Asbestos Mining and Medical Camps - Rajasthan

MLPC
Mine Labour Protection Campaign

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Our Raison d’être

Mine Labour Protection Campaign (MLPC) was formed as a response to the problems and needs of the millions of unorganized mine labourers throughout the state of Rajasthan.

Rajasthan is one of the largest producers of natural stones in India, and mining is the second largest employment sector.

MLPC works to empower mine workers to fight injustice and inequality through the organization of Self Help Groups (SHGs), Unions and Cooperatives. MLPC’s goals and activities centre around labour rights, community development, advocacy, livelihoods and policy level work.

Profile of Mine Workers

• Most mine workers are indigenous people, landless, marginal farmers, living below the poverty line.
• Their habitats are practically inaccessible with no metalled road, no portable water, no electricity, or a phone connection.
• Few children go to school since teachers do not attend the government run schools due to their inaccessible locations.
• It takes one hour to reach the nearest primary health care centre, thus not ready access to healthcare.
• Most women and children suffer from anaemia or iron deficiency. Malnutrition is common.

Asbestos to Asbestosis

• After the Government of India asbestos ban order in July 1986, all official asbestos mining in Rajasthan came to a close only in 2005 – almost after 2 decades.
• We have been working on Occupational Health ever since we lost one of our community members to asbestosis.
• Recent investigation by us showed that illegal asbestos mining and processing units still thrive in the State, since India still has a large market for asbestos drain pipes and other products.

Strategy to Demand what is Ours

• Medically Examined but No medical Records – 169 former asbestos miners were examined by National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) in Jhadol, Udaipur district and 93 were found to be suffering from asbestosis. Till date, the medical diagnosis has not been shared with those examined.
• Litigation in the court by the victims of asbestosis, filing for Right to Information
• Staged Non Violent protest or Dharna in front of the collectorate in Jhadol for 10 days by the victims and their next of kin; in front of NIOH in Ahmedabad (another state) demanding the reports from NIOH
• Finally, order for medical re-examination came only in April 2011 since NIOH had misplaced the earlier medical reports

State Apathy – Peoples’ Movement

• Rajasthan State government tried to lift the ban on asbestos through gazette notification – claiming that asbestosis does not exist in the state
• Those affected by Asbestosis led the movement and drew attention to the reports of Dr. Arthur Frank.
• Media attention, agitations, helped to stall the ban.
• In August 2011, MLPC exposed an illegal asbestos mine which was fined a mere INR 50,000 (approx.$1000)
• June 2011 NIOH re-examination camp was held for 3 days where 88 former asbestosis workers were examined. 35 workers from the original list were denied re-examination since they did not have proper identity proof.
• Today we are again following up with NIOH to declare the medical examination report of the 88 examined in June
By April, 20 former asbestos mine workers who had been examined by NIOH in 2008, had already died.

May 2011 we did a door to door survey to find out how many workers were associated with asbestos mining and where they are today. We identified 2000 former asbestos mine workers in Jhadol.

During this survey we also discovered Provident Fund receipts, establishing employment proof for about 257 former asbestos mine workers.

In August 2011 we organised a 5 day camp with OSHA, OEHNI partner where almost 230 former workers were examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Mineworkers examined</th>
<th>OEHNI examined</th>
<th>NIOH</th>
<th>Estimate Among Former Miners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos Cases</td>
<td>211 (48.8%)</td>
<td>99 (55%)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shame and blame the government for human loss due to asbestos mining and use
Campaign for Ban on Asbestos mining
Judicial remedy by way of compensation
Agitation to condemn the prevalent government practice to collect research data on asbestosis without sharing the medical reports with those examined, and inform those who are dying from it
Asbestos Victim Survival Programme – Victims’ Union; Secure alternate livelihood; Provide Healthcare through government supported health camps and health insurances; Demand Justice; Catalysts for change in Policy

Thank you to the OEHNI network partners for their support.

A very special Thank you to Laurie since no work is possible without resources.