



FIAN E-News Letter

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Editorial:

In the era of globalization to achieve rapid economic growth, the government of India has supported investments in industrial projects, mines dams, roads, power plants and new cities which have been made possible only through massive acquisition of land by large-scale displacement of people. There are no official statistics available on the numbers of people displaced by large projects since independence. However, in 1994, the Government mentioned the figure of 15.5 million internally displaced and acknowledged that some 11.5 million were still awaiting rehabilitation. According to the statistics available from Indian Social Institute, the 21.3 million development-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) include those displaced by dams (16.4 million), mines (2.55 million), industrial development (1.25 million) and wild life sanctuaries and national parks (0.6 million) (Lama, August 2000, p.24-25).

Evidence suggests that often most vulnerable, economically backward and socially marginalised communities become victims of Development Induced Displacement (DID). According to the World Commission on Dams (WCD) study, the impact of DID has been felt most heavily by marginalized and vulnerable populations including the indigenous people. Experiences show in India, 40-50% of the displaced population is made of adivasi tribal people; when tribal people constitute only 8% of country's population. The large-scale evictions of tribal people in Orissa and Jharkhand in the name of different mining projects are concrete examples of how tribal people are being affected by development projects.

The result or outcome of the DID has been extremely negative in terms of Right to Food and other human rights. The outcomes have included hunger and starvations due to assetlessness, unemployment, debt-bondage and cultural disintegration, resulted from displacements. In both indigenous and non-indigenous communities, women and children have suffered most due to displacement. The WCD observed, *"Impoverishment and disempowerment have been the rule rather than the exception with respect to resettled people around the world."* Michael Cernea, a sociologist who has researched on DID points out that displacements have often marked with serious long-term risks for the victims of becoming poorer than before displacement, becoming more vulnerable economically, and disintegrated socially. And experiences in India have registered no exception.

To address the problem of DID a Key instrument is the *Guiding Principles on Internal displacement*, formulated by a team of international legal experts and presented to the United Nations in 1998. These were the first guidelines based on international human rights and humanitarian law. The *Guiding Principles* define internally displaced persons as *"persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."*

Principle 6 states that *"Every human being shall have the right to be protected against being arbitrarily displaced from his or her home or place of habitual residence;"* this prohibition against arbitrary displacement *"includes displacement in cases of large-scale development projects which are not justified by compelling and overriding public interests [italics added for emphasis]."*

In the planning and implementation of so called development projects, the *Guiding Principles* say that it is incumbent on the authorities first to explore all feasible alternatives to avoid displacement altogether, if it cannot be avoided, DID should be minimized. Moreover, authorities must demonstrate that such displacement is justified by *compelling and overriding public interest*. In all instances, displacement should not threaten life, dignity, liberty, or security and it should be effected in conditions of adequate shelter, safety, nutrition, and health. Finally, the authorities must take special care to protect against the displacement of indigenous peoples, minorities, peasants, pastoralists, and others with special attachment to their lands. (Courtland Robinson January 1, 2004)

The resettlement and rehabilitation of the large number of persons displaced by development projects in India has been far from successful. Major obstacles have been the lack of genuine political will of the government and the reluctance to adopt a clear "land-for-land" policy. Instead, insufficient cash compensation or poorly designed non-land based projects have been offered to the victims. These have left many destitute and exposed the poor to hunger and starvation. At the same time, local social networks and traditional support systems have been weakened or destroyed, leaving many development-displaced with no option but to migrate to slums of the major cities (Mander, August 1999, p.8-10, 13-14).

To ensure rights of the victims of DID the need of the hour is to adopt such an approach which would be based on recognition of human rights in general and right to food in particular. The guidelines refer to *"overriding public interest"* and *"necessity and proportionality"* in determining the justification of DID. We have to be very careful in defining 'public' as public in human rights terminology refers to the whole population and not only the economic and political elite of a country.

We have to think of an alternative development paradigm based on interests and needs of the people. The people centered model of development would be economically, socially and culturally acceptable to all and would also be sustainable in a long run.

We need to clearly recognize the fact that any abrupt and forced eviction of an individual or community in the name of development is a violation of human right. If the displaced are not adequately rehabilitated socially, culturally and economically it is a violation of RTF. Therefore the need of the hour is to make people aware of their rights and to pressurize the state to fulfill its obligations under RTF.

India is a state party to almost all important UN human rights conventions. UN therefore should also take a proactive role in ensuring the effective functioning of periodic reporting and review process of the implementation of these conventions with request on country specific information on forced displacement. The committee on ECOSOC has already included such requests in their reporting guidelines. However the feed back from the countries are poor. The need of the hour is to strengthen a vibrant civil society movement in India which would increase the accountability of the state and redefine the notion of development

Ujjaini Halim

Displacements due to Mining

Threat of Eviction and Livelihood of the Tribals in Kashipur, Orissa – A Profile

The East Indian state of Orissa is very rich in mineral resources and the Government of Orissa has welcomed corporations to exploit the states huge mineral wealth. One such mining project is proposed in Kashipur, Orissa by Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL). UAIL is a joint venture of the Aditya Birla Group and Alcan, a Canadian mining company. Norsk Hydro, a Norwegian company that had a stake in UAIL in 2000 withdrew from the project following criticism in Norway for its complicity in Human Rights abuses in Kashipur. The tribals of Kashipur have been opposing the establishment of the proposed 100 percent export – oriented alumina project and the people's protest has successfully kept UAIL from mining Baphlimali (a mountain held sacred by local tribals) for 12 years now.

Since December 1, 2004, the state has launched a campaign to repress the tribals, their leaders and key supporters of anti – mining protests. A massive police operation has been launched to terrorize the tribals and their supporters into allowing the bauxite mining and alumina refining projects to come up in Kashipur. The police have also led siege a group tribal villages around Kashipur and all entry into an exit from the Kashipur villages have been barred. The police have reportedly restored to indiscriminate and unprovoked physical violence against the tribal residence and everyone protesting the mining projects. On December 1, 2004, peaceful gathering of about 300 tribal and other protestors predominantly women were beaten with sticks. On 16th December, a rally of tribals and Dalits gathered at Baghajhola village to peacefully commemorate the Kashipur martyrs, but were prevented from doing so by the police goons sponsored by the company. Eleven platoons of armed forces and eight magistrates were deployed to spoil the ceremony. Many delegates were physically assaulted, vehicles damaged, and even three MLAs who were to attend the meeting, were arrested. The police also misbehaved with the three foreign delegates from U.K. and Israel. Their passports were seized and they were kept in police custody for a day. These incidents of violence by an organ of the Government, in collusion with a multinational company, ultimately reached its gory finale, when the police opened fire on the people attending the rally, and grievously injured six. After this incident, the movement has gained even more ground. An enquiry Commission under Justice PK Mishra was formed to enquire about the Manikanch police firing. The Commission has clearly identified the culpable officers. However the Government is yet to take any action.

The UAIL project will displace and alienate the tribals from their land and lead to the destruction of the fertile agricultural land, forests, perennial water – streams, the very basis of their livelihoods and livelihoods for generations to come. Open cast mining of bauxite will cause severe environmental hazards. Discharge of red mud will cause water pollution. Water will not be suitable for irrigation and domestic purposes. Rivers will dry up and the toxic effluents discharged will result in crop losses and cattle deaths. All these will lead to the destruction of livelihood and loss of life. Around 20,000 people will be affected in 82 villages. The displaced people will scarcely have any survival support. Moreover, the majority of the tribal population will not get any compensation when displaced because they cultivate land as encroachers and not as owners. The entire community will be splintered, livelihood will be impaired and an entire culture of tribal self – reliance will be destroyed if this project is pursued. Moreover the resettlement and rehabilitation facilities will be deficient in basic civic amenities. If the Government succeeds in inaugurating the project in future it will be a major setback for the people's struggle to defend for the right to feed themselves.

The State has taken loan from the World Bank, going into debt, displacing the most marginalized communities and destroying precious forest land to invite investment for mining that will disturb the ecology and environment and led to destruction of livelihood security and displacement of marginalized people. Most of the tribal populations are already denied of their basic minimum wages, the infants and children fail to get even the measly rations of the ICDS programme and incidents of violence, false cases, imprisonment and harassment are occurring every day. If the tribals are displaced the situation will become even more worse.

FIAN West Bengal is upholding this struggle of the tribal people for the right to survive in dignity and self – respect. As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, India and therefore the state of Orissa is duty bound under international law to respect and protect the people's right to feed themselves. Alienation of the people from their land will threaten their right to feed themselves. Moreover, future generations' food producing resources in the area will be destroyed. It will be a legitimate recognition of a legitimate struggle if the human rights of this tribal population are duly protected. . FIAN has launched actions repeatedly to support the cause of those struggling against the state and the mining corporations for their right to feed themselves.

Parama Ukil

Displacement in Lanjigar

The state of Orissa is well – known for its vast mineral resources. Orissa has 69% of the total bauxite deposits of India mainly concentrated in the K-B-K districts (Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi). 25% of the population in Orissa are Adivasis who are dependent on agriculture and mining for their livelihood. A one million ton export oriented project has been proposed by Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. for development of Alumina Plant to produce bauxite in the Lanjigar Block of Kalahandi district. The proposed bauxite mining will take place on the Niyamgiri hills, which have 73 millions tonnes of high quality bauxite. The alumina refinery plant will be at the mining site.

60 tribal families will be displaced and 302 families will be affected as fertile agricultural lands would be used for the project. The Adivasis are solely dependent on these hills and the forests for their livelihood. Eviction and alienation from their land will lead to hunger and starvation. The Government of Orissa has justified the approval as it will result in the inflow of funds and contribute to the economic development of the state. But no adequate rehabilitation facilities have been planned for the affected families. In absence of adequate rehabilitation, the people would lose their access to productive resources like common resources and would be alienated from income opportunities. Thus the poor tribal families of Lanjigarh would be the victims of starvations or in other word victims of violations of RTF. The mining would also dry up rivers, streams and ground water in the area and the dumping of red mud would result in further pollution of surface and ground water as well as deterioration of soil fertility. The affected people would not have access to cultivable land nor safe potable water.

On February 1, 2004, 35 Adivasi households were forcibly evicted from the village of Kinari in Lanjigarh block, Kalahandi district of Orissa. There are further plans to displace twelve villages of over ten thousand people to make way for mining and the alumina refinery plant. The Adivasis will be denied of their right to food and livelihood security if they are evicted without proper rehabilitation and previous experiences of displacement in mining areas have shown that the displaced people end up living in small shacks of ill – planned resettlement colonies with no means of livelihood.

FIAN West Bengal has been organizing campaigns and lobby networks to highlight this issue. The representative of the support group of tribal in Lanjigarh was invited by FIAN West Bengal and Agramee to present their case to Mr. Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, who visited Orissa for investigating status of RTF in the state in order to submit a report to UN. The main aim of the campaign of FIAN West Bengal is to support the struggle of the victims in Lanjigarh to realise their right to food and to stop forcible eviction of the tribal community without any provision of adequate rehabilitation.

Parama Ukil

Hazaribagh Coal mining and eviction threats

Subhechcha Banerjee

The open cast coal mining in Hazaribagh (Jharkhand District) has led to the displacement of a large number of Adivasis and local communities . This project is called East Parej Project and the excavation and exploitation of shallow coal reserves will make hundreds of Adivasis and indigenous people homeless . This Parej East mine is a World Bank funded project and is ostensibly subject to stringent guidelines and criteria against which proper performance can be more openly assessed. Mining activities in Parej East mine are carried out by Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd (CIL), a public sector company.

This project was carried out despite warnings and recommendations by local and international NGOs. FIAN has also taken an initiative to campaign for this particular case because the social and economic consequences of the local population are not adequately addressed. FIAN has been constantly raising voice for the full rehabilitation of Project Affected Persons (PAPs) which includes both income restoration and house settlement. In short FIAN has taken initiative so that the village dwellers are not deprived of their land and natural resources that constitute their economic survival base. Otherwise they should be provided with adequate and proper rehabilitation and resettlement facilities. FIAN raised this issue of violations of RTF at Lanjigarh in United Nations

United Nations is deeply concerned about the ongoing human rights violations victimizing the people of Parej East in the coal mining areas of Jharkhand where some the inhabitants of the mining area were involuntarily resettled. Not only did they lose their homes but also their sources of livelihoods, formerly guaranteed by usufruct rights to the forest land.

In November 2002, the World Bank's Inspection Panel released a detailed report on the occasion of a complaint filed by the project affected people: it observed that the project affected people had not been and were not being adequately compensated and were therefore lacking natural resources for food production as well as access to clean water and to land. If proper rehabilitation facilities are not provided the people will lose their access to food resources and as a state party to the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, our country is duty bound under international law to respect and protect the victims' access to food and food producing resources in the context of all projects which affect livelihoods of the people and World Bank project in East Parej is no exception.

Displacements due to Tourism Industry

Imminent eviction of fishers in DANDI, Orissa

An island formed by extensive silt deposition at the mouth of Subarnarekha River (Orissa) has been existing since 1972 and the local people have named it Dandidwip. The 127 households settling in this island are victims of chronic eviction and majority of them have migrated here from surrounding villages after being severely affected by floods. Some of these families were forcibly evicted by police during the Anti Missile Base Movement of Bhograi Baliapal. The people who have resettled in this island are largely dependent on sea for their livelihood. Majority of them are fishermen and are also involved in secondary occupations like collection of shrimp seeds and drying of fishes. The people suffer from abject poverty and many of them do not have fishing boats or nets of their own. No family living here has the legal land title.

Since past few years the conflict over the ownership of the island has gained strength. There is no clarity on whether the island belongs to the Forest Department or to the Revenue Department and the poor fishers settled in this island have become the helpless victims of the tussle between two government departments. In a recent development at the initiative of the local MP the state government is trying to lease out this island to salt producing companies and also to private companies for developing tourist resort. The Chief Minister of Orissa visited the island and announced the plan of developing tourist resort there. Sri Vinayak Salt Works Ltd, a company which produces salt, has already applied for the lease. The forest department of the state served the fisher families with eviction notice in 2003 and the state authorities have geared up the preparation for evicting the families forcibly.

The impact of these initiatives would be farfetched. The families would be evicted, their livelihoods would be destroyed. They would be exposed to hunger and starvation deaths. No proper resettlement or rehabilitation facilities would be provided to them. Since most of the locals have meagre or no assets and they lack education, their scope for alternative employment is very limited. The state initiatives would also have an adverse environmental impact since it would threaten the coastal biodiversity and disturb the ecological balance.

Forcible eviction with inadequate or no rehabilitation is a violation of RTF as per ICESCR to which India is a state party. Moreover an existing Supreme Court Judgement entails the settlers to retain their land if they are living in that place for more than 10 years, which is the case in Dandi. Besides that, Indian constitution also provides security to vulnerable communities against forcible evictions in the name of development. The project proposes a number of activities that are strictly prohibited in Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas. Therefore threat of eviction of the fishers in Dandi is a clear violation of RTF and should be challenged. Right to Food which is a corollary of the Right to Life (Article 21 of the Indian Constitution) has been threatened in Dandi and it also reflects the violations of the respect bound and protect bound obligations of the state.

The local support group of the fishers, IMSE, has filed a PIL in Cuttack High Court to stop the eviction. The judgement is awaited. FIAN West Bengal has taken up Dandi as a case for the International Fact Finding Missions to be held on December 2005. FIAN has been highlighting this issue for the past few years. During the recent visit of Mr. Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, representatives of IMSE and the victim community of Dandi were invited to share their problem in a dialogue organised by FIAN West Bengal and Agramee.

In the name of “development” this virgin island would be handed over to the foreign players. This model of development which destroys the livelihood security of so many people is questionable and a human right approach is needed to look for people centred alternative development paradigm.

Sunderban Sahara Project and Its Deadly Effects

The location of the famous Sunderbans is in the State of West Bengal. The largest delta and mangrove forest in the world, the Sunderbans is spread over 10,000 sq.km in India and Bangladesh. Of this roughly 4,000 sq.km lies within Indian boundaries and roughly 2,500 sq.km is being conserved at the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve. The sea and the creeks support significant populations of marine life including crustaceans, molluscs, crabs, dolphins, and sea turtles that nest on some of the beaches here. It is an extremely rich and productive eco-system that supports millions of families and livelihoods.

"The Sahara Group" in collaboration with the state government, will develop five Virgin Islands in the 36,000 sq.km of water area in the Sunderbans ... as tourist destinations of global standing ... these islands would set new standards in hospitality and entertainment. Some of the facilities planned for this dream destination are: modern aqua sports, a mini golf course, a spa, a health centre, a club house and a casino. About 75 per cent of the accommodation would be on floating boathouses and 25 per cent as on-shore cottages, stylish huts and fabulous tents. The exclusive, beautiful virgin beaches of the region would be preserved in their pristine glory. The complex would also have a 30-seater, multi-utility high-speed power craft for a floating clinic, a fire fighting unit, an ultra modern security system and both small and big ships. All cottages and house boats would be equipped with broadband internet facilities, video on demand with interactive dish antenna". It is only one in a slew of many mega projects of various kinds that the State is welcoming with gusto. In January 2004, the West Bengal Government and the Sahara group signed a Memorandum of Agreement for the project as well. It will be a joint venture with the State making available about 750 acres of land on the islands of the Lower Long Sand Island, Sagar, Frasergunj, L- Plot, Jharkhali and Kaikhali for a paltry sum of only Rs. 20 crores. With this investment and ambition, project could well sound the death knell of the extremely fragile and unique Sunderbans. It will kill the golden goose, the very ecosystem that makes it such an attractive tourism proposition in the first place. The impunity with which environmental and social concerns have been neglected in the planning of this project could certainly be called spectacular, if indeed they were not so serious and "deadly".

There is violation on every single front: First and probably most important, is the violation of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA) - 1986. There are a number of laws that the project and government authorities are either ignorant of, or are deliberately violating. Both, of course, are inexcusable. The project proposes a number of activities that are strictly prohibited in Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas. These include dredging in creeks and water bodies and the use of coastal salt marsh for developmental activities during the construction phase. Nothing is known of the plans for the disposal of waste and sewage; neither of those to deal with the inevitable oil grease and other forms of pollution resulting from the operation of the boats, barges and floatels. **There is serious concern being expressed about availability of fresh water, which is already a problem in this marshy and saline region.** Presently available only at a depth of about 1,000 feet, many are worried that the huge requirements of the project will only worsen the situation for the environment in general and the local populace in particular. So it's clear that the project does not adhere to; rather clearly violates basic principles like those of right to water, ensuring conservation, environmental sustainability, involvement and benefits to the local communities and ensuring cultural respect; principles that guide and define an eco-tourism project.

FIAN is mainly concerned with violation of right to water and right to food. With the destruction of mangrove ecology in Sunderbans, thousands of poor households in neighboring seven districts, who depend on this ecosystem to earn their livings would be destitute, result would be starvations and chronic malnutrition. FIAN West Bengal has been organizing campaigns and lobby works to highlight this issue in public so that the accountability of the state could be increased and authorities comply with the human rights obligations.

Land Alienation of Mundas in Kolkata leading to violation of Right To Food



The Mundas hold a unique position in the tribal map of India. Their main concentration being in the Chotanagpur of Bihar but they are also spread over in the adjoining states of Bengal, Orissa and Assam wherein they migrated a few generations ago in search of livelihood. There is a unique Munda settlement of about 72 families at a place called Anandapur in Kolkata. While studying the living conditions of the Mundas at Kolkata, we have observed that this tribal community is facing lots of hardship due to their poverty stricken condition. The

Munda community in Anadapur has often become helpless victim of violations of human rights and the recent NRI project has intensified the degree of violations.

The Mundas of Anandapur area came to this place because of natural migration and economic pull. This primary occupation of this community is agriculture and gathering from nearby jungles. But due to the urbanization process they cannot depend solely on agriculture any more. They are nowadays also engaged in other occupations like daily wage laborers, factory workers, vegetable sellers and van rickshaw pullers etc. The black spot of illiteracy is prevalent among this Munda community which often increases their difficulties in finding suitable employments outside agriculture. The Mundas encounter lots of hardship and are often exploited by the local influential people. A survey revealed that majority of Mundas who worked as wage laborers did not receive statutory minimum wages which intensified the household poverty of these people. The women belonging to this community suffer most as they have poor access to education and health facilities.

An NRI Project is being developed in Ananadapur and some of the plots identified for this project belong to the Munda community. The entire land around the Munda settlement is the state property i.e. land acquired by the government for redistribution among poor, but the Mundas are still deprived of their proper dues. To allure the investments of NRI communities the state government has decided to give the land around Munda settlement for NRI project and as mentioned earlier some of the lands belonging to Mundas have also been given to the NRIs illegally. The land which has been given to NRIs for their project is used by the Mundas for agriculture e.g. growing vegetables and also rice. Allotting this land to NRIs destroys the livelihoods of those Mundas who depend on this land for earning their daily breads. No compensation has been given to the Mundas who lost their land or rights to cultivate the land. Thus it has been found that NRI Project has been threatening the existence of approximately 22 families and if there is eviction without proper rehabilitation then the situation will be worsening.

Though survey indicates that majority of the Mundas live below poverty line and suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition, but no measures have been taken by the local officials to include these people in any scheme of PDS to ensure their right to food.

The Munda community in Anandapur also suffers from lack of access to safe water and poor access to health facilities. There is no primary health center near the region and the nearest Government hospital is 12 km away from the settlement. The entire community depends on 4 tube wells for drinking water however, due to the pollution and absence of proper drainage and sewage system the ground water is contaminated and the drinking water collected from local shallow tube wells do not fulfill minimum safety requirements. There is a nearby canal which is another source of water for washing, bathing and other household chores. But the canal water is highly polluted and the area is filled up with dirt, mosquitoes and flies, which act as the carriers of many diseases. Despite several complaints lodged by the Mundas in local government offices, no steps have been taken so far to provide the community with safe water.

The Human Rights of the Munda population of Anandapur region are violated in many ways. The Right to life liberty and security of a person is one of the most important elements of civil and political rights, which is also enshrined in ICESCR and Universal declaration of Human Rights. But it is found that the livelihoods of Mundas in Anandapur are at stake due to allocation of local agricultural land to NRI housing project by the state. Moreover, being poor illiterate and vulnerable, they are often victims of exploitations. They are excluded from benefits of land redistribution programme, they do not receive statutory minimum wages, they are excluded from health services and also do not have access to safe drinking water. Moreover, they are often subjected to cultural aggression from local people belonging to high castes.

India is a state party to ICESCR and therefore duty bound to ensure right to food and feed oneself for all. Everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment, just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment (Article 22 ICESCR). The right to equal pay for equal work and the right to just and favourable remuneration also constitute an important part in this respect. Moreover, minority communities have special rights for protection. Mundas in Anandapur have the right to food and feed themselves as well as the right to social security and its realization through national effort and international cooperation. Being a scheduled tribe, Mundas are entitled to special protection from the state.

In Anandapur however, state is playing a key role in destroying the right to food and feed oneself of the Munda community by allocating agricultural land, which belong to Munda, for NRI project. The local state representatives have also failed to take measures to ensure that Mundas receive statutory minimum wages. These are examples of breach of respect and protect bound obligations of the state under RTF as enshrined in ICESCR.

Moreover, failure of the state to provide Mundas with safe water, incapability of the state to include poor Munda families in PDS or in other social security measures and lack of initiative of the state to redistribute ceiling surplus land among Mundas in order to ensure their livelihoods refer to violation of fulfillment bound obligations of the state under RTF.

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. But due to the poor health facilities the reproductive health of women has been affected and many children were found to be undernourished. Thus Right to Education (Article 25 of ICESCR) is also violated in many cases.

According to the Article 25 of ICESCR education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms. But lack of access of Mundas to education and health services indicate that their basic human rights are being violated.

Another area of concern is the slow but steady detachment of Mundas from their cultural and traditional practices due to pressure of dominant culture. Most of the traits and characteristics of their unique tribal identity were found to be lost. Everyone has the right to participate in cultural life of the community, or enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancements and its benefit. Failure of the state to create an enabling environment for Mundas to practice their culture is a violation of human rights.

We have made an endeavour to highlight some of the crisis faced by the Munda population in the city of Kolkata and we hope to draw the attention of the responsible authorities as well as the civil society so that the human rights of Mundas could be ensured.

By Parama Ukil

Displacement of Peasants in West Bengal

The Government of West Bengal has been wooing Singaporean and Indonesian investors to set up industrial and ancillary units in the “investment – friendly” environment of West Bengal. According to the Government, globalization should be encouraged and Foreign Direct Investment should be invited. As a consequence, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with Indonesia’s Salim group. 5,100 acres of agricultural land would be handed over to the Multinational Company for the development of shopping malls, residential complexes, food, health and I.T. Parks in 24 Parganas and Rajarhat area.

The state of West Bengal that was well – known for its Land Reform measures is now following the trends of globalization and liberalization. The conversion of Bengal’s land use for industrial purposes would have an adverse impact on the overall food security of the state. The common people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood would be deceived and deprived if this project is executed. The use of farmland for the sake of “development” at the cost of the lives of poor farmers would pose a threat to their livelihood and occupation. This would also result in mass eviction. Thousands of farmers would be uprooted and their right to food will be violated if they are forcibly evicted from their farmlands without any proper rehabilitation and resettlement facilities. The villagers who have practiced agriculture throughout their lives cannot suddenly graduate from agriculture to industry. Development of “knowledge city”, “shopping malls”, food, health and I.T. Parks, residential complexes etc which are the key components of the proposed projects will be unable to accommodate the unemployed peasants who do not have expertise in such economic activities. Moreover, the protection of the poor farmers’ income opportunities is also a crucial question to be faced by the state authorities as destruction of livelihoods of the people is considered as violation of RTF. In case displacement is unavoidable it is the State’s obligation under right to food to provide proper form of rehabilitation facilities to the poor farmers and their families.

The state government does not have any comprehensive policy to support peasants to strengthen agrarian economy, neither does the state have any policy to rejuvenate the sick public sector industries in the state. On the contrary the government is bent upon privatising of agriculture and industry and inviting TNCs to invest in the state. The Government has become more “investor friendly” rather than being “people friendly” This has resulted into large scale unemployment both in agriculture and industry in the state. Reports of starvation deaths have become regular feature in the news papers.

In this backdrop the farmers and small producers will suffer a tremendous setback further if the newly proposed project of the government comes into effect. This new reformist measure of using agricultural land for industrial purposes will have an adverse impact on the food security situation of West Bengal also.

Realizing the risk components involved with this process of large-scale conversion of 5,100 acres of contiguous land FIAN West Bengal is working to protect the right to food of the peasants and small producers in the state. FIAN is raising voice to protect the right to food of the marginalized farmers whose fate lie in the hands of Government and the big business tycoons. FIAN WB has been organizing campaigns to highlight this issue among different actors of the civil society. FIAN WB is also involved in lobby work with the state authorities to reconsider the project.

Parama Ukil

NEWS FROM FIAN WEST BENGAL

Food Sovereignty Conference

The struggle of survival of marginalized and vulnerable section of people like landless

laborers has further intensified as a result of imposition of globalization. The related policy changes in poor countries shaped by conditions of IMF, WB, WTO etc. have further endangered livelihoods of poor. Poor accountability of the state and lack of genuine political will have worsened the situation. The result is increasing poverty and hunger in poor countries. To face this crisis, a comprehensive resistance is needed to present a counter policy on food and agriculture that is pro people.

The idea of an alternative paradigm of development has given birth to the concept of food sovereignty. The lack of access to food and the lack of adequate nutrition is called food insecurity. In addition to food security the concept of food sovereignty is also very important. It is the peoples and communities fundamental right to determine their food and agricultural policies. People should have the right to access and control their means of production and also a right to safe culturally, socially, economically and environmentally appropriation foods and sustainable food production.

To support and uphold the people's food sovereignty, a Training of Trainers Program was jointly organized by IMSE and APRN in Kolkata from 19 – 21st September. This introductory course promoted food sovereignty as a people oriented policy response to mainstream Government policies and succeeded in the broad acceptance of food sovereignty as a policy advocacy framework and platform. The necessity of building frameworks and strengthening of mass movements to promote food sovereignty was also discussed in course of the training. All the participants belong to the countries of south and south – east Asia like India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand representing various national and international organizations like IMSE, PAN AP, APRN, VAK, DDS, and FIAN West Bengal and FIAN Andhra Pradesh. How the problem of hunger and malnutrition are intensified by imperialist globalization was one of the important issues of discussion and it was agreed by all that a right based framework and power based approach should be developed for advocacy and campaigns. The conference called for developing a broad based people's alliance for food sovereignty as a platform for effective sharing and networking of NGOs/CSOs in the struggle against corporate globalization. The conference also called for better degree of accountability of the government in recognize their responsibility to uphold people's rights to food security and food sovereignty. The participants observed that the right to feed oneself is not fully ensured in most of the third world countries, despite the fact that most of these countries have signed numbers of treaties and agreements to fully realise the human RTF. How the policies and programmes regarding food sovereignty could be translated to practice was a major topic of discussion during the strategy session in the conference.

In course of discussions participants were successful in developing concrete strategies for advocacy campaigns on food sovereignty. This right based approach will help in the process of achieving food security and safety and will also try to solve the problems of hunger and malnutrition.



Durga Puja is the most important mass festival of Bengalis. Every Bengali is busy setting up agenda for the four days of Durga Puja. The familiar sound of Dhak (musical instrument), Dhunuchi Nach, the mild fragrance of Shiuli (flower), gives a familiar tug at every Bengali heart. The city of Kolkata enlivens during the four days of Durga Puja starting from the day of Bodhon on Maha Shasthi and ending up with the immersion of clay idols in the river Gangs in the evening. Bengal specialises in preserving the age old tradition of making clay idols. Such unmatched skills come in the limelight during the festive occasion of Durga Puja. Months before the Puja clay artisans start to breathe in life in the images of Durga. Making Durga idols is a lengthy and a backbreaking process.

The Pandel making has taken a form of art. It is the abode of Goddess Durga for the four days of Durga Puja. Skills and creative ideas are used to make the most exquisite and intricate designs which leave the viewers awestruck. Built in such an elaborate and grand manner they appear stunning after depicting famous architectural splendour. But lavish expenditures are incurred to build the pandals and immense wastage of food products like paddy, wheat, bread, sugarcane etc. are visible which are used for making pandals and decorations. The people of Kolkata should always give it a thought whether these spending are justified. The evolution of many clubs, associations and societies has made the Puja cosmopolitan in character. Today this festival has become an occasion for pageantry and extravaganza.

Ironically Durga Puja is often marked with floods in rural Bengal and the struggle of survival of thousands of poor families. This year is also no exception. On the one hand thousands of people in West Bengal are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. People are suffering from starvation deaths and suicides due to lack of food and on the other hand huge expenditures are incurred for making pandals and decorations and large quantities of food items are misused for these purposes. This reflects the social irresponsibility and lack of sensitivity of the elite of urban areas. Durga Puja is definitely the greatest social festival and a major event which sets the pace high for every Bengalis. But we should not forget the downtrodden who are deprived of food every day in our state. We can definitely avoid the incurrence of huge expenditure and unnecessary wastage of food resources while remaining surcharged with fun and gaiety during this festive season

Parama Ukil

Parama Ukil

A Visit to the Hooghly Group

On 2nd October FIAN West Bengal organised a day long discussion on *Significance Of RTF And The Role Of FIAN Groups* in collaboration with the Hooghly group of FIAN in West Bengal. Dr. Ujjaini



Halim, Mr. Arobindo Mukherjee, Ms. Parama Ukil and Ms. Subhechha Banerjee went to Haripal (Hooghly) where the meeting was organised. The local host was the FIAN Hooghly group and a social organisation known as Abalamban. The meeting started with the welcome address by the convenor of FIAN Hooghly group. This was followed by the presentation of Mr. Arabindo Mukherjee, who gave a brief idea about the global hunger scenario and nature of FIAN's work in the state. In her presentation Dr. Ujjaini Halim elaborated the main activities of FIAN groups in West Bengal. She discussed about different

interventions of FIAN i.e. Fact Finding Missions, the preparation of hotlines and urgent actions and local researches. The participants discussed in length different contemporary local and state level human rights issues mainly related to RTF and have adopted certain strategies to carry out local researches on a few selected cases by the Hooghly group. The members of the Hooghly group further pointed out the need for organising Human rights training for the members. They were particularly happy to receive the Bengali News Bulletin published by the section and promised to contribute to the Bulletin in coming months. All the participants expressed their opinion in favour of organising regular dialogues with the representatives of the secretariat and during the course of discussions it was decided that this process of keeping in touch with each other will be given a high priority in coming days and months. This would ensure the emergence of a vibrant and strong section of FIAN in West Bengal as a space would thus be created for exchange of views and opinions among each other to develop new strategies and methods for better functioning and networking. The main purpose of the visit is to motivate the group members to take a proactive role in FIAN West Bengal's works. It was very encouraging to observe the great enthusiasm among the FIAN members of Hooghly in human rights work and the spirit of volunteerism in facilitating people's struggles for full realisation of right to food in the state.



*A discussion meet at Kolkata on
“Profit for Few or Food for All”
As a part of Action Highlight of
FIAN, on the occasion of World
Food Day*



FIAN West Bengal organized a day long discussion meet on *PROFIT FOR FEW OR FOOD FOR ALL* on October 17, 2005 as a part of Action Highlight of FIAN International, on the occasion of World food Day, 2005. Members representing various groups of FIAN West Bengal as well as prominent members of the Executive Committee were present in the meeting.

The significance of World Food Day, in the context of existing poverty and hunger scenario of West Bengal was the main theme of the meeting. The discussion was focused on the proposed collaboration of the state government with a MNC from Indonesia, which would endanger food security of thousands of peasants in West Bengal. This project would result in large-scale land alienation of poor peasants and no adequate and feasible compensation/rehabilitation is planned for the victims. FIAN West Bengal would closely monitor the development of this case and would organize campaigns, advocacy and lobby works to ensure right to food and feed oneself of those who would be affected by this project. In this regard some concrete campaigning strategies were adopted in the meeting. The meeting was followed by a film show. Mother Ganga Do you Hear us Cry: A film made by FIAN International, highlighting poverty and violation of RTF in India was screened.



COMING UP IN NOV-DECEMBER 2005

1. PEASANT'S CONVENTION AGAINST INVASION OF WTO IN AGRICULTURE AT KOLKATA in December 2005

WTO's invasion in agriculture endangers food security of millions of poor in India. To protest against this invasion a Peasant Convention would be organised by IMSE at Kolkata on December 06, 2005 on the occasion of 104th Birthday of Com. Abdul Halim, pioneer of the Left Movement in the subcontinent. FIAN West Bengal would be a co-host of the convention. The main aim of the convention is to highlight how policies of WTO affect the food security of poor peasant households in particular and urban as well as rural poor in general in South Asian countries. Representatives of various peasant organisations, NGOs/CSOs and human rights organisations would be present in the meeting. A main focus of the convention is to make the voices of the victims of violations of right to food heard and to this end representatives of the victims/affected communities would also be present in large number.

2. NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY REPORT ON RIGHT TO FOOD IN INDIA AT DELHI IN December, 2005

FIAN India will be organising a National Symposium for documentation of violations of RTF I in India as a part of drafting the Parallel Report on RTF in the country. This would be a follow-up of TOT at Chennai and West Bengal, organised by the respective FIAN chapters, during the beginning of this year. Representatives of various NGOs/CSOs who took part in those TOT would be invited to present the cases which they documented in their regions. A final structure of the Parallel report would be adopted in the symposium.

In the Next Issue:




Agrarian Reform a Human Rights Obligation

River Erosion in West Bengal and Violations of RTF

Eviction of Slums at Kolkata and Violations of RTF

MDG and Realization of RTF

New Publications from FIAN West Bengal

-  **Updated Brochure of FIAN West Bengal**
-  **A brochure in Bengali 7 English on Voluntary Guideline on Right to Food**
-  **Report of Fact Finding Mission of FIAN International in Bangladesh**

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