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FROM NCAS DESK

1st May is a tribute to and celebration of workers across the globe. May Day or International Workers' day is celebrated in over eighty countries. Its origin lies in the labour union movement that advocated Eight hour day (eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for leisure). The Haymarket massacre that took place in 1886 in Chicago, USA, involved workers protesting for this cause. In India, Labour Day was first celebrated on the 1st of May, 1923 in Chennai. The event was organised by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan and comrade Malayapuram Singaravelu Chettiar.

Today, International Worker's Day remains equally relevant. With the changing face of capitalism and evolving conditions of employment, it is only through organised struggle that workers retain their rights and confront new issues.

The struggle for minimum wage has been an important one for labour rights. In this issue of NCAS, we look at a report that was published by NCAS ten years ago in its *People Centred Advocacy Series* [sic] edition on labour rights dealing with Anganwadi workers' struggle for minimum wages in Karnataka. In March, 2017, Karnataka saw thousands of Anganwadi workers participate in protests and marches demanding adequate remuneration. Ten years on, many grievances remain the same while new ones emerge.

Do write to us with your feedback and suggestions at interface@ncasindia.org

In solidarity

Team NCAS



Anganwadi Workers & their Struggle for Minimum Wages

Anganwadi scheme as a part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was launched in 1975.

Anganwadi workers are mainly women. They have been rendering very important services to the mother and child in rural areas such as pre-natal, post-natal care, immunization and pre-school training. But even after all these years, Anganwadi workers are still struggling to ensure regularization of their services, minimum wages and social security provisions. Since 1991, the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers have been carrying on an agitation. One of their main grievances relates to their inadequate remuneration. From the fund which is allotted for the scheme, a major option goes towards paying officials at the level of supervisors, but the actual implementers of the scheme at the grassroots level i.e. the Anganwadi worker and helper is only paid an honorarium between rs.510- rs.600 and rs.250 – rs.350 respectively in accordance with the time period of service. In Karnataka, the AIFAWH with support from the AITUC filed a case in the Karnataka tribunal which conceded their demands. The government had to raise the monthly allowance of the workers and helpers by rs.150 and rs.75, respectively. This may not be a major raise, but it points to the fact that Anganwadi workers through unionized action were able to win minor victories in their struggle for minimum wages. *It also points out to the fact that approaching the courts is one of the options available to workers in their fight for minimum wages.*

Reproduced from People Centred Advocacy Series

Information booklet on Minimum wages (2007), NCAS

In 2017, there has been a cut in Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS) budget which was met with much dissatisfaction. In Bengaluru, Karnataka, Anganwadi workers from across the state, organised under the Karnataka State Anganwadi Workers' Association, went on strike on 21st of March. Over 5000 workers

participated in the protests¹ and demanded a raise in their wages. The Hindu reported Jayamma (58) saying, “Till a few years ago, I was getting less than Rs.2000. I will retire in two years, and I have no savings. We are made to work none hours a day, but we earn lesser than minimum wage.”² She had been working as helper in an Anganwadi in Hunsur for over 35 years.



More than 5000 anganwadi workers went on strike in Bengaluru. Sourced from Deccan Chronicle³



Sourced from Indian Express

Following the release of the state budget in Maharashtra, it saw similar agitation with protests across six cities under *Jagnyacha Hakkache Andolan*, namely Pune, Kolhapur, Sangli, Roha, Dahanu and Navi Mumbai. These protests voiced their concerns over the slash in ICDS budget and inadequate allocation to health and social sectors. Anganwadi workers unions were at the forefront of these protests. In Mumbai, over 1500 Anganwadi workers participated in the agitation and demanded a reversal of the state budget cut in ICDS.

Juxtaposed against the NCAS report from 2007, it becomes clear

that the rights of workers have not been gifts from above, but have been claimed through earnest struggles. Workers across the globe and in India have continuously fought for better working conditions and fair wages. Labour Day is an important reminder of these struggles and a celebration of the victories thus achieved.

¹ <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/210317/anganwadi-protest-chokes-bengaluru.html>

² <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/anganwadi-workers-protest-enters-second-day/article17552056.ece>

³ <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/210317/anganwadi-protest-chokes-bengaluru.html>

UPDATES



1. NCAS launches 'Foundation Course on Public Policy and Advocacy': The 'Foundation Course on Public Policy and Advocacy' took off on the 16th of May, 2017. About twenty-five students from social work, social sciences, law, journalism & communication backgrounds, as well as young professionals and activists from different parts of the country have enrolled for this month-long course.

Mr. S.P. Shukla (formerly Finance Secretary, Government of India) inaugurated the course with his address on 'India at crossroads'. This internship is an enviable opportunity to interact with and learn from leading policy makers, noted development sector professionals and social activists.

2. NCAS Internship program: The NCAS internships is a year of rigorous multi-disciplinary learning under the guidance of experienced resource persons. This programme provides a wide spectrum of training on advocacy and action to individuals who are looking to make a difference. Few interns have already started their internship, and others will be joining us soon.



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