ASSERTION OF COLLECTIVE WILL AGAINST BIG DAMS: AN APPEAL TO THE NATION

Round eighty of us met in Anandwan, at Warora in Maharashtra, in the first week of July 1988 to express our grave concern about the devastation caused by big dams. We came from different parts of the country, all united by a common resolve - to ensure that people were no longer denied their basic rights over natural resources. We affirmed that the nation's rivers are the cradle of our civilisation and that they cannot be strangled to meet the needs of the exploiting class within society. The issue raised by the construction of big dams challenge the very concept of the present pattern of economic growth, unquestioningly adopted by our planners. Nothing less than the survival of life itself is at stake for very many of our people, and time is running out rapidly. We appeal to the nation to halt all big dams, here and now.

We are opposed to big dams. We consider them symbols of destruction of the name of development. They delude people by promising benefits which do not accrue to them. The reliance on big dams is symptomatic of the unthinking acceptance of the dominant models of economic growth.

There are over 1,500 big dams in the country, none of which have lived up to their expectations. By relying on big dams, the planners have destroyed the way of life of Adivasi communities and hill peoples, and alienated them from the rest of India. This has polarised society and endangered the nation's integrity.

g dams have led to the wholesale destruction of natural resources, particularly forests, along with their diverse flora and fauna. Often contravention of the Forest Conservation Act, official agencies art felling trees before a project receives clearance.

g dams have destroyed the ecology of riverine systems, depriving thousands of farmers and fishermen in downstream areas of their livelihood. They have led to extensive waterlogging and salinisation, turning millions of hectares infertile. In several cases, they have ceased the risk of earthquakes.

G dams, especially those located in strategic zones, pose risks to national security. Justified in the name of national interest, they are diametrically opposed to it.

Spite widespread criticism of big dams, projects have been cleared without completing studies by the official agencies themselves (as in Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar) or without heeding the findings of committees appointed by the Government (as in Tehri). The Government has also ridden roughshod over all local opposition, especially among Adivasis (as in Suvarnarekha, Bihar).
We are also against big dams because they corrupt the people and the officials and mortgage the nation. The cash compensation paid to oustees can never be a substitute for their hereditary means of livelihood. Till today, oustees have not been accorded justice (as in Bhakra Nangal, Rihand and Koyna).

We call for a moratorium on big dams. All projects on which construction has not begun should be scrapped. All work should be suspended in projects where it has already started, and a fresh holistic appraisal should be made by an independent body with representatives of people's organisations. Cost-benefit analysis, including comprehensive social and ecological impact, should be conducted on projects already completed. Where people have been displaced, they must be comprehensively rehabilitated. Under no circumstance can people be denied the right to life and livelihood.

Can we remain silent spectators in the face of this destruction? Lakhs of people are being uprooted each day. Air, water, trees and all natural resources and our lives are being destroyed. Should we not plunge into the struggle? No, we will not let time pass us by. We must decide today that we are going to support the tribal, hill people and other vulnerable sections by reaching their hearts, by opposing this threat of big dams, which is making them victims of a huge conspiracy. We will also carry this message to misguided technocrats, lawyers in quest of justice, career-oriented journalists, and other consumerist sections of society - we will attempt to awaken all these sections.

Towards this task, let us spread out spanning out from village to village, city to city, demonstration to demonstration, celebration to celebration in any forum available to us. Let us involve landlords and thousands of the poor and the rich, cultivators and entrepreneurs, the crafts people and workers, in a massive cadre committed to the cause.

But even this may not be enough to halt and reverse the juggernaut of "development": this may not stop the pillage of the wealth of generations by a handful of elites and therefore, let us go to each and every dam site. We will join such struggles as those at Koel Karo, Tehri, and Pooyankutty through exhibitions, demonstrations, dharnas and such actions. Let us gather at each dam site, and with our gradually increasing strength, let us halt them.

Very soon, on one such dam site, we will demonstrate the collective strength of our Campaign. We will lay the foundations of a nation-wide movement and move confidently towards victory. Come, let us commit not only our voices but our lives in this struggle.

[Excerpts from the declaration made at the convention held during July 1-3, 1988, at Anandwan, Maharashtra]
ORKSHOPS ON DEVELOPMENT, DISPLACEMENT & REHABILITATION

In the last two decades, there has been a tremendous increase in investments in large dams, mining operations, industrialisation and urbanisation in areas mainly inhabited by tribal communities. The location of such activities has resulted in the displacement of tribals and erosion of their rights over forests and other life-supporting natural resources.

During April 8-9, 1988, a workshop on the theme, 'Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation' was jointly organised by Centre for Science and Environment, World Wide Fund for Nature - India, Indian Social Institute and Multiple Action Research Group at New Delhi. Nearly 30 participants including activists from the field and journalists took part in the workshop. Representatives of government and public sector enterprises also took part in the workshop.

The recent issue of the journal, Social Action, contains some of the papers presented at the workshop.

For further details, contact:
Dr. Walter Fernandes, Indian Social Institute, 10, Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003.

During April 8-12, 1988, a workshop on the theme, ‘Dams and other major projects: Impact and Responses on Adivasi Communities’ was organised by Programme for Adivasi Solidarity at Goa. About 25 activists involved in such activities in India and other Asian countries took part in the workshop.

For further details, contact:-
Mr. Raajen Singh, Parkash Nivas, Charat Singh Colony, Andheri East, Bombay - 400093.

3. During July 1-3, 1988, a workshop on the issues related to ill-effects of big dams was organised by Shri Baba Amte, at Anandwan, Maharashtra. The purpose of the workshop was to express concern about the devastation caused by big dams. Nearly 80 environmentalists, social activists, journalists and other professionals working on these issues took part in the workshop. Among the participants, the prominent were, Sunder Lal Bahuguna, Anil Aggarwal, Kamla Chaudhry and B.D. Sharma. During the workshop, an action plan was chalked out to raise national consciousness against the big dams in the country. In this context, a working group under the convenership of Vikas Amte has been set up.

For further details, contact:-
Dr. Vikas Amte, Maharogi Sewa Samiti, Anandwan, Via Warora, Maharashtra - 442914.
A regional workshop on the theme, 'People, Forests and Environment', was organised by the POWU, Bombay and the Kashtakari Sangathan, Thane, on June 12, 1988 at Dahanu, Maharashtra. The purpose of the workshop was to highlight the impact of new forest policy on the people and environment. Nearly 200 participants from Maharashtra and Gujarat took part in the workshop.

For further details, contact:-
Kashtakari Sangathan, 3 Yezdeh Behram, Malyan, Dahanu Road, Dist. Thane, Maharashtra - 401602.

SATYAGRAHA ON COMMON LANDS ISSUE

In Karnataka, nearly 75,000 acres of village common lands have been handed over by the state government to a joint sector project, to plant eucalyptus trees. As a result, over 5 lakhs of rural poor have been deprived of their basic needs of fuel, fodder and fruits. In this context, a Satyagraha was organised on June 20, 1988 by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya at Kusnur, Karnataka. The aim of satyagraha was to uproot eucalyptus trees and plant useful trees in the common lands.

For further details, contact:-
Mr. S.R. Hiremath, C/o Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, 'Ashadeep' Jayanagar Cross, Saptapur, Dharwad-580001, Karnataka.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST INDIRA SAG

The Campaign Against Indira Sag dam (CAISA) is a group of soci-activists, journalists, film-make and professionals who are opposing the construction of this dam. This is one of the major dam under construction on the river Narmada. Recently, the group has published a field report titled 'In Sorrow and Anger'. The report is based on a visit to the area going under submergence by the dam. The contribution for the report is Rs. 10/- and can be obtained from:-

Campaign Against Indira Sag
El/208, Arera Colony, Bhopal 462016, Madhya Pradesh.

WORKING GROUP ON DISPLACEMENT

Displacement and its various related dimensions have today become an issue of serious concern. Ti Lokayan took up this issue and formed a national working group on displacement in 1987. The members of this group include social activists, lawyers, environmentalists and professionals. Recently, the group has prepared a draft of the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation. The group has also started a quarterly bulletin in hindi titled "Udvasit". The annual subscription of this bulletin is Rs 25 for individuals and Rs. 4 for institutions.

For further details, contact:
Mr. Smitu Kothari, Lokayan,13, Alipur Road, Delhi - 110054.
MATERIALS OF INTEREST

THE GREAT CONCERN

This is a quarterly newsletter of the Indo-German Social Service Society, New Delhi. The recent issue of this newsletter focusses on Tribals and Development. The newsletter is free of cost and can be obtained from:

Indo-German Social Service Society
28, Lodhi Road Institutional Area,
New Delhi - 110003.

THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

"The Fight for Survival: People's Action for Environment" is a compilation of papers presented at a seminar on Environment and People's Subsistence, organised by the Centre for Science and Environment, in 1986. From dams to nuclear power plants, mining and threatened tribals, the book covers the larger questions of what kind of development needed in the world today. The book also focusses on the issues determining the survival of millions of people worldwide and how they have organised themselves to cope with this challenge.

For copies contact:-

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)
807, Vishal Bhawan, 95, Nehru Place,
New Delhi - 110019.

GREEN FILE

Green File, a monthly publication of the Centre for Science and Environment, is a compilation of news clippings on all environment issues in the country. The clippings are taken from nearly 25 newspapers and 15 news magazines. Nearly 400 clippings are compiled and arranged according to major areas of interest like dams, mining, forests, pollution, pesticides etc.

Copies available from: CSE.

BANTAYAN ENVIRONMENT ALERT

This is a quarterly newsletter of Cordillera Environmental Concerns Committee, Philippines. The inaugural issue carries articles on deforestation, mining and environmental degradation in Philippines. It also carries an article on the Narmada Valley Project. The publishers of the newsletter welcome exchange of publications from other groups.

For further details contact:-

Bantayan Environment Alert, C/o Garcom Baguio (687) P.O. Box 7691, ADC - MIA Manila 3120, Philippines.

WORLD RIVERS REVIEW

The World Rivers Review (formerly International Dam Newsletter) is a bi-monthly publication of the International Rivers Network. The recent issue carries articles on the battles and struggles carried out to save India's rivers from being dammed and polluted. People's struggles against Tehri, Bodhghat and Narmada are mainly dealt in this issue. The subscription of this newsletter is $ 15 for NGOs and individuals.

For further details contact:-

World Rivers Review, 300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133, U.S.A.
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS: GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING

This is a series of manuals providing technical information to the development workers and others to become aware of the environmental factors that should be considered while planning small-scale projects. The manuals have been jointly published by the Coordination in Development (CODEL) and the Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA).

For further details contact:-

Vita Publications,
1815, North Lynn Street,
Suite 200, Arlington,
Virginia, 22209, U.S.A.

REPORT ON PESTICIDES

The Kalpavriksh, an environmental action group, is preparing a report on the environmental and social impact of use and abuse of pesticides in India. The report aims to fill a major gap, that of a single publication where most of the important data and issues related to pesticides use in the country are presented. Apart from giving available information on the adverse human and environmental impacts, a major issue addressed in the report is whether pesticide use can be made safe in the existing socio-cultural conditions. The report is primarily aimed at NGOs and individuals involved in these issues.

For further details contact:-

Kalpavriksh,
1, Court Road
Delhi - 110054.

SUBMERGING VILLAGES: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

This book written by Dr. Vidyut Joshi, is a study of 19 villages of Gujarat which will submerge due to the construction of Sardar Sarovar dam. The book seeks to provide overall patterns of village types, social groups, economic conditions, leadership and attitudes of the potential oustees towards rehabilitation. The book is priced at Rs. 60/- and can be obtained from:-

Ajanta Books,
1, UB, Jawahar Nagar,
Bungalow Road,
Delhi - 110007.

FILM ON BALIAPAL

Outraged by the government's proposal to take away their land for the construction of a missile testing range, the people of Baliapal and Bhograi blocks of Balasore district, Orissa, have carried on a unique struggle to stop this project. A 16 mm film is being made to document this struggle. The film will record the people's determination and methods of organising the struggle against the testing range. The film is being made by Mr. Ranjan Palit and Ms. Vasudha Joshi. Donations are welcome by the producers.

For further details, contact:-

Mr. Ranjan Palit,
C/o Vector Productions,
189, Sarat Bose Road,
Calcutta - 700029.
THE NARMADA PURANA

Produced by Mr. Avinash Deshpande, The Narmada Purana, is a video film made in Hindi and English. The film is based on interviews with those oustees who have been displaced by the construction of six big dams in the country. The film is being used for the campaign against the Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar dams on the river Narmada.

For further details, contact:-

Mr. Avinash Deshpande,
B - 20, Soami Nagar,
New Delhi.

TRIBAL WOMEN AND FOREST ECONOMY

This book is based on a joint study by the Indian Social Institute, Gram Vikas (Ganjam), PREM (Ganjam) and the Rural Life Programme (Kalahandi), Orissa. The book attempts to study the traditional roles of tribal women in the forest economy and the adverse effects of deforestation on them.

The book is priced at Rs. 35/- and can be obtained from:-

Indian Social Institute,
10, Institutional Area,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003.

FORESTS, ENVIRONMENT AND TRIBAL ECONOMY

This book is also based on a joint study conducted by the Indian Social Institute and eight action groups based in Orissa. The book looks at the forests from the point of view of the people and studies the extent of their dependence, the role of minor forest produce, shifting cultivation and firewood in their economy. The study also gives a new dimension to the debate on the forest policy and tribals. The book is priced at Rs. 50/- and can be obtained from ISI.

OUR COMMON FUTURE

This is a report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. This commission headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland, was set up as an independent body in 1983 by the United Nations to re-examine the critical environment and development problems on the earth and to formulate proposals to solve them. The report calls for a better understanding of economy and ecology so that human progress can be sustained through development without destroying the resources of future generations. The report is priced at Rs. 110/- and can be obtained from:-

Oxford University Press,
YMCA Building,
Jai Singh Road, New Delhi - 110001.

FORTHCOMING

- The Agriculture Man and Ecology Programme attempts to stimulate the self-reliance of farmers through a transfer of knowledge related to ecologically sound agriculture. The programme conducts training courses which start from 24.10.88 to 11.11.88. For further details, contact:-

Agriculture Man Ecology, Post Box No. 11, Pondicherry - 605001.
ISSUE: DRINKING WATER CRISIS

- There are 1.16 lakh villages in the country where there is no provision for drinking water. (Times of India, November 21, 1987)

- The National Drinking Water Mission which aims at providing drinking water to 5.7 lakh villages, has achieved only one-third of its target. (Economic Times, May 5, 1988)

- U.P.: As far as drinking water is concerned, out of over one lakh villages in the state, there are as many as 78,000 'problem' villages. (Hindustan Times, May 16, 1988)

- Rajasthan: Most of the 34,960 villages in the state are facing an acute shortage of drinking water. (Indian Express, April 18, 1988)

- Cherapunje, the wettest place on earth having an average rainfall of more than 1000 cms. a year, suffers from water famine in the post-monsoon season. (National Herald, May 25, 1988)

COMING EVENTS

- During September 10-11, 1988, a meeting is being organised at Chaibasa, Bihar to express grave concern against the construction of Subernarekha dam. Nearly 1000 people are expected to take part in the meeting.

For further details, contact:

Mr. Ghanshyam, Lok Jagriti Kendra, Madhupur, District: Deoghar, Bihar - 815353.

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PRIA
Society For Participatory Research
In Asia, 45 Salnik Farm, Khangur
New Delhi-110 062 Tel : 051120/74