

# Report

## First National Level Consultative Meeting on ASM

Venue: Anil Agarwal green College. 42 Tughlakabad Institutional Area. New Delhi 110061

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt



### Attendees

Rana Sengupta (MLPC)  
Ravi Sreedhar (mm&P)  
Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (ANU)  
Sonia Wazed (MLPC)  
Mr Chandra Bhusan (CSE)  
Bastu M. Rege (Santulan)  
Kishan Jakhar (MLPC)  
Sandhya (SPS)  
Shahnaz Parveen (GRC)  
Samit Kr. Carr (OHSAJ)  
B.T. Venkatesh (mm&P)  
Dr Ramesh Pant (GUSK)  
Mr. Azad (PRASAR)  
Lalith Kumar  
K. Rajendra Kumar (CRYNET)  
Madhma Kulkarni (Oxfam CAA)  
Mr Benkatesh (Bellary)  
Mr Yousuf (MLPC)  
Ms Monali (CSE)  
Mr Nesar Ahmad (JNU)  
Mr Mithilesh  
Mr Joydev Bancrjee

### Presentations

Maharastra — Bastu M. Rege (Santulan)  
Rajasthan — Kishan Jakhar (MLPC)  
Uttar Pradesh — Sandhya (Shikar Prasikshan Sansthan)  
Uttar Pradesh — Shahnaz Parveen (Guya Resource Centre)  
Jharkland — Samit Kr. Carr (Bapi OHSAJ Jameshedpur)  
Karataka — B.T. Venkatesh (Legal Resources mm&P)  
Uttarkland — Dr Ramesh Pant (Gramin Uthan Samithi Kapkot)  
Delhi — Mr Azad (PRASAR)  
Tamil Nadu — Lalith Kumar  
Andhra Pradesh — K. Rajendra Kumar (Sujana CRYNET)



Mr Chandra Bhusan of CSE welcoming the guests

A National Level Consultative Meet was organised to discuss issues pertaining to Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) in India on 20 March, 2007, at the Center for Science and Environment, New Delhi. The Meeting was jointly organised by Mine Labour Protection Campaign (MLPC), The Australian National University (ANU), Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, mines, minerals and People (mm&P) and Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). The meeting was attended by representatives of groups from: Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The main aims of the meeting were to brainstorm current actions and activities of stakeholders in the ASM sector in India, and to consult amongst the civil society to groups with regard to good practices.



The Meeting was presided over by Mr. R. Sreedhar, (above) President of Environics and the Delhi Convenor of mm&P who gave an overview of the status of minor minerals and mining issues in the country.



Mr Rana Sengupta, (above) MLPC Campaign Manager, presented the introduction and objectives of the meeting. This was followed by introductions by individuals attending the meeting and presentations from different states.

Dr. Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (right) from the ANU highlighted the issue that major minerals are for big players but mining of minor minerals involved a large number of poor people who depend on the income for their livelihoods.

The state and the central governments have poor accountability with respect to both the environment and the workers, and in general the labour force is unrecorded and poorly documented.

ASM signifies traditional and un-mechanized activity, which is part of the informal sector of Indian economy. Small mines and quarries operate small and scattered deposits, which invariably lead to widespread environmental degradation due to the accumulated impacts from the large number of such quarries in one particular area.





**Mr Chandra Bhusan and Ms Sonia Wazed (MLPC)**



**Mr. Azad (Prasar)**



**Bitumen cracks due to roadside ASM coal mining.**

Yet another need is to strike a balance between environmental concerns and labour rights. It was pointed out that the need is to formulate policies that uplift the situation of workers and improve the environment for the greater community, to implement these policies effectively and to reach out to people to communicate the need to revisit several laws (such as the Land Acquisition Act and the MMRD Act) that assist in continuing exploitation in this sector.

Above all, we need to give due importance to gender and health issues of mineworkers in the ASM sector. As long as possible alternative livelihoods to mining are not possible, we need to improve the situation of the workers and find a way to communicate the need to legal reforms to the State.

It was noted that simple safety gear and equipment, secure wages on par with government's minimum rates, facilities such as toilets and drinking water at the work place, and medical insurances is also absent in all mines.

Data on quarries, their production and number of laborers employed is significantly lacking and these are urgently needed. The layers of intermediaries between the laborer and owner of the mine lead to gross exploitation of workers and the system of labour contractors need to be eradicated.



**Road closure due to roadside illegal mining impacts.**

## Reports from Individual States

### Maharashtra

Mr. Bastu Rege (right) is the founding member of Santulan organisation in Pune district which started the program by running schools for quarry workers children. This organisation fought for the basic rights of quarry workers and their children.

Later they intervened on the right to food for migrant workers and they succeeded in getting ration cards for the migrants. Santulan is leading struggle now to get social security and water for the workers in the quarry.

Mr. Bastu Rege presented the status of stone quarry and working in his field area of Pune district of Maharashtra. He also presented his views on the status of stone quarry and workers in Maharashtra. Mr Regge briefed on this organization activities and interventions level in the issue of stone quarry and workers and also in communities nearby the vicinity of quarry.



A Santulan film entitled 'Struggle and Survival' was screened to inform the participants of Santulan's activities in the ASM sector in Maharashtra.



### Rajasthan

Mr Kishan Lal Jakhar (left) from Mine Labour Protection Campaign (MLPC) overviewed the mineral sector status in Rajasthan talking specifically on mining minor minerals. In the recent decades Rajasthan has aggressively expanded its minor minerals sector.

MLPC is one of the organisations in Rajasthan working with mine workers engaged in the unorganised mining sector to protect their rights by generating awareness among the mining communities. MLPC focuses in organising mine workers through unions and cooperatives.

He also presented the plight of mineworkers and how lives of mine workers have changed since MLPC intervention. He explained how the cooperatives of mine workers have played a catalyst role to improve the working conditions and bargaining capacity of mineworkers. These cooperatives have taken out loans and already substantial amounts of these loans have been repaid. These cooperatives follow the norms of the Mining Act and thus convey a message to other private mine owners to follow.

## Madhya Pradesh

Mr Yousuf overviewed the status of minor minerals in Panna. He observed that mineworkers are not getting proper wages, nor are they aware of their basic rights.

He also noted that the exploitation of women mine workers is rampant in Panna. Basic rights, safety norms, social security measures are violated. A major focus of his work has so far been to mobilise quarry workers and help them organise to fight for their rights.



Mr Yousuf (left) and Mr Jakhar (right).



## Uttar Pradesh

Mr. Mithilesh (left) presented views on mining minor minerals in Uttar Pradesh. He told the meeting that labour rights and social security measures are not implemented. Mr. Mithilesh and his group have taken initiative to organise the workers.

## Andhra Pradesh

Mr. Rajender from Sujana told of the quarry workers plight in east Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. He briefed us on the various occupational diseases suffered by workers.

## Tamil Nadu

Mr Lalith made a touching presentation where he described the tyranny inflicted on the mineworkers from all dimensions from gender to health, water, sanitation, long working hours and how they lead their life no better than bonded labourers.



Mr Benkatesh (Bellary Karnataka)



Madhura Kulkarni with others

## Action Plan

At the end of the day-long consultative meet it was decided to draw out an action plan with inputs from the participants.

It was agreed that every two months the groups participating from different states will send updates on their work and mining information to a central contact point. The website [www.asmasiapacific.org](http://www.asmasiapacific.org) will be used for this purpose.

It was also noted that there is an urgent need to make a perspective and position paper on the minor mineral policy. This could include an analysis of minor mineral act of various states from where participants came for this meet.

Other points observed were the need for inter- state exposure for groups to get exposure and to develop knowledge, and consultation among peers. This would lead to the creation of a wider movement. A tentative one year plan of activities was contemplated and discussed further in my absence



Mr Chandra Bhusan and Mr Azad



Ms Monali (CSE)



Illegally mined coal on Grand trunk Road near Asansol in eastern India



Mr Azad (Prasar)