

September 9, 2004

Dear friends,

The entire Jharkhand state is reeling under one of the worst droughts in its history. People are faced with the cumulative effects of the fourth successive drought year in the state. Reports of starvation deaths have started pouring in, particularly from the Palamau division which is the worst hit. Newspapers and TV channels have given wide coverage to such reports. In such situation, the state is expected to respond in the most humane way and with a sense of utmost urgency to save people's lives, ameliorate their sufferings and link relief and rehabilitation work with development. Unfortunately, the state has been trying to refuse any hunger deaths in the state and is yet to announce any relief measure.

In order to assess the severity of drought and hunger situation, we undertook a quick survey in 112 villages of 12 blocks of 7 districts, namely Palamau, Garhwa, Latehar, Ranchi, Godda, Dumka and East Singhbhum between 22nd and 26th August (a list of surveyed villages is appended). Out of these 52 villages were from the three districts of Palamau division. The period covered during the survey was June to August 15, 2004. A summary of the findings are given below:

- a) Rainfall was inadequate and irregular during June and July. Rainfall between June 1 to September 8, 2004 has been only 707 mm which is deficient by 25 per cent as against expected normal rainfall of 937 mm during the period. Of 311 Ahars covered in the survey, water availability was only 18% compared to a normal year. Water availability was less than 50% in 495 wells surveyed in these villages. In Palamau division the figures were 3% and 23% respectively.
- b) The loss of Halka paddy, an early maturing upland paddy variety that gives food security during September and October, has been to the extent of 84 per cent. In Palamau division the loss has been to the extent of 99%. It is the failure of this crop that causes famine situation in poor households. The future prospect is further bleak as sowing of low land paddy, called Bhari paddy, could take place only on 28% paddy lands in total surveyed villages and 13% in the villages of Palamau. Moreover, 63 per cent of paddy seedlings have been damaged. Aside from crop failure, employment generation in agriculture is almost nil.
- c) The possibility of Maize production is upto 51% compared to a normal year which means that it may not provide food security beyond 15 days in the month of September. In Palamau, Maize production may be upto 15% of production in a normal year.
- d) A large number of cattle deaths have been reported in the villages surveyed. A total of 3291 cattle – 230 cows, 173 oxen, 118 buffalos, 706 goats, 520 pigs and 1544 hens – died between June and mid August, which restricted the income possibility of poor households during food crisis. Out of this 2671 cattle died in Palamau villages alone.
- e) The status of implementation of government schemes in the state is very poor. Only 4% pregnant women in the total survey area reported getting any services from ICDS centers.

- f) The implementation of Antyodaya Anna Yojna is pathetic. Of 86 villages from where data was collected on Antyodaya, only in 44 villages beneficiaries reported having received ration during July to mid August 2004. Antyodaya ration was distributed only in 22 villages in June, 3 villages each in May, April and March, and 1 village each in February and January 2004. 9 villages had not received any Antyodaya ration in 2004. The situation is more or less the same in Palamau.
- g) In case of Annapurna Yojna is no different. Data is available from 53 villages on Annapurna. Only in 11 villages, beneficiaries had been given ration during July to mid August 2004. Month-wise figures pertaining to number of villages in which any beneficiary had received Annapurna ration was: 15 villages in June, 1 each in May and April, 6 in March, 4 in February and 1 in January 2004. No Annapurna ration has so far been distributed in 14 villages in 2004.
- h) Regarding employment generation by the government, the average number of human days generated was less than a human day both in Palamau and in total surveyed villages. Per village human days figure comes to abysmal 25 during the month of July and 32 during June 2004. Corresponding figures for Palamau are 37 days and 29 respectively.
- i) Migration has been one coping mechanism in such situations. In the surveyed villages, 1513 persons, in many cases the entire family, have migrated out, leaving the old-aged behind uncared and unattended. The survey found 707 old aged persons who had no body to take care of. Out of these, Palamau has a higher proportion (901 migrants and 474 old-aged). However, the most worrying is the return of many families back as they could not get any employment in Southern/Central Bihar which too is facing severe drought situation.
- j) A wild leaf, called Chakora and a root known Gethi, both having very low nutrition content have been main survival food during such situations. Due to over-exploitation of them for the last 4-5 years and also low growth this year because of negligible rains, these food items have also become scarce.

The above-mentioned findings show extreme vulnerable situations in Jharkhand, particularly in Palamau division. 9 starvation deaths in past fortnight is a grim pointer of the future unless attended to with a sense of humanitarian emergency.

At this point of time, the need is to immediately provide gratuitous food to non-able bodied persons, vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, newly delivered mothers, children, and those families suffering from acute hunger. At the same time, massive food for work programme for able-bodied adults should be undertaken. It is also important to link relief and rehabilitation with development. Thus, it will be important to identify such works under food for work that have potential of long-term mitigation of drought situation.

We appeal for your cooperation in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Pushpendra
Regional Manager

Appendix

Sl. No.	District	Block	Village name	Panchayat
1	Dumka	Saraiyahat	Taraon	Digghi
2	Dumka	Saraiyahat	Jamua	Digghi
3	Dumka	Saraiyahat	Jamuniya	Mathakesho
4	Dumka	Saraiyahat	Bhouratanr	Nawadih
5	Dumka	Ramgarh	Bishunpur	Parma
6	Dumka	Ramgarh	Simartala	Khuthan
7	Dumka	Ramgarh	Satarla	Kanjo
8	Dumka	Ramgarh	Parma	Parma
9	Dumka	Ramgarh	Aluwara	Chotiranbahiyar
10	Dumka	Ramgarh	Gidbanna	Chotiranbahiyar
11	Dumka	Ramgarh	Amba	Sahara
12	Palamau	Manatu	Bhandari	Gurha
13	Palamau	Manatu	Udaypura	Tarhasi
14	Palamau	Manatu	Bedari Khu	Tarhasi
15	Palamau	Manatu	Bishunpur	Tarhasi
16	Palamau	Manatu	Saraidih	Tarhasi
17	Palamau	Manatu	Kushladih	Suggi
18	Palamau	Manatu	Suggi	Tariya
19	Palamau	Manatu	Tirondha	Suggi
20	Palamau	Manatu	Bhalogadi	Suggi
21	Palamau	Manatu	Shewti	Tariya
22	Palamau	Manatu	Tariya	Suggi
23	Palamau	Manatu	Bhandara	Tariya
24	Palamau	Manatu	Barkoma	Tariya
25	Palamau	Manatu	Dhuma	Gurha
26	Palamau	Panki	Sorath	Mangalpur
27	Palamau	Panki	Chauriya	Mangalpur
28	Palamau	Panki	Nawadih	Mangalpur
29	Palamau	Panki	Duriyartu	Karar
30	Palamau	Panki	Garihara	Mangalpur
31	Palamau	Panki	Ulgaratola	Mangalpur
32	Palamau	Panki	Auka	Taal (abun)
33	Palamau	Panki	Khajuri	Taal (abun)
34	Palamau	Panki	Jotang	Abun
35	Palamau	Panki	Chappar	Abun
36	Palamau	Panki	Gopaldih	Abun
37	Palamau	Panki	Tetriyadih	Abun

38	Palamau	Panki	Nawdiha	Mangalpur
39	Palamau	Panki	Kasmar	Taal (abun)
40	Palamau	Panki	Dema	Hotai
41	Palamau	Panki	Mahe	Hotai
42	Palamau	Panki	Radhadih	Sagaldepa
43	Palamau	Panki	Husainigui	Maran
44	Palamau	Lesliganj	Kubua	Nawadih T
45	Palamau	Lesliganj	Erwa	Nawadih T
46	Palamau	Lesliganj	Chandaigir	Nawadih T
47	Palamau	Lesliganj	Gentha	Nawadih T
48	Palamau	Lesliganj	Nawadih T	Nawadih T
49	Palamau	Lesliganj	Harsangra	Nawadih T
50	Palamau	Lesliganj	Pardohara	Nawadih T
51	Palamau	Lesliganj	Cherry	Nawadih T
52	Palamau	Lesliganj	Bhakasi	Rajhara
53	Palamau	Lesliganj	Sitadih	Lesliganj
54	Palamau	Lesliganj	Pathrahee	Gopalgunj
55	Palamau	Lesliganj	Sons	Dhela
56	Palamau	Lesliganj	Rajhara	Dhangaon
57	Palamau	Lesliganj	Koirin Patra	Koirin Patra
58	Palamau	Lesliganj	Aukhora Patra	Koirin Patra
59	Palamau	Lesliganj	Koyeri Patra	Koirin Patra
60	Palamau	Lesliganj	Takurai did	Darudih
61	Palamau	Lesliganj	Sangbar	Darudih
62	Palamau	Lesliganj	Lotwa	Oriya
63	Palamau	Lesliganj	Darudih	Darudih
64	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Barwa	Barwa
65	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Kushwar	Barwa
66	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Durjan	Barwa
67	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Tetardih	Barwa
68	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Bairiya	Barwa
69	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Homiya	Barwa
70	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Udaypur	Udaypur
71	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Pundaga	Udaypur
72	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Nawadih (G)	Udaypur
73	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Chapri	Harhe
74	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Patsar	Udaypur
75	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Suli	Udaypur
76	Garhwa	Ramkanda	Sabane	Harhe
77	Ranchi	Murhu	Gajgaon	Murhu
78	Ranchi	Murhu	Bara Pandu	Kunjala
79	Ranchi	Murhu	Saparom	Saparom
80	Ranchi	Khunti	Simbukel	Budhodih
81	Ranchi	Murhu	Kudahatu	Digri
82	Ranchi	Murhu	Chatradih	Binda

83	Ranchi	Murhu	Somar Bazar	Murhu
84	Ranchi	Khunti	Phudi	Phudi
85	Ranchi	Angara	Jarga	Jarga
86	Ranchi	Angara	Chandidih	Rajadera
87	Ranchi	Angara	Paika	Jarga
88	Ranchi	Angara	Kanshidih	Kanshidih
89	Dumka	Raneshwar	Kadma	Kadma
90	Dumka	Masalia	Pokhariya	Basmatta
91	Dumka	Raneshwar	Dhakajol	Simaljor
92	Godda	Boarijor	Bara Amra	Bara telo
93	Godda	Boarijor	Balkami	Bara telo
94	Godda	Boarijor	Bansdanda	Pipra
95	Godda	Boarijor	Garbhu Tola	Bara telo
96	Godda	Boarijor	Telo Tok	Bara telo
97	Latehar	Manika	Lanka	Kui
98	Latehar	Manika	Manikdih	Kui
99	Latehar	Manika	Sevdhara	kui
100	Latehar	Manika	Ranki Kala	kui
101	Latehar	Manika	Mohantanr	Kui
102	Latehar	Manika	Nawadih	Sinzo
103	Latehar	Latehar	Dugila	Kura
104	Latehar	Manika	Kui	kui
105	Latehar	Latehar	Rehra	Kura
106	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Chakuliya
107	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Bankai
108	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Terenga
109	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Kasidih
110	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Patkita
111	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Kendadih	Netra
112	E. Singhbhum	Musabani	Rakha	Bara Jharna