

Research Methodology in Forced Migration Studies: The Reangs in Mizoram

Shyamalendu Majumdar

The methodology followed in the present study had to be modified and re-modified till the final model could be arrived at. The first obstacle that the researcher had to face about the number of respondents he had to cover in his survey. The universe of this research was extremely scattered in nature and the places involved were largely inaccessible owing to physical/geographical reasons. In fact the respondents were residing in different relief camps situated over a large area around Northern Tripura bordering Mizoram. Some of them were situated in more or less inhospitable terrains. So it took about a fortnight time to cover the camps situated in and around Kanchanpur subdivision of North Tripura. The number of Reang respondents widely varied in these camps. As a consequence, the Researcher had to compromise with the system of perfect probability sampling. However the Researcher had formulated an interview schedule containing around 20 (twenty) questions meant for the displaced Reang respondents residing in the relief camps in Naisingpara, Ashapara, Anandabazar, Kaskau, Hezacherra and Hamsapara. Some around the Jampui Hill could not be reached. The Researcher had to depend largely on “case study method” along with structured interviews. Many of the female respondents were unwilling to give straight forward answers to the structured questions. However when they were befriended by the Researcher they readily narrated stories of their ordeal. They were extremely illuminating and served the purpose of the research. The unstructured interviews were more rewarding as the respondents were more spontaneous in their responses.

The second problem encountered by the Researcher while carrying on the field study related to the language spoken by the respondents. Only a limited number of respondents could talk either in English, Hindi or broken Bengali. So the Researcher had to rely on the interpreter who could speak Kobra. In his presence some of the respondents were not willing to talk freely. Hence the Researcher had to take recourse to purposive sampling as he had to rely on his judgment to select respondents who were comfortable with languages other than Kobra and the chosen ones were representative as well as typical of the population. In this study “Quota Sampling” was also employed in order to ensure equal gender representation. It was assumed that the Bru women are more exposed to ethnic discrimination by the Mizo community. They are the most hapless victims in pre-displacement and post displacement situations.

The Researcher took particular care about engaging into long conversations with the Bru leaders on chat sessions in an informal atmosphere. They revealed some of the most critical political rudiments involving inter-ethnic relationships in Mizoram. Another method became extremely useful for collecting data in the relief camps. The Researcher became a participant observer and spent time in each of those camps, from early morning to evening. He had witnessed the hardship the Bru camp dwellers were undergoing and the ground level assessment about Tripura Government’s assistance to the displaced Brus could be effectively made.

The secondary sources like the national dailies and the local newspapers in Tripura also provided rich information about the problem. The correspondence between the Government officials (both Tripura and Central) and the Bru leaders along with the publications by the Mizo organizations

like MZP and YMA were quite informative. Above all the Researcher relied on the available books and articles on the Bru problem.

Research in Mizoram depended on structured as well as unstructured interviews with the repatriated Bru families residing in facilitating centres. The researcher also had long unstructured interviews with the Mizoram's Government officials in Aizawl and Mamit as well as with the YMA and MZP office bearers. However Mizo newspapers were not much helpful as most of them were in Mizo language barring a couple of them.