I’ve read about him and his fight against endosulfan in the past. But this is the first time I meet him.

M.A. Rahman is a man of many talents. Among other things, he is a documentary filmmaker.

Dressed in a simple white and blue lungi, he starts the conversation by telling me about his documentary film, A Paradise for the Dying, the first of its kind to portray stories about the victims of endosulfan in Kerala. “I met a mother and her two daughters, who were suffering from some major skin ailments. More than anything, I recorded their anger and pain and even though the mother wasn’t very happy about being filmed, later when she saw the film she cried and thanked me, hoping something positive would come from this.”

Positive indeed. The first screening of the film raised Rs. 3,000, which was given to the mother. But the victims are in dire need of money and support, he explains, “Food for them is basically milk, curd, a little rice and maybe chillies. Their expenses are minimal but because of bad health, their expenses have increased drastically.”

Yet, the politicians in their area did their best to keep the issue under wraps, until they couldn’t do it anymore. “Thanal (a non-profit organisation) was and is working on getting pesticides banned and we need more organisations like that to ensure that unheard voices get heard.”

He goes back to telling me about the mother and her daughters from the documentary, “They get Rs. 1,000 as pension from the government, but since the processing of their solacium is still pending they can’t afford medical treatment.” His concern for this family and his connection with them is obvious. Perhaps that’s the reason he has decided to dedicate his first book, the one he is currently working on, to these two girls. According to him, a lot has been written about the victims already but it’s time that everyone got fair compensation from the government for the pain they’ve endured.

This piece was written on the basis of the conversation Siddharth Sreenivas, a Greenpeace campaigner, had with M.A. Rahman.