

# FACT FINDING REPORT OF DROUGHT IN ANANTAPUR & THE STATE OF CITIZENS' ENTITLEMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DROUGHT

## BACKGROUND

A civil society fact finding team went to different parts of Anantapur district, on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017, to make a rapid assessment of the situation of drought in the district as well as the situation with regard to various citizen entitlements in the context of drought. This report is being put in the public domain on 8/5/2017 after the fact finding visits and wide ranging interactions taken up by the team, for immediate action by the district administration, state and central governments. We also hope that the Supreme Court of India will take note of these findings in its ongoing PILs related to Drought and Farm Suicides.

The fact finding team consisted of Shri Basha and Shri Sashanka Mouli (Human Rights Forum, who joined the effort on different days), Shri Chandrasekhar (AP Rythu Sangam), Ms Bhanuja (AP Rythu Swarajya Vedika Convenor), Ms Kavitha Kuruganti (ASHA-Kisan Swaraj network), Ms Padmavathi (Mahila Samakhya, who joined on May 6<sup>th</sup>), Shri Siva Reddy (AP Rythu Swarajya Vedika, who joined on May 6<sup>th</sup>) and Shri Sesha Reddy (AP Rythu Sangam, who joined on May 6<sup>th</sup>).

The team visited Anantapur Rural, Raptadu, Obula Devuni Cheruvu (ODC), Mudigubba and Kadiri mandal villages (7 villages which included Kurugunta, Kodimi, Raminipalli, Balijapalli, NSP Kottala, Diguvaipalli and Kareddipalli Tanda) in addition to interacting with the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) of Anantapur Rural Mandal and the Lead Bank Manager (LDM) for the district of Anantapur. Two of these villages were visited by team members on 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2017. Focused Group Discussions were organized in each of these villages, usually in the presence of the Sarpanch/ any other elected representative/ PDS Dealer/SHG leaders/Anganwadi teacher/VRO etc. The team picked up its sample villages close to Anantapur town, as well as far away from the district headquarters. The villages were picked up both purposively (especially in the case of Kareddipalli tanda, which was highlighted for its extreme living conditions in the past too with the district administration) as well as randomly (just stopping midway to discuss the situation of drought in villages next to the highway).

The timing of the fact finding initiative (in the first week of May) was such that the government and district administration had adequate time in which to institute all the mechanisms that are supposed to be put into place, to uphold the Right To Life, a Constitutional guarantee to all citizens. It had six months' time from November 2016, after the official Declaration of Drought. Further, the timing was such that, it captures the acute hardships in the peak summer month of May when lack of adequate measures by the administration are bound to show up. It also comes at a time when all measures have to be taken up to ensure that the possibility of a normal year in the upcoming Kharif, which is weeks away, have to be optimized by everyone by being adequately prepared.

The support mechanisms and services that were assessed for their existence and implementation by this fact-finding are not charity from the state, but are statutory entitlements of citizens as encapsulated in the Drought Manual, the National Disaster Management Act 2005, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act 2005, National Food Security Act 2013, and as ordered by the Supreme Court in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 857/2015 (popularly referred to as Swaraj Abhiyan PIL on Drought).

Anantapur is experiencing the consequences of a 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of Drought. One would think that the district administration and the state government would be better prepared for facing such a drought. But the findings of this Fact Finding initiative belie this hope. The following pages describe the main findings of the fact finding visit.

## DROUGHT SITUATION

Secondary reports (mainly local media reports) indicate the following picture:

- Rainfall was just 284 mm, as compared to 722.4 mm in 2010-11
- At least 42% of the agricultural borewells in the district have run out of water/dried up by April 2017
- The groundwater levels in the district have fallen to 70-90 meters in many places
- The number of milch and draught animals in the district has declined by 50%, to around 8.22 lakh animals; it is estimated that around 38 lakh heads of sheep and 8 lakh goats have been taken to distant places for grazing
- Migration of at least 4.87 lakh persons is estimated to have happened out of the district
- In 68% of the villages in the districts, severe drinking water shortage is reported
- Crop loss estimates in the district are the highest ever in Kharif 2016, at 3500-4000 crore rupees

The graveness of the situation and the acute nature of the current drought could be gauged firsthand by us in this fact finding visit, by the following situation:

**WATER:** Availability of drinking water as well as water for other household purposes was in acute shortage in villages like Raminipalli, which are in the very backyard of the district administration so to speak. It is RDT's (a well-known NGO) water supply that is helping the village tide over the current crisis. The crisis was also acute in Karedipalli Tanda. Though RDT recently invested in a solar-powered pump for drinking water, the lack of availability of water even here means hours of filling a few water pots under thin streams of water which dry up frequently. The water crisis in Kodimi village was of a different kind – though water quantities and the number of working borewells is not a problem here, the quality of water was a serious issue. Villagers contend that their groundwater is highly polluted by a neighboring veterinary pharmaceutical plant which makes the water unpotable. The entire village depends on purchased water for its drinking water. In NSP Kottala which is connected by Satya Sai drinking water project, there was a recent breakdown in the supply of this piped water for three days. The villagers suffered quite acutely for want of water during this period, we were told. Random conversations with citizens who were just carrying water over long distances, as we travelled around the villages, gave us a picture of people depending on agricultural borewells here and there, for fetching water for household needs and this usually meant at least 2-3 hours for each household for this activity. It was seen that women, men as well as children were involved in this water-carrying activity in all such places. It was also apparent that most villagers were shifting to a market-based mechanism for their

drinking water supplies in any case, of buying water with prices that ranged from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- per pot. Households were seen to spend at least Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 per day on an average for drinking water being supplied by various commercial players.

**FODDER:** availability of fodder for animals was in acute shortage. All livestock owning households are purchasing fodder at the cost of at least Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 7500/- per month (a tractorload of paddy hay costs around Rs.10,000/- and groundnut fodder costs around Rs.15000/- and this is adequate for one milch animal for 2 months), per cow or buffalo, except those rare households which managed to harvest a rabi crop because of irrigation availability. This is an unaffordable investment in many ways for many families. However, in the absence of any fodder cultivation taken up by the government village-wise, or supply of fodder from elsewhere, this is something that families are spending their limited resources on, including by borrowing money from some source or the other.

We also found serious shortage of water for livestock. Vast open (grazing) lands do not hold any water for these animals. Herds were being taken each day for 4-5 kms where water points were available, and then taken for grazing. No special arrangements for water for livestock were seen in many villages.



**ANIMAL DEATHS AND SALES:** There are instances of deaths of milch animals as well as small ruminants like goats and sheep due to fodder shortage, summer heat and drinking from whatever available sources of water remain for them. For each such death of a milch animal, a household incurs a loss of around Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 30,000/-. The fact finding team came across reported instances of drought-related deaths of milch animals in at least 6 cases. Further, there is a high level of distress sale of animals by a large number of families at throw-away prices because owners are unable to provide for the animals any more. We came across cases of animals which were purchased for around Rs. 30,000/- being sold at such low prices as Rs. 5,500/- in a period of 1 year. Water for livestock is a major problem and animals are being herded several kilometers to take them to watering points, before being taken for grazing over parched lands.

**MIGRATION:** Large scale migration is happening from several villages in search of employment and sheer survival. 20 families in Kurugunta, 15 families in Raminepalli, 40 families (25%) in NSP Kottala, 35 families in Kareddipalli (75%) and 7-8 families (10%) in Balijapalli. The situation in Kareddipalli is heart-rending and it is completely unconscionable that the district administration has not been active in taking care of children and elderly people in this village, nor provide livelihoods to villagers to stem large scale migration. We found several cases of little children staying with their grandparent(s) or even completely by themselves. In NSP Kottala, we came across information about several families owning upto even 10 acres of land also migrating out for seasonal work elsewhere owing to the huge losses incurred in agriculture last season.

**IRRIGATION WATER:** A very large number of agricultural borewells have dried up in all the villages visited and village tanks are dry without much water.

**ORCHARDS DRYING UP:** Even 8- or 9-year old fruit orchards are drying up and years of investments by farmers as well as government are just withering away. Farmers are feeling absolutely helpless unable to save their crops and are in great despair.

The team also came across a recent incident of a farm suicide in Raminepalli village, linked to the crop loss incurred due to the current drought – here, it was a case of a public sector bank putting pressure on the suicide victim. We came across a village (Kareddipalli) which was populated at present mainly by children and the elderly because able bodied adult members had largely migrated out.

The fact finding team also took note of the fact that poor workers have died of sunstroke, as per several media reports, after working in NREGS work sites. So far, a compilation of media reports indicates that at least 50 such sunstroke deaths have taken place, in just Anantapur district. ***It is not clear if these families have received compensation amounts as per procedure. The fact finding team notes that several of these deaths are of workers at NREGS sites.***

All the above has been already reported in various media reports and has also been highlighted in the protests of some Opposition parties. This fact-finding is able to reiterate the similar findings strongly, with an additional picture from rapid information collection from 10 other villages in 10 mandals of the district. The following is the summary of the drought situation.

<b>Number of Mandals</b>	<b>Number of Villages</b>	<b>Number of villages with severe water shortage, warranting tanker water supply</b>	<b>Number of villages with significant migration (of at least 15 or more families)</b>	<b>Number of villages with high levels of distress sale of animals</b>
5	7 (FFT visit)	2 (Raminepalli and Kareddipalli Tanda) + 1 (Kodimi, polluted water)	4 (Kurugunta, Raminepalli, NSP Kottala and Kareddipalli Tanda), with Kodimi being an exception to the migration trend	6 (except Kareddipalli which did not have many milch animals to begin with, all other villages)

## CITIZEN ENTITLEMENTS & THEIR VIOLATIONS

Certain basic provisions to be delivered by the government during droughts and similar natural calamities, is in fact a matter of Constitutional Rights guaranteed under Right To Life of every citizen of the country. The fact finding sought to look into issues of citizen entitlements related to water availability/supply, food security, employment, farmers' risk insurance and re-investment for next season, livestock support systems etc.

### 1. WATER AVAILABILITY/SUPPLY<sup>1</sup>:

The December 2016 "Manual for Drought Management", finalized by the Drought Management Division, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has an entire section on Water Resources Management, in Drought Response and Relief. It clearly states that "*water scarcity is expected to manifest during events of hydrological drought.*



*Successive years of hydrological drought will enhance scarcity*". The Manual says that the Collector must determine the quantity of water that is required to be reserved for drinking water purposes and intimate the same to the concerned water supply and irrigation authorities. The Manual says that the Collector should be provided with funds for ensuring water supply while the village Panchayat has the overall responsibility for proper maintenance and timely repairs of the piped water supply. It also states that village Panchayats can be given suitable grants by the district administration for meeting the expenditure on this front. Taluka wise lists of villages in which drinking water scarcity has already developed or likely to develop, are supposed to be prepared early on. The priority for provision of water by Collector should be to make functional existing piped water supply, or borewells, installation of new borewells with adequate care to damage to aquifers, repairs or construction of open wells in river beds, and finally, provision of drinking water through tankers or bullock carts. However, we did not see any of these measures taken up in any villages, including in Raminepalli (Raptadu) and Kareddipalli Tanda (Kadiri) in the villages visited (or in Gandlaparthi (Raptadu) and Mallapuram (Kalyanadurgam mandal, where a borewell has been dug but has very little water), amongst the additional villages surveyed).

**IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED:** An immediate mapping of the water situation in each habitation, followed by immediate provision of water supply as suitable, in all those cases where the shortage is severe, forcing citizens to spend several human-hours in fetching water from distant sources, or even purchase water due to lack of availability of local sources. In Kodimi village, though unconnected with the current drought situation, potable drinking water has to be provided immediately.

<sup>1</sup> The photo shows Dastagiramma and Vinay of Mudigubba, who are fetching 6 pots of water on each trip from a nearby agricultural borewell that still has water. The kindness and generosity of the land owner allows them to procure water from here for all their household needs. At least 10 trips are made each day which takes at least 2 hours according to her.

## **2. FOOD SECURITY:**

In almost all villages visited, there were some families which did not possess any ration card, for a variety of reasons. In only Kurugunta village, in one lone case, we found that a single woman abandoned by her husband and back at her maternal village, was able to access her PDS entitlements without possessing a ration card. This was the only exception.

The following were the main issues with regard to the PDS entitlements:

- In Kareddipalli Tanda (Kadiri mandal), the dealer's outlet is 6 kilometers. In an inhuman way, little children are being forced to walk this distance and carry back kilos of ration when accessed, by walk, especially in those families where the adult members have migrated out. This needs to be addressed immediately.
- PDS dealers were unaware of the Supreme Court Orders in the Swaraj Abhiyan PIL on Drought. They were bringing up their problems of fixed quotas being sent to them, and how they have to issue only against biometric verification and ration cards. Citizens were unaware of the Court Orders. No effort to publicise the entitlements of a citizen at the time of a drought was made anywhere by the administration. The state and district administrations have to immediately issue instructions to all dealers to comply with the SC Orders.
- In several cases, problems with bio-metric verification were reported. In some cases, it would be because the machine would not accept the finger print of an existing authentic beneficiary (which was the case with little children who went all the way to the dealer's shop several kilometers away only to be rejected), or in some other cases, because a family member would have migrated out. It was also seen in the case of Diguwapalli village (Kadiri mandal) that some very old people are unable to access their PDS entitlements given that they can't go to the dealer's shop for biometric authentication.
- It is reported that when families migrate out in search of work, if they do not access their PDS quotas for 3 months consecutively, their names are being removed from the lists and PDS supplies are no longer accessible to them even after they come back.

In the case of the Mid Day Meal Scheme, it is seen that in almost all the villages visited, students have been given coupons for rice, edible oil, dal and eggs which are yet to get. In Kodimi village, 4 students did not get their coupons due to lack of possession of Aadhaar card.

The system instituted for addressing the Supreme Court Orders of supplying mid day meals even during summer vacation, that of dry, take home ration being given to students, might beat the very objective of such a provision, even though it might be convenient to administer.

ICDS/Anganwadi centres are running as usual in most places, we found.

**IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED:** An immediate mapping of the need for opening new PDS outlets is required. In Kareddipalli Tanda, such an outlet needs to be opened immediately to relieve the children of the need to physically go to a distant dealer shop and carry back the weight of the monthly rations themselves. If this is going to take some time, the administration has to arrange for transport of supplies

purchased by the villagers on a daily basis by hired transportation. Instructions have to be issued from the appropriate source immediately to all PDS Dealers to comply with the SC Orders in drought-hit regions (this will require extra stock to be sent to each village each month). The problem of individual ration-card holders and inability to get biometric authentication due to technical reasons has to be resolved by giving a small discretionary buffer quota to the PDS dealer, who still has to follow certain other clearly laid down criteria while issuing such a quota. However, no citizen should be unable to access their entitlement for no fault of theirs, due to the technology or mechanism of verification instituted. MDMS, to meet its objectives, has to be given as hot cooked meals only.

### **3. EMPLOYMENT & LIVELIHOODS:**

This was one of the worst facets discovered by the fact finding visit. The letter and spirit of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) were being violated in every way possible. We came across cases where families had to migrate out due to not just lack of provision of work under NREGS, but due to having been employed in NREGS! Continuous days of employment on works provided under NREGS without payments being received on time meant further borrowing for survival for some families. Long delays in payments resulted in families having to migrate out to earn elsewhere and repay debts. The demand for work from land-owning, OC families is an indication of the severe lack of employment opportunities locally, and the need for some cash earnings to prop up investments in the upcoming Kharif season.

We found that no work was provided in time to stem migration in several villages. We also found that no shelf of works was being provided, which was suitable for manual work to be put in, in harsh summer conditions with the earth having hardened a lot. The insistence on only farm ponds is expected to result in realized-wages to be less than statutory minimum wages (may be even as meager as Rs. 70/day). It is not clear if Summer Allowance was being paid since no new bills for payment have been generated for the recent round of works. No pay slips were being provided for workers for them to verify the accuracy of payments being raised against their names. Posts of Field Assistants were found to be vacant, unrecruited. There were no technical staff for taking measurement of work done. Villagers complained about how there is no recording of demand for work. Workers were not issued their Job Cards despite repeated requests in several cases. No arrangements for drinking water or shade were being provided at work sites.

The worst is the situation with regard to inordinate, unconscionable and unacceptable delays in payments. It is reported that 82 crore rupees' of pending wage payments exist in the district right now. **This is a case of government's "enslavement" of poor workers.** Arrears from last year were being reported by some workers, while yet others are waiting to get their wage payments for work done 3 months ago! Some received a partial payment only. These delays have become a major deterrent for work-seekers in NREGS, and are abetting migration from the villages. No single case of compensation being paid for delays beyond 15 days for wage payments was encountered. Workers were not aware of this entitlement.

It was shocking to note that even after payments are made, Banks are insisting on a balance of at least Rs.3000/- from these poor workers (this was the case with Anantapur Rural villages visited where villagers have Urban bank accounts; it was Rs. 1000/- in other cases) as minimum balance to be maintained, preventing these workers from accessing much needed personal earnings through schemes like NREGS. This is reportedly being done even in the case of the much-hyped Jan Dhan Yojana Accounts. Villagers were repeatedly saying in all villages that dealing with banks is quite undignifying, tedious and challenging for them and that NREGS payments being linked to bank accounts has been a major problem for them. They were very keen on post offices being the payment routing mechanism. They said that even the behavior of the staff in these post offices is vastly better than the way Bank officials behave with them.

In Raminepalli, we came across an instance where NREGS wages were adjusted by the local Banker (Canara Bank, Raptadu) against an outstanding loan. In fact, it was reported that even an old age pension payment was adjusted against an outstanding loan by the bank. This is absolutely condemnable and needs immediate instructions from RBI and other concerned authorities.

We came across the challenging situation of a village habitation falling under one mandal, but its agricultural lands falling under another mandal, making smoother administration of schemes like NREGS a difficult proposition. It is clear that the government has to look into this situation, consider and implement the best re-organisation possibility of unified administration starting from the village upwards.

IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: It is inhuman on the part of the governments to cite procedural delays in release of funds for non-payment of poor workers their paltry daily wages. All pending payments have to be paid immediately to all workers, - with clear Work Slips generated so that they can try and tally the payment made vis-à-vis the work done, - along with compensation for the delay, as reiterated in the Supreme Court Orders in the drought PIL. There should be no further delay in this for any reason whatsoever. There should be a shelf of works available for willing workers, and the proposals should emerge from the workers themselves as envisaged and laid down in the legislation. Work site facilities should be provided as laid down in the law. There should be no conditions for workers accessing their full earnings in the name of minimum bank balances to be maintained etc. There should be no freedom given to Banks to use earnings under social security schemes like pensions or NREGS against loan accounts.

#### **4. LIVESTOCK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SECURE LIVELIHOODS:**

In none of the villages that the fact finding team visited did it find any fodder cultivation plots developed by the government in preparation for this acute shortage period. It is also seen that no fodder is being supplied through fodder banks/camps, nor any cattle camps being run despite numerous reports and large scale evidence of large distress sales of livestock. No special efforts for provision of water for livestock were seen. No livestock deaths due to drought related reasons have received any “replacement assistance for milch animals” for small and marginal farmers, where the National Disaster Response Fund/State Disaster Response Fund (NDRF/SDRF) assistance norms lay down Rs. 30,000/- per

milch animal and Rs. 3000/ per sheep/goat/pig. In fact, it is not apparent to anyone about what procedures to adopt for such livestock deaths, and to access such assistance for replacement of animals. Cattle Feed was being accessed by some village(r)s, where lactating animals were involved. Here, there is a ceiling of 8 bags of 60 kgs each, for subsidized feed. Having to pay through Demand Drafts, and transporting such feed from wherever the animal husbandry department chooses to distribute it from, were cited as severe constraints on farmers who wanted to access this.

It is seen that livestock owners are spending substantial amounts, in some cases by borrowing from external money lenders, to purchase fodder for their animals. As already mentioned elsewhere, this ranges from Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 7500/- per month. Water for livestock is also an issue.

**IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED:** Immediate identification of livestock deaths in the past 3 months by the concerned departments across all villages so that assistance for replacement can be extended. Such assistance to be extended immediately as per the NDRF/SDRF norms dated 8/4/2015 by Disaster Management Division of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Immediate setting up of cattle camps or provision of fodder is a necessity for most villages, especially during this peak summer weeks. Fodder cultivation plots to be planned at least in Kharif 2017. Publicity to be given to all support and entitlements that are available from Animal Husbandry Department.

#### **5. RELIEF MEASURES FOR CULTIVATORS (INCL. HORTICULTURISTS):**

***Input Subsidy:*** In no village has Input Subsidy or Disaster Compensation been received by any farmer. Input subsidy for 2014 is the last time that such support has been received!

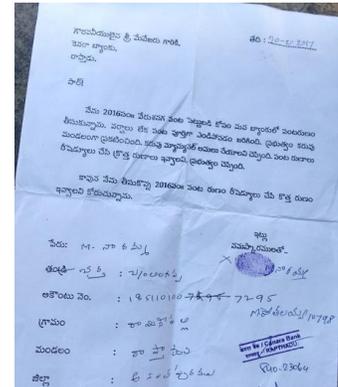
***Crop Insurance:*** Similar is the case with Crop Insurance payments. In the case of crop insurance, it is weather-based crop insurance for groundnut in Anantapur district. In a recent affidavit (dated 24/4/2017) in an ongoing PIL on farm suicides (SLP (C) 29910/2014), the Andhra Pradesh government stated that claims under WBCIS will be settled after completion of risk period. It has been more than 6 months after the completion of Kharif 2016 but no insurance amount has been received by farmers so far.

It was brought to our notice that more area of groundnut was insured than the area sown, to a tune of ~0.75(?) lakh hectares in Anantapur district, and that this could be one of the reasons for the delay in insurance claim settlement. It is not officially known why there is a delay in settling of crop insurance claims, even though in weather based insurance scheme, data updation with regard to weather parameters is supposed to be real-time, with no delays possible. We heard some rumour (which we hope is only an unfounded rumour given how untenable the proposition is) that the government proposes to link input subsidy payment to crop insurance claims. This proposition is absurd given that the private insurer has to pay the valid insurance claims in full, while the government is supposed to pay input subsidy as per its norms notified.

At a premium rate of Rs. 1380/- per acre (9.2% premium rate on scale of finance for groundnut), farmers have already paid an insurance premium amount of Rs. 300/acre, with the state and central governments expected to provide a subsidized share of Rs. 540/ each per acre. The gross insurance

premium paid on 7.67 lakh hectares of groundnut turned out to be Rs. 264.71 crores. However, farmers still await their claims to be settled, seven months after the harvest time is over.

**Loan Rescheduling:** We did not come across a single case of crop loan/short term loan being rescheduled in any bank for even a single farmer, nor any fresh loans being issued. We also discovered that most farmers did not know the distinction between crop loan renewal and crop loan rescheduling. A few farmers in a couple of villages recalled that such loan rescheduling took place in 2009 and that due to increased interest rates on the same, the outstanding dues have almost doubled by now. They also said that the loan waiver or debt redemption scheme of Andhra Pradesh government did not address these rescheduled loans. It is also noted that there is no publicity given at all to the debt rescheduling possibility, with all details provided to farmers so that they can make informed decisions about going to the Bank to exercise this option which has its positive and negative features.



What was shocking was the case of Raminepalli farmers – here, many had applied with the local Canara Bank (Raptadu Branch) for crop loan rescheduling in February 2017, well in time before the closure of (extended) deadline of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017. However, no rescheduling has taken place so far with the Branch Manager refusing to let them know if this was happening. Months after the applications were filed, many farmers had to do a protest on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 outside the bank.



It is also worth noting that it was this same Bank and Branch applying pressure on a distraught farmer that led to the suicide of Srinath Reddy, who was just 32 years old when he committed suicide on the night of 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (about 3 weeks prior to this fact finding effort). No inquiry has been conducted by the 3-person official committee so far as per the extant procedures in the state of Andhra Pradesh for each such farm suicide, and no ex-gratia sanctioned to the surviving members of Srinatha Reddy.

**Farmers take other farmers to Police Stations:** We came across instances of farmers filing complaints in police stations against other farmers, in Raminepalli, after having stood as guarantors for these fellow farmers to borrow from the Bank. When the loanee farmer is unable to repay, the guarantor will be unable to take further loans from the Bank either, leading the guarantor to resort to police complaints. We had come across an instance in Raminepalli when a farmer is being summoned and harassed regularly by the Circle Inspector of the local police station, to repay. When the RBI guidelines clearly say that no collateral is required for loans of upto one lakh rupees (the limit of which has been enhanced to 2 lakh rupees by some Banks themselves), it is seen that in practice, this system is not followed by Banks. Further, the *zamaanat* sought from Banks from fellow villagers is leading to great social disharmony and stripping of the dignity of honour-conscious farmers. **Don't the Banks know that this is**

***the sixth consecutive year of drought and that farmers have nothing to survive on?*** Are they able to put similar pressure on defaulters in other sectors in any way or is it mainly about vulnerable farmers?

**IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED:** Input subsidy due to farmers for 2015-16 and 2016-17 has to be paid immediately without any further delay. That is the only way that severely-battered farmers, beaten back by repeated droughts, can invest in the upcoming kharif season without further being entrapped by unaffordable loans. Crop insurance claims have to be settled by the insurance companies which cannot cite data mismatches for the delay in settlements. The insurance companies should have done their due diligence at the time of collecting premium amounts but cannot make farmers suffer now. Banks should be told not to use any coercive measures whatsoever at all (as decided in the DLBC meeting too), to put pressure on farmers to repay, in a drought year. They should not use the system of Guarantee by fellow farmers and relieve all such farmers immediately from their earlier consent to become guarantors so that they become eligible for their own loans and can also continue to have cordial relationships with fellow farmers. Police Stations should be encouraged not to take up any such cases and get into putting pressure on hapless farmers, who are likely to commit suicides under such extreme pressure. Banks should pro-actively publicise along with the District Administration about the crop rescheduling option that is available for farmers, and the timelines for such re-scheduling may be extended immediately. The state government should take up interest subvention for all such rescheduled crop loans to bring it down from MTL interest rates to regular short term credit interest rates. Fresh loans should be extended immediately in the coming 15 days for farmers to be able to invest on Kharif 2017 with renewed hope and to contribute to not just their own livelihoods but the nation's growth and food security.

## LARGE (IN)HUMAN TRAGEDY UNFOLDING

P Chandrasekhar Reddy is a grape farmer from Raminepalli village, Raptadu mandal. After having invested repeatedly, with hope of hitting some water, on nearly 25 borewells, he went missing abruptly for two months now. The farmer simply walked out on his family, farming and village, unable to see his crop wither away and unable to repay loans. His wife and two small children have been left to somehow cope with the hardship of their unfortunate life all alone.



Meanwhile, Harijana Linganna (next), an elderly farmer from the same village who planted a *cheeni* orchard on 1.83 acres in 2008, is unable to see his trees drying and dying. 60 trees dried up completely in this year's drought. He had spent at least Rs. 60,000/- each year on this plantation of his, which he raised carefully so far, he says. On the remaining trees of his orchard, the quality of the fruits is not good and the

prices hover only around Rs. 12000/- to Rs. 13000/- per quintal. In good times, the prices touch Rs. 50,000/-. He was keen on the fact finding team members having some of his fruits however, and kept insisting that we eat them. The taste was sweet and good, those precious fruits that he picked for us.



Bukya Syamulamma is a 12-year old tribal girl (Sugali/Lambada tribe) in Kareddipalli who has been left all alone to take care of her younger brother and sister in Kareddipalli Tanda in Kadiri mandal. Her father, who was an alcoholic, passed away in February this year. An old grandmother who used to be of some support to the children, broke her leg recently and since she cannot be taken care of by Syamulamma, went to a relative’s family to recover. Syamulamma, left alone, to fend for herself and her siblings, does a great brave and smiling job of it. She lugs 25 kilos of PDS ration on her back from a neighboring village which is several kilometers away. She fetches water and cooks. She also studies.

Rama Devi is a 15-year old girl living all by herself in her village after her parents migrated out to Kerala. She says that she sometimes fears for her personal safety. On the day when the fact finding team went to Kareddipalli Tanda, her parents were there, having returned from Kerala the earlier day. However, it is not clear for how long.



It is absolutely shocking that Kareddipalli Tanda in Kadiri mandal has seen no substantial improvements – other than the solar-powered water supply system set up by RDT in the village - despite huge adverse publicity and many official teams making household-wise plans for the Tanda’s development. Here, on walls of buildings, mobile phone numbers of people who have migrated to Kerala are written

in large letters, for ready reference. Given that there are only children and elderly people living in the

homes of many families here, health care services is a major concern, and it is clear that they need mobile health clinics to visit them regularly during this drought period.

Lakshmi is the widow of Srinatha Reddy, who committed suicide on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 after being pressured by the local Canara Bank Branch in Raptadu. She began crying silently when we went to meet her. She continues to mourn her dead husband and is unable to bear the loss, of having to face the responsibility of bringing up her two little girls all alone. She has not come out of her house in the past three weeks since her husband's death, neighbors tell us.



Is this the society that we want to become? Is this how the State should be behaving the face of a large human tragedy? Is this how Banks should be treating farmers?

## OUR SUMMARY

Our findings described above appear to be the tip of the iceberg. This is only a glimpse into the current situation in the district.

It is indeed inexplicable that a district administration which sees repeated droughts is so unprepared in terms of its institutional and programmatic responses to the crisis that unfolds regularly in Anantapur. Paucity of funds at the disposal of the district administration is also an important cause for this, we realize. However, this cannot be the excuse for all the violations that this fact finding team witnessed, of citizen's basic entitlements in the case of drought.

***During our visits to villages and interactions with villagers from various socio-economic backgrounds, it was apparent that people feel undignified, ignored, unsupported and even insulted, while trying to access their entitlements. Often, it also makes them give up hope and exercise their citizenship.*** The lack of accountability towards these citizens is apparent from the administration as well as bankers.

On the other hand, we found no effort made by the government in pro-actively publicizing the entitlements available to drought-hit citizens.

Except for the running of the PDS system to a reasonable extent within some design and implementation related constraints, we conclude that citizen entitlements around all other aspects related to their lives and livelihoods are being violated at this point of time. The Supreme Court in its May 2016 Orders said, *"In our opinion, in the process of implementation and monitoring, what is important is for the Union of India and the State Governments to set up watch-dog committees or ombudsmen to see that the policies framed are faithfully implemented"*.

The Court further ordered, *"we direct the concerned authorities in the Union of India, the State Governments and the Reserve Bank of India and other banks to religiously implement their policies since*

*they are ultimately intended for the benefit of the people of our country and not for the benefit of any stranger”.*

It is apparent that the case of Anantapur, - with its repeated droughts and severe hydrological stress/depletion - is to be considered as a special case, and not treated on par with Drought in other parts of the country. Here, even the 150 days of employment guaranteed (it is another matter that even this is not delivered) under NREGS is inadequate, and requires the scheme to be re-designed to guarantee at least 250 days for example. Yield based crop insurance products need drastic re-designing, for instance. Relief measures like crop loan rescheduling with one year moratorium are not adequate, given that successive years of drought are a reality here.

The fact finding team hopes to do a follow up consultation (with a wider range of experts and stakeholders) with regard to medium and long term measures that need to be instituted for better drought proofing, drought mitigation and instituting of redesigned and improved relief measures in the case of Anantapur district and limits the current set of Demands that it puts forward to the governments to mainly immediate measures to be adopted/implemented. In the preceding pages, sections titled “IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED” have detailed set of demands, while the following section has a broader set of demands presented.

## **OUR DEMANDS**

While raising the following demands, we realize that many of the existing norms and schemes are inadequate, and in the medium term (1 or 2 years’ time), these have to be revised/recast substantially.

1. Immediate publicity should be given to all citizen entitlements in a drought situation, so that monitoring of implementation can be proactively taken up by citizens themselves.
2. The district administration has to immediately map out, and ensure supply of potable drinking water to all villages/habitations which are facing acute water shortage.
3. All arrears of wage payments in NREGS have to be paid immediately with compensation to all workers.
4. NREGS demand for work has to be taken from all villages and a basket of work proposals sanctioned by the administration, as chosen by the workers.
5. All input subsidy (2015-16 and 2016-17) due to Cultivators have to be paid immediately, at least by the end of May 2017, after identifying the real cultivators. Input Subsidy norms have to be revised to cover at least the scale of finance for a crop.
6. Government has to ensure that the private insurer who is responsible to pay crop insurance for 2016 settles the claims immediately, by the end of May 2017.
7. Banks have to be instructed not to use any coercive methods with loanees. Gold loan auctions have to be suspended immediately.
8. Crop loan rescheduling timeline has to be extended, and wide publicity given to this option, so that farmers may exercise informed choice about this relief measure. In all such re-scheduling cases, state government has to provide interest subvention to a substantial extent. Fresh loans for the upcoming Kharif season have to be extended to all desirous Cultivators.

9. Gratuitous Relief has to be extended immediately to all deserving cases, like in the case of Kareddipalli children and elderly, as under the NDRF/SDRF norms.
10. Mobile health clinics have to be arranged to visit remote villages regularly as part of relief measures.
11. Inquiry, sanction and release of ex-gratia amount to farm suicide victims, as in the case of Raminepalli's farmer who committed suicide (Srinatha Reddy) have to be taken up immediately.
12. Ex-gratia relief/compensation to be paid to surviving families of all sunstroke deaths.
13. PDS food supplies have to be universalized and instructions have to be issued to all PDS dealers immediately, based on the Supreme Court Orders. Biometric authentication (or lack of it) cannot come in the way of this entitlement, and the administration has to institute mechanisms for overcoming this constraint in some cases. Civil Supplies department has to ensure that buffer stocks are sent to all dealers for this purpose. MDMS has to be served as hot cooked meals.
14. Take up market intervention for ensuring remunerative prices to certain horticulture crops where after severe crop losses due to drought, farmers are now facing market adversities too. Also take up protective irrigation for horticulture plantations of all species on a much larger scale.
15. "Project Anantha" recommendations should be implemented.

This Fact Finding was organized jointly by Andhra Pradesh Rythu Swarajya Vedika (APRSV), Human Rights Forum (HRF), AP Rythu Sangam and Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA).

### ***Epilogue***

What is disconcerting is to note how often the same or similar demands have been raised in the past, to address the issues of Anantapur district and its repeated droughts comprehensively, and how the situation on the ground sees very little improvement in reality. We hope that the state and district administration wake up to the (in)human tragedy unfolding in the district right now, and will not allow any business-as-usual attitude to creep in, in addressing the issue.

**DROUGHT & CITIZEN ENTITLEMENTS: INFORMATION FROM 10 VILLAGES OF 10 MANDALS OF ANANTAPUR DISTRICT (AS ON 1<sup>ST</sup> TO 3<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2017)**

**1. Current Situation with regard to Drought**

<b>Mandal &amp; Village Name</b>	<b>Is there a drinking water problem?</b>	<b>Is there fodder shortage*?</b>	<b>Are animals being sold? How many, in the past 6 months?</b>	<b>Have any animals died due to shortage of fodder/water? **</b>	<b>Is there out-migration for work?</b>	<b>Are there families who are getting only two meals a day?</b>
Raptadu Mandal: Gandlaparthi	Severe shortage: people fetch water from the private agricultural borewell of a farmer, ½ km away from village	Yes	Yes – 60 cows/buffaloes and 2000 sheep/goats in the past 6 months	3 cows/buffaloes and 100 sheep/goats have died	More than 10 families	None
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Manirevu village	Severe shortage: village depends on borewell in SC Colony – when there is no power supply, there is a problem. Inadequate water.	Yes	Yes – 300 cows and buffaloes, and 1500 sheep/goats in the past 6 months: more animals sold this year compared to earlier year, same period.	10 cows/buffaloes and around 60 small ruminants in the past 6 months	Yes, at least 100 persons	Yes, some – less than 10 such families.
Kudair Mandal: Sivarampeta (Udipirikonda GP)	There is water available	Yes	Yes – 25 cows/buffaloes and 550 sheep/goats in the past 6 months – this is estimated to be more than the numbers at the same	4 cows/buffaloes and 15 sheep/goats (in past 6 months)	No, not from this village	None

			period, last year			
Setturu Mandal: Parlachedu (Perugupalyam GP)	There is shortage of water for household needs – however, people are adjusting from the panchayat borewell.	Yes	Yes – 50 cows and 20 buffaloes have been sold, in the past 6 months, in addition to 500 sheep and 200 goats	It is reported that 10 cows, 5 buffaloes, 100 sheep and 30 goats have died in the past 6 months	More than 50 families have migrated out due to lack of employment in the village	Around 5 families
Atmakuru Mandal: Pampanur tanda (Pampanoor GP)	There is water available, through 2 borewells and piped water – govt arranged tanker for 7 days and then stopped.	Yes	35 cows, 3 buffaloes, 10 sheep and 14 goats have been sold	2 cows have died due to fodder shortage and excessive heat. Similarly, 3 sheep.	Many workers go to neighboring villages and Anantapur town for work	Yes, some – less than 5 such families
Dharmavaram Mandal: Nimmalakunta (CC Kothakota GP)	Severe shortage – water supplied through panchayat piped system inadequate for household needs	Yes	8 cows and 10 buffaloes have been sold in the past 6 months	No	Yes, more than 10 families	There are some families (number would be less than ten such households – there are also some who depend on begging)
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Mallapuram (Palavai GP)	Severe shortage – 3 panchayat borewell attempts have failed to hit water. Recently, one borewell	Yes	Many animals have been sold	15 cows/buffaloes died and similarly, 45 sheep/goats, in the past 6 months	Yes, upto 30 persons	There would be more than 10 families; there are also families which

	was successful but only 1.5 inches of water – inadequate for village. RDT has begun supplying 3 tankers a day					resort to begging
Tanakallu Mandal: Gandodivaripalli (Tavalam GP)	Shortage exists	Yes	45 cows/buffaloes and 550 goats/sheep have been sold, in past 6 months	2 cows/buffaloes and 62 sheep/goats have died	Yes, number not known	None
Garladinne Mandal: Kotanka	Enough water is available	Yes	Around 100 cows/buffaloes and around 500 small ruminants	1 milch animal and upto 10 small ruminants	Yes, more than 10 HHs	None
Ananthapur Rural: Poolakunta	Shortage exists	Yes	3-4 animals have been sold in the past week.	No	Yes, nearly 25 households migrated to Bangalore	Yes, around 3 households

\* In almost all villages, fodder shortage is in an acute crisis situation and not just an ordinary shortage

\*\* Numbers as reported by villagers

## 2. Drinking Water & Food Security Related Entitlements

	Has govt arranged (drinking) water where needed through tankers?	Are people getting 5kg per capita ration even without a ration card?	Is there mid day meals being provided in vacation?	Are eggs or milk being provided for 3 days a week?
Raptadu Mandal: Gandlaparthi	No. Borewell repairs have been taken up. But villagers are depending on	15 families don't have ration cards. They don't get. Without ration card and Aadhaar, in	Unclear picture	Unclear picture

	private agricultural borewell.	addition to biometric verification, they don't give.		
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Manirevu village	No – only SC Colony borewell works. People spend hours fetching water.	Around 30 families don't have ration cards in this village and they can't access any PDS ration.	There is talk of dry, take home ration being provided. Yet to commence	
Kudair Mandal: Sivarampeta (Udipirikonda GP)	Yes, Govt supplied drinking water by tanker for one month only.	Out of around 250 households in the village, 6 families do not have ration cards. They are not able to access PDS entitlements.	No	NA
Setturu Mandal: Parlachedu (Perugupalyam GP)	Borewell repairs have been taken up.	About 20 families who do not have a ration card are unable to access.	This has been arranged as a dry, take home ration: 4 to 6 kgs of rice, 800 to 1200 gms of dal, 15 eggs and 200-300 gms edible oil per student, for 126 students – yet to be given	Eggs, twice a week
Atmakuru Mandal: Pampanuru tanda (Pampanoor GP)	NA	There are 5 families who are unable to access PDS supplies due to lack of ration cards.	Dry ration is being proposed	Eggs and bananas provided twice a week
Dharmavaram Mandal: Nimmalakunta (CC Kothakota GP)	No	All families have ration cards and therefore, get to access their entitlements	This has been converted into a supply of ration per child, as take-home – it has been announced, but has not happened	Eggs being given
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Mallapuram (Palavai GP)	No – new borewell has been dug. RDT is helping the village by providing tanker	About 40 families don't have ration cards – they are not able to access their PDS entitlements	Unclear picture	NA

	water			
Tanakallu Mandal: Gandodivaripalli (Tavalam GP)	NA	About 12 families who don't have ration card don't get PDS entitlements. In some cases, due to biometric finger print problem, access is not always there.	No	NA
Garladinne Mandal: Kotanka	Yes, new borewells have been drilled	All have ration cards	No	NA
Ananthapur Rural: Poolakunta	Yes, through government	All have ration cards	Unclear	NA

### 3. Employment Entitlements

	<b>Are people getting employed under NREGS or any other public works?</b>	<b>Have wages been paid within 15 days?</b>	<b>Is there a shelf of doable works being made available?</b>	<b>Are there past arrears to be paid?</b>	<b>Was compensation paid for delay in wage payments?</b>
Raptadu Mandal: Gandlaparthi	Yes, 250 persons are working – roadside pits for planting trees, percolation pits etc.	No	No	Yes, to almost 50% of workers	No
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Manirevu village	Yes, around 80 persons are working	No	No – only farm ponds	Yes – several workers are awaiting past wage payments	No
Kudair Mandal: Sivarampeta (Udipirikonda GP)	30 families are availing of this – farm ponds.	No	No	Yes, no one has been paid	No
Setturu Mandal: Parlachedu (Perugupalyam GP)	20 families are availing of work on farm ponds and trenches	No	No	Yes, many have not been paid yet	No
Atmakuru Mandal: Pampanuru tanda (Pampanoor GP)	Trenches and farm ponds work has been started for	No	No	Yes	No

	around 10 families				
Dharmavaram Mandal: Nimmalakunta (CC Kothakota GP)	Yes, all groups are getting employed right now	No	No	Yes	No
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Mallapuram (Palavai GP)	2 groups are working, on farm ponds	No	No – only farm ponds	Yes	No
Tanakallu Mandal: Gandodivaripalli (Tavalam GP)	Yes, exact details not known	No	No	Yes	No
Garladinne Mandal: Kotanka	Yes	No	No	Yes, many workers	No
Ananthapur Rural: Poolakunta	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

#### 4. Livestock Related Entitlements

	Is Govt providing fodder/feed for livestock?	Has Govt opened any fodder depot?	Is there water for livestock?
Raptadu Mandal: Gandlaparthi	No	NO	No – water scarcity for livestock is increasing
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Manirevu village	No	No	No – situation is worse than last year
Kudair Mandal: Sivarampeta (Udipirikonda GP)	No – villagers who have livestock are arranging themselves	No	Yes – water drinking points have been built for livestock
Setturu Mandal: Parlachedu (Perugupalyam GP)	No	No	No – water for livestock has lessened, compared to last year
Atmakuru Mandal: Pampanuru tanda (Pampanoor GP)	No	No	
Dharmavaram Mandal: Nimmalakunta (CC Kothakota GP)	No	No	Provision for constructing water facilities has been sanctioned, but yet to be constructed
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Mallapuram (Palavai GP)	No	No	No
Tanakallu Mandal: Gandodivaripalli (Tavalam GP)	No	No	No
Garladinne Mandal: Kotanka	No	No	Yes
Ananthapur Rural: Poolakunta	No	No	No

## 5. Agriculture Related Entitlements

	Was crop credit re-scheduled?	Were farmers given a fresh loan?	Did farmers receive "input subsidy"/ crop loss compensation?	Did farmers have crop insurance cover?	Did they receive insurance proceeds into accounts?
Raptadu Mandal: Gandlaparthi	NA	Only some	No, none	Yes, some	No
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Manirevu village	NA	Some	No	Yes, some	No
Kudair Mandal: Sivarampeta (Udipirikonda GP)	NA	No	No	Yes, some	No
Setturu Mandal: Parlachedu (Perugupalyam GP)	No. Last rescheduling was in 2010, as per villagers	20% farmers got fresh loans in 2016. Not for 2017	75% farmers received, of 2014, @ Rs. 4000/acre – subsequent years' payments not made	Yes, some	After 2014, no crop insurance has been received (in that year, it was Rs. 1600/acre)
Atmakuru Mandal: Pampanuru tanda (Pampanoor GP)	No	Yes, some farmers obtained	Farmers are right now getting Rs. 4000/acre as compensation for 2014-15 season!	Yes, some	Few received insurance for 2015-16 season, but none for 2016 Kharif
Dharmavaram Mandal: Nimmalakunta (CC Kothakota GP)	No	No	No		No
Kalyanadurgam Mandal: Mallapuram (Palavai GP)	No	No	No		No
Tanakallu Mandal: Gandodivaripalli (Tavalam GP)	No	No	No		No
Garladinne Mandal: Kotanka	NA	Yes	No		No
Ananthapur Rural: Poolakunta	No	Only some	Few received, for earlier years		No