

SUPPLY CLEAN WATER

Residents of the bastis near the Union Carbide factory get their water from bore wells. As the contamination has slowly spread through the water table and percolated through the soil over the nearly 35 years that Union Carbide has been operating in Bhopal, increasing numbers of people have been affected every year. At present, activists claim that sixteen wards with an estimated population of 20,000 are currently forced to use the water from the wells. Even though most residents know that the water is dangerous, they have no other options.

DRINKING POISON

Health surveys in the affected areas have found that one in two suffers from a multitude of symptoms most commonly abdominal pain, skin lesions, dizziness, vomiting, constipation, indigestion, and burning sensations in the chest and stomach. They have also found 95% anemia in women, as opposed to 52% as a national average, and that most girls have delayed menses. This is in addition to birth defects, growth retardation in children, and contaminated breast milk.

- A small scale epidemiological survey done in 2004 by the Center for Rehabilitation Studies of the Madhya Pradesh government found that residents of communities affected by groundwater contamination have higher prevalence of diseases in the skin and the respiratory and gastrointestinal systems.
- Samples of breast milk from mothers in the ground water contamination affected communities were tested at the laboratory at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and the presence of toxic and cancer causing chemicals such as Hexachlorocyclohexane [HCH], Chloroform, Dichloromethane, Chlorobenzenes and heavy metals such as Mercury, Lead and Nickel in the human breast milk samples was confirmed.

UNHELPFUL GOVERNMENT

The supreme court of India ordered in 2002 that the State Government of Madhya Pradesh provide clean water to those residing in 14 affected wards near the factory. Although the MP government did begin tanker service with some water, a maximum of 14% of the necessary water was being delivered everyday to the contaminated areas, with at least five basti's receiving no water at all. This amount then plummeted to almost zero when monsoon rains made the roads difficult to pass during the summer. As this example clearly shows, providing water by pipeline is the only way to reliably bring water into these communities.



Not only has the MP government declined to ensure water supplies, but police have beaten and jailed peaceful protesters from the communities asking for water, as happened in May 2005. And although the

TIMELINE

- 1972 UCC internal document notes that the proposed design for the Bhopal plant poses "danger of polluting subsurface water supplies in the Bhopal area" (UCC04129)
- 1996 The MP Public Health Engineering Department tested tubewells near the factory the factory, and found "a heavy presence of chemicals", concluding "it is established that the pollution is due to chemicals used in the Union Carbide Factory."
- 1999 A Greenpeace investigative team found chlorinated methanes, ethanes and benzenes in excess of WHO drinking standards at most wells near the UCC site. (Labunska et al 1999)
- 2003 Sambhavna Trust's investigation of Annu Nagar, near the factory surveyed 1528 individuals found that one in two was suffering a multitude of symptoms.
- 2004 Supreme Court of India orders that clean water be provided to 14 affected communities, with a resident population approaching 20,000.
- 2005 In April, Communities were getting only 14% of water needed daily.
- May 300 protesters were beaten by police for asking for clean water.
- June All tanker service is suspended for two months due to the monsoon.
- August Babulal Gaur makes a "rakhi" promise worth 9 crore rupees to provide clean water to the 16 affected communities
- Present No promises to communities affected by water contamination have been fulfilled.

former Chief Minister of MP, Babulal Gaur, made promises to survivors that water would be provided by pipeline as he accepted their "rakhi's" in August, he has broken that promise, too.

WATER TANKS - ONLY A TEMPORARY SOLUTION

In September 2000, the municipal corporation began supplying tanks of clean drinking water to Atal Ayub Nagar and a few other affected communities. Only through the community's daily meetings and petitions to the Collector and local elected officials was this success achieved. However, the quantity of water is totally insufficient and 20 percent of Atal Ayub Nagar's population still does not have access to uncontaminated drinking water. Given that UNESCO estimates domestic water needs to be 50 liters per person, there is a current shortfall of 791,500 liters of water from the tanked water supplies in fourteen of the most severely affected communities. The municipal corporation has promised Atal Ayub Nagar and a number of other affected communities that it will provide a permanent piped water supply in the near future.



KOLAR WATER

We need water from the Kolar reservoir - why should we settle for less? Of all the reservoirs of domestic water that is available in Bhopal, Kolar Reservoir is the only truly clean option as a source for contamination affected neighborhoods. Earlier, the municipal corporation offered to supply water from the Upper Lake. The Upper Lake, water from which was being offered by Bhopal's Municipal Corporation, is the repository of sewage from huge residential areas such as Koh-E-Fiza and Shamlia Hills. The other source that has been offered is water from borewells in Rasla Khedi. Rasla Khedi, however, lies close to and just north of the Union Carbide factory, directly in the flow path of the contaminated groundwater. The other problem with Rasla Khedi water is that it is located next to the Patra Nullah, which is the main sewage exit channel for the entire city of Bhopal.

WHAT WE NEED NOW

Sick, wasting children, and entire communities being slowly poisoned to death cannot be tolerated, particularly against those already victimized and vulnerable to chemicals. The government must immediately provide piped water from the Kolar Dam to 16 affected communities, and the Dow Chemical company must be made to pay for the complete remediation of the poisoned aquifers, as well as the costs for infrastructure and piped water.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SAFE WATER?

Union Carbide's legal responsibilities to gas and water affected Bhopal residents is still being fought in courts. Regardless of whose legal responsibility it is to decontaminate and protect the groundwater, the need for safe drinking water in affected communities is an urgent humanitarian matter. In a 1999 study of groundwater contamination, Greenpeace International issued the following statement: *"The municipal corporation of Bhopal, the central government of Madhya Pradesh, and the national government of India all have a responsibility to provide clean drinking water to Bhopal's water affected communities."*

WE DEMAND that the Government of India step in and commit full funds for and agree to time-bound plan for delivery of piped Kolar Reservoir water to communities affected by Union Carbide / Dow Chemical's contamination.

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

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