



MAKAAM
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महिला किसान अधिकार मंच
MAHILA KISAN ADHIKAAR MANCH

Appeal to support the women from farm suicide affected families of Marathwada and Vidarbha

In order to highlight the struggles and demands of women farmers from suicide affected households from Vidarbha and Marathwada, the Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM) Maharashtra shall organize an agitation at Azad Maidan, Mumbai on November 21st, 2018. A symbolic agitation will be held in Azad Maidan, Mumbai on 21 November, 2018. About 50-75 women from suicide affected households of Vidarbha and Marathwada will be present in this agitation and they will present their questions. The agitation will be in the form of a **Condolence Meeting**, and women farmers from suicide affected households will take the lead in it.

The Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM) is a network that has been working on the issues of women farmers from 2014 on a national level. Various networks, campaigns, movements, organizations, researchers, and farmers are a part of this network across the country. MAKAAM is currently active in 24 states across the country, working towards ensuring that women be recognized as farmers in their own right, along with recognizing their rights to land and other natural resources. MAKAAM has been active in Maharashtra from 2017. MAKAAM Maharashtra specifically focuses on the issues of women farmers from suicide affected households.

Maharashtra is counted amongst the states with the largest number of farmer suicides in the country. Fourteen districts from Vidarbha and Marathwada have been declared as suicide afflicted districts. As per the statistical data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), about 65,000 farmers committed suicides in Maharashtra between 1995 and 2015. About 90% of the farmers who committed suicide were male leaving the same number of women behind to fend for their families.

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women (MSCW) and MAKAAM jointly organized two consultations on the issue of 'Security of women farmers from suicide affected households' in Nagpur and Aurangabad, in February and March, 2018 respectively. In these consultations, the women present discussed various issues such as women's rights over land and housing, along with the hurdles in accessing social security schemes like availability of credit, physical and mental health, institutionalized

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credit (from banks), children's education, etc. In this backdrop, MAKAAAM conducted a study in the months of September and October 2018, with the aim of systematically analysing and presenting the questions of women farmers from suicide affected households.

This survey covered around 505 women from 11 districts from Vidarbha and Marathwada (Aurangabad, Beed, Hingoli, Latur, Nanded, Osmanabad, Parbhani, Akola, Amravati, Wardha and Yavatmal). In this survey, we tried to understand the condition of women farmers from suicide affected households, in the context of access to social security. Around 20 organizations from Vidarbha and Marathwada affiliated with MAKAAAM had participated in this survey. All of these organizations completed the survey in their districts on their own expenses.

Salient findings from the study

Pension: 33% of the women had not submitted the application for the pension scheme. 26% of the women did submit the application but their pension was not approved. Only 34% of the women got their pension approved.

Warsa registration: After the death of their husband, 29% of the women were not able to get the land in their name, whereas 43% of the women were not able to get their house in their name.

Independent Ration cards: 52% of the women possessed independent ration cards in their name.

Education: Of the 355 children from class 1 to class 12 only 43 (12%) children were able to avail of concessions in fees and only 88 (24%) received material help in the form of books, uniforms and stationery

Mahatma Phule Jeevandayi Arogya Yojana: From 1 October 2016 onwards 69 families had surgeries done of these 34 families (49%) were not aware of the scheme. 13 families (19%) could not benefit from the scheme and 15 (22%) had to bribe the officials to avail of the scheme

Prerna scheme for mental health: only 74 (15%) of the households had any information on the Prerna scheme. Only 36 (7%) had information about a counseling cell within Prerna scheme. From 2015 onwards mental health patients were found in 137 households. Of these 83 (61%) did take treatment. Of these only 23 (28%) patients went to the government hospitals. Of those who did, 83% had to still spend on medicines and other treatment.

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MAKAAM's Demands

Based on the findings from this study, along with all the work done by MAKAAM in the previous year, the following are demands regarding women farmers from suicide affected households:

1. Eligible/non-eligible suicides and ex gratia payment

The current criteria of eligible/non-eligible suicides should be changed and the sum for ex gratia payment should be increased by 5 times.

2. Widow Pension

The amount for widow pension should at least be doubled and the pension should be received on time.

3. Education

Children from suicide affected households must get free education.

4. Ration card

Women from suicide affected households should be able to get independent ration cards in their names, without asking for any kind of application. Moreover, they should be included in the priority group.

5. Healthcare

Government hospitals and clinics must provide free healthcare facilities in suicide affected areas.

6. Warsa registration

A special campaign should be conducted in order to facilitate *warsa* registrations in suicide affected areas.

7. Assistance for employment and sustainable agriculture

Women from suicide affected households in 14 districts must get the benefit of employment guarantee schemes, along with schemes of the Irrigation, UMED, and Agriculture departments, to guarantee work and sustainable farming.

8. Protection from sexual assault and violence

All the mechanisms at the district and taluka level, such as local grievances committees, women's vigilance committees, Women's Commission office, should be actively functioning. Special campaigns should be undertaken in the 14 districts in order to conduct hearings of such complaints.

9. Kisan Mitra Helpline

A helpline should be started immediately in all suicide affected districts. A special environment should be created for women farmers wherein they can easily pose their questions.

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MAKAAM's Action Program

Based on the findings of the study and the above mentioned demands, MAKAAM has prepared a set of questions that have been given to the MLAs of different parties, with a demand that these questions be raised in the upcoming Winter Session of the Maharashtra Assembly. At the same time, MAKAAM has organized the following events to draw attention to these questions, keeping in mind the upcoming winter session:

- A symbolic agitation will be held in Azad Maidan, Mumbai on 21 November, 2018. More than 100 women from suicide affected households of Vidarbha and Marathwada will be present in this agitation and they will present their questions. The agitation will be in the form of a condolence meeting, and women farmers from suicide affected households will take the lead in it.
- A press conference shall be organized in the press club in the afternoon from 3 to 4 pm. MAKAAM's report of the study and a booklet of case stories shall be released in this. Women farmers from suicide affected households will present their demands themselves during the press conference.

We urge you to come and support the agitation at Azad Maidan

Date 21 November 2018

Time: 12-4

Location: Azad Maidan

For MAKAAM Maharashtra

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