful to NORAD (Norway) for supporting the production and publication of this report.

The Lahore-Islamabad Section

A Brief Introduction

Roads play an important part in human development. All over the world, developing countries are laying down road networks to develop their agriculture and industry. During his first tenure in 1990-1993, Pakistan Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif formulated a plan to construct national motorways with the aim of connecting the northern and southern areas of the country. The proposed national motorway network comprised a total of ten projects:

M-1	Islamabad to Peshawar	155 kilometres
M-2	Lahore to Islamabad	334 kilometres
M-3	Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad	54 kilometres
M-4	Faisalabad to Multan	280 kilometres
M-5	Multan to Dera Ghazi Khan	84 kilometres
M-6	Dera Ghazi Khan to Kakkar	467 kilometres
M-7	Kakkar to Karachi	286 kilometres
M-8	Ratodero to Gawadar	895 kilometres
M-9	Karachi to Hyderabad	136 kilometres
M-10	Karachi to Northern (by-pass)	53 kilometres

Source: National Highways Authority

Construction of the Lahore-Islamabad motorway began as the first stage. Although construction work remained suspended for some time, the project was finally completed in November 1997. The contract price for the Lahore-Islamabad motorway was a huge sum totalling US\$ 986,900,000, although actual costs may have been higher. The Opposition has levelled charges of irregularities and corruption focusing on this massive expenditure. Many other allegations have also been levelled which, perhaps, do not warrant mention in a report of this nature. These issues notwithstanding, the motorway was finally inaugurated by Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif on 26 November 1997 and opened for traffic.

People's Lives and the Lahore-Islamabad Section

The loud slogans of political and economic 'benefits' accruing from the 350 kilometre-long Lahore-Islamabad Motorway section has drowned out the feeble voices of those affected by its construction. Thousands of families living on the periphery of the newly-constructed section of the motorway face extreme difficulties because of the abnormal haste, irresponsibility and haphazard planning that governed the project's construction. Their daily routines have been severely disturbed, leaving them in a state of crisis. Although their protest continues even today and these baffled villagers have approached the courts, people from the most fertile agricultural areas affected have not found room in the media to air their grievances. The media could have effectively advocated their cause and highlighted their protests before it was too late, but it was swayed by the government's claims regarding the motorway and by the lucrative promised advertisements for the inauguration.

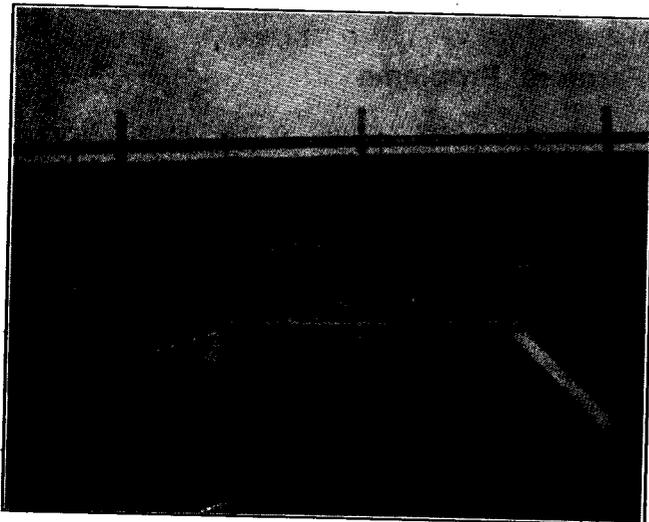
With the passage of time, the crisis facing people whose lives have been affected and their despair is becoming more and more acute, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to contain their protest. A large number of those affected have approached the courts, while crime in their areas is increasing as natural sources of income have been adversely affected. Mohammad Bashir, an affected farmer from Mauza Missan Kaalar, Tehsil Ferozewala, District Sheikhpura succinctly summed up the present situation: "*Inj lagda aye jeewain asean Pakistan witch nahin rahnday.*" ("It seems as if we do not live in Pakistan.")

Those affected by the Lahore-Islamabad section of the motorway are all farmers, both small-holders as well as larger land owners. The problems they face due to the motorway include: division of land; stoppage of water supply lines; blockage of approach ways to their lands; obstruction in the flow of flood waters; blockage of approach ways to cattle grazing grounds; the motorway police's harsh regulations; and the blockage of paths between graveyards and human settlements.

For example the road leading to the graveyard of village Mauza Missan Kaalar, Tehsil Ferozewala, District Sheikhpura has been obstructed by the motorway, making it difficult for the 7,000 villagers to visit or bury their dead in their ancestral burial grounds. No access way has been constructed under the motorway. If the villagers want to bury their dead they have to travel 15 kilometres to reach the graveyard. But this is possible only in the dry season and not when it rains.

When the villagers demonstrated in front of the motorway builders demanding an access passage to the village graveyard, they were disbursed with the help of the local police. They were also warned that if they repeated the protest, the company would sue them for damages since their demonstration obstructed the company's work. The local people took their case to the Members of the National and Provincial Assembly from their constituency but came back disappointed since the Members did not have the courage to take such complaints to the Punjab Chief Minister or the Prime Minister. Malik Tajamul Hussain, a big landlord from the village recounted that last year 12 people died in their village during the monsoon. Since all the nearby roads were under three to four feet of water, the coffins were tied to long bamboo poles and some 30-40 people plodded through the water for four hours to reach the graveyard.

Meanwhile, no adequate drainage system has been constructed for the area. There is only one six feet wide and three feet high bridged water drain under the motorway but even this has been constructed in total disregard of the local terrain. It is some five feet higher from the surface it is supposed to drain. This means that if the area comes under six feet of water, it can only drain one away foot, leaving the area still submerged under five feet of water. Landlord Malik Tajamul Hussain also reported that the area is flood prone as it lies in the flood path of Nala Deg. The construction of the motorway has hampered the passage of water and thus water stagnates in the area from July to October every year. This has almost put an end to farming and the incidence of disease has risen locally.



Water drainage passage which lies five feet above land level.

This is only a glimpse of the problems that the people affected by the construction of the motorway have had to suffer. The most serious problem has been the division of hundreds of thousands of acres of land. From Thokar Niaz Beg, Lahore to Kalar Kahar, highly fertile lands have been unnaturally divided in a 241 kilometre stretch. There is a 25 kilometre stretch of barren mountains from Kalar Kahar to Balkasar where there are only small patches

of agricultural land. But because of the division, average agricultural holdings from Balkasar to the end of the Motorway have become impossible to cultivate, irrigate and transport harvests from.

Tragically the Motorway Authority, the National Highway Authority and other government sources have ignored glaring details, facts and figures, and instead paint a rosy picture of the project's supposed success based on the expectations of the 'official position'. Tariq Mahmood Qureshi, Director Design for the motorway project, rejects the position that farmers are suffering losses. He believes their lives will be transformed for the better: they will be able to take their produce to the market in minutes and will realise how lucky they are when the other sectors of the 'Pakistan Motorway Project' come on line. Since the true impact of the project on people's lives has not been officially acknowledged, it is very difficult to obtain an 'official position' beyond these words. True to official traditions, unsubstantiated claims are made about the future, ignoring facts and figures altogether although they may present a totally different reality.

Agricultural lands along the motorway route have to a large extent lost their productive utility. These are lands owned by small farmers, with average holdings in the area standing between 10 and 20 acres. The width of the motorway has been decided according to the terrain it passes through. At most places it is 60 metres wide but at other places the width increases to 80 and 100 metres. Some 10 interchanges have been constructed to date (20 July 1998) where traffic is operating, whereas only seven interchanges had been constructed when this section of the motorway was formally inaugurated in November 1997.

Land Acquisition and Farmers' Problems

Under law, the state can acquire land for such important projects and acquisition of the land needed for the Lahore-Islamabad section was the first official step. Farmers were issued notices to leave possession of the lands needed for the motorway through the local officials of the Punjab Revenue Department. Surveys were undertaken to ascertain land compensation and rates were fixed according to the local market value for the various areas. This stage was completed relatively smoothly although farmers in some areas complained about the low rates of compensation for their lands. Farmers with less fertile, un-irrigated lands or those from mountainous areas where farming was not profitable were considered fortunate in this context.

But such lands only covered a 120-kilometre stretch between the end point near Islamabad to Kalar Kahar and the Lallah interchange. Beyond this starts a stretch of highly fertile land which goes right up to the motorway section's starting point at Thokar Niaz Beg on the suburbs of Lahore. Covering over 230 kilometres, this

area is vital for local rice and wheat production. Farmers were paid between Rs 107,000 to Rs 120,000 per acre on average in this area.

The process of payment to farmers began a year after the official acquisition and gradually became contentious. There are still countless people who have not received complete payment. Initially, only land over which the metalled road was to be constructed was acquired with compensation being paid to the owners. In the second phase of acquisition, a 66 feet wide stretch of land was acquired on both sides of the road for which compensation has been merely promised but not actually made to date (20 July 1998).

However, there are in fact numerous people who have not been paid even for land acquired in the first phase. For example Mohammad Bashir, a farmer from the Lahore suburbs with tears in his eyes recounted how some six-and-a-half acres of his land was requisitioned for the motorway but he has not been paid a single *paisa*. The significance of this becomes clear when it is noted that his total holding was seven acres, which was the sole source of sustenance for his family. The remain four *kanals* (half acre) is on the other side of the road from his village so he cannot cultivate it. His family has been financially ruined and his life destroyed.

Mohammad Bashir also recounted that he had learnt that his compensation cheque had been made and he would be able to get his money from the National Highway Authority office, but unfortunately, he will have to pay a 10 per cent bribe amounting to Rs. 60,000 in order to actually get his money. According to Mohammad Bashir, National Highway Authority officials encash the cheques against their commission and pay the farmers only after deducting their 10 per cent cut.

A large number of farmers in 53 villages affected by the Lahore-Islamabad section have not yet received compensation payments. According to Ghulam Hussain, a farmer from Mauza Saalam, Tehsil Bhalwal, District Sargodha, while farmers have had to give up their lands forever, they had yet not been paid. The result has been families facing virtual famine who have had to take children out of school and college and put them to work. Female family members who used to help the family farm are now forced to work as domestic help in affluent households. The marriage of grown-up daughters has had to be delayed since families cannot afford to marry them off. Ghulam Hussain further told that there are no mills and factories in their area where those affected could find employment.

The Division of Land Holdings

The major problem facing farmer families has been the division of their lands. The magnitude of the issue can be seen from the fact that in 97 per cent of villages along the 334 kilometre stretch agricultural land has been divided. Cultivation has not been so badly affected in larger holdings where the lands were roughly divided in half by the motorway. But for small holders, losses have been huge. In order to facilitate continued cultivation by allowing passage of agricultural machinery from one patch of land to the other across the motorway, flyovers or underpass bridges should have been constructed in villages where land holdings of 5-10 acres were divided. But this has not been done for 95 per cent of the affected villages. Tractors are not allowed on the motorway and the passages - where they exist - are only six to eight feet high and are too narrow to allow passage of a tractor and trolley and other agricultural machinery. Interchanges and fly overs are 20 to 30 kilometres apart and there are places where access across the motorway is available only after covering a distance of 50 kilometres. Inevitably, farmers have either sold their holdings at throw-away prices or have sold the top soil to brick kilns, allowing them to survive on the proceeds.

Rasheedan Bibi from the village Daavkay in Sheikhpura is a widow with three young children. She owned five acres of land. Of this, two acres were requisitioned for the motorway while the remaining three acres are across the road. There is no proper passage from her village across the motorway. There is only a small underpass which is always under three to four feet of water and is very difficult to cross. According to Rasheedan Bibi "I cannot reach my land nor can I rent it out for cultivation since land rents have plummeted owing to the lack of passage." This proposed rent is not enough to provide her family even with a bare minimum sustenance. When asked how she plans to provide for her three children, she said with extreme dejection, "What can I do? This is not a city that I can work as domestic help washing dishes, nor are there any mills or factories where I can find work. I can only die. I only see one way out and that is to sell the remaining land and migrate to a place where I can find some petty employment to raise my three children. But how much will any body pay for this useless land?" When asked what happened to the compensation money she had received, Rasheedan Bibi said she has spent almost all the money paying back old loans, using the remaining money to survive for the past one-and-a-half years. Only a few thousand rupees remain and they will soon be spent. There are thousands of other Rasheedan Bibis who used to farm and care for animals to survive, making a crucial input to the family income. Now they are out of work.

Countless farmers have sold their cattle for they could not produce fodder, chaff and rice straw for them since the wheat and rice crops could not be properly

cultivated as irrigation had become scarce and the transport of agricultural implements impossible. This has further impoverished households.

It is important to note that no Environmental Impact Assessment was done for the motorway project and the Snowy Mountain Engineering Cooperation Australia relied upon a geological survey dating from 1937.

In many villages in the Sargodha district, farmers' orchards have been divided by the motorway. It is not possible for the owners of divided orchards to irrigate them or collect their fruit harvest at one place for onward transport to the market. Now having to travel many kilometres to tend their orchards, most farmers have started cutting down the orchards that fall on the other side of the motorway from their village.

Pindi Das, Mandaala, Hudyala Virkaan, Khushalpura and Kaathianwala are some of the unfortunate villages where farming has been eliminated as a way of life since there is no drainage of flood water and houses have collapsed due to consequent floods. These villages lie in the flood path of the monsoon Deg and Choti Deg *nullahs*. Before the construction of the motorway, flood waters used to drain into rivers after traversing the open land. Only two drainage passages have been constructed under the motorway to drain the area and their drainage capacity is meagre. They can drain rainfall waters but are ineffective in the face of destructive flood torrents. These villages were completely submerged last year because of the inadequate drainage passages.

This year as the monsoon season began, large numbers of people migrated from the area, taking only their most valuable possessions with them. Allah Rakha, a farmer from Mauza Huyala Virkaan said farmers in his area were facing a double loss. On the one hand, they had been cut off from their fertile lands lying on the other side of the motorway and were unable to cultivate it for lack of resources, and on the other hand their lives have been endangered because there is no means of draining water from the monsoon *nullahs*. The land remaining on this side of the village is their last resort and even that now lies under water all year long, rendering hundreds of acres no longer cultivable.

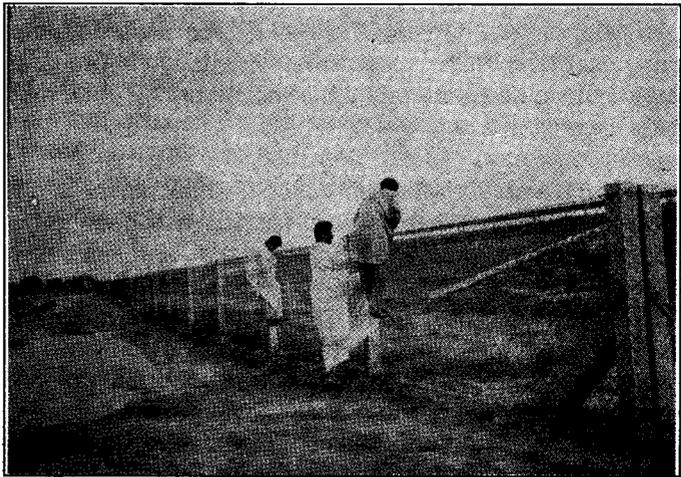
Seen in the context of village life, animal husbandry and farming involves the input of all the members of a family and the loss suffered by one family affects the whole clan. But a greater impact is borne by the women of the family, who are more deeply affected by poverty and the problems facing the family.

Small farmers depend on their female family members to help them cultivate the land. While men can travel long distances to reach their fields and at times simply cross over the motorway fences to reach their lands, social restrictions on mobility mean that women cannot travel such long distances on foot nor can they hop over motorway fences. With women unable to reach family land holdings

across the motorway, families now face extreme poverty. Fatima Bibi of Mauza Sahoo Ki Malyaan said "All of us women have become useless because we can't reach our fields by using the drainage passages or by jumping over the fences, nor can we cover distances of up to 25 kilometres on foot." Fatima Bibi recounted how each house used to have an abundance of food grains, and the villagers were prosperous and free from all worries. "But all this prosperity and grain have become a thing of the past and we have now become helpless. We women used to work with our men in the fields. Our daughters

also worked along side us. Now our daughters can neither study nor work in their own fields."

Similarly, in the suburban mountainous areas of Baalkasar, Kalar Kahar and Islamabad where small-holdings predominate, the men used to migrate to other cities to take up jobs or work as labourers, while the



Men can easily hop over the Motorway fence, but how can women cross?

women would grow seasonal crops and vegetables. Now, women cannot reach these small holdings in these areas. Besides small cultivation, women used to supplement their income by grazing goat and sheep flocks in the mountains. The uneven mountainous terrain makes the going tough and the extra distances required to cross the motorway via flyovers and interchanges has meant that the motorway has forced the women of nearby villages to remain with their animals on one side of the road. Moreover, fewer underground passages have been constructed in the mountainous areas. Bridges have only been constructed for rainwaters and do not allow passage to women and their cattle.

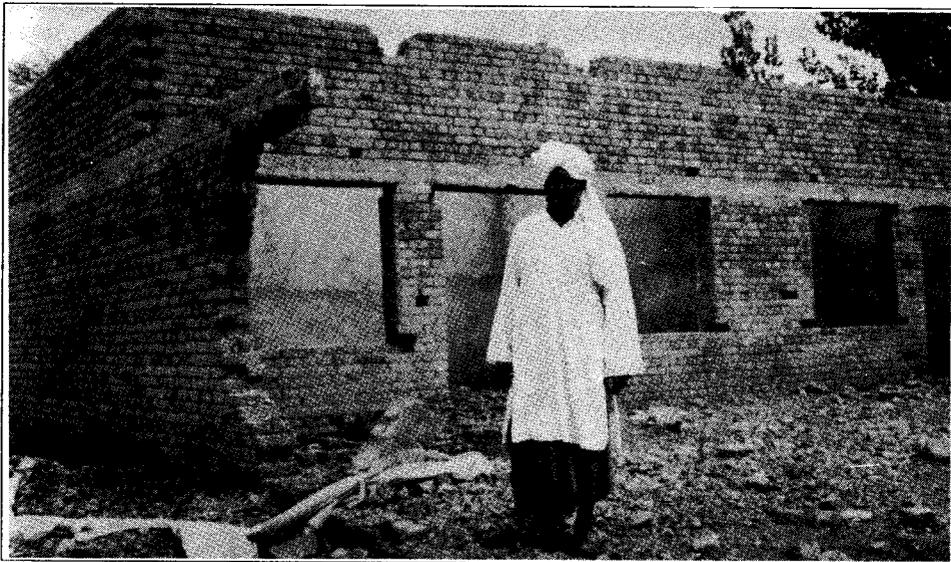
Meanwhile, adding to the women's problems, the lack of employment opportunities in the villages along the motorway has meant that male family members are thinking of migrating out of the area.

While the official plans and maps of the motorway contain plenty of passages, water drains and other facilities, these do not exist on the ground. Yet Motorway Authority and National Highway Authority officials have no answer when asked

how this has happened. Their only comment is that the motorway is a symbol of prosperity. According to Dr. Ghazanfar Mehdi, the Director General of Public Relations at the National Highway Authority, people have only benefitted from the motorway. Replying to a question about underground passages and water drainage he said such facilities have been provided at all places where they were needed.

Case Study of an Individual Loss

Farmer Gulla Waince



Gulla Waince of Sargodha with the second of demolished homes

Gulla Waince, 65, of District Sargodha declares himself the individual most affected by the construction of the Lahore-Islamabad section of the motorway. Here is his story in his own words:

"I am Gulla, son of Sardara, caste Waince Jat, resident of Mauza Salam, Tehsil Bhalwal, District Sargodha.

"I am a small farmer and was making a living and supporting my four children by farming when my life was suddenly caught in a storm. On March 11, 1996 local revenue officials and a heavy contingent of police occupied my *dera* (homestead) at Adda Salam.

"I asked them the reason for the occupation. I was told that the revenue department had already informed me that some 129 *kanals* of my land have been acquired for the Salam Interchange. My plea was that I knew that some *kanals* of my land had been requisitioned for the motorway but I was never told that all my land had been requisitioned. Nonetheless, the occupiers threw all my possessions out of my *dera*. My cattle were also pushed outside the *dera* limits. I

had two shops constructed on the *adda* (bus stop). They were also taken over and I was forced to stay in the open with my family.

"After some days, I went to the local Members of the Provincial and National Assemblies but everybody told me that my land cannot be recovered. I had planted some 4,000 trees on my *dera* spending all my life's savings. Most were uprooted. I was told to file a suit for compensation. With full honesty and keeping in mind the expense I had borne and the roadside location of the land, I asked for Rs. 25,00,000 (Rs. 2.5 million) but I was allowed only Rs. 3,21,000 (Rs. 321 million). I went in appeal but nothing could be done. I had to return disappointed.

"Having received this sum of money, I resolved to build a small *dera* for my family. I had two acres of land some 1.5 kilometres away from the Salam Interchange. I spent all the money to construct somewhere we could live and some barns for the cattle. The money that I received in compensation for my Salam lands was all spent on the construction of this *dera*. I now had only 1.5 acres of land left. Only a little time had lapsed when I received another notice to vacate the *dera* since the land has been acquired for the Phularwan flyover situated kilometre 161 on the motorway. My family was devastated.

"I once again started running from the revenue department to the courts but in vain. The newly constructed *dera* and the adjoining land was requisitioned for the Phularwan flyover. My new home was also razed to the ground with bulldozers and I was not even told how much compensation I would get for the structures and the land and when.

"Out of compassion, my clan gave me some land for cultivation across the motorway. But I do not have a single *paisa* for the inputs needed to bring the land under cultivation. Now my family does not even has a home. The monsoon is about to set in. The water drain under the motorway is too narrow and too small. So the whole area will be submerged and it looks like we will all be drowned. Only a short time ago my family owned land and was prosperous but now we are penniless. My identity as a landed farmer is now no more. My lands have gone and family has also been ruined."

Case Study of an Individual Loss

Mai Wallaan Bibi

Mai Wallaan Bibi, the wife of Dost Mohammad, is from the Mussalli caste and is also a resident of Mauza Salam. Wallaan Bibi is from a landless family. She is without children and her husband, Dost Mohammad, has long been ill. Wallaan keeps a cow from which she says she makes Rs 25 a day by selling milk, the income used to sustain her family. Apart from the cow, her other asset was a one-room home which has been demolished to make way for the Phularwan flyover.

Mai Wallaan has neither received compensation for her home nor has she been provided alternative land to build a house. Mai Wallaan, who is almost 80, said "I have almost lost my eyesight. My husband was already sick. I have no support save the cow and this house that is now a rubble heap. We do not have any other shelter. We have not received any compensation for the house. Even if we get some money in lieu of the demolished structure, we do not have land where we can build a house. It looks like we will be washed away during the monsoon and the whole story will come to an end."



Mai Wallaan of Sargodha sits atop the rubble of her demolished home

Case Study of a Collective Loss

Mauza Missan Kaalar Villages

Missan and Kaalar are two neighbouring villages with a population of 7,000. They are inhabited by the Khokhar clan who are farmers by profession. The motorway has cut off some 25 squares (625 acres) of land from these villages. No passage has been constructed allowing agricultural implements and cattle to be taken to these lands. A passage more akin to a hole has been constructed some three kilometres away from the village but neither agricultural machinery can pass through it nor, in the rainy season, any human. The government tubewell irrigating Missan-Kaalar lands was in the way of the motorway's shoulder and was demolished along with its machinery. Landlord Tajjamul Hussain who had a significant holding in the area said that their lands have not been provided with an access passage nor have alternate arrangements been made for irrigation water. "Collectively we have lost some 4,000 maunds (1 maund = @37 kg) of rice and a similar quantity of wheat under cultivation. Since the farmers cannot find water for irrigation they have started selling the top soil from their lands. This may help them run their kitchen for a while but it will kill this most fertile land of Punjab."



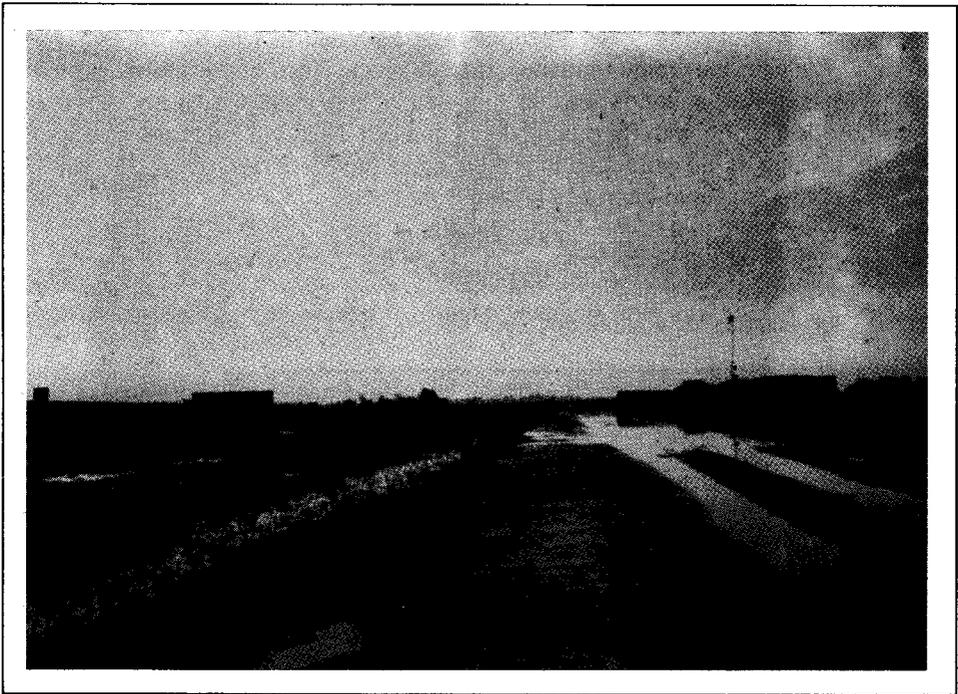
The government tubewell at Missan Kaalar that was demolished since it was in the way of the motorway.

Missan and Kaalar are on one side of the motorway while the village graveyard has been left on the other side. With such large populations, these villages now face severe problems in burying their dead. The farmers have now taken a case to court pleading that their lands be exempted revenue levies and taxation as their land is now not fit for cultivation. Meanwhile, the farmers from these villages have not

yet been paid compensation for lands that were requisitioned for the motorway.

Bashir Ahmad, a farmer from Missan village, said that his entire 6.5 acre holding was requisitioned for the motorway but he has not received any compensation money as yet.

The other major loss that these villages have suffered is that the Motorway Authority has not provided alternate bridges to drain flood water from the area, making the villages more vulnerable to flooding. Last year flood waters entered people's homes and they suffered immense losses.



Rain water has started accumulating from the very onset of monsoon for want of a proper water drainage system.

Problems facing Motorway Travellers

In addition to the problems facing those who live along the Lahore-Islamabad section of Motorway, those travelling from Lahore to Islamabad on the motorway also face numerous problems. There are next to no facilities on the hastily completed motorway for travellers, despite the heavy toll tax. The lack of facilities includes the lack of petrol stations, roadside rest places and vehicle repair facilities. The nearest such facilities are some 197 kilometres from the starting point. A common complaint among motorway travellers is the behaviour of the motorway police, who reportedly levy stiff fines for minor violations. Travellers comment that this will only result in people avoiding using the motorway.

Another complaint is that the length of the motorway has been increased in contrast to original plans. According to earlier designs, the length of the motorway was to be less than the existing Lahore-Rawalpindi G.T. Road but was revised to extend over 360 kilometres. On the old G.T. Road, there are all types of facilities available to travellers and the toll tax is also less. With road conditions now improved on the old road, a large number of people avoid travelling on the motorway.

Another major objection to the motorway is raised by the owners of heavy goods transport vehicles, who say the gradient of the motorway has become too steep by routing it through Kalar Kahar. Average vehicles cannot pull heavy loads on this ascent so they are unable to use the motorway with carrying heavy loads. Motorway Authority and National Highway Authority officials reject these complaints out of hand. Their reply is always that the facilities on the motorway will "gradually increase with the passage of time."



شورکت گاہ

Women's Resource Centre
Lahore

E-mail: sgah@lhr.comsats.net.pk

sgah@sgah.brain.net.pk

Karachi

sgah@sgah.khi.sdnpk.undp.org