

ACTIVITY REPORT OF SANCHAL FOUNDATION FOR THE YEAR 2000 TO 2001

There were five programmes that were either initiated or followed up in the year under review (2000-2001):

- 1) Critical issues concerning Adivasi/Indigenous people in the North-East.
- 2) Environmental health issues in Bhopal.
- 3) Profiles of Social Movements in Madhya Pradesh.
- 4) Promoting Peace.
- 5) People's Master Plan for Delhi.

I. Adivasis/Indigenous Project

An Adivasi/Indigenous person was appointed as a full time coordinator for this programme whose special task was to travel to different Adivasi regions and network with people concerning common issues that affect them. Four areas of concern were identified:

- a. Adivasi/Indigenous women's concerns. An independent mechanism was evolved with a core committee of women from the Adivasi region to meet, discuss, and identify areas of concern, and work out some common programmes. Accordingly a Convention was organised in the North East for Adivasi/Indigenous women of the 7 states in the North-East. It was a 3-day convention where women came together to discuss their history of struggle in the North East and write their own history. The three-day meeting also identified areas of concern to be followed up.
- b. The second area of concern was with regard to Patent law and Biodiversity issues that affect Adivasi/Indigenous people. A meeting was organised in 2000 in collaboration with Kalpavriksh and the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP), where some 80 people from different Adivasi regions participated and came out with a declaration. This process contributed to the NBSAP process. The Convenor of this committee also participated in an international meet in Spain on Biodiversity issues.
- c. The third area was with regard to writing an update of the Adivasi situation of the different regions, which is in the process of being collated and it may be published at a future date. Five people were identified in five Adivasi regions and they were assigned the responsibility of writing area specific reports.
- d. The fourth area of work was with regard to Adivasi/Indigenous people who are becoming extinct or who face a serious threat of becoming extinct. A small committee has been formed to look into this and the members have been identified from Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and the North-East who have taken the responsibility of working on it.

II. Environmental Health in Bhopal:

Bhopal is an issue in which the Foundation has been involved for some time now and some initiatives have been taken this year to participate in and support the setting up a National Commission on Bhopal.

An independent group has been working and investigating into 15 areas of study and research to evaluate comprehensively the present status in Bhopal. A coordinator has been appointed to coordinate the work with 15 convenors who are experts in different fields and who have volunteered to do the job. To begin with, a comprehensive survey was initiated in Bhopal with a common questionnaire addressing all the fifteen areas of

study. The volunteers who were employed to do the survey were paid an honorarium for collecting the data. The data so collected has been fed into the computer for analysis. The analysed data has been passed on to the different convenors, who are coordinating their respective studies. This is a long-term project and the work is in the process of completion. There is a possibility that three of the reports would be published sometime in January 2002 and others would follow.

Only after completion of the 15 reports a National Convention will be called, where the reports would be submitted for discussion and debate. The objective is basically to evolve a mechanism to monitor the ongoing impact of the disaster and, if possible, initiate programmes for rehabilitation by constituting a National Commission on Bhopal.

III. Profiles of Social Movements.

As part of evolving profiles of social movements, one Adivasi Movement in Madhya Pradesh has been identified, namely Adivasi Mukti Sangathan. Research has already been initiated on this study. A coordinator has been appointed with two researchers who have spent time in the Adivasi areas collecting data and interviewing people. They are currently in the process of writing a report. The report will be presented at a seminar after which a book may be published. [This section to be expanded a bit with material to be sent later by Vijayan.]

IV. Promoting Peace Initiatives

[To be sent later by Vijayan]

V. People's Plan for Delhi

Several 'public interest' petitions filed in various courts of Delhi since 1985 as well as a number of ad-hoc 'development' projects have been adversely affecting the lives of more than 80 lakh people living in the Jhuggi Jhonpuri Clusters, Resettlement Colonies, and Unauthorised Colonies of Delhi. The urban poor living on pavements, providing informal services, working in the small-scale industrial sector, recycling waste, running public transport, and maintaining public areas have also become victims of both judicial as well as administrative activism aimed at keeping the city "clean". Eight organisations came together in early 1999 to meet the challenges to survival posed by this kind of activism based on an upper class view of the Master Plans and 'rejuvenation' of the city. Through collective action this alliance of groups called the Sajha Manch has grown to incorporate over seventy organisations by the end of 2001. The Foundation, in collaboration with the People's Science Institute, has set up the Hazards Centre to provide technical and professional support to this alliance.

In January 2000, a one-year project on the "People's Master Plan for Delhi", was undertaken by the Hazards Centre. This project had four objectives:

- a. Develop a theoretical critique of the formal planning process in Delhi city.
- b. Collect household data from roughly 1% of the total households in unauthorised, informal settlements, representative of a population of about 60 lakhs.
- c. Set out alternative pro-people norms, principles, and plans for the growth of the city.
- d. Promote the participation of people from the unauthorised and informal settlements in developing and lobbying for an alternative Master Plan for Delhi.

A final report describing and evaluating the entire exercise was submitted in January 31, 2001, with the following conclusions:

1. A new strategy has to be developed to intervene in the legal process. There is also a clear need to go beyond a dependence on intervening in courts.
2. There is little sympathy in bureaucratic and administrative circles for the concerns of the urban poor. The civil space needs to be expanded through different forms of mass action in civil society.
3. The media has been quite unresponsive, except when there is a crisis in the city. Thus, enhanced local organisation at both the work-place as well as the residence become necessary components of any strategy.