

the marriage of their daughters.

The condition of migrant workers is also difficult and it is not possible for them to save adequately from their meagre earnings and inflation-driven expenses in cities like Delhi. They work very hard and cut expenses so that they can save a little to take to their village after about six months or so. Some like Gyani become victims of pick pockets on their way back home in crowded trains. Gyani lost all his savings and in addition was injured by the blade used by the thief. There are incidents also of migrant workers being given poisonous substances and robbed while on their way back home.

One handpump is used to provide water to about 100 families. The drinking water problem may get very difficult in the coming days. In addition animals are suffering greatly due to lack of fodder as well as water. Dalits face discrimination in getting drinking water.

Several years back several of these families were supposed to receive land under the land ceiling laws but this land has not yet been provided to these Dalit families.

Grain and fodder banks, started by the Vidyadham Samiti, have provided some badly-needed relief to people.

The *Mausingh Ka Purva* hamlet is located in Naugawan panchayat of Naraini block (Banda district). Despite loss of three successive crops, very little work has been provided under the NREGA during this year. Even when this work is provided, wages are delayed for several months. So villagers have lost faith in the NREGA, although they say that if this scheme is implemented properly, then this will be a big help for them.

This is a one-crop area, growing gram and wheat in rabi season and *jowar* and *arhar* in summer. However, nothing could be sown this rabi season while the kharif crop was lost entirely. In fact even the kharif crop of 2014 was not good, as only 40 per cent of the normal crop yield could be obtained. So one after the other difficulties have piled up for the people. Very little compensation was received, in fact none yet for the kharif crop loss of 2015.

Leaving aside about five families in this hamlet of about 35 households, others face hunger and malnutrition problems—skipping breakfast and having two meals of just *rotis* and salt or *chutney* in a day.

Raja Bhaiya, co-ordinator of the Vidyadham

Samiti, says at the group meeting: the Everyone suffers in such a crisis situation but women generally suffer the most. They are generally the last to eat in the family and if nothing is left after feeding all family members, then they may remain hungry or somehow manage to chew a few left-over crumbs. This scarcity also sometimes makes men vulnerable to anger, particularly if a guest is expected and in anger they may turn violent against their wife."

I asked the assembled women if this is true, and they nodded in quiet agreement. The men present at the meeting did not object, expressing silent agreement that such situations do arise from time to time.

Another factor contributing to simmering tension for women as well as men is the growing worry of the marriage of daughters. Raja Bhaiya who is liked so much by villagers that he can raise the most uncomfortable situations, discusses the possibility of a number of marriages being held at a community gathering. Villagers say this is a very good idea but the groom's side will have to be convinced first.

Meanwhile many more villagers are preparing to leave the village after the panchayat elections because, as Rani says, "our *mandas* (grain storages) are entirely empty now".

*Oram*—The Oram village is located in Bisanda block of Banda district. In this village a farmer, Mannu Lal, had committed suicide by hanging himself in broad daylight on an eucalyptus tree right in front of his house. Everything happened very unexpectedly and quickly and several onlookers had no chance to rescue him.

At that time several officials had rushed to the spot and made all kinds of promises and so it was shocking to know several months later that this family has received no help and is living in great poverty. At the time of our visit only the daughter, Shyama, was at home and she called her brother, Surdar. Another brother had migrated in search of work while her mother had gone for work on someone's field.

Explaining the circumstances of suicide we were told that Mannu Lal had also migrated in search of work in brick kilns but due to unseasonal rains he did not get work. He returned home to find that his crop too had been ruined. As he was already indebted he lost hope and committed suicide.

It was clear that the poverty of this family has only increased since then. The entire area