

Fact finding report on Starvation Deaths

Background

Bellary district is one of the most backward district in Karnataka. This district regularly faces drought. Last three years the district facing similar drought and farmers not cultivating their lands. Mainly the small farmers, agricultural labourers and small business people are facing critical situations. This time drought effected most of the part of the state. Agricultural labourers are not getting work any where. For the last six months labourers are not getting work one week they get one or two days of work only. The daily wage is Rs. 10 to 15. Since last three years, not a single day work has been provided for labourers in this particular village.

The village background

Haragina Dhani village is 18 km. from district headquarters. This village came under Belgaum Grama Panchayat. Some KSRTC buses are coming to this village. Village have 500 households and 3000 population. The major population is lingayaths followed by dalits, kumbaras, nayaks, muslims, barkers and jangamas. 80% of the village population are agricultural labourers. The village has PDS fair price shop but is opened only three days in a month. This village comes under mining area. Two mining companies have mines in the village. The name of the companies are Triple benefits and Alloys mine company. But these companies had given work only to 40 villagers.

Mr. Hanumappa's family background

Mr. Hanumappa aged above 60 was a land less agricultural labourer. He has five children— two daughters and three sons. Two daughters already got married. Three sons not yet married. The elder son is mentally disabled. One son works at Bellary and earns Rs.15 to Rs. 20 per day but does not get work every day. Another son is an agricultural labourer. Hanumappa and his wife were also agricultural labourers. The whole family used to get only 30 rupees per work and with this money. It is very difficult for many families to get food every day. The state has not distributed Antodaya Anna Yojana cards to this poor family. They have a BPL ration card but do not have money to purchase.

Hanumappa's death

Hanurappa died on 21st June, 2003 evening 6 pm at his small hut. Before one week of his death the whole family got food once in two days only. They face similar starvation problems. His wife was with him in the time of death. The funeral was held on 22nd Sunday June, 2003.

Opinion of the Villagers

All of the villagers who we met said that Hanurappa's death is only due to starvation. All the villagers said that government has not sanctioned any project since three years. Poor people have only one time food a day. H. Mareppa, driver thimmappa, T. Dharmareddy,

B Basavana Gowda, Mr. Shivana reddy (Grama Panchayat President). Mr. Enirswamy, Zilla Panchayat member, all of them pointed that Mr. Hanurappa's death is clearly because of starvation.

Other issues

Grama panchayat does not conduct any grama sabha at all. People are not aware of grama sabha. Selection of government schemes beneficiaries is not accountable. Only rich people get benefits. Government formed a committee for waste land development but project has not started. One NGO called Development Promotion Group worked with people on sanitation project, but not working in this village.

What the government has done

After the starvation death report government authorities said that it was not starvation death and only a natural death. But after 3 days local Thasildar issued a cheque to Hanurappa's family (cheque No. 529855, Tungabhadra Grameena Bank, Gandhi Nagar, Bellary, account No. 18104, dated 24.6.03) the cheque amount is Rs. 10,000/-. After the death of Hanurappa, local authorities started food for work in the village on 24.6.03. This is the first drought relief work in this village since three village.

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