

## Medical Camps in Rajasthan, Ahmedabad and Madhya Pradesh

A four day medical camp for ex- asbestos miners was organised in Akodara village in Jhadol area of Rajasthan from August 4 to August 7. The camp was organised by Mine Labour Protection Campaign. This followed a similar camp organised in Udaipur City by national Institute of Occupational health (NIOH) in June. The diagnosis report from NIOH is still awaited. This NIOH camp had been organised only after a prolonged struggle by the villagers to get THEIR medical reports from an earlier camp held by NIOH. The asbestos mines have been closed after the government decided that the mining operation was dangerous but it forgot all about the miners. They have not been provided any alternative employment nor have the mines followed any closure plans which questions government's own credibility in enforcing laws meant to protect the environment and people. The nearest health clinic is far away from most of the villages. The mines lay abandoned with the dangerous mineral lying all around. Illegal mining is rampant in the area. The fate of informal workers is seized of all mandatory requirements and benefits like - workers were not given any employment proof and in many cases did not even know the name of the owner of the mine – a proof must for establishing employment in a particular mine or factory.

As it is said, *“where there is a will there is a way”* we came across one of the supervisors of the mine who helped us in locating the Provident fund slips for about 238 workers (provident fund is a government welfare scheme in which the employer has to deposit money in the employees account every month). This gave us the employment proof we were looking for and move ahead with rest of the process, it was encouraging and the struggle started to locate these 238 workers to get them diagnosed. Unfortunately many had succumbed to death. However, 148 of these workers were located and they were diagnosed through x-rays and other physical checkups.

Dr V murlidhar, Prahlad malwadkar, surekha Kandpal from Mumbai were present to diagnose the villagers and to do necessary tests. More than 170 workers came during the camp. Dr Mulridhar, after the completion of the camp, read the X-rays in Udaipur city and it was found that more than 100 workers had varying degrees of Asbestos related disorders. Out of the 148 workers x-rayed with the proof of employment, more than 70 turned up in the camp and almost 95% were found to be suffering from Asbestos related disorder. Compensation claims will be filed for these workers under the Employee compensation Act. For the other works, a complaint will be filed with the state government to provide adequate compensation and rehabilitation.

From Udaipur the medical team moved to Ahmedabad to do a diagnosis of workers from Thermal power plants and Asbestos product manufacturing plants. The team was joined by Advocate Krishnendu Banerjee and Amruta Sane. The team medically examined 14 victims (8 from Gujarat Composite Cement Ltd, 2 from AEC torrent power and 4 cases of Secondary exposures). The advocates posed detailed questions and enquired about history of service, work conditions etc. cases will be filed for compensation under various Labour laws.

The team (minus the advocates) proceed to Panna city in Madhya Pradesh. The district is home to the diamond industry in the country and has scores of sandstone quarries. The workers work in deplorable conditions without any protective equipment. 66 workers came for check-up during the 2 day camp. 32 of these were found to be suffering from Silicosis or siliso- tuberculosis. Most of the problems faced by the asbestos miners in Udaipur were found in Panna as well. Most of the workers

in the camp were found to be suffering from Tuberculosis as well. These workers claimed to have undergone the course for the treatment several times.

Some Photos



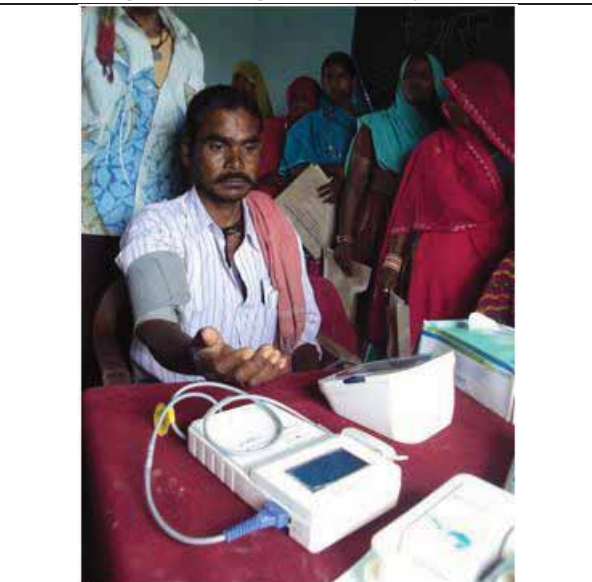
Medical Camp at Jadhola Block, Rajasthan



Villagers waiting for the camp to start



Dr Murlidhar demonstrating during the camp



Diagnosis during the camp (measuring of blood oximetry and blood pressure)



Lung Function Test



Diagnosis





Occupational history being noted meticulously



Abandoned Asbestos mine, Udaipur, Rajasthan



Diagnosis medical camp, Panna



Medical Camp, Panna



Stone Cutter without any protection. Children about 5 years old were found working



Dr Murli tries his hand at the art of stone cutting



Stone quarry



Stone Quarry



Stone Quarry



Diamond mine at Panna