

The pen has snatched our bread

Indefinite dharna from October 3rd, 2006 District Headquarters, Chittodgadh

In September 2006 the government discarded the old BPL list and came up with the new one. At this time in the district of Chittodgadh 77,111 families have been removed from the list. 70 Bhil families live in the Potlao panchayat of Bhadesar district. These people live in run down shacks, they are landless and most of the youth are or were bonded laborers. They can hardly buy grains to feed their families. If they get sick, they have no choice but to die because they cannot get medical treatment. Many other castes have poor people and widows whose lives are in danger because of the absence of basic things- food and medicines. But the new BPL list categorizes these families as 'rich' and well to do and thus their rights as the rightful beneficiaries of BPL have been snatched.

This is not only the case of the villages under Potlaw Gram Panchayat; in many other villages in each and every panchayat of the district this is the story. The people who created the survey are responsible for this because the surveyors had absolutely no idea of the nature of poverty in the villages. Out of the 13 questions of the survey, some questions were: do you get two meals a day, how many clothes you own, do your children go to school, what kind of debt do you have, is there any migration for employment, type of employment in the family and what kind of help do they want from the government. These questions are so vague that they do not capture the reality of a poor family and misidentify poverty.

When they survey work started in 2002, people's movements vehemently opposed these survey questions. But the government was stubborn, stuck to its plans and completed the survey carelessly. After the survey in ward sabhas and gram sabhas the government officials behaved like dictators, misled the people and with its irresponsibility fully prepared to snatch the morsels of food from the mouth of these poor people.

As a result of this, 7,655 people of the affected districts came together and filed an appeal requesting a resurvey in all the tahsil headquarters in Chittorgarh district. But the officials ignored this appeal. Even during such dire times, the popularly elected political leaders were hand in glove with the bureaucrats involved in this matter. Now the lists are ready and have been sent to the gram panchayats, but in many villages all or most of the poor families have been deleted from the list. This has caused wide spread anger and frustration in the people. This is the reason that poor people from the villages are protesting against this list. As a result of this, the panchayat presidents and other representatives have started organizing independent protests against the BPL. But these being small are not effective and they are not making any impact on the government. To wake this insensitive and cruel government now the people in the villages and the people's movements will have to come together and fight. The people's movements have decided to start an indefinite protest at the district headquarters beginning October 3rd.

Fight for your rights. Show solidarity. Participate in the dharna. Every aware and sensitive citizen from the villages or cities who thinks that this is injustice against the poor is requested to show support and solidarity to this campaign.