June 11th, 2007
Simlipal/JCE/491/Orissa.

To,
Shri.Ajit Tripathy
Chief Secretary
Government of Orissa
Secretariat
Bhubaneswar
Orissa

Dear Shri.Tripathy,

Subject: Constitution of a Joint Commission of Enquiry (JCE) to look into the incidence of repeated deaths of children allegedly due to malnutrition in Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Mayurbhanj District, Orissa.

You will be aware that the Office of the Commissioners of the Supreme Court is designated to monitor the implementation of food related welfare schemes of the Government and the implementation of the orders of the Supreme Court in Writ Petition (Civil) 196/2001, PUCL v. Union of India and others. The incidence of deaths due to malnutrition has further been brought under the purview of the Commissioners by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Over the past months, we have received several reports regarding cases of starvation that have been reported from the Simplipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district in Orissa.

We have decided to constitute a Joint Commission of Enquiry (JCE) to assess the cases reported and to look into the status of implementation of food-related welfare schemes under our purview in the area, including the Targeted Public Distribution System, ICDS, MDMS, SGRY/ NREGA, NOAPS, NFBS and NMBS.

We are particularly keen that the JCE goes into the structural reasons for such malnutrition related deaths and comes up with concrete suggestions on changes in policies and programmes that can perhaps be brought about so as to increase outreach to the most vulnerable sections of the population.

We are requesting our Adviser in Orissa, Rajkishore Mishra to head the JCE and would request you to nominate a senior official, not less than the rank of a Joint Secretary, to be part of the JCE. The other members of the JCE would be Sampad Mohapatra, Mr.Lingaraj, Mr.Biswajit Mohanty, Anuradha Talwar (Our Adviser in West Bengal). The purpose of the JCE is not just to investigate individual instances but also to suggest longer term measures for dealing with such problems.

We are attaching as a annexure the most recent media report from The Hindu as well as the list of names of the children in XXX village of YYYY Block of Mayurbhanj District who have reportedly died due to malnutrition related causes. We would urge you to ensure the following for the families of these children:

- Provide immediate relief to the survivors in the affected family especially for any siblings of the deceased children who may be facing similar problems.
- Ensure that other children who have been identified in the village receive medical attention without delay and
- Identify the communities that are living with starvation, the structural causes for their malnutrition, and initiate longer term responses to address these problems

We request you to ensure that the work of the JCE be completed no later than 15th July, 2007.

With Regards,

Saxena

Dr. N.C. Saxena

Harsh Mander

CC: Rajkishore Mishra, Advisor to the Commissioner of the Supreme Court (Writ 196/ 2001).