

Report of the MP meeting on the Proposed Right to Food Act

Several groups of the Right to Food Campaign Madhya Pradesh Support Group and Jan Sangharsh Morcha MP met in Bhopal on the 20th of August, 2009. The meeting was called to share the national processes on the proposed Right to Food Act and also examine the state specific issues in this context.

The meeting was attended by more than 60 people of 40 groups including about 10 people's organization. The day long meeting can be summarized as follows:

Most of the groups strongly articulated their position that there should be a fresh conceptualization on the question of hunger which takes into cognizance the structural causes of hunger including examining the political economy question. Any law addressing the right to food must build itself on this premise otherwise it would be another illusory and dishonest exercise which does not address the basic question.

Several of the participants were skeptical and uneasy about participating in the present exercise, some even down right rejected the idea of a law, while a few felt that they would study the papers and then comment.

The group took a decision to meet on a later date and work on a vision document which would put forward their position on how to address the hunger question. This document would be put in the public domain. This meeting would also discuss the strategies needed for public action.

Kavita Srivastava, Madhuri, Sachin Jain

Summary Report of the Rajasthan State Meeting held on 17-18 August, 2009 on the proposed right to food act and drought.

More than 130 people of 59 groups from 16 districts of the State met in Jaipur on the 17-18 August, 2009. The meeting was organized in the IDS, Jaipur by both the Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan Rajasthan and the IDSJ, It was co-chaired by Prof Surjit Singh, Director of IDS and Ashok Khandelwal (Advisor Rajasthan, SC Commissioners).

The objective of the meeting was to share and discuss the national processes and the essential demands of the Proposed Right to Food Act. Since this meeting was happening in the backdrop of drought, the first session was also dedicated to understand the situation of drought of the areas from where the participants came. Sessions were also organized on the situation of PDS in Rajasthan, our demand for a universal PDS, Implementation of ICDS in the State and a proposal on changing the pension rules and norms in the State. There was also some discussion on the report of the expert level committee on BPL set up by the MORD. The Minister of Rural Development came for the valedictory who was presented with our memorandum on implementation of the Famine code and doubling up of food and work entitlements during the period of drought and setting up a fortnightly, monthly platform of groups on drought..

All these sessions were interactive sessions initiated by speakers who were Harsh Mander (Special Commissioner in the SC in the right to food case, Biraj Patnaik(Advisor to the Commisioners), Sarita Singh (Secretary Women's empowerment and Child Development), Rajendra Bhanawat (Secretary Rural Development and BPL) , Ashok Khandelwal (Advisor Rajasthan to the Supreme Court Commissioners), Kavita Srivastava (PUCL) , DR Mehta (Chairperson Prakrit Bharti) and Arvind Ojha (Urmul Trust), Bhanwar Singh(Astha), Arunanshu Chowdhary (PO Care, India),

The group resolved to organise in order to work at the national and State level to bring a right to food Act on the basis of the Essential demands, In particular in Rajasthan it was important to fight for a Universal PDS (safeguarding access to vulnerable groups and learning from other State experiences), owning up of Anganwadis by groups in their areas and to struggle for just norms and rules for pensions for single, old and handicapped people. It was decided that in Districts or where possible at the Divisional level meetings would be organized at the earliest on the Proposed Act and on the issues stated above. It was also felt that public action would follow these district/divisional level meetings. There was also a decision to participate in the National consultation on the Right to food on the 17th of September, 2009

Kavita Srivastava and Ashok Khandelwal

