

March Newsletter

1. NCDHR Initiatives

Dalit Watch Andhra Pradesh

National Dalit Watch was evolved from the experiences of Discrimination against Dalits in the relief activities of Tsunami-affected areas in 2005 and Bihar flood-affected areas in 2007-2008. The severity of October 2009 flood, affecting 5 districts in AP has alerted the National Dalit Watch on the issues of exclusion and discrimination and the appalling situation of Dalit Rights in the flood affected area.

The special survey, initiated from 23rd February to 2nd March 2010, is the second report of Dalit Watch AP along with the National Dalit Watch on the issue of exclusion of Dalits in the flood affected areas of Kurnool and Mahabubnagar districts in Andhra Pradesh. The objective of this study is to monitor Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation package announced by the government, in the 80 villages of Kurnool and Mahabubnagar districts, to bring out the issues of exclusion practiced in the implementation of the same; to submit representations and petitions to all concerned authorities at the district and state levels of the individual cases of the denial of entitlement from relief and rehabilitation, either fully or partially, of the 80 villages and to create awareness about the Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Package as per the latest amendments and GOs among the affected families, to claim their entitlement.

AIDMAM International Women's Day in Gandhi Maidan, Patna on 8th March 2010.

All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch-National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights with Nari Gunjan Patna celebrated the international Women's Day in Gandhi Maidan, Patna on 8th March 2010.

Through the rally AIDMAM addressed the issues of Dalit Women that they are facing at National level and State level. Over 550 Dalit Women, along with several educationists, lawyers, activists, PRI leaders from different districts of Bihar and other professionals participated in the Rally and marched from Gandhi Maidan to R-Block. The focus of this non-political rally was on institutionalized discrimination, the discrimination facilitated by the concerned responsible authorities and upper echelons of society on Dalit women. To ensure Schedule Caste women rights and entitlements, the AIDMAM put forth a number of demands from the Union and States.

DAAA: The National Consultation on Special Component Plan (SCP) for Scs, March 9, 2010.

The month of March, 2010 had been full of activities at DAAA with a successful move of transition from our approach of agitation to lobbying. The lobby actions of DAAA started with the National Consultation on Special Component Plan held on March 9, 2010 in Constitution Club. It was attended by fifteen MPs of both lower house and upper house, Planning Commission Members, Bureaucrats, Civil Society Organizations, Academicians, Media and Concerned Individuals.

The national consultation has been organised by National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and National Action Forum for Social Justice (NAFSJ) with support from Indraprastha Public Affairs Centre (IPAC) and was intended to lobby with the MPs for the proper implementation of the Special Component Plan. The “Special Component Plan” (SCP) is a vital policy initiated during 1979-80 for transforming the lives of the Dalits and strengthening their inclusion in the expanding economy of the nation. The purpose of holding the consultation with the Parliamentarians was to discuss the recommendations arising from certain challenges faced while implementing the SCP in the past and to arrive at a consensus of the steps needed to be taken by all the stake holders for effective implementation of SCP both at the Union level as well as at the state level.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav, Member Planning Commission was the Guest of Honour for this National Consultation. Numerous leaders of all collaborating partner organisations and other leading organisations from different parts of the country who have been concerned about the welfare of the SCs and are keen to strengthen the SCP to make it effective towards achieving the goals of economic liberation, education parity at all levels and social dignity of SCs were present at the consultation.

The challenges associated with the SCP in its effective implementation were broadly discussed and brought into the notice of the MPs, Executives and Planning Commission Members. The representatives of Civil Society Organizations shared their experiences.

The consultation started with the presentation on Special Component Plan by Mr. N Paul Divakar. All the participants put forth their views on the issues, challenges associated with SCP and probable solutions.

A group of representative of DAAA met with Shri **Dara Singh Chauhan**, Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment on March 25, 2010 to suggest some interventions on effective implementation of SCP. Interventions to make the Post Matric Scholarship more effective for the empowerment of the Scheduled Caste students were also suggested to the committee.

The representative also met the Chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of SC/ST, Shri Gobinda Chandra Naskar on March 31, 2010 and suggested the interventions on effective implementation of SCP.

NDMJ Advocacy and lobby intervention

The Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of SCs & STs had its 14th sitting on 31st March 2010. On the eve of this sitting, NDMJ met with around 16 out of 30 members of the committee at their official residence as well as at the corridor of the parliament. In these meetings, equipped with a four-page note on the critical gaps on 20 years of implementation of the SC & ST (PoA) Act and Rules, we requested them to take up the review of the implementation of this Act as a part of the committee.

NDMJ Dalit Paralegal training

End of March, NDMJ organized training programmes for Dalit Paralegals in Panipat (Haryana), Kandmahal (Orissa), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) and Motihari (Bihar). The paralegals were trained on using of SC & ST (PoA) Act, Domestic Violence Act, NREGA and RTI Act as well as atrocity monitoring, understanding of human rights and constitutional safeguards.

NDMJ Dalit Lawyers Consultation

Dalit Lawyers consultation took place in Sholapur (Maharashtra) on 20th – 21st March 2010 and in Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) on 27th – 28th March 2010. The first one gathered 60 participants including 45 Dalit Lawyers and an action plan was chalked out to strengthen the enforcement of the SC & ST (PoA) Act. 80 participants including 60 Dalit Lawyers participated in the second one where an action strategy was arrived at for judicial intervention and monitoring of atrocities.

NDMJ Monitoring of vigilance and monitoring committees

On 22nd – 23rd March 2010, during the budget session of Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly, NDMJ members visited Bhopal. They met with 15 members of legislative assembly, 3 personal secretaries of the MLAs, 3 political leaders and a retired judge. The purpose of the meetings was to lobby for proper implementation of rule 16 and 17 of the SC & ST (PoA) Rules 1995, which talks about formation and meetings of State-level and District-level Vigilance and Monitoring Committees. They were equipped with a 4 page note on powers and roles and duties of the elected representatives and other stakeholders with respect to the implementation of this provision.

Filing of RTI Applications on enforcement of PoA Act

Centre for Dalit Rights has filed 250 RTI applications in numerous districts for getting the status of the cases registered under Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, details of relief and rehabilitation provided to the victims of atrocities, supervision of prosecution and performance of Special Public Prosecutors, and constitution and steps taken by the District-level Vigilance and Monitoring Committees.

2. Seminar on Dalits and Private Sector

Visit of Mr Govert, an Independent Consultant, from Netherland, Cordaid, 8th April 2010, NCDHR office.

NCDHR-NDMJ members have welcomed Mr Govert for a meeting focused on an evaluation and learning review. Since almost one year, Mr Govert is supporting NCDHR members to learn new techniques in influencing decision making processes for Non-profit sector, lobbying, in particular. The aim of this fifth meeting was to see if this partnership/support is successful to develop NDMJ lobby interventions. During the two hours presentations, NDMJ members presented and evaluated the results of their one year work as lobbyist concerning the amendments on SC/ST (PoA) Act 1989 and Rules 1995. It has been agreed that the core approach of the organization has changed as new methods are being used for better implementation of the Act. As NDMJ is now more focusing on the lobby, it has to go to next level and form the linkage between the grass root level and politicians (MLA's and MP's).

Visit of Sylvain Ropital, from CCFD, France, 8th April 2010, NCDHR Office.

NCDHR members have welcomed Mr Ropital for a meeting focused on understanding the CCFD strategy. The 4 hours meeting was focused on the following issues/questions: (i) Is there a need for a coalition, (ii) how to build a coalition, (iii) discuss the integrate inclusive approach or the conditions for non Dalit organizations to join the coalition, (iv) how to push the actions of the partners. The core of the discussion was to identify the right issue to develop on which NCDHR and its movements would work with CCFD. It has been agreed that there is a need to keep empowering Dalit but also Adivasi and to create a bridge between communities for the empowerment of marginalized communities. There is a need to integrate non Dalit organizations within NCDHR coalition.

MEDIA Events

As a prelude to the **National Consultation on Special Component plan** prominent news papers published write ups and articles both at the state and national level. This was a result of well planned strategy of lobbying and advocacy with the media houses to highlight the issue of diversion of funds allocated for the welfare of SC community. Prominent news papers covering the issues were **Nai Duniya, The Hindu, Business Standard, Dainik Bhaskar, Samachar Jagat, Bureau Sandesh, Mehka Bharat, Rajasthan Patrika, Rashtradoot.**

Apart from this exclusive coverage on SCP, **Outlook Magazine** raised the issue of marginalized section especially SC & ST communities in it cover story **Budget 2010**. This story featured interview bites of **Paul Diwakar** highlighting the plight of marginalized sections. **Sandeep Dikshit** in his article in **The Hindu** brought to the limelight the issue of caste based discrimination and the way Indian government has failed to address this long standing problem. This article too had bites of **Paul Diwakar**.

3. Upcoming events

People's SAARC 2010

NCDHR is part of People's SAARC, a regional convergence of peoples' organizations and movements for sharing, forging and strengthening solidarity linkages among like-minded action groups, resource agencies, progressive individuals and others, with the common aim of promoting a movement for democracy and justice, and to build a people's resistance against the forces of globalization across nations. A two day People's SAARC event will be held in Delhi in April 22nd and 23rd 2010. NCDHR is deeply involved in the SAARC process by being part of the group of Civil Society organizations of India that coordinate and lead the People's SAARC 2010 as well as by attending the several discussions and meetings aimed at organizing the event. As part of PSAARC, NCDHR planned to organize a workshop on Social Exclusion on April 21st.