

# **Report on the Meeting on Land Rights and Organization Building**

Banaskantha, Gujarat

21st September, 2019



Human Right Law Network, Gujarat organized a one day seminar on Land Rights and Organization Building with Banaskantha Dalit Sangathan at Banaskantha, Gujarat on 21st September, 2019 under the bread for the world project. 25 grass root activists participated from different parts of the Banaskantha district. The objective of the seminar was to build an understanding on issues concerning Land Rights and Organization Building.

During the seminar the following issues were discussed:

1. Ceiling/Surplus land
2. Encroached land
3. Land for housing
4. Violation of Government conditions
5. Land to build crematory

The government had given the people land under the Land Ceiling Act of 1961, but physical possession of land did not occur. However, all the legal documents are in favor of the beneficiary. Further participation within the meeting raised serious issues regarding land, as discussed below within the testimony.

The land has been cultivated by the dominant upper caste. When they demand land from the upper caste, they create trouble for them and consequently an FIR is filed. The people feel that the upper caste has encroached their land. They feel that the government and police are on the side of the upper castes and the lack of political will has furthered their struggle. The Dalits and Adivasis in Gujarat have been demanding land under the Land Formation Act of 1960 but they do not know how to claim it. On having demanded the government for land, they have been told, “we have no land.” The land that has been allotted on their name under the 1960 Act has not been transferred on their name. They frowned over the fact that they do not even have land to bury the dead bodies of their friends and family.

One of the participants suggested that activists and organizations need to learn and apply constitutional legal provision for the land rights. Dalits and marginalized people are landless in Gujarat. Hence, surplus, ceiling and wasteland should be distributed to landless people. Furthermore, land should be allotted for building a crematory for Dalit community in the village. They further need Agriculture and Land Ceiling Act to be implemented in every state.

The participants further asked questions regarding advocacy. They further suggested that a 2 days training program should be organised to deal with thematic issues such as land rights,

laws relating to land and encroachment. Consequently, further action plans were discussed at the meeting.