LAND AND PEOPLE
a pria newsletter on land ownership and alienation

JANUARY - MARCH 1988

PROLOGUE

PRIA as a support organisation has been working with number of rural and urban groups for last six years or so. During this period PRIA has been able to evolved a close and meaningful relationship with substantial number of groups throughout the country. In the process of building up these relationships through responding to specific needs of the small groups working among the marginalised sections of rural society, PRIA has developed a programme on "Land Ownership and Alienation".

In this programme, over the period, PRIA's role has been three-fold: sensitizing those working with rural poor but not directly on land related issue; assisting those intending to take up land related issues in documenting and analysing the local situation; and providing back-up support to those engaged in struggle on land related issues by strengthening their knowledge base and understanding of whole issue.

Like other programmes of PRIA, this programme also has components of research, training, production of learning material, and networking. Though the workshop, organised by PRIA time to time on different land related issue work as training event and as a plant form for networking, but we also make some extra efforts in both these fields. Tailor-made training for the activists of a specific group for systematically collecting information on land related issues in order to strengthen the people's initiatives, for developing skills and strategies to organise people around land related issues; and for strengthening internal training capacities of the groups to cope with leadership training etc. are examples of some fruitful experimentation in this field. The attempts of networking among the groups working on similar issues through regional and issue based workshops have yielded encouraging results in some of the states. On issues like dams and displacement a wider networking achieved through workshops has been of some use.

This newsletter is an attempt to strengthen already achieved linkages and to further expand these linkages among the groups working on similar land related issues. This newsletter, as a consequence, is expected to facilitate exchange of experiences and ideas among the groups concerned with land related issues, in near future.

Your cooperation in this effort is essential. While we try our best, we expect you to guide this effort of ours; to provide information and material for this newsletter; and to utilise it to the advantage of disadvantaged.

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Land Degradation Due to Pollution and Mining

A national workshop on "Land degradation due to pollution and mining" was organised by PRIA with the help of Rourkela Environmental Society and friends from Sambalpur University, Orissa. Groups from Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh took active part in this workshop. Several case studies of land degradation due to industrial pollution and mining were presented at this workshop. Though the effect of mining on land was not well documented but participants from Orissa and Chhotanagapur area of Bihar have presented illustrative descriptions of local misery caused by irrational and unscientific mining. Participants expressed the need to highlight the issue of loss of land in areas around industrial estates and mines, since the phenomenon has no statutory recognition today. The need to evolve strategies for mobilising public opinion and affected people's through exchange of experiences and ideas. It was proposed to hold an annual consultation of groups concerned with the issue. The participants from Maharashtra representing Yuvak Kranti Dal reported the above plans for agitation on the issues related to land degradation due to pollution by industrial estates of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation in Raigad district. On the proposal of a regular newsletter for exchange of information and experience it was agreed upon to utilise "Land and People" PRIA's newsletter for this purpose for the coming year and depending upon the response, we can begin some kind of regular publication on the issue after the first annual consultation.

A popular document based on the deliberation in the workshop will shortly be published by PRIA.

Brief account of some case studies is given below.

The Valley That Spells Doom

(Development of Chemical Valley at Rasayani-Patalganga Area in Raigad District of Maharashtra)

"Rasayani-Patalganga Industrial Area" at Rasayani, Panvel Taluka of Raigad district of Maharashtra was developed with the blessings of Maharashtra government. Soon it came on the map of 'Chemical Valleys', which Government of India has decided to develop in the furtherance of its emphasis on developing chemical and pharmaceutical industry.
In the first phase of official enthusiasm chemical industries growth, government owned Hindustan Organic Chemicals Ltd., Hindustan Insecticides Ltd., MAIDC's Fertilizer Plants etc. had surfaced on one bank of Patalganga River at Raigad, Panvel Taluka of Raigad district. Further, in 1980 the state government decided to set-up another Industrial Estate across the river. Out of 52 plots carved out in this estate 34 plots were given to chemical and pharmaceutical industries. Nearly 40 industries have already started production.

MAIDC has laid down two separate pipelines on two banks, which discharge effluents into the river Patalganga in its saline zone. Despite the presence of these pipelines, HOC, HIL and MAIDC and other companies utilize the streams, nallas and open land freely to dump their solid and liquid effluents. The reckless discharge of effluent has badly affected about 15 villages within a radius of 5 km from three sides of the factories.

Around Waveghar village alone, on which Rasayani township was developed, about 500 acres of land, previously used for agriculture, has been damaged due to discharge and storage of effluents. In the nearby villages even underground water has started showing signs of contamination. Water for irrigation purposes, which used to come from river, it also not useful anymore. Fishing in downstream has totally stopped rendering several fisher families unemployed. Cropping pattern had also drastically changed.

People's Response

The villagers of Turuda village noticed that their wells started getting contaminated by Diwali season of 1971. Petitions were made in early September 1971. After two years of persuasions, agitations, ultimately factory authorities provided piped water supply at their cost to 4 villages. But problem was not yet solved and the agitation in some or the other form continued. The voices of concern from the local people in this phase got lost in bureaucratic apparatus.

In early 1983, once again the people of the area got mobilised and organised on the issues by the support of an NGO. This time people had resorted to different forms of agitation and were able to take their voices even to the Parliament. Though much could not be achieved in this phase as well but it is a learning experience for the people there and surrounding area. A detail case study of this experience is available with PRIA.
Onslaught of Development

(A case study of the Roha-MIDC Industrial Complex in Raigad District, Maharashtra).

The Roha-MIDC (Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation) industrial complex on the banks of the river Kundalika is first of its kind in Raigad district, Maharashtra. The major industrial units (all chemicals) were established in this complex in 1972. Today, over 45 major chemical plants are operating in the complex.

Except a few industries, rest of chemical Industries dump their untreated liquid and solid effluents into the nearby nullahs, canals and small rivers. This has resulted into the loss of cultivable land and contaminated water supply in the villages adjacent to the industrial complex. Over 30 villages situated along the industrial Kundalika are suffering from this problem.

In 1986, a survey was conducted in the affected villages by Yuvak Kranti Dal to evaluate the impact of contamination of water on the agricultural output. This survey reveals that the agricultural output has steeply declined over the past decade. Some affected villagers reported a productivity decline of as much as 80 per cent.

Major inferences drawn from the survey are following:

1. Agricultural output (mainly rice) which is the chief means of livelihood of the villagers has steeply plummeted over the past decade as a result of widespread degradation of soil and non-availability of uncontaminated water.

2. The MIDC has acted in a very irresponsible manner by closing its eyes to the plight of local people after obtaining land at a pittance from them.

3. The Pollution Control Board (P.C.B) of Maharashtra on its part is also indifferent to the problem. In spite of many complaints and appeals, the company-managements keep getting all clear signals from the P.C.B. The periodic inspection procedure by the P.C.B. inspectors have been reduced to a farce, corruption being rampant.

4. It need not be specially mentioned that the managements of the industries are in no mood to take notice of the havoc that is caused by the effluents spewing out of their plants.
YKD activists are at present educating the people on this issue and trying to workout a strategy to make it a focal issue of local politics, so that fruitful pressure could be created on official vigilance machinery and people's rights could be protected. Details can be obtained from:

(A case of labourers engaged in drought relief work in Sabarkantha District at Gujarat)

Sabarkantha district of Gujarat is facing worst drought of the century. To provide employment to the drought-affected people, the state Government has started a number of relief works in all the talukas of this district. The relief-works include digging and deepening of village tanks, building new roads, repairing old roads, digging earth, etc. A voluntary organisation, Disha, working among forest dwellers and landless balourers has made an attempt to study the working conditions, wages and problems of labourers involved in drought relief programme of Gujarat Government.

A survey team from 'Disha' had collected information from 129 gangs (groups) working at 50 work sites in different parts of the district.

The survey reveals that more than 70 percent of labourers earn only Rs. eight per day. Whereas, the state government has fixed minimum daily wage of rupees eleven per person. Only those labourers who are engaged on a time-rate basis like water carriers get rupees eleven per day. Therefore, the impression created by the government that all the labourers working on drought-relief works at rupees eleven is totally false, according to the survey. The survey also reveals that the workers are not paid their wages in due time.

The survey points out that majority of the workers are not aware of various provisions laid down in the relief manual and the computation of wages. Similarly, many workers do not know to whom to approach for the complaints arising out of wages, working conditions and other problems. According to the survey, the working conditions of the workers are in bad shape. Facilities like drinking water and medical aid are not available at work sites.

The survey report has also suggested various remedial steps to remove the problems of the labourers:

For further details, please contact:
REPORT

Demonstration Against Dam

A public demonstration was organised by Dam Virodhi Samiti, on January 18, 1988 at Jurmundi Block Office, Dumka district of Bihar. The demonstration was organised to protest against the construction of proposed large dam on river Tepra. Thousands of people took part in the demonstration.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Arvind Kumar, c/o Dam Virodhi Samiti, Jurmundi, Dumka, Bihar.

Seminar on Agriculture and Environment

A three day seminar was organised by Regional Study Centre, Bihar during October 12-14, 1987 at Singhbhum. The seminar was attended by nearly 100 farmers. The main theme of the seminar was to focus the adverse effects of new agricultural strategy on the environment. During the seminar, various techniques for better land and water management were also demonstrated to the farmers.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Amiyo Chaudhary, c/o Regional Study Centre, P.O. Ichadih, Dist. Singhbhum, Bihar.

Workshop on Land and Water Management

In the last two decades, there has been a tremendous increase in developmental activity in the form of large dams, mining operations and urbanisation in the Himalayas. The location of these projects has resulted into soil erosion, deforestation and depletion of water and other life supporting resources. Lok Chetna Manch, Ranikhet, Uttar Pradesh organised a four day workshop on the theme-'Land and Water Management'- to reflect on some of the issues mentioned above. The workshop was held at Ranikhet from February 26-29, 1988. 35 participants mainly from the kumaon region of Uttar Pradesh shared their views in the workshop.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Narendra Routela, c/o Lok Chetna Manch, Ranikhet-263 648, Uttar Pradesh.
_Tribal Staged Dharna_

On November 14, 1987, nearly 5000 people belonging to kol tribal staged a dharna at Manikpur. The dharna was organised by Patha Kol Adhikar Manch, Manikpur to demand the release of lands related to bondage.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. G.P. Gopal, c/o Patha Kol Adhikar Manch, Manikpur, Banda, Uttar Pradesh.

_Workshop on Floods in Bihar_

A three day workshop was organised by Lok Jagriti Kendra, Bihar during January 28-30, 1988 at Madhupur, Bihar. The main focus of the workshop was to discuss the problems of floods in the state of Bihar. The participants also suggested preventive measures to combat this natural disaster.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Ghanshyam, c/o Lok Jagriti Kendra, Medhupur (Deoghar), Bihar-815 353.

_Workshop on the Ecological Development of the Adivasi Regions_

A three day workshop on the ecological development of the tribal regions was held during February 9-11, 1988 at Nurkeda, Maharashtra. This workshop was organised by Vrikshamitra (Friends of Trees), district Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. Supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, this workshop was co-sponsored by Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi and Jangal Bachao-Manav Karnac Andolan, Dist. Gadchiroli. During the workshop, various issues related to the development of tribal areas were discussed. An unique feature of the workshop was the presence of local population mainly tribals who took active part in the workshop.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Mohan Hirabai Hiralal, Convener, Vrikshamitra, P.O. Gadchiroli, Maharashtra-442 605.
The Narmada Issue

1. During December 5-6, 1987, Kalpavriksh, jointly with World Wildlife Fund (India), New Delhi and Narmada Dharangrast Samiti, Maharashtra, organised a meeting of concerned individuals and organisations working on the issues related to the Narmada Valley Project which consists of 30 major, 135 medium and 3000 minor dams on the river Narmada. In the meeting, it was decided that these organisations would coordinate their action by pooling together resources for research, mobilisation, litigation and media campaigns.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Shekhar Singh, c/o Narmada Action Plan, C-17/A, Munirka, New Delhi-110 067.

2. A public rally was jointly organised by Narmada Ghati Navnirman Samiti, Madhya Pradesh and Narmada Dharangrast Samiti, Maharashtra on January 30, 1988, at Navagam, the proposed site of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Besides activists, thousands of oustees mostly tribals participated in the rally. In the rally, it was decided that an agitation would be launched if the demands for proper resettlement and rehabilitation of the oustees were not met within two months.

For further details, please contact:

Mr. Parbhakar Mandlik, c/o Narmada Ghati Navnirman Samiti, Grambharti Ashram, Tavlai, District Dhar Madhya Pradesh.

Ms. Medha Patkar, c/o Narmada Dharangrast Samiti, Post Box 52, Dhule, Maharashtra-424 001.

Booklet on Narmada Valley Project

Kalpavriksh has recently published a booklet entitled "The Narmada Valley Project: A Critique". This booklet has put together the major concerns voiced against the massive development project, the Narmada Valley Development Project. While the project consists of 30 major and thousands of minor and major dams, the booklet mainly focuses on two major dams which are under construction at present, Narmada Sagar Project and Sardar Sarovar Project. This booklet is priced at Rs. 10 and can be obtained from:

Kalpavriksh, c/o Achich Kothari, 1 Court Road, Delhi-110 004.