

# UPDATE COLLECTIVE

Issue No: 1

September 1<sup>st</sup> 2007

## LAND RIGHTS STRUGGLES & NEW PEOPLE'S POLITICS

### Editor's Note

Greetings to all readers from Update Collective team. After a gap of several months, Update is back and we hope not to have any break-period in publication in the future. Newly reconstituted Update Editorial team is happy to bring out this issue of Update focussing on the land rights struggles across the country.

These struggles are taking new forms and dimensions to the extent that the struggle history and geography itself will get re-written and re-drawn. This is the new dawn in people's politics in the sub-continent. Political analysts are bound to recognise this shift in pattern and trend.

As always, we feel it is the role and duty of Update Collective to bring these struggle stories to the readers and activists across. We do this with the hope that each one of you will engage with these issues and guide the public discourse on 'Rights of marginalised communities and Affirmation of Natural Resources'. The trend is clear and sound. So far these communities were on the back-foot, resisting state atrocities and invasion into their resources, customs and traditions. Now being pushed against the wall, we see a new rising, of the poor and landless against a state that favours the corporates and landed elite - one that reclaims lost land and resources.

*"Give us land or give us bullets..."*

### The Chengara Land Struggle in Kerala

The hilly terrains at the southern plantation belt of the Pathanamthitta district in Kerala reverberates with a major land struggle of an unprecedented nature involving more than 5000 families of the most deprived sections of the population - Dalits and Adivasis. These are the people left-out in the land reforms of Kerala, once lauded as a grand success. They demand land to live in and labour on.

This struggle by landless Dalits and Adivasis to gain ownership of land began on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2007. According to the President of the Sadhujana

Vimochana Samyuktha Vedi (SJVSU), Laha Gopalan, about 4500 landless families involving 29000 odd people from different parts have moved on to the struggle front building tents with poles and plastic sheets. The numbers are going up every day with landless people from different districts joining the struggle.

They have been labelled as 'encroachers' and attacked by the *Goondas* of the rubber plantations of Harrison Malayalam Limited at Chengara near Konni in Pathanamthitta District. Ten of them including women were admitted in the hospitals in Pathanamthitta. To top the state and land-mafia terror, Chickungunia epidemic is also taking its toll on these poor people.

With the rains continuing, the fever tightening its grip and the food stock drying up; the people are facing a dire situation. But their spirits are high more than a month into the struggle. They affirm that they will not go back. "Give us land or give us bullets", their lips read.

This is actually the second phase of the struggle. Ten months back the SJVSU launched a struggle that was on very much on similar lines. It was in Kumbazha Estate of the same management. The struggle was called-off after getting assurance from the Government that their demand would be looked into. Since there was no indication of any positive move from the state Government, the SJVSU moved into the present struggle by occupying new land. To begin with, they occupied about 125 acres. After Onam Festival, they have spread on to a larger area covering four hills-each family occupying about one acre of land.

The lease period of the estate in question has expired but the estate owners claim that even if the land is not theirs, the trees belong to them. The CPI-M lead Left Front Government in Kerala is bound by its one year old promise to take this land from the plantation owners and distribute it to the landless. The Government had given in writing that the Adivasis will be allotted land. Successive governments of all shades- from Right to Left have not fulfilled the promise of providing land to the landless except in a very nominal way. The Ghost of Muthanga, where the police shot at the Adivasis who claimed their ancestral land, should continue to haunt the authorities.

Muthanga is a landmark in peoples struggle for land and it challenges people to go on with struggles claiming land for the Dalits and Adivasis.

By the most conservative estimates, 56% of Dalits and Adivasis in Kerala have no land. The Advisis, Dalits and Dalit Christians (all these communities are among the 4500 occupiers in Chengara) constitute about 65 lakhs in Kerala's population - 5 lakhs of Adivasis and the rest Dalits. If they posses 2 cents<sup>1</sup>, 4 cents or at best 10 cents of land, they are considered as landowners while corporate houses continue to get thousands of acres on lease. There are estate owners such as 'Harrison Malayalam' who have no legal right over thousands of acres that they hold on to. They have 33 estates (Tea & Rubber) holding not less than 50, 000 acres in six districts of Kerala. How do we reconcile with such injustice? The reality which is the reason for hope is that these communities who are denied basic rights are becoming conscious and they are rising up.

The management, Trade Unions and the media have been most unfriendly to the land struggle at Chengara. The Political Parties including the CPI-M and CPI who led the land struggle in Khammam in Andhra Pradesh in August, who are collecting money to help the families of the deceased in Khammam, are sparing no effort to drive away the poor Dalits and Adivasis struggling for land in Kerala.

The present agitation is an indication of the intense nature of the struggle. It is not easy for 4000 odd families (which keeps on increasing by a minimum of 20 families a day) to come away to an area surrounded by "enemies" and to stay on for weeks and months fighting the most horrid situations of rain, epidemics and hunger. The families at the Kurumbatti division of the Chengara estate were asked what if the court gives the verdict to oust the encroachers; the women were the most vocal in declaring: "We have five liters of kerosene oil and the moment the authorities' turn us out we will burn ourselves. No question of retreating without getting land".

---

<sup>1</sup> 1acre=100cents

Contacts from the SIVSV support committee in Kerala:

P.J. Johnson & Jomon (Navachethana) - 0469-2630923, 09447956412 Email: Jomon Cheriyan [jomoncheriyan@gmail.com](mailto:jomoncheriyan@gmail.com); Dynamic Action (Navachethana) <[dynaact@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dynaact@yahoo.co.in)>  
Joy Joseph (Programme for Social Action) - 09447907635; Email: [joykutty23@yahoo.co.in](mailto:joykutty23@yahoo.co.in)

*"Jo Zameen Sarkari Hai, Who Zameen Hamari Hai..."*

### **Victories and the ongoing Land Struggle in Sonebhadra, UP**

Uttar Pradesh's Sonebhadra district has become the epicenter of a major land rights struggle, especially after police repression and the arrest of several activists of the Kaimur Kshetra Majdoor Mahila Kisan Sangarsh Samiti (KKMMKSS) under the draconian National Security Act. The KKMMKSS won a land mark victory, not just for the local movement but also for land struggles across the country, when due to the strong and persistent political pressure created by it the Mayawati Government was forced to withdraw charges on activists under the draconian National Security Act within 10 days. In a historic decision, the state government has also agreed to the demand of the Kaimur Samiti for land distribution to Dalit and Adivasi families.

For several years now the Kaimur region and several districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh have been the focus of a struggle between the Forest Department and the forest dwellers, mostly landless Adivasis and Dalits for the return of the land that the local community claims as their traditional *gram samaj* land, been illegally taken over by the Forest Department. The KKMMKSS, a movement led by women, Dalit and Adivasis, has been at the forefront of this struggle. Repeated protests and clashes have ensued, while the Forest Department has refused to negotiate the issue or recognize the rights of local communities.

Since the enactment of the Forest Rights Act in December 2006, tension between the officials of the forest department and local organizations heightened with the forest department in collusion with the local police issuing threats and harassing innocent people. Their repeated statements that the Forest Rights Act is still not in

place are actually contempt of the Parliament. The local landowners and forest officials in nexus with police have done every bit to suppress the movement by branding the Dalits and Adivasis involved in this peaceful struggle as Naxalites.

Roma, a woman leader of the KKMMKSS and a steering committee member of the National Forum of Forest People & Forest Workers (NFFPFW), along with three other KKMMKSS activists, Shanta Bhattacharya, Lalta Devi and Shyamlal Paswan were picked up by the police from Robertsganj in Sonbhadra district on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August while campaigning for the implementation of the Forests Rights Act. While all arrested were charged under IPC 144, 143, 447 and 5/26 and 63 of the Indian Forest Act, Roma has also being charged under 120B of the IPC and the National Security Act. This was clear attempt to demoralize the members and activists of the movement.

But it failed to dampen the spirit of the struggling people especially that of women force. They vehemently opposed the police action and agitated and blocked the main highway for hours and continued the *dharna* at the District Court premises through out this period. The local communities successfully controlled the 5000 acres land which they had recaptured earlier, standing firm against an all out attack by the police and the forest department in alliance with the local mafia. This is remarkable and it reaffirms the strength of struggle truly owned by the local people's organization. The struggle continued strongly despite the fact that the police registered FIRs against 300 people, half of whom were women.

The struggle made it impossible for the UP government to ignore the demands and on 17<sup>th</sup> August Chief Minister Mayawati herself signed orders directing the withdrawal of charges under NSA. In the matter of other local cases the assurance has been given by the state to file a final report and quash all the cases.

The core issue in this struggle of course centers on the enactment of Forest Rights Act 2006. The passing of the Act by the Parliament in December 2006 created an enthusiasm among the forest dwellers who have been fighting for their rights for centuries. They could see the dawn of the new

era which would help them to liberate from the land lordism of the forest department in the forest areas. At the same time through this legislation, a strong possibility of unity of forest dwelling communities is also emerging as Adivasis and Dalits are coming together against the local land lords and the forest department quiet decisively. The emerging situation is definitely threatening the very basis of this unholy alliance between the Forest department, the local landlords, contractors and the police.

Even as the struggle for land and for withdrawal for false charges on all activists in continues Sonbhadra, this experience and victory holds significant lessons. It underlines that where land has not been easily given to the landless they have to and will take possession by themselves through democratic process and sustained effort. It may take a longer time but it has to come. There is no other shortcut.

Contcat:  
NFFPFW, Purab Mohal, Harsh Nagar, Robertsganj,  
District Sonbhadra- 231216, Uttar Pradesh  
Tel : 91-5444-224578  
Email : [romasnb@gmail.com/](mailto:romasnb@gmail.com/)  
[hrlkaimoor@gmail.com](mailto:hrlkaimoor@gmail.com)

*"Birsa Munda Amar Rahe..."*

**Land struggle in Ghateha, Rewa (MP) continues even in the wake of police brutalities**

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007 the police opened fire on Adivasis in Ghateha village in Teothar Tehsil in the Rewa District of Madhya Pradesh under the supervision of Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), SDOP and Circle Officer. More than 4000 Adivasis families had taken possession of a piece of land in this village. After surrounding the area for more than 5 hours, police fired tear gas shells and started beating the women mercilessly. This was followed by police firing. 3 people were feared killed and hundreds said to be injured or missing. More than a month later and after a lot of struggle on ground by the local movement and support from movements across the country, the IG Shri B. Maria ordered a high level enquiry into the firing incident. The issue was also strongly taken up in the Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha. The National Human Rights Commission too issued notices to the DGP and Collector of Rewa to report on the Ghateha firing.

Around 1500 Adivasi families have been dependent on rain fed agriculture in 1500 *bighas* of the land in Ghateha village. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007 they moved into this land on which they had been living off for three years, building temporary shelters and huts. The land in and around the area was denotified in July 1974 and then reclaimed by the Forest Department, branding the forest dwellers as “encroachers.” They also attracted the ire of the local landlords and contractors.

Historically, the lands that belonged to the Princely States were transferred to Forest Department in 1937 but all the community rights were maintained. But after the merger of these small kingdoms in the state of Madhya Pradesh in 1962 all community rights were curtailed. The lands were transferred to the Forest Department for management. These lands were notified u/s 4 of the Indian Forest Act 1927 but without completing any process of determining the rights the community lands, the land was acquired in the working plan which was illegal. There is no provision in Indian Forest Act to notify section 4 lands in the working plan. It is very clear that the said disputed land actually belonged to the Kol Adivasis which was their *Nistari* land (land used by community for customary practices) and was snatched historically from them by the illegal actions of Revenue and Forest Department.

On April 17, forest officials and police threatened the tribals with dire consequences if they did not leave the land. The next day, the District Collector of Rewa came to the village and started negotiations with the villagers and assured them in front of the Samajwadi Party MLA, K. K. Singh, Munnial – one of the conveners of the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW) – and other activists from Uttar Pradesh and Rewa, that the villagers would be compensated with land after ascertaining the nature of this particular land under contention.

From the morning of April 19<sup>th</sup>, however, the DFO and the district police started mobilizing a strong police force in the village and after surrounding the area for five hours started firing tear gas shells followed by lathi charge and firing. Women were beaten up as they formed the first cordon to protect the other villagers. All the houses were burnt and looted by the police and forest officials.

For several weeks following the incident it became very difficult to contact people affected by the incident. Massive repression continued making it difficult to even look for the missing people, organise medical help for the injured and lodge FIR against the officials and others for brutally beating people. The local media and landlords spread misinformation about the strugglers, branding them as ‘outsiders’. They were even called Naxalites as their organisation was named after Birsa Munda!

It was almost like a lost battle but the activists of the Birsa Munda Bhumi Adhikar Manch (BMBAM), Uttar Pradesh Bhumi Sudhar Avam Shram Adhikar Abhiyan Samiti and NFFPFW started their attempts to reorganize the movement on the ground. The presence on investigating teams such as one from Sangharsh 2007 helped tremendously in building pressure on the administration. On 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007 more than 1000 Adivasis held a demonstration outside the office of Commissioner against the atrocities inflicted on them by the administration. It was for the first time that all the activists and the leaders of the BMBAM came openly and made speeches and told the tale of repression that unleashed on people on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007. A 20-point memorandum was prepared and presented to the Commissioner who came outside and took the memorandum amidst people where he announced that the IG Police had ordered a high level enquiry into the matter. After presenting the memorandum to the Commissioner they marched to the IG Office who also came out to take the memorandum and immediately ordered for medical examination of victims and lodged FIR on the issue of *lathi* charge, bullet injuries and missing children.

The fact that the local landlords, forest officials and local police were unsuccessful in its efforts to break the local struggle in Ghateha is indeed a big victory for a movement who continue to struggle in the area for land and other developmental issues.

## OTHER NEWS

**Fishworkers’ Do or Die Agitation in Delhi succeeds**

The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), exercising powers conferred by the *Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972* banned catching of Sharks, Sea Cucumbers and 62 other species in August 2001. The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) had immediately protested to the ban as a result of which shark and other species were exempted and a committee was set up to look into other items including sea cucumber. Since then, even though the fishworkers' met the Minister of Environment and Forest several times, all efforts to get the ban lifted failed.

Recently many fishermen have been arrested by the police in South Indian states, under the guise of violating the said ban. The poor fishermen have been struggling for their own survival. The age old practice of fishing cucumbers has become a criminal offence due to this notification and as a result fishworkers often land up in jail.

The 'Do or Die' indefinite agitation was launched in Delhi on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007 and it started with 300 fisher women and fisher men who came from Ramnad district in Tamilnadu under the leadership of Paulsamy, Arulanandam and B Shekhar. These fishworkers were to be joined by many others after the completion of the first ten days of agitation.

The dharna was visited and supported by several members of Parliament from the very first day of agitation. A series of meetings and negotiations were held with the Prime Minister and other Ministers where the fishworkers' exposed the unholy nexus of the members of the environmental lobby, who wanted the ban to continue, with companies like the Tatas, who had managed to secure the lifting of the ban in Lakshadweep, where they were catching, processing and exporting the "banned" sea cucumber. The issue was raised in Parliament by D.Raja MP of CPI and was supported by Gurdas Dasgupta MP, Tirunavukarasu MP, Panyan Ravindran MP, Appadurai MP and Sudhakara Reddy MP.

On 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007 the Minister of MoEF Mr Namu Narayan Meena agreed to the fishworkers' demand of lifting the ban on Sea Cucumber and the other items in the presence of Minister of Labour Mr. Oscar Fernandez. This is a success saga of the fishworkers struggle, which was

temporarily called off on the third day of the indefinite agitation in Delhi.

The NFF have managed to undo a long pending injustice against the traditional fishing sector by managing to secure the lift of the ban. Along with this achievement, the NFF has also managed to defeat the argument by the conservation experts that traditional catch will lead to depletion of the natural resource and hence extinction. This should be seen along with the fact that there has been no international restriction existing on the fishery of sea cucumber and there is no obligation on India to ban it. Almost 70 countries are involved in the export of sea Cucumber. Another contradiction is that while India has been enforcing the, countries like China has emerged as giants in the trade by extending support to the traditional sector in catching and processing Sea Cucumber.

**People's Convention on Salwa Judum**  
*A call to break the silence on the civil war in Chhattisgarh*

A deafening silence has surrounded the civil war like situation that has prevailed in Chhattisgarh for more than two years now. Since June 2005, the Government of Chhattisgarh, with the support of the Home Ministry has been waging a counter-insurgency operation against the Naxalites in the guise of a 'spontaneous', 'self initiated', 'peaceful', 'people's movement' named the Salwa Judum in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

The fact however is that far from being a peaceful campaign, Salwa Judum 'activists' are armed with guns, *lathis*, axes, bows and arrows. There has been a complete breakdown of civil administration and the rule of law in Dantewada district and Salwa Judum 'activists' have become vigilantes who murder, loot, burn and rape with impunity.

At least 1, 00,000 people have been displaced and the life of at least 3, 00,000 people from the 644 "liberated villages" has been completely disrupted because of Salwa Judum. People are forcibly picked up from their villages and are confined into 'relief camps', where they face acute shortage of food, water and other basic amenities. The condition of several thousands who have been forced to migrate to neighbouring states and districts is even worse.

In one of the first civil society initiatives on Salwa Judum, many organizations and individuals in Delhi came together for a 'People's Convention on Salwa Judum : Civil War in Chhattisgarh', organized by the Campaign for Peace and Justice in Chhattisgarh on the 4th September 2007. The Convention was attended by Members of Parliament, Human Rights activists, journalists, intellectuals and others from different walks of life.

Key speakers included Himanshu Kumar, a social activist from Dantewada; Manish Kunjam, ex-MLA from Dantewada and secretary of Adivasi Mahasabha; Ajit Jogi, former Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh and several Adivasis from Dantewada who have been victims and witnesses of the violence unleashed in region in the past two years.

Kartam Joga, a District Council (Jilla Panchayat) member from Dantewara stated that he was in prison for 9 months just for defying the summons and orders of the Salwa Judum. Narrating the brutalities and torture he had to face from the SJ members and the para-military forces, Shri. Joga added that the Salwa Judum was angry with him for protesting against the burning of village houses and also for protesting and attempting to file police FIRs on killing and torture of innocent villagers.

"Salwa Judum has become an uncontrolled private militia, with an absolute license to kill, rape or arson with absolute impunity from the state government and the central government", said Himanshu Kumar of the Vanvasi Chethna Manch from Dantewara district of Chhattisgarh, where the creation of Salwa Judum has led to a civil war situation.

"Salwa Judum is the by-product of BJP and Right-wing fascist forces to gain control over the adivasi areas. Salwa Judum is not any spontaneous peace campaign against the Maoists or Naxalites. It is a game-plan by the fascist forces to destroy the people and their culture" said Shri. Ajit Jogi.

The Convention demanded the Government of Chhattisgarh to immediately disband and disarm Salwa Judum and to stop recruiting Special Police Officers (SPO). It also demanded that the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005 be repealed. The Convention demanded Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs to stop supporting Salwa Judum and such initiatives under the cover of village defence mechanisms.

The Convention also demanded that the state government and the Maoists should stop all acts of violence and initiate a situation conducive for political dialogue.

### **People's Statement against Displacement**

#### **Sangharsh 2007 Delhi Declaration of People's Movements and Organisations, August 2007**

*[People's Convention against Displacement was held at Ambedkar Bhawan, New Delhi on 11th and 12th August 2007 and dharna against displacement demanding a national policy and an enactment on development planning at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar on Monday, the 13th August 2007. Organised by Sangharsh 2007, the People's Convention and Dharna was attended by more than 600 people from across the country, representing about 80 people's organisations, engaged in struggles against displacement. The Convention, while condemning UPA Government's anti-people displacement policies including SEZs and hundreds of so called developmental projects, has demanded that the UPA government do justice to its election promise of 'no displacement' and also bring in a people-friendly DEVELOPMENT PLANNING POLICY in place of the National*

*Rehabilitation Policy, which is nothing but a justification for the ongoing displacement of millions of people. The participants at the Convention shared their respective experiences about displacement ranging from rural (project based), Urban 'evictions', forest, water, coastal, militarisation caused, etc. SEZ affected people's organisations also raised their issues. Dalit and adivasi organizations from various parts of the country demanded special provisions for the socially imposed displacement]*

We, the representatives of different people's movements engaged in struggles against undemocratic and inhuman displacement enforced by the Indian state for the past several years, state/demand the following:

- The Land Acquisition Act, 1894 should be abolished and a new comprehensive legislation must be spelt out with (i) our development goals (as a reference) for defining public interest (ii) the planning process including options assessments and criteria for choice and (iii) the democratic structure as well as (iv) process – legal, humane - for minimum displacement and (v) just and fair rehabilitation displacement non-negotiable, except in cases of voluntary resource-sharing based development with principles, provisions and processes with democratic, decentralised administrative structure
- Special Economic Zone Act should be repealed and implementation of STZ, SEZ, etc should be immediately stopped
- Coastal Zone Management Notification, that aims at displacing a large number of coastal people should be withdrawn and all decisions regarding coastal management should be taken in consultation with fish workers and other coastal peoples
- There should be an emphasis on the resources belonging to people and the people's rights to statutory duties underlined in the Indian Constitution, not on the principle of eminent domain, which has created utter devastation and elimination of marginalized communities
- The policy must be a step towards minimizing the displacement and not for increasing it. The policy already on paper (prepared by a large group of activist and representatives of the development project affected) should be taken as a reference, for bringing out a consensual final policy statement for ready reference
- The unit of planning a project, not only rehabilitation, should be the smallest social unit, ie: hamlet / village in the rural areas and basti (of not more than 1000 families) in the urban area. Enforcement of Article 243 of the Constitution of India to ensure people's democratic participation in national planning and economic progress.
- The change in the utilization pattern of natural resources, including land, can occur without 'displacement', if it is in favour of the contributor/investor of the resource; voluntary and not without an alternative ensuring a better life/livelihood & share in the benefits.
- A large majority, including adivasis, dalits, farmers and laborers require protection from 'evictions' in the present context and hence no

displacement without 'prior informed consent' should be acceptable in the case of any of the affected populations

- The options assessment as a part of the project planning process also can begin at the smallest unit and needs to be finalized, pre-facto to ensure the appropriate option with minimum of overhauling, socio-environmental impacts, displacement to destruction and effective, efficient and just distribution of benefits
- No use of force against the project affected should be acceptable and permissible in any development project
- Rehabilitation would mean social, economic and cultural alternative way of life and hence can't be attained without an alternative livelihood which needs to be land based (to be allotted as private and common property) for agriculturist populations, forest dwellers and nomadic pastoral communities affected
- This policy should be for both rural (Dalit and tribal) and urban populations and hence the any such draft needs a review by more than one ministry. A Consortium of ministries including Ministry for Rural Development, Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry for Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ministry in charge of Development of North East, Ministry for Human Resource Development, among others should be collectively taking this process forward
- The earlier proposal and demand for a National Resettlement & Rehabilitation Commission seems to have been omitted from the present policy draft. The NRRC was suggested in the earlier drafts as a national level redressal mechanism and formation of it should be a part of the policy plan. The purpose behind the NRRC and that of having project level Grievance Redressal Committee should be understood as separate
- The R&R Planning Committee as well as the NRRC, while differentiated in duties and mandate should form the basic implementation instruments as well as redressal mechanism, for any development project, to make sure exploring of maximum socio-economic options, no unfair and forced displacement and participatory economic progress.

All this establishes the fact that there is a need for not just rehabilitation policy but a serious

discourse on development paradigm. This has become necessitated not merely with displacement as a problem or a barrier to progress but since inspite of en-masse, brutal 'eviction' and pauperization imposed, the development plans are not fulfilling the basic needs of all, denying distributive justice, nor is enabling utilization of natural resources with least dangers, with unsustainable impacts. The eco-systems damaged and depleted are being heavily paid a price for, by all citizens beyond the immediately affected. These long term impacts of degradation and salinisation of land, depletion of sea fish, emptying of years, old or even non-availability of land for and of affordable housing ultimately leads to generation long repressions which are bound to cause fervor in the society. SEZ is the peak of policies, which rule out, ignore and bulldoze a need for not just a debate but even a dialogue.

Hence, we demand the UPA Government to bring in a policy of 'development planning' in the lines of the draft submitted and cleared by the National Advisory Council, headed by UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi. **The new policy must:**

- Minimize development induced displacement and to identify non-displacing or least displacing alternatives to achieve development objectives.
- Minimize the direct and indirect adverse social impacts of land use changes due to development and commercial projects, activities or policy changes (on land, shelter, livelihood, access).
- In the rare cases where non-displacing alternatives are not available, to shift from the earlier practice of forced displacement to displacement by voluntary resource-sharing based development.
- Ensure full transparency and justice in the processes of displacement and land acquisition.
- Ensure that all those who are displaced are significantly better off, not just in economic terms, but also in terms of human development and security, in a reasonable time frame, and in accordance with their aspirations, than they were prior to displacement.
- Ensure that the displaced people and communities are respected and recognised for their resources wealth as a critical investment. They must share the benefits and be comparable with

the people benefiting from that specific project or with the people who have been beneficiaries of the developmental process in general.

- Integrate rehabilitation concerns into the development planning and implementation process.
- Ensure that that special care is taken for protecting the rights, and ensuring affirmative state action for the weaker segments of society, especially members of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, women and children and to create legal obligations on the state to ensure that they are treated with special concern and sensitivity.
- Ensure that without complete integrated rehabilitation of existing oustees, no further displacement be done so that the people trust the state in its intents of making integrated rehabilitation possible and achievable
- Ensure that commons cannot be acquired for any purposes by land acquisition

**We are committed to:**

- Deepening democracy and democratising development, supporting the assertion of constitutional rights of the communities, strengthening resistance movements in the process of struggle and constructive development
- Struggle for a new development process by restructuring existing administrative and political processes & structures
- Creating democratic space for alternative sustainable development
- Link up resistance movements with wider political movements for a holistic peoples politics to sustain and flower
- By halting the development model progressing on the basis of dividing society on caste, communal, ethnic, gender grounds; so that resistance movements progress
- Campaign for the electoral process to be responsive to people's aspirations; the power of recall should be central in all areas of representative politics
- Reclaiming resources and democracy - not possible without discarding the draconian legislations in force

**Declaration released on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

**Update Collective**  
 F-10/12, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017.  
 Tel: 011-26680883, Fax : 011- 26687724  
 Email: [update.collective@gmail.com](mailto:update.collective@gmail.com)  
 Website: [www.updatecollective.blogspot.com](http://www.updatecollective.blogspot.com)