

Report of State Level Public hearing

on

**Farmers' Suicides, Hunger Deaths,
Poverty, Loan Recovery, Corruption
and Exploitation in Bundelkhand
Region**

Date: December 17, 2007

Venue: Bharat Janani Parisar, Ranipur Bhatt, Chitrakoot



Organised by

Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS)
Chitrakoot (UP), India

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Executive Summary

Bundelkhand region is known for its abundance of natural resources. Because of mismanagement and neglect of these very natural resources, once a prosperous region, Bundelkhand today is one of the poorest regions of the country. At present farmers' suicides, hunger deaths, unemployment and continued migration plague Bundelkhand. The government schemes fail to reach the target people as the administration is blatantly corrupt.

Several efforts have been made at various levels to draw attention of the powers that be to the condition of extreme distress prevailing in the Bundelkhand region. The State Government has already declared all the seven districts of this region (Jhansi, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Lalitpur, Chitrakoot and Banda) drought affected. This step has, however, not brought any change in the lives of poorest of the poor of the Bundelkhand and the situation remains same.

Various media groups and well known journalists compare Bundelkhand with Kalahandi or Vidarbha. The entire Bundelkhand region is suffering from drought for the last five years. According to an estimate, 60 per cent of agriculture land is uncultivated. Farmers are unable to recover their cost of cultivation and they are forced to commit suicide. Approximately 400 farmers have committed suicide in this region. Continued hunger deaths, migration and corruption remain the same. Now the poor and victims are awaiting sustainable sources of livelihood.

Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS), Chitrakoot, is struggling for legal entitlements, food security and human rights in Bundelkhand for the last three decades. ABSSS identified and documented oppressed families in seven districts of Bundelkhand, viz, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Banda, Jalaun and Lalitpur.

Continuing its struggle, ABSSS has from time to time organised a public hearing at its headquarters with the objective to provide the victims a platform through which they can interact with senior and experienced judiciary members, bureaucrats, well known legal experts, scholars and media persons to enable them to understand real situation prevailing in Bundelkhand and take initiatives for redressal of the problems and pressurising the government. In the series of public hearings, ABSSS organised a "Farmers' Suicides, Hunger Deaths, Poverty, Loan Recovery, Corruption and Exploitation in Bundelkhand Region" on

December 17, 2007, at Chitrakoot with active participation and cooperation of PUCL, HRLN, IPT, local CBOs and POs.

Justice Mr Ram Bhushan Mehrotra chaired the jury panel. Justice Mr Rafiquddin, Justice Mr Colin Gonsalves, founder director of Human Rights Law Network, New Delhi, Ms Roop Rekha Verma, Former Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University, Lucknow, Mr SR Darapuri, former Inspector General of Police, and dalit rights thinkers were jury members.

Approximately 800 victims from different districts of Bundelkhand participated in the public hearing. A book *Vaytha-Katha* (Agony of Victims) which covers 82 case study of region was presented to the jury for better understanding of the cases. During the public hearing 18 cases of farmers' suicides, 11 cases of hunger death, 39 cases of deprivation from government scheme, 6 cases out of 273 cases related to denial of job under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, three cases of exploitation, 2 cases out of 101 cases related to labour migration and 3 cases of fake loans were presented by the victims.

During the public hearing most of the victims of the region presented their problems in front of all. Drought or loan is not only the reason for the destruction of Bundelkhand but improper implementation and corruption in government schemes plays a big role in the destruction of Bundelkhand. The process of public hearing was completed with emotion, aggressiveness, tear and sorrow.

Preface

Bundelkhand is a part of the state Uttar Pradesh, which has its own culture and tradition with a varied geography. Despite its wealthy natural and human resource, Bundelkhand is known as a very backward region of India. All the seven districts of the region fall under the category of poorest of the poor districts of the country. More than 82 per cent of the total population is rural, 25.14 per cent of the population belongs to Scheduled Castes and 0.02 per cent of it is Scheduled Tribes. Tribes like Kols are included in the SC population.

The economy of the region is dependent on agriculture and the main source of livelihood of the community is agriculture and related activities. Seventy-five per cent of the people in Bundelkhand depend on agriculture and more than 80 per cent of them are small and marginal farmers. Again 75 per cent of the total agriculture is rain-fed. But agriculture activities have virtually come to a halt as the region has not received sufficient rainfall during the last five years. Low productivity in agriculture and industrial backwardness, together with the dying traditional household/ cottage industries has kept the region as one of the most poverty stricken and today poverty is rampant in all the districts of Bundelkhand.

This year's delayed rains have made worsened the situation even as many areas did not receive any rainfall. Due to this, seedlings in the fields have died and the loss to agriculture in the region is more than 70 per cent. Over the years the Bundelkhand region has gone under severe ecological degradation, which, with the passage of time, is posing threat to livelihoods of the populace. The effects are wide and varied, impacting every dimension of the people.

Employment and income generation programme run by the government hardly reach to the poor in the feudal setup of the society widely prevalent in the area. Migration to other States does not always solve the problem of everybody as the population living below the poverty line is very large (more than 56 per cent). The region is economically backward and a large number of landless labours are busy struggling with life to satiate their hunger. Most important necessity of a man is the bread and this necessity is more acute in Bundelkhand. That is why there are reports in the local newspapers as well as national newspapers and magazines that a large number of poor people are silently dying out of hunger in Bundelkhand. Locked houses are a common sight in Bundelkhand. Crop failure and debt have driven more than 400 farmers to commit suicide in the seven districts that make up the

Uttar Pradesh part of Bundelkhand. Most of the farmers' suicides are due to forced recovery of institutional loan payments. Even during this hard time of drought and struggle for survival, loan recovery by financial institutions is on peak and further aggravating the vulnerability of small and marginal farmers.

In the recent times, mass distress of the people of Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh, as manifested in alarming levels of hunger and malnutrition, water shortages and indebtedness, has attracted attention at the national level. The current spell is the longest and most severe in the region's recorded history. Government records show that Bundelkhand had only 12 years of drought in the 19th and 20th centuries. But the arid spell has already lasted five years this century. Now the condition of Bundelkhand is so pathetic that the farmers and agriculture labour no option but to commit suicides or to die with starvation. Natural hazards such as drought, flood, etc., as well as man-made hazards such as corruption, bribe, exploitation, etc., are the factors that are spoiling the life of Bundelkhand farmers and labours. These subjects are really disgusting and shameful for the government functionaries, who are always eager to extract last drop of blood of these poor people to fulfil their greed.

ABSSS realised the need to provide a platform to these hapless people to bridge the gap between them and the Government. In the pages that follow we are presenting a report of the public hearing with the hope that it will motivate the readers to ponder and change their outlook towards this unfortunate region.

Objectives

The objectives of the state level public hearing organised by ABSSS on December 17, 2007, at its Bharat Janani Parisar, Ranipur Bhatt, in Chitrakoot district, were:

- To raise voice collectively against farmers' suicides, hunger deaths, corruption in government schemes, exclusion from government schemes and violations of human rights in Bundelkhand.
- To provide a platform where victims can present their problems themselves.
- To sensitise the government for the redresses of problems.
- To project the efforts at non government level.



Mr Bhagwat Prasad, Director of ABSSS, addressing the public hearing

Participants

Participants from different parts of Bundelkhand and different walks of life attended the public hearing. These included:

- Approximately 800 victims from Hamirpur, Jhansi, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Banda, Jalaun and Lalitpur districts of Bundelkhand.

Sl. No.	Issues	Case study
1.	Former suicide	18
2.	Hunger death	11
3.	Deprivation from government scheme	39
4.	Unavailability of job under NREGS	06 cases of 273 labours
5.	Exploitation	03
6.	Fake loan	03
7.	Migration	02 cases of 101 labours

- Representative of CSO partners, NGOs and POs of Bundelkhand Region.
- Law students from India and other countries.
- Media persons from different newspapers.
- Academicians, research scholars, etc.



Victims during the public hearing

Jury Panel

The jury panel comprised seven members from different fields with a long experience in development field. The jury was presided over by Justice Mr Ram Bhooshan Mehrotra, a former Judge of Allahabad High Court, Allahabad. The members included:

- Justice Mr Rafiquddin, former Judge, Allahabad High Court, Allahabad
- Mr Colin Gonsalves, senior Advocate of Supreme Court and Founder Director of HRLN, New Delhi
- Dr Rooprekha Verma, former Vice Chancellor, Lucknow University, Lucknow
- Mr SR Darapuri, former Inspector General of Police, an IPS Officer and Dalit well-wisher
- Mr Azamal Khan, senior Advocate, Allahabad High Court, Lucknow Bench, Lucknow
- Mr KK Roy, Advocate, Allahabad High Court, Allahabad



Mr. Colin Gonsalves, Dr. Rooprekha Verma, Justice Mr. Rafiquddin, Mr. Darapuri, Mr. Azamal Khan

Media at a Glance

To provide an overview of the farmers' suicides, hunger deaths, exploitation, exclusion from government schemes and corruption in Bundelkhand region, an exhibition of news reports published during the last two years in different newspapers was held.



A discussion of jury members on media at a glance



Discussion during exhibition visit

Presentation of Cases

The chief guest, jury members and participants were welcomed by Mr Bhagwat Prasad, Director of ABSSS, and representative of Partner Organisations. The presentation started with a painful song:

*“Pipal Ki Pyari Chhaon me hoti hai kyo jalan,
Ja ja ke dekho gaon me nago ke lambe phun”*

This song has a painful connotation for villagers of Bundelkhand. The *pipal* tree once had cool shadow, but now the condition of villages is so bad that the shadow of *pipal* tree creates burns, even as corruption and exploitation in villages are on the peak.

During the public hearing real situation of Bundelkhand was presented by the villagers in front of all. Victims from Banda, Hamirpur, Chitrakoot, Mahoba and Jhansi districts presented their problems, one by one. A book titled *Vaytha-Katha* was presented to the jury, so that they could develop an understanding about the situation. This book is based on the detailed of cases and contains 82 cases form various districts of Bundelkhand. During public hearing 18 cases of farmers’ suicides, 11 cases of hunger deaths, 39 cases of exclusion from government schemes, six cases of 273 cases of non-availability of job under NREGS, three cases of exploitation, two cases of 101 cases of labours’ migration and three cases of fake loans were presented by the victims.



Farmers' Suicides

The history of Bundelkhand is full of inspiring and adventures stories. The story of Bundela bravery is famous all over world. Bundelkhand is now in limelight not because of its bravery, but because of farmers' suicides. Farmers' suicides are a burning issue in Bundelkhand so that Bundelkhand is compared with Vidarbha. Farmers are committing suicides because of drought, crop failure, burden of loans, fake loans, damage to dignity and worry about the future of family members. Seventeen cases of farmers' suicides came into focus during the public hearing. The basic reasons of farmers' suicides as revealed during the public hearing were:

Drought/Loan Burden/Fake Loan/Process of Recovery

Bundelkhand is suffering from drought for the last five years. Drought is a natural calamity, but to some extent humans are also responsible for it. The drought is so severe that farmers are not getting back the seeds they are sowing. Survival of family needs money, which they borrow from banks, or from money lenders. Continuity in drought has deprived the farmers a chance to repay their loans. Despite the drought, brokers of tractors agencies encourage farmers to buy tractors on loan, and this has aggravated the situation.

Tulsidas (55), Resident of Karba Sarila village, Hamirpur District

Tulsidas (Chandu) jumped in well and died. His wife said that "Chandu (Tulsidas) had 30 bighas land. Before the drought, production from land was sufficient for the family, but drought decreased the production. Chandu started borrowing from moneylenders. The broker abducted him by saying: "You can purchase tractor on loan and we will give you money also. This will help you repay the loan of moneylenders." Chandu purchased the tractor by getting loan from State Bank of India, Basela. Now Chandu had a loan of Rs 8 lakh. He did not have any means to repay the loan. As the days passed, the process of recovery started. On the other hand moneylenders ploughed his 4 bighas of land for the money they had lent to him. Chandu could not stand all this and on May 8, 2007, he jumped into the well and died. Chandu's family prayed to officers for government support, but till now they have got nothing. The rest of land is ploughed by moneylenders and tractor has been taken away by the bank. Now 17 members of Chandu's family do not have any land and there is pressure on them to repay the loan.

Krishanpal Singh and Chandrapal Singh, Residents of Atrarmaf, Kabrai block, Mahoba District

Krishanpal Singh and Chandrapal Singh committed suicide. Saroj Singh wife of Krishanpal said Krishanpal and Chandrapal were real brothers. We had 10 bighas of land, but the productivity of land was so low that they even did not get back cost of cultivation. Increased family expenses, loss in agriculture, study of children and marriage of daughter created tension in the mind of Krishanpal and he took a loan from the bank. One day there was an argument between the bank manager and Krishanpal for loan repayment and the same day he committed suicide. Now the whole responsibility of running the family came on his younger brother Chandrapal. It was not easy for Chandrapal to run both the families because of economic crisis and loan burden. Five months after Krishanpal's suicide, Chandrapal also committed suicide. Both the families are now on the verge of starvation.

Sheela from village Atrarmaf, Kabrai Block, Mahoba District

Sheela (30) from village Atrarmaf, Kabrai Block, Mahoba district with her daughter aged seven and son aged three could not control her emotions in front of all. She lost her husband Chandrapal (34) five months earlier. Sheela said: "My husband (Chandrapal) was very simple and innocent. He committed suicide because of economic crises as he had borrowed Rs 38,000. We had 10 bigha of land, but half of the land is mortgaged. He was under pressure to pay back money to bank as well as moneylenders and he was not able to arrange food for the family. Increased burden of loan recovery upset him and one day he hanged himself.



Victim Shiladevi presenting her case during public hearing

Maiyadeen, Resident of Banadi Village, Karvi Block, Chitrakoot

Maiyadeen said: “I had 22 bigha land and the production of from the land was sufficient for the expenses of my family. One day an agent Girish Chandra came to him and said: “You can buy tractor with out paying any money immediately.” I bought the tractor and started farming. Unfortunately my tractor developed a snag so I went to the tractor agency. Suresh Mishra (agency owner) did not return my tractor. I met many officers, but nobody listens to me. My elder brother died because of economic crisis and loan burden. The ruin is not completed here. My land was auctioned three times, but at last 9 bigha 9 biswa land was auctioned for Rs 3.90 lakh. The same day revenue collector (tehsildar) sent me to jail for two hours. After the auction, State Bank of India sent me notice, but I could not go to the bank because I got it late. On the other hand, Suresh Mishra is threatening me to repay Rs 1.35 lakh more otherwise rest of my land would be auction. I have sent application from district level to Human Rights Commission, but nothing is happening. Increased recovery pressure and economic crisis do not allow me to live freely.



A victim presenting his problem

Drought is not the only reason of farmers' suicides, but increased loan burden is also a reason. Generally villagers prefer to borrow from the bank and moneylenders. As loan provider moneylenders do not have a good picture in Bundelkhand, but at a time when one needs money he does not have any option other than approaching moneylenders. The agent of tractor agency abducts the villagers and farmers to buy tractors on loan. Generally agent says that tractor will improve social status and crop production and improved production will help you repay the loan and you will be the owner of tractor. Villagers are very innocent and simple and the day they easily believe the agent they get entrapped in the net of agents. Illiteracy and lack of awareness of villagers is used to cheat them.



Gathering of participants during public hearing

Gopal Singh (30), Resident of Alipura Village, Kabrai Block, Mahoba

While narrating his story with tearful eyes, Gopal said I can't forget the day when I lost my world and my life became a curse. He said: "I borrowed Rs 3.5 lakh from the bank to buy a tractor and decided with the earning from tractor, I would repay the loan gradually. I paid

some instalments but drought became a hurdle in repayment. One day a bank staff came and threatened me to pay the instalment otherwise they would take away the tractor and also auction the land. It upset me and I felt helpless. I was not able to find the way to get rid off the loan. One day I decided to commit family suicide and told to my wife that we have to go Mahoba. She got ready. On the way I told my plan to my wife. She was with me and we went to the railway line instead of station. My wife Laxmi, my four year son Gaurav and I sat on the railway line. I could only see the speeding train and when I got sense my wife was in pieces, and my son and I had lost our one hand each. My life became a curse with this disability. I and my son both are totally dependent on my brother. It would have been better if both of us had also died.

Kamla (60), Resident of Bhandra village, Kabrai Block, Mahoba

Kamla said: “I am bearing the punishment of the act which I never did. I met many officers regarding my problem, but nobody listened to me. I am a ‘borrower’ of Rs 6 lakh which I never took. My cousin Malkhan withdrew money by cheating me and brought a tractor in the name of my elder brother Kamtu. When my brother knew it, he died of heart attack. I have also spent eight months in jail. I mortgaged my home and land to repay the loan, but it was not possible. Now I have lost my land and house and the condition of our family is so bad that we have to live under open sky.

Recovery of loan is a big cause of farmers’ suicides in Bundelkhand. Banks and moneylenders hire influential people for recovery. These people use various ways for recovery as abusing, quarrelling, beating, threatening and insulting the borrower in front of all. Not only the borrower, but his family member also pulled by the recovery persons in this matter. They auction property at such low prices that the loan is never repaid. In some cases people bear it, but in others they commit suicide.

Kamal Singh, Resident of Pritampur Village, Sipari, Jhansi

Kamal said: “My father (Haru) purchased a tractor on loan of Rs 2 lakh, but due to continuous drought he was not able to pay the instalment. My father informed the bank officers and gave them assurance that as the crop would grow he would pay the amount. But nobody listened to him. State Bank of India officers sent some influential persons for recovery. They insulted my father and my family in front of all. They harassed my family and

threaten us that they would impound our tractor. My father could not bear it and he died the same day.

Ram Manohar (45), Shivhad Village, Mahua block, Banda

Ram Manohar took care of his family by hard labour. He is owner of 10 biswa land, which does not produce seeds because of drought. He has four sons and two daughters. Anyhow Ram Manohar manages only for food. Worried over the marriage of his daughter, Ram Manohar borrowed Rs 20,000 from moneylender and married his daughter. As the days passed the land did not produce anything and manual labour did not come across. The situation became so grim that he could not arrange food for the family and started suffering from stress. On November 22, 2006, Ram Manohar lost his control and committed suicide on railway line. Now his family is on the verge of starvation.

Achchhelal (50). Resident of Madopur Village, Mahua Block, Banda

Madhopur village is very backward and bereft of basic facilities. Achchhelal was owner of 6 bighas land, but the land was rocky and unproductive. His land was on mortgage because of loan. Achchhelal borrowed loan from different banks for treatment of his son Rohit. Achchhelal tried his best to save the life of his ailing child, but Rohit died. Now Achchhelal is a patient of tuberculosis and has a loan of Rs 1.21 lakh on him. He is unable to do any work. His wife any how manages food by selling woods, but that is not sufficient to satiate hunger of the family. Now Achchhelal's eyes are full of tears and darkness. He is not able to think how he will repay the loan. He says: "It would have been better if I die, so that I have not to see this again."

Farmers are not worried only for burden of loan but marriage of daughters, education of children, illness of family members and other family expenses. Hunger of family forces them to commit suicide.

Hunger Deaths

Hunger death is a big issue in Bundelkhand and has attracted attention at national and international levels. Hunger is natural and basic characteristic of human being, but hunger death is a curse in growing and developing India. In Bundelkhand people have to eat *roti* with *namak* (salt) and *chatni* for survival. Several families are unable to store ration; they eat out

of their daily earning and if they cannot earn on any particular day, they sleep without food. Arrangement of food is possible only for those, who are able to work as labour and if they get work. The disabled, old and infirm to do hard work suffer from hunger.

Shiv Prashad, Resident of Nahri village, Block Naraini, Banda

Shivprashad said: “My mother (Gunthi) was a labour. She had to work because of food. My elder brother migrated because lack of work in the village, or neighbourhood. Due to hard labour my mother became ill and sick. I was also working as labour, but for the family my mother had to work. I was not getting wages on time and my family started facing the problem of insufficient food. This situation made my mother very weak and she was unable to endure hunger. One day my mother died and administration provided us Rs 1,000 after her death.

Suresh, Resident of Naraini block, Banda

Suresh said: “We are potters and we make clay pots. This was the only mean of livelihood of my family. Some influential persons forcibly got hold of the clay which we use for making pots. This situation forced my father to work as a labour. The wages supported us only for food, but my father suffered from the tension of the marriage of my sister. My father ate last only when all the family members had eaten, otherwise he slept hungry. We did not have BPL card also. When my father died, we did not have any thing to eat and hunger was the basic reason of his death.



Suresh presenting his case

Drought is the basic reason of hunger deaths, but another important reason is improper implementation of government schemes. Government has made lots of schemes for the benefit of needy, but real beneficiary does not the advantage of these schemes, and this creates problems. If a person is on the verge of hunger death, he/she does not get ration card, job, pension and wages, and he/she dies of hunger. In some cases, lack of proper and timely food makes the person weak and malnourished and this becomes cause of death. In rare cases the administration provides immediate support to the suffering family, but in others this rarely happens and administrative apathy becomes cause of death.

Exploitation

Bundelkhand is a region where feudal system is acquiring newer dimensions. Exploitation of poor and vulnerable by dacoits, feudal powers, moneylenders and village leaders are rampant here. The poor and weak are always exploited by the powerful and overbearing people. The person who has a sound economic background and a good reach in the administration is an influential person in this region. By using his power he can use or misuse the resources easily.

Lakhan Anuragi (32), Bhandra Village, Kabrai Block, Mahoba

Lakhan Anuragi (32) is Pradhan of Bhandra village in Kabrai block of Mahoba district. He started crying when he started explaining his condition as a Pradhan. Pradhan Lakhan Anuragi was exploited by Narendra Mishra, a powerful and overbearing person of Bhanbra village. The condition of Lakhan is so pathetic that he is unable to take care of his family and his family is totally depend on his brother who works as a labour in the neighbouring villages. His brother is anyhow able to manage only food. Lakhan said: “Narendra fielded me for Pradhan election and I won. Now Narendra was happy because what he wanted had happened. Narendra misused all the powers of Pradhan and I just became a puppet. Whenever he needed my signature and seal, he got it done on gunpoint. He has a good reach at the block level so he never faced any problem in withdrawing money. I have to bear all with silence because whenever I opposed, he threatened and beat me in front of all. I met with many officers but nobody listened to my problem because he was leader of the then ruling party. When the government changed in the State, I started opposing him and met officers, but Narendra’s people threatened me, beat me up and my family members, and even raped women of my family to silent me. He has done a lot of exploitation and corruption in our

village, and except mid day meal no other government schemes is not running in my village. All the NREGA work is being done by machines.

Lakhan said: “With the interference of Daddu Prasad (Rural development Minister, Uttar Pradesh) I filed an FIR against him and the SDM Mahoba provided me two constables for security. My economic condition is so pathetic that I am not able to satiate hunger of my family, so how I can afford the expenses of constable. I have told them my whole condition and told them, “Whenever I need you, I will call you.”

Rekharani (30), Resident of Budhaura, Jaitpur Block, Mahoba

She said Jaitpur is famous for its Khadi products all over India. We are weavers and weaving is the source of livelihood of our family. We weaved cloths for Gandhi Ashram, they purchased our finished material and this provided enough money for the survival of the family. Now our produce is not being purchased by Gandhi Ashram, which at the behest of an influential person of the area purchases cloth from somewhere else and puts seal of Gandhi Ashram, Jaitpur. This has snatch our business and we are on the verge of begging.

Exploitation of the poor and the weak by overbearing persons in Bundelkhand is a common phenomenon, but in several cases they are exploited by the police and government officials too.

Corruption in Government Schemes

Governments launch various schemes for the welfare of people. Every scheme has an objective and importance at grassroots level. NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme), MDM (Mid Day Meal), PDS (Public Distribution System), SWS (Social Welfare Scheme) and ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), etc., are some of the major schemes launched in India for the benefit of people. Improper and corruption full implementation of these schemes puts a question mark before all these schemes. Corruption prevails all over India, but the level of corruption in Bundelkhand is very high. During the public hearing cases related to NREGS, MDM, ICDS, PDS, Old Age Pension Scheme, Widow Pension Scheme, etc., came into sharp focus.

NREGS started to remove the problem of unemployment and migration but it failed to make an impact and the situation remains as it was before the start of the scheme. In Bundelkhand

region, cases related to non-issue of job cards, unavailability of work, job cards for labours, work done by machinery and non-reimbursement of wages and compensation came out.

Munnilal , Bharatpur village, Chitrakoot

Munnilal, a resident of Bharatpur village in Chitrakoot district, while narrating his tale started crying. He said: “I applied in writing to Gram Pradhan Smt. Chandu Devi and Gram Sewak for work under NREGS. They verbally said go and join the work of well construction, we will give you your job card soon. Munnilal started his job on February 16, 2007, but unfortunately on February 22, 2007, he fall in the well and his right leg got fractured. Munnilal has a poor economic background so he said to Pradhan and Gram Sewak: “I don’t have money how I will get my leg cured.” On this the Pradhan said: “NREGS does not have budget for these purpose. Go and borrow, we cannot help you.” Munnilal has four daughters and only Munnilal was the person who earned money. His wife borrowed money for his treatment, but Munnilal is not well till now. Munnilal wrote application for unemployment allowance and compensation of accident and is still waiting for action. Now Munnilal tense about the survival of his family.



A group of women presenting their problem

Widows of Dodiya Gram Panchayat in Chitrakoot district said that in their hamlet 13 women are widow and old and they are not able to do hard work. Till now we have not got pension and advantage of other schemes. We have sent application and opened our account, but we did not get any help till now. Some of us have to beg for fulfilling our hunger and some have to totally depend on the others for food – if they give us, we eat otherwise we have to sleep without food.

On the other hand, **Public Distribution System (PDS)**, which was launched with the objective to provide food security to the needy and poor in India, does not have a growing curve in Bundelkhand. Victims of Panihai village in Mau block of Chitrakoot district said that the distribution of ration cards to ineligible people is common in the villages and said Ram Kishore of our village died because of hunger. He was eligible for BPL card, but he never got despite best of efforts. His family, however, got the card after his death.

Words of Jury Members

Justice Mr Rafiquddin said: “Till now I listened and watched such news through newspapers and television, but today I am able to see the real victims and real picture of Bundelkhand. It makes me shocked that how the common people lead their lives. Proper implementation of government schemes is a big problem. Removal of this problem is not so easy, but we have to fight against it. At my level I will do whatever is possible.”



Justice Mr Rafiquddin

Mr Colin Gonsalves while addressing the villagers said: “This picture is same in other states of India. Government, police and banks drive the people on the verge of hunger death. I have seen this situation in Madhya Pradesh and Punjab also. I am an Advocate by profession, but this situation forces me to say this that now the time has come when we have to break the rules and laws for living. I will say to organisations (NGOs) that we will file all cases in High Court free of cost.”



Dr Rooprekha Verma said: “India is the biggest democratic country where every one has right to say, but now the situation has become so pathetic that no body listen to the poor. This is the time when we have to organise ourselves in a group and raise our voice collectively. We have to make a movement when neither we will eat nor we will allow the officers and government functionaries to eat.”



Dr Rooprekha Verma

Mr SR Darapuri said: “The administration does not follow rules and only understands the language of pressure to start the work. We don’t expect any thing from the leaders and government functionaries.”



Mr SR Darapuri

Mr Azmal Khan said: “It is the character of our government who always denies the real cause of starvation. If we have to die then we will die with struggle.”



Mr Azmal Khan

Conclusion

The public hearing provided a platform to the victims who presented the real picture of Bundelkhand, which played a great role in India's freedom struggle. This public hearing gave a chance to victims of direct interaction with legal scholars and media persons. As an output of public hearing all the cases will be filed free of cost. A large number of social activists, government officers and social workers gathered for the well-wishers of victims.

Drought is a natural hazard. Bundelkhand is reeling under drought for the past five years and the pinch is more severe this time because of rampant corruption. The government has launched several schemes to combat drought, but corruption has placed a question mark before them. In this region, borrowers take recourse of suicide to get rid of loan repayment. People hand over their children because they can't look after them. Migration becomes a pattern for living and survival for the resident of this region. High level of corruption and exploitation of poor and vulnerable are rooted in all government schemes in Bundelkhand. The feudal system of the region also does not allow the oppressed to raise the voice, but the present era needs collective and joint effort for the prosperity of Bundelkhand.

Now the condition of Bundelkhand is so bad that it has to struggle for development. On the basis of tales narrated in the public hearing, we can emphatically say people are dying of starvation because of drought and corruption in government schemes. Bundelkhand can acquire a prosperous position in India because of its rich natural and human resource, but the present scenario of this region can cause lots of hurdles in the prosperity of Bundelkhand.

As the families lose their leader, there is a risk that this can create the problems of child labour, human trafficking, depression, migration, etc., in the family as well as in the community. When the young and unskilled manpower migrates to the cities, it becomes afflicted with slum-related problems.

Overview of the Problems and Actions

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
Vindhya Dham Samiti, Banda	Jiyalal (70)	Village Chandpura Narani	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Ayodhya (35)	Village Nedua Narani	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Ramesh (38)	Village Nahri Nahri	Patient of tuberculosis; family is on the verge of hunger death	Lekhpal provided 2.5 kg grains and Pradhan provided Rs 1,000. SDM helped for health check-up
	Gunthi (50)	Village Chandpura Narani	Hunger made her ill and she died	Rs 1000 from Pradhan
Krishnaarpit Sewa Ashram, Banda	Shivpoojan Pal (35)	Village Khairada Badokhar Khurd	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Pratap Singh (55)	Village Matoundh Badokhar khurd	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Ramchandra Kushwaha (40)	Village Bansakha Mahua	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Ram Manohar (45)	Village Shivhad Mahua	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Achchhelal (50)	Village Madhopur Mahua	Loan from 7 banks, family is verge of hunger death	–
	30 labours of Madhopur	Village Madhopur Mahua	Applied for job under NREGS but neither they got neither jobs nor unemployment allowance	Order for action issued
	Maheshwari Deen (55)	Village Manipur Narani	Loan burden and economic crisis	–
	Shiv Shankar (28)	Bhagdar Dera, Tindwari	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Kamta Prasad (40)	Village Chilla Tindwari	Committed suicide because	–

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
			of economic crisis	
	Shiv Mangal (38)	Village Bambiya Tindwari	Committed suicide because of economic crisis	–
	Rasuli (70) and Chunbadi (35)	Village Parsouda Tindwari	Hunger death and economic crisis	–
	Lalu (20)	Village Palra Tindwari	Deprivation from Government Schemes	–
Antyodaya Sansthan, Hamirpur	Lakkhu (65)	Village Kundoura Hamirpur	Heart attack because of loan burden	–
	Ram Sewak (53)	Village Purainy Sarila	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Chandu (55)	Village Karba Hamirpur	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Diuli (26)	Village Thika Amchur Neruva	Death by malnourishment because lack of foodgrains	–
	Vishram (45)	Village Tikariya Kolan Manikpur	Death by hunger and illness; family does not have money to purchase ration from PDS	–
	Santosh (30)	Village Markundi Manikpur	Husband wife both are suffering from disability and hunger	–
	Kaluti (65)	Village Markundi Kihuniya Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	Applied for family welfare scheme but waiting for action
	Hiralal (58)	Village Tikariya Kolan Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Bhaiyalal (88)	Village Markundi Kihuniya Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Joga (80)	Village Bheda	Exclusion from	–

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
		Amchur Manikpur	government schemes	
	Kesh Kali (65)	Village Bagrha Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Savitri (50)	Village Bagrha Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Chukavan (45)	Village Jaggannathpuram Manikpur	Unavailability of job under NREGS	–
	Baishakhu (80)	Village Itwan Dundaila Manikpur	Eligible for antyodaya, but got of BPL card	–
	Chunku (85)	Kol Colony, Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Rampyari (60)	Village Itwan- Dundaila Manikpur	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	69 labourers of Jaggannathpuram	Village Jaggannathpuram Manikpur	Unavailability of job under NREGS	–
Damini Samiti, Shivrampur , Chitrakoot	Maiyadin	Village Banadi Karvi	One has died because of loan burden and other is being exploited	–
	Chanda	Rouli Kalyan Chitrakoot	Disability and excluded from government schemes	–
	Munnilal	Bharatkoop, Chitrakoot	Neither got wages nor compensation during NREGS work	–
	Mohan (55)	Village Bihara Chitrakoot	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Rani Kushwaha	Bharatkoop Chitrakoot	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	100 labourers	Various villages in Chitrakoot district	Migration because of lack of work	–
Arunodaya Sansthan,	Krishanpal Singh and	Village Ataramaf Kabrai	Both had committed	–

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
Mahoba	Chandrapal Singh		suicide because of loan burden	
	Babulal Basor (55)	Kabrai Mahoba	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Laxmi Devi (25)	Village Alipura Kabrai	Suicide attempt	–
	Kandhilal (35)	Village Alipura Kabrai	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Kamtu Kori (60)	Bhandra Kabrai	Committed suicide because of fake loan burden	–
	Amarchand (55)	Village Pava Kabari	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Dhampoli (40)	Village Supa Charkhari	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Shila Devi (30)	Village Ataramaf Kabrai	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Ashok	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Administrative carelessness drove family on verge of hunger	–
	Illay	Village Ataramaf Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Gulabchand	Village Ataramaf Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Ganpat	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Unavailability of job under NREGS	–
	Durga	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Unavailability of Job under NREGS	–
	Tillipat	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Migration because of loan burden	–
	Premabai (37)	Village Bara Kabrai	Fake loan	–
	Kalawati (40)	Village Bara Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Dhaniram (40)	Village Ataramaf	Exclusion from	–

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
		Kabrai	government schemes	
	Ramkishor (40)	Village Ataramaf Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Tulsarani (36)	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Unavailability of job under NREGS	–
	Anandi (47)	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Unavailability of Job under NREGS	–
	Nathhu Ahirvar (55)	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Bhola	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Lakhan Anuragi	Village Bhandra Kabrai	Exploitation	–
	Lal (25)	Village Supa Mahoba	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
	Pooran Lal Rajpoot (58)	Village Mauranipur Mahoba	Committed suicide because of loan burden	–
Shabari Sewa Sansthan, Barghad, Chitrakoot	Soni (20)	Village Kotva Mau	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Ramkali (45)	Village Dondiya Mau	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Israr Khan, Biru and Ashok	Barghad Mau	Police exploitation	–
	Munshi (65)	Village Dondiyamafi Mau	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Ramjiyaji (60)	Village Kalchiha Chitrakoot	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	13 widows of Donsiya village	Village Dondiya Mau	Exclusion from government schemes	–
	Shankerlal (48)	Village Dondiya Mau	Hunger caused disease and later died	–
	Ramkishun (38)	Village Panihai Mau	Hunger death	–

Name of NGOs	Name and Age	Resident	Problem	Action
	Kusumkali (35)	Village Kithai Mau	Committed suicide	–
	Ramgulab (38)	Barghad Mau	Hunger death	–
	Biharilal (60)	Village Bogh Mau	Committed suicide	–
	170 labours of Bogh village	Village Bogh Mau	Unavailability of Job under NREGS	–
	A school of Goiya village, Khohar	Barghar, Mau	Mid day meal	–
	Chhotelal	Dhanihai, Mau	Exclusion from government schemes	–
Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan, Jhansi	Ram Prasad (55)	Village Jarvo Badgaon	Fake loan	–
	Dhansingh (55)	Village Atariyan Babina	Shocked by auction and died	–
	Haru (60)	Pritampura Jhansi	Death by recovery and exploitation	–