

# RESOLVE UNCERTAINTY OF RELIEF RESOURCES FOR BHOPAL SURVIVORS

Those exposed to Union Carbide's gas in 1984 need, and are legally entitled to, free treatment for the rest of their lives. Their children, who suffer from birth defects and demonstrable developmental problems, are also legitimate claimants to care as gas affected people. The government has a legal obligation, as set out by the Supreme Court, to provide the funding for this care, and to ensure that the funding is spent to the benefit of the gas survivors. Right now, however, relief and rehabilitation strategies that might be of help are starved of funding while lawsuits over who should provide the funding languish in court. Meanwhile, thousands suffer.

- The Government of India sanctioned Rs. 102 crore from 1985 to 1989 for gas relief rehabilitation and financial assistance to survivors

- In 1990, the Government of India approved a Rs. 163.10 crore, 5-year Action Plan for medical, economic, social, and environmental rehabilitation of gas affected Bhopal. The Action Plan was to be implemented by the State Government of Madhya Pradesh but funded 75% by the Central Government.

- In 1995, at the end of the 5-year Action Plan, many of the projects remained incomplete and the objectives of the plan remained unachieved. The government of Madhya Pradesh requested extensions of time and funding from the Central Government.

- More money was provided to the state government but a second review in 1997 found that the objectives had still not been achieved. Several more extensions of time and money followed, but by 1999 the Central Government demanded that the state government catch up both on achieving objectives and on providing its promised 25% of the funding.

- Today, funds necessary for medical and other relief are absent as the question of who can and must provide them remains stuck in court. While the Central Government points to the hundreds of crores it has already handed over with little to nothing in the way of successful results, the State Government of Madhya Pradesh claims inability to pay for what is needed to move forward.

Bhopal is in the midst of a massive public health crisis -- thousands suffer without medical care for health problems due to gas exposure and water contamination, and each day people are further poisoned and new victims are claimed by toxic, contaminated water. Addressing these problems cannot wait for years while financial and legal battles slowly unfold in the court system.





## **What is Needed and Who Must Provide It**

We need an independent body for the administration and oversight of relief and rehabilitation of Bhopal. This would be a National Commission on Bhopal which would include medical personnel, NGOs, and eminent persons, and survivors' organisations, all located in Bhopal. The Supreme Court of India has already directed the setting up of such an independent committee on 9 January, 2004.

This National Commission on Bhopal must set up a corpus fund that can ensure that no legitimate effort to provide relief to gas and contamination affected Bhopal will fail due to lack or uncertainty of funds. Estimated expenditure on health care facilities, research and monitoring activities, and on social, economic and environmental rehabilitation projects would be Rs. 50 Crores annually. It is proposed that a corpus fund large enough to ensure long term financial security of all such rehabilitation efforts be created under the authority of the Commission. In addition to contribution from the Government of India, funds can be raised from private donors, UN organizations, NRI Diaspora and medical and social research bodies.

**WE DEMAND that a National Commission on Bhopal be set up with the necessary authority and resources to set up a corpus fund that will ensure the financial viability of all Bhopal relief projects for the next 30 years. The management and allocation of this funding must be completely transparent and involve the participation of representatives of survivors' organizations.**

**This padyatra is our march for justice and dignity. We shall struggle until our last breath. 21 years is enough!**

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