

home. The rural employment guarantee work is not available and more and more people are preparing to leave the village soon as migrant workers (apart from those who have already left). Acute problems of survival exist for many elderly, weak and ailing persons left in the village due to this surge towards migration in recent times. When I expressed a desire to meet some such persons, so many appeared that I was overwhelmed and soon stopped taking down details as they were simply too many—extremely poor, old, ill, physically challenged. People said Mahamaya pensions received earlier are not available now while new ones started by the present State Government are also scarce.

While hunger is a serious problem for 90 per cent of the village households, it is particularly acute for these helpless, old persons. Drinking water problem is also going to become increasingly serious in the days to come, the villagers said. Arunodya, a voluntary organisation, has made several efforts to improve people's access to development and welfare schemes. It is now planning to start a grain bank soon in this village to provide some grain to the most needy families in time. This is a good but small effort and more resources are needed.

Rawai—This village is located in Charkhari block of Mahoba district. This village experienced 90 per cent destruction of rabi crop followed by almost full wipe out of kharif crop. The present rabi crop has been planted but prospects of another big crop failure is staring the people in the face as there has been no rain after an initial shower which encouraged them to plant the crop. All the time they are looking skywards for signs of rain.

Two crop failures have resulted in acute hunger and malnutrition in the village, forcing the villagers to migrate in large numbers, particularly to Ahmedabad. This village normally grows wheat, peas, grain and *masoor* pulse in the rabi (winter) crop and *moong*, *urad* pulses and *til* oil seeds in the kharif (summer) crop. All these crops have been destroyed and so now people depend on market purchase of grain. Pulses have almost vanished from their diet.

Due to destruction of crops there is scarcity of fodder. *Bhusa* (dry fodder) is selling at a very high rate of Rs 600 per quintal which the villagers cannot afford. So animals like cows are

also badly endangered due to hunger.

The rural employment guarantee work has not started. Compensation payments for destroyed crops is very meagre. No compensation at all is given to share-croppers or to those who lease the land of others for a fixed cash advance (*balkat* system). These land-leasers work hard and borrow money to invest in farming but do not get any compensation when adverse weather destroys their crop.

Ghasraut village—This village is located in panchayat Gurhasla of Naraini block (Banda district). This village is almost entirely dependent on rains with hardly any irrigation. The rainfed crops are grown on sandy, one-crop-in-a-year land (if winter crop is grown in one field, then summer crop is not taken in that field). Shankar, a farmer, says that during the last four years or so, there has been adverse weather of one kind or the other but this year has been the worst.

The main winter crops are pulses—*gram* and *arhar*—and mustard oilseeds while the main summer crops are millets, *jowar* and *bajra*, *moong* pulse and *til* oilseed. This year both the summer and winter crops were wiped out—winter crop by excessive untimely rains and hailstorms and later the kharif crop by drought. Due to continuing drought, the recent rabi crop also could not be planted. Hence now people here have become extremely dependent on market-purchased grain.

However, at the time when the rural employment guarantee scheme is most needed, people have not got any employment opportunity under the MGNREGA. There has also been very little compensation for the ruined rabi crop and none so far for the lost kharif crop. There is no hope of any rabi sowing as the village's time for the rabi sowing is already over.

Again, at a time when nutrition programmes are most needed, the performance of the ICDS has deteriorated further. Adolescent girls have not received nutritious food (*panjiri*) for several months. Mid-day meals are of poor quality and highly diluted with water. Milk is served very rarely while vegetables are highly diluted with excess water.

In this situation to keep away the pangs of hunger people are migrating in large numbers to Delhi, Surat, Ahmedabad and Punjab. The others intend to leave soon after the panchayat