

15 February 2003

To: all organisations committed to the right to work

Dear friends,

We are writing to invite you to take part in a joint effort to put the RIGHT TO WORK on the country's political agenda.

We sense a growing interest in this issue from many concerned individuals and organisations. A strong expression of this interest emerged at the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad in early January. It came up again at a public hearing on hunger held in Delhi on 10 January (convened by the Right to Food Campaign), and also at a follow-up meeting on 11 January involving members of about 50 organisations based in 12 states. The meeting concluded with a proposal for a "week of action on the right to work" at the end of April, culminating in nation-wide demonstrations on 1 May.

Following on this, further consultations have been held with a broad range of organisations committed to the right to work. The response has been overwhelming and there is wide support for the proposal of a week of action at the end of April. We envisage this as a joint initiative of these and other organisations with a strong commitment to the right to work. These organisations would retain their autonomy, and associate with each other as and when appropriate, but they would all join forces in this attempt to create a strong momentum for the right to work.

The proposed demands of this week of action, initially formulated at the 11 January meeting, are: (1) adoption of an Employment Guarantee Act, and (2) immediate guaranteed employment at the legal minimum wage in drought and scarcity affected areas. Beyond these core demands, the participating organisations would be free to take up more specific issues depending on local circumstances.

We are writing to invite you to join this initiative. If you plan to join, please send a line to right2food@yahoo.co.in to enable us to update the list of participating organisations and their activities (if possible, please mention a "contact person" for this purpose within your organisation). Regular information about this event will be posted from time to time on the website of the right to food campaign (www.righttofood.com), and also circulated through other means and channels. Please consider helping to disseminate this information, after translation in local language if necessary.

So far, there is no specific plan of activities for this "week of action". There is scope for a wide range of activities, and the details are left, for the time being at least, to local initiative and imagination. Please consider joining this initiative and starting preparations without delay.

In solidarity,

Anuradha Talwar (Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti), Aruna Roy (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan), Bharat Dogra (National Campaign for the People's Right to Information), Colin Gonsalvez (Human Rights Law Network), Jean Drèze, Kavita Srivastava (Akal Sangharsh Samiti), K. Loganathan (Tamilnadu Agricultural Labourers Movement), Medha Patkar and others (National Alliance of People's Movements), M.P. Parameswaran and others (BGVS), Sandeep Pandey, Subhash Lomte (National Campaign Committee for Rural Workers), Vandana Prasad (Jan Swasthya Abhiyan); also on behalf of all participants of the 11 Jan meeting of the right to food campaign.

Note: The organisations in brackets are planning to participate in the proposed week of action (though confirmations are awaited from BGVS and NAPM). The list of participating organisations is growing day by day and an updated list will be circulated shortly.