

## BELOW POVERTY LINE (BPL) MOVEMENT REPORT:

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and thus needs to be tackled by providing opportunities, creating entitlements and building capabilities. Undoubtedly the process of economic growth contributes to end by creating productive employment opportunities.

In order to ascertain the determinants of rural poverty, it is imperative to explain how poverty is measured. In estimating poverty levels, defining how poverty line is the first step. A poverty line demarcates the poor from the non-poor. It is identified as the minimum required consumption level of food clothing, shelter, transport, education and healthcare.

In India a task force constituted by planning commission in 1977 defined the poverty line for the country as per capita consumption expenditure level, which meet the average per capita daily calories requirement of 2,400 kcal in rural areas. Failing to meet this requirement and the expenditure we term them as BPL.

Crores of people in our country are in the trap of tremendous suffering due to lack of food and proper health facilities. Government supports this population of the country by forming BPL lists. But even in this list, instead of selecting the tribal, daily wage labourers, landless farmers etc., *Zamindars* and well to do people have been selected. This time a BPL list of 3 crores 86 lakhs 48 thousand and 6 hundred (3,86,48,600) people is being prepared in the whole country for a period of five years. Since fifty five years of being a Democratic Republic there have been uncountable instances of scams of thousands of crores of rupees by our politicians and beaurocrats. But the largest of all these scams till date is the recent scam of the BPL list.

In the year 2002 a survey was conducted for preparing the BPL list wherein each family was asked thirteen questions and scores or numbers were allotted to each answer according to the replies. The families with small scores were selected for the list. But the Government's survey shows that the rich are consider as BPL and the poor people who deserve to be in this category (BPL) are eliminated from such category. The survey has favored comparatively well off and influential persons in the rural areas at the cost of the poor even in the selection of the deprived, they have charged.

In order to deepen its understanding of the people about the BPL scenario, **the Prayas** decided to visit the various village of Bhadesar Tehsil and to find out whether Government's survey on BPL has truly conducted justly. Talking to various people of the village and through observation, it is found out that the Government's survey on BPL has not conducted properly. And it is totally unjust conducted against the poor. While enquiring about the survey to Gram Panchayat and to the Authority person, they failed to give the information. But after much complain the Gram Panchayat decided to give the copy of the survey. (*Which I am sending you, the sample copy.*)

Going through the survey conducted by the Government's authority, we find lots of contradiction with the survey conducted and the actual condition of people living in the village. When such a injustice was found out, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Rajasthan, which had filed a public interest writ in the Supreme Court in the past, took up the BPL selection process in Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan as a case study. A survey was carried out in the 9 tehsils- Bhadesar, Nimbaheda, Chittorgarh, Arnod, Pratapgarh, Begun, Kapasan, Doongla and Bari Sadri of district. It indicated that the poor families were credited with more points, decided on

the basis of the land holdings, food availability, clothes, sanitation facilities and worldly possessions, to mention a few of them, then their comparatively well off neighbors. (***For this you can refer the case study which I am sending you the attachment copy***) looking back again carefully we find that the zamindar of the village gets 9 points in the score sheet while the landless Dalit get 20 points. Those who are awarded 15 points do not stand much chance to get into the BPL list.

Many poor people did appeal with the help of the activists and other organisations, but which the local authorities initially rejected, before they were taken up following a directive from Jaipur. Moreover 'Ward sabha' meetings did not take place anywhere. Even though the ward sabha meeting was held but without much attendance. The names in the list were read out at gram sabhas but the authorities are in no mood to make corrections or include the names of the left out.

### **Negligence and Shrewdness on the Part of the Administration:**

1. Neither the scores of the thirteen question survey were revealed in the villages nor their copies provided even on demand.
2. Ward meetings were held only on papers. Even if held at a few places the meetings went useless as none of the appeals of the poor was entertained. People were only allowed to give in their names in case they were left out in the survey.
3. It was told by the Development Officers and the Chief Executive, *Zila Parishad* that *Gram Sabha* cannot make any change in the scores once provided through the survey; it only holds power to add on those people to the list who were somehow left out in the survey.
4. The initial appeal of thousands of poor families was relentlessly rejected by the officers, *tehsildars* and the block officers without even giving an ear. Thus due to lack of any investigation by the responsible authorities, these poor families had to live with injustice and numerous troubles in life.
5. So that the negligence and selfish deeds of the administration involved in the BPL selection is not exposed to the people, the authorities tried to misguide the people by hiding their scores and doing everything in a hidden and closed manner.

### **Our Demands:**

1. The lists of the thirteen question scores should be revealed in each and every village and their copies must be provided on demand.
2. Ward meetings and *Gram Sabhas* should be reconducted and strict efforts should be made to honestly include the actual poor and needy in the BPL list.
3. Any officer causing any kind of negligence or interruption in the process must be strictly dealt with and disciplinary action must be taken against him so that the poor can get enough protection in their troublesome lives.

From this it is very clear that the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the poor will not get a place in the BPL list in many of the districts in Rajasthan while those who can look after themselves will corner all the benefits meant for the depressed and downtrodden. The Government wants to wash of their hands on the poor.

## **Great Victory:**

In order to convert the demands, a *dharna* for indefinite time period was started by the *Khetihar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan* at the collector *chouraha* of Chittorgarh beginning from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May.

However the whole story took a great turn on the second day of the *dharna* itself when a call was received from the collector asking for a face to face discussion in order to settle down the things. The meeting lasted for about one and a half hour at the end of which the collector had to succumb to our demands. It was decided that a resurvey would be conducted for all the 7655 appeals submitted so far from the nine *tehsils* of Chittorgarh. It was also decided that the resurvey would be conducted in the presence of at least one representative from our *sangathan* in order to assure that no injustice happens this time. Also to be noted that the commissioner appointed for the BPL survey would be visiting a few villages himself on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May in order to verify the situation.

This is a great success in itself and we thank everybody who have been with us through out the struggle and have been a motivating factor in our fight against injustice.

I am sure these documents will help you for further understanding. I am also sending you the attachment copy of the following:

- The Supreme Court's letter.
- A case study of rich and the poor,
- Newspapers cutting.
- Questionnaire of the survey.
- The Master sheet.

We can send you more of our newspapers cutting, which we have compiled in our BPL documents. Any queries and details please let us know.

Thanking you

With best wishes

Karuna Brahma  
(Lok Shikshan Sansthan)