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is in the grip of a severe drought with cultivation confined to a few fields around bore villages. Yet work has not been provided under the employment guarantee scheme. Very meagre compensation was received by small farmers to whom we talked. Manan, a share-cropper, said: "No compensation is given to the likes of me who take land as *batai*. We are ruined entirely by the adverse weather. We invest our money and labour but get no compensation."

In the absence of employment opportunities, village youths agree to work in dangerous small factories in extremely hazardous conditions. Two workers, Anshu and Budhvihan died recently in an accident in a small fire-cracker unit in which they were badly burnt. Anshu's mother, Munni Devi, said that the government provided no help at all.

People here expressed shock that officials made many promises but even in the case of a farmer's suicide and a very serious accident the government did not provide any significant help and also did not keep the promises made earlier.

Animals face very serious shortage of fodder.

The *bhusa* rate has risen to Rs 900 per quintal and a *sach* or *bojha* of *bhusa* is being sold for Rs 50.

To check the fast aggravating distress in Bundelkhand before it is too late, the government should start the MGNREGA and/or drought relief work on a large scale. This region has already been officially declared to be drought affected. Hence all recovery of loans should stop and in addition no interest should be added to the loans during the drought period. A loan-waiving scheme should be considered. Adequate compensation should be given for crops which have been badly ruined. From a longer term perspective, ecologically protective alternative development policies should be implemented with honesty so that the increasing problems of this phase of climate change do not prove too overwhelming for the people. ■

[This report is based on group discussions of the author with the people of nine villages held on November 27, 28 and 29, 2015. This report has been written under the InclusiveMedia-UNDP Fellowship 2015.]