



Fact-finding Report

Two indigenous farmers committed suicide due to lack of irrigation water in Rajshahi, Bangladesh.



Food Security Network- KHANI
Bangladesh

Death for water

Two indigenous farmers committed suicide due to lack of irrigation water

We all know that, water is life. If we do not get that water, our life will be at stake. Bangladesh situated in the Ganges Delta is riverine. We have remarkable number of small and big rivers across the country. The availability of surface water is enough, side by side, ground water is also being extracted; then there should be no shortage of water. But unfortunately, life and livelihood of many people are ruined in many cases just due to the water related issues. There is shortage of drinking water in almost all sub-regions of the country; Again, there is a shortage of irrigation water across the northern region of the country. The land of our country is dry, the weather is dry; the severity of cold is excessive in winter, and the heat of summer is excessive too. In the dry season, the infrastructure of the agricultural production has been developed based on the groundwater. Over time, various problems and challenges have been developed in that structural system, to which the common farmers are the victims.

In the last half of the March 2022, a national newspaper reported that an indigenous farmer committed suicide due to the lack of irrigation water in Rajshahi. Just two days letter, again the same news, another farmer from the same community committed suicide for the same reason. The issue created a storm of discussion across the country- Suicide due to lack of irrigation water? Why did this happen? Is it really because of the water scarcity that the farmer was forced to commit suicide, or is there any other reason hidden behind it? The two self-slaughters are from ethnic minorities, the incident was able to create a stir for a social purpose. This tragic incident raises several questions among the citizens-

- Did the farmers commit suicide really because of water?
- Why did the farmers did not get water?
- What is the source of water and who are the regulators of the source?
- Why does the state cannot guarantee water to farmers?
- Why did the concerned have to take a decision like suicide?
- What is the social position of the indigenous farmers who committed suicide and how is it?
- What/how is the post-suicide situation (reactions of various segments of society)?
- Why is a party/group desperate to prove that the story of suicide is not correct?
- What is the reaction of various authorities of the state on this incident? etc.

People from different parts of the society have reacted to the incidents. This reaction was mainly negative and attributed the incidents to the existing political-economic-social reality. Again, another party mainly: the irrigation authorities and the government party did not want to give importance to this. There were several opinions like- it is difficult to say whether suicide happened or not; However, deaths have occurred; Although the death was not natural, lack of water was not the cause, etc. Normally newspaper-centered campaign-backlash stopped within days. Several organizations have investigated the issue from human rights context. They interpret the incident in the light of the information received and make recommendations to prevent such incidents from happening again.

Food Security Network – KHANI Bangladesh, works on food security issues in the Bangladesh. KHANI had been keeping an eye on the situation and the progresses since the beginning of the incident; Much later (four months after the incident) a delegation from KHANI visited the site. The visit was aimed to understand the real picture of the incident by conducting field visits and talking to the victims. But surprisingly, it is true that even four months after the incident, the Santal village was completely occupied with fear. No one wants to talk about it. The wife who lost a husband, a mother who lost a child does not want to say anything about this death; They do not want anyone from outside to help them. They shed tears in pain, but do not want to say anything. A conclusion can be drawn from this situation that those who want to suppress this suicide incident, are very influential, they continue to torture the people of this small ethnic group to a terrible extent.

Members of the Fact-finding Team

Led by KHANI Member Secretary, the members of the delegation are:

- Nurul Alam Masud, Member Secretary, KHANI
- Mushfikur Rahman, Treasurer, KHANI
- Aminuzzaman Milon, Member, KHANI
- Advocate Manik Noman, Lawyer, Bangladesh Supreme Court
- Gourango Nandy, Member, KHANI
- Rashed Ripon, Executive Director, Poriborton, Rajshahi
- Dr. Bakhtiar Ahmed, Department of Anthropology, Rajshahi University
- Bimal Chandra Rajowar, Indigenous leader, Rajshahi

The Fact-finding team visited Godagari and Sadar Police Station of Rajshahi on 21st and 22nd of July, 2022. Right after the visit accomplished, they joined a dialogue meeting with the local journalists.

Method of the Fact-finding

Interviews with the concerned family of the farmers, irrigation authority, law enforcement agency and civil society representatives and analysis of the reports published on the daily newspapers regarding these incidents. The relevant state policies were also analyzed at the same time.

The Happenings

Nimghatu is a village of Dettopara Union Parishad in Godagari Upazila of Rajshahi District. The village is home to a small ethnic group - the Santal community. 45 Santal families live in the village. By profession, they are farmers and day laborers. They have little habitation and some of them have little land. In addition to daily wages, they also cultivate their own land, and also cultivate the land of others on a sharecrop basis. Two members of Nimghatu village, Abhinath Marandi (36 years) and Robi Marandi (27), cousins, committed suicide two days apart. Both of them were involved in agriculture. Before his death, Abhinath complained to his relatives and fellow patients that he did not get the water required for his irrigation. He contacted the authority several times and not given water. Growing crops without water is completely uncertain. Out of his anger



Image: Abhinath Marandi & Robi Marandi

and disappointment from this uncertainty, he chose the path of suicide. Similarly, Robi followed Abhinath's path. Both of them drank pesticide during an argument in front of the irrigation pump operator. Abhinath was immediately poisoned by this; Robi's reaction was a little later.

Water for irrigation

Water crisis in Barendra region is quite well known. Irrigation system was developed under government initiative to overcome the water shortage and make the area suitable for crop production. Barendra Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) look after the irrigation system. The organization took the initiative of placing 16 thousand deep tubes in the dry lands from which water is distributed among the farmers for irrigation. The farmers have to pay a fee to get this water. These pumps are operated by locally appointed pump operators. They are not permanent employees of the irrigation authority; They get temporary, fixed amount of allowance. However, local public representatives and influential people have an unfair role in their appointment. These pump operators have a special role in operating and supplying water to pumps and deep wells. It is alleged that operators are giving preferential treatment to some in water supply by taking unethical benefits.

A similar incident is alleged to have happened in the case of Abhinath and Robi Marandi. There is a deep tube well of BMDA in Ishwaripur area beside Nimghatu. Farmers buy water from there and use it for irrigation. The farmers have to wait for their turn to water their agricultural land. In the area covered by this deep tubewell facilities, Abhinath cultivated BORO paddy on his own one and a half bigha land and half a bigha taken by sharecropping totaling two bighas and Robi cultivated on about three bighas. It was the time for rice to grow. But there was no water in the land. The soil was started to crack. Abhinath and Robi ran to the operator for water. They left other work and followed up their request to the operator several times in a single day. But the operator kept them waiting. Trying for a long time for water, Abhinath and Robi could not convince the operator, but failed. On the one hand, they were not going to daily labor from which they get daily wages and wandering for water, but not getting any support, they were quite angry and disappointed. One day they had arguments with the operator about this issue. With anger they said, "If you don't give water to the land, I will kill myself by drinking poison." Hearing this, the pump operator humiliatingly replied, "Then you take poison, I will give you water." They were bitterly upset because of the same situation for several days. On the afternoon of March 23, they had the same argument with the operator. Angered and frustrated, Abhinath drank pesticide in front of the operator. Robi also took the pesticide from the same bottle at the same place. Abhinath's body soon began to be poisoned. Robi's body reacted to the poison a little late. Surprisingly, it is true that after the two brothers drinking the poison, the operator watered their land.

In a report published on March 29 by daily Alokito Bangladesh published from Dhaka, it is said, "Several farmers of that area complained that the operator Sakhawat Hossain does not maintain serials to irrigate their land. A farmer named Habib Murmu said, "After planting paddy, Sakhawat did not give water to my land even for a single day. We had to buy water from a nearby tubewell at Tk 110 for an hour.' Seventy-year-old farmer Ameer Hasda said, "People of the Santal community are being continuously harassed by BMDA operators to irrigate their land for a long time, resulting in very low yields. With water from deep tube wells, even if the capacity of the tubewell is not high, it is still possible to cultivate BORO in about 400 bighas (more than 100 acres) of land. But it is not being possible because of the nepotism and corruption of the operator." But the officials of BMDA do not support this statement at all.

Quoting Shamsul Huda, Additional Chief Engineer of BMDA, report of the Alokito Bangladesh mentioned that, '30 to 40 acres (one acre = three bigha) of land can be irrigated with the help of a deep tube well pump. We always recommend irrigating around 30-40 acres, but sometimes farmers push operators to irrigate more than their capacity. As a result, it becomes impossible to water the land regularly.'

The deep tubewell operator Sakhawat Hossain had 260 bighas of land under his responsibility. Serially watering one field after another, the soil bursts and cracks before the turn comes again. However, several people complained that some farmers had a good relationship with Sakhawat and he used to provide them with water regularly. Relatives of the deceased Abhinath Marandi and Robi Marandi also alleged that they engaged in an argument with Sakhawat only over irrigation water.

Abhinath Marandi's wife Rozina Marandi said, "We have cultivated BORO in about one and a half to two bighas of land. Last Wednesday afternoon, when my husband and brother-in-law Robi went to get tubewell water for the cultivated land, they had an argument with the operator Sakhawat Hossain about the water. Then they told him that if he doesn't give water to the land, my husband and brother-in-law will commit suicide by drinking the pesticide. Then Sakhawat told them to get back and commit suicide. Right after that, they took poison."



Rozina Marandi
with Fact-finding team members

In fact, these poor Santal indigenous peasants were mentally broken with the struggle. They cultivated BORO on loan and on terms of crop sharing on their own land and land from others. If they fail to yield crops properly, the loans cannot be repaid, thus can't manage food for the family members. They could not manage to give fertilizer to the land, the lands were getting dry; they did not have enough money to clear the weeds and the pump operator was not convinced to provide the water. All these issues disappointment and they committed suicide. As Abhinath and Robi took poison in front of Sakhawat, he was naturally shocked by this. Abhinath immediately collapsed because of the reaction of the to the poison. At that time the rickshaw-van driver Bappi was passing through that area. Sakhawat called Bappi and brought Abhinath in the van and leaves for his home.

Abhinath was then fighting to the death. He was barely speaking. He still told Sakhawat, the pump operator in the van, 'I have taken poison. I will die and only then you will give water.' Sakhawat and Bappi brought the sick Abhinath to his house around sunset. At that time Abhinath had already become so weak. The family members were shocked to see his condition. Some of them tried to call the local Kobiraj (not doctor. Kobiraj is an occupational title found in persons in Indian subcontinent who practice Ayurveda). Abhinath, slowly fading, died by that evening.

On the other hand, Robi was quite strong even after taking the poison. He comes home by himself. He told his mother, 'Mother, I have taken poison. I told the pump operator Sakhawat a lot- give us water[□□ □□□□ □□], but he did not. I told him, if I do not get water, I will take poison. He replied me to take poison and die. He wants us to die. So, I took it and now I will die.' Robi's condition gradually worsened. His relatives

took him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for treatment. He under medical treatment in the 16th ward. Robi died on March 25, 2022 at around eight o'clock in the night.

Meanwhile, upon getting the information, the police reached Nimghatu late on March 23. By then Abhinath had already died; And Robi has been taken to Rajshahi Medical College. Police received Abinath's body and his body was sent to the morgue for post-mortem on March 24, 2022. The next day on March 25, Abhinath's wife Rozina Marandi filed a case accusing her husband of abetting suicide. Pump operator Sakhawat was made defendant in this case. [Case No. 43/2022, dated 25.03.2022; Godagari Model Police Station, Godagari, Rajshahi.]

On the other hand, after the death of Robi Marandi on March 25, the post mortem was conducted as usual. As Rajshahi Medical College is under Rajpara police station, an unnatural death (un-natural death) case was registered there. Later on 27 March 2022 Robi's elder brother Sushil Marandi filed a case of abetment of suicide as the plaintiff. In this case too, Sakhawat is the only defendant (accused). This case No. 46/2022; Date: 27. 03. 2022, Godagadi Model Police Station, Godagadi, Rajshahi.

As a result of the discussion across the country, the administration and BMDA authority gets concerned. Denying the humanitarian and justice aspect, the BMDA authority started to spread a narrative against this incident of suicide to avoid the negligence of the water-irrigation management authority and social accountability of the political leadership. It had been spread in systematic way that these deaths are because of drinking excessive locally brewed liquor (chulai mod) rather than suicide. There was another rumor spread that not two, rather three people died out of drinking alcohol, two are from Santals and one is from Muslim community. So, spreading news of just the indigenous two is intentional, according to the rumor. This is true that the Santals drink this homemade alcohol, but cases of poisoning very rare example.

The Ministry of Agriculture constituted an investigation committee consisting of four members on this incident. This news was announced by a circular signed by Senior Assistant Secretary of the ministry Tasnim Jebin Bintey Sheikh on March 27. The convener of the committee was Joint Secretary (Fertilizer Management and Monitoring) of the Ministry of Agriculture Md. Abu Jubair Hossain Bablu. The other members were: District Commissioner of Rajshahi, Natore BADC Executive Engineer Md. Sazzad Hossain and Naogan BADC Executive Engineer Md. Shamsher Ali.

On the other hand, the BMDA itself formed an investigation committee of 03 members. The committee was asked to submit the report within the shortest possible time. The chief of this committee was BMDA Superintending Engineer Nazirul Islam. This investigation revealed irresponsibility, questionable behavior and unethical benefits by the pump operator. BMDA suspended Sakhawat and he was arrested. The police filed chargesheet against him.

Interview Statements/interviews of those involved in the incident

The inhabitants of the village are indulged in fear. As soon as they see someone and proceeds to speak, they pretend not to see or hear anything and leave the place quickly. Explaining the reason for this situation, someone familiar to the village said that in fact they do not want to talk to anyone outside. They have been intimidated from various quarters including the administration, they have been ruled not to speak in front of anyone outside; specifically: an NGO - working in this village, among these Santals. Disbursement of loans is also one of their functions. They have also ruled them, put undue pressure on them to pay their debts, threatened to implicate them in lawsuits. Even the renowned and popular politician Fazle Hossain Badshah

failed trying to talk with the villagers. The Fact-finding team of KHANI managed to speak with some people after long waiting.

Rozina Marandi [Abhinath's wife]: She remained completely unresponsive at the very first. After begging her in many ways, she said very slowly in a broken voice that for a long time her husband was asking for water to for their land land but the operator was not giving water. So he died of poison. She demanded justice for this incident.



Dulina Murmu
[Robi Marandi's mother]

Sohagi Saren [Abhinath's mother]: Abhinath's mother Sohagi Saren has been crying since her son's death. When someone comes, she cries even more. She has almost gave up eating and drinking. He demanded punishment for those responsible for his son's death.

Dulina Murmu [Robi Marandi's mother]: Dulina Murmu, Robi's mother, burst into tears when she asked about her son. She said, I want punishment for those responsible for my son's death.

Gopal Hembram [Abhinath's relative]: Gopal Hembram lives in the same village. There's a lot of pressure on them, he indirectly shared. They can't talk. Abhinath and Robi committed suicide in agony without getting water. This suicide should be punished. We have filed a case. But there is doubt whether the criminals will be punished or not. He expressed apprehension about whether the case will be handled and the witness will be given properly or not.

Jayanti Baske [Rovi Marandi's brother's wife]: She said, the problem of water in the fields is very old. "Every year there is the same problem. His brother-in-law Rovi and Abhinath were in mental agony for quite a long time about getting water for their land. They had a quarrel with the operator about getting water. In the end, not getting water, they committed suicide by drinking poison. We want justice. But will we get justice? All kinds of intimidation are being used to shut us up. We are poor people, we have no one to look after us."

Kamrul Islam, Officer-in-charge, Godagari Model Police Station, Godagari, Rajshahi: Mr. Kamrul went to Nimghatu village along with his companions as soon as he got the news on the evening of March 23. They found Abhinath Marandi dead there. By then Robi Marandi was taken to Rajshahi Hospital. A case of Unnatural Death was filed on March 24 based on Abhinath's post-mortem report. Later on, March 25, Abhinath's wife Rozina filed a case of abetment to suicide (No-43/2022) as the plaintiff. Robi Marandi died on March 25 while undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. A case of unnatural death was registered at the concerned Rajpara police station. His body was also post mortem as usual. Robi Marandi's brother Sushil Marandi filed a case (No. 46/2022) for inciting suicide as the plaintiff in this incident. The defendant in both these cases is operator Sakhawat Hossain. The accused has been arrested. He was interrogated at the jail gate

with the permission of the court. Investigation Officer. Monirul Islam filed the chargesheet finding the defendant Sakhawat guilty after investigating both the cases.

Abdul Jalil, Deputy Commissioner, Rajshahi: Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner Abdul Jalil said that the matter was immediately looked into by the administration. The whole procedure is also being monitored carefully so that the victim's family gets justice. A representative of the local district administration was placed in the inquiry committee formed by the Ministry of Agriculture. In that investigation report, the issue of corruption and immorality of operators regarding irrigation water was identified. The operator has been arrested. 'We have a sincere attention to ensure that the incident is prosecuted and the guilty are punished. The affected families have been given immediate assistance of ten thousand taka and one bag of rice per family,' he said.

Md Iqbal Hossain, Secretary, Barendra Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA): He said, Barendra Multipurpose

Development Authority is responsible for the

irrigation of Barendra. This organization has been looking after this irrigation system since its inception. We have 16 thousand deep tubes. There is a demand for more tube wells for irrigation, but at present the installation of deep tube wells has been stopped due to a severe drop in groundwater levels. Our operations are spread across 16 districts. BMDA does not have enough skilled manpower required for pipeline management. At present, the activities of the entire work area are being managed with the individuals capable of carrying out the duties in the three districts. Operators are employed to operate the deep tubes at the field level. Generally, local skilled and experienced people are employed as these pump operators. In this case, usually BMDA look for suggestion from the local public representatives. And the employed operators are temporary staff. They are given a fixed rate of allowance for this work.

The incident of suicide of two Santal farmers for not getting irrigation water in Godagari is sad. However, there is doubt whether they actually committed suicide by drinking poison or not. They are used to take locally brewed liquor. Liquor poisoning can also lead to death. Still, we did not ignore the matter. BMDA formed an inquiry committee and the committee found and confirmed the pump operator's misconduct and also found him taking unethical benefits at the same time.

Based on the investigation report by the committee, he has been relieved from duty. The police arrested him. If he is identified as a criminal in the police investigation, we have no say on whether he should be sentenced in court. In response to the question whether BMDA will bring any change in its management regarding this issue of immorality-corruption of the operator, he said, "We are reviewing the incidents. We have a board of directors. They will make the final decision. "



Md Iqbal Hossain, Secretary, Barendra Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) with Fact-finding Team Members

Omar Faruk Chowdhury, Honorable Member of Parliament, Tanor-Godagari Parliamentary Constituency, Rajshahi and Member, Standing Committee of the National Parliament on Ministry of Agriculture: He expressed grief over the suicide of two Santal farmers due to lack of irrigation water. In this context, he expressed anger about the corruption of BMDA. He identified BMDA as a corrupt institution. He said that many corruptions were already heard about the pump operators. But sadly, it is true that the BMDA authorities have not paid much heed to this issue. Their management did not take any initiative to fix this problem.



Omar Faruk Chowdhury

Member of Parliament, Tanor-Godagari Parliamentary Constituency, Rajshahi Member, Standing Committee of the National Parliament on Ministry of Agriculture

Honorable Member of Parliament also said that BMDA was formed with the responsibility of irrigation system. This irrigation system is operated by lifting water through deep tubewells. Year after year, water is drawn from the ground, which has crossed three decades. The water level is gradually going down. Of the amount of water being withdrawn from the aquifer, a very small portion is being recharged against the withdrawal. Therefore, this water crisis has also arisen. BMDA will not be able to meet the needs of farmers in this way. They also need to change their thinking. The government has already imposed restrictions on setting up deep wells. As a result, we have to think about it differently.

“We have to plan ahead of this water supply crisis. Therefore, the farmer's suicide is totally undesired. I have ensured that those responsible for this incident are punished. Also, I am looking into whether any assistance can be provided to the affected families. I went to Nimghatu and talked to Abhinath and Robi's family. I have contacted the local chairman to arrange for Abhinath's two sons to get an education. Their education can be arranged in the church there,” He added.

Analysis of the Incident

Two Santali male farmers committed suicide due to frustration of not getting irrigation water in their agricultural land. The incident took place near Ishwaripur deep tube well in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi district. The case of suicide by taking poison has also been proved in the forensic report. The report was given on 16 April 2022, quoting Dr. Kofil Uddin, head of the forensic department of Rajshahi Medical College (Ramek) Hospital, multiple newspapers and magazines said. Dr. Kofil Uddin said, “We collected samples of various body parts of the deceased. Then those parts were sent to the laboratory for the viscera report. After receiving the viscera report we prepared the final report. According to the viscera report, pesticides were found in the bodies of the two deceased. In the test, we found a type of pesticide poison called organophosphorus compounds. We have finalized the final report that they died due to this poisoning.”

The incident was widely reported in the national mass media. People across the country protested this incident. National Adivasi Parishad organized human chain and rally to protest this incident. They claim the

suicide of two farmers as murder. They also demanded proper compensation to both the unfortunate families.

In both the investigations by the Ministry of Agriculture and BMDA, the issue of irregularities in the supply of irrigation water against the operator Sakhawat, in the suicide of two farmers was found. However, they did not say anything directly about the reason for the suicide. In the investigation report, allegations of nepotism, malpractice and extortion of extra money have also surfaced against the operator of BMDA's Ishwaripur-2 deep tubewell. The report also highlighted the lack of supervision in the provision of water. Also some recommendations have been made. In this regard, BMDA Executive Director Abdur Rashid was quoted as saying in the newspaper that some irregularities were found in the investigation. He told reporters about the type of irregularity; the operator used to charge Tk 135 instead of Tk 125 hourly water. The operator of this tubewell is Sakhawat, president of Bangladesh Krishak League [related to the ruling party at present] ward branch. At the end of the day when those two farmers drank the poison, he watered the land of those farmers. On the night of April 2, 2022, Sakhawat was arrested by the police. The next day, BMDA sacked Sakhawat. On that day Sakhawat was brought and presented in the court and the police applied for three days of interrogation. The court sent Sakhawat to prison; The remand application was not heard that day. Later, the court allowed him to be interrogated in jailgate.

Most alarmingly, there is a tendency not to acknowledge this incident. Except the family of the victims and other one or two individuals, do not want to accept the incident as a suicide. Many have tried to say that they died by drinking locally made (homemade) liquor. Others have tried to say that the media has promoted the death of two members of the ethnic minority as suicide to create a sensation. Because, as they claim, another Muslim farmer died at that time; But it did not get covered by the media. The KHANI delegation did not receive any information about a third death in the area at that time. One thing is very clear from this that the responsible groups including the irrigation authorities have tried to avoid or cover up this suicide incident. Because of this, a reign of terror has been created in the entire Santal neighborhood using the loyal and trusted members from within this powerful group. The Santals don't want to talk about it with anyone. A Santal woman member sat near the delegation saying she even did not know what had happened that day.

On the other hand, after investigating the incident, BMDA found fault with their pump operator and held him responsible for the accidental death. He was immediately fired. Of course, firing a temporary worker is not such a difficult task for the authorities. The police arrested him the next day. As the whole process unfolds, it seems that the BMDA authorities are trying to cover up their own structural mismanagement-corruption by blaming the operator for the death. Analyzing the overall situation and the available data, it can be said that several things have been clearly identified in the death of two Santal members:

- The water irrigation system of Barendra region is entangled of structural corruption.
- The poor, the members of minority ethnic groups are lagging far behind in accessing irrigation facilities.
- The current social leadership is not very focused on meeting the needs of the poor peasants, members of minority ethnic groups.
- By denying the incident of suicide, trying to spin a different story, the main issue (corruption in irrigation-water distribution) is being avoided.

- In order to cover up the suicides and blaming mass media and human rights activists are being resorted to a heterodox campaign, which is provocative (for example, a total of three suicides including a Muslim farmer at that time, but only the two Santali farmers are being mentioned in the propaganda).
- A fearful atmosphere has been created among the Santal neighborhood, in which there is doubt as to whether such an accidental death will be prosecuted and the guilty will be punished.

This incident is a prime example of the marginalization of the society, the poor and minority ethnic groups who are not getting the opportunity to enjoy the minimum civil rights. Through this event, we are faced with some irregularities or questions; That is:

- Marginalized people are harassed to get any marginal services.
- Services at marginal level are also mired in corruption.
- The ruling class of society is not committed to preserving the basic human rights of ordinary citizens.
- The dominant group in the society does not hesitate to adopt ugly tactics to avoid responsibility for any incident.
- Influential circles do not want any criminal incident to be properly investigated and prosecuted; Rather, it interrupts it.

Conclusion/Recommendations

After visiting the place of suicide of two Santali farmers without getting irrigation water and their residence, talking to the relatives and various concerned parties, the following recommendations are being presented:

- Witness protection must be ensured to ensure prosecution of suicide incidents and exemplary punishment of the guilty/s.
- The operator is solely responsible for the suicide of two Santal agricultural workers. In fact, neither the operators who looked after nor the regulatory authorities can escape responsibility for these deaths; Therefore, they should also be punished in legal process.
- BMDA should take responsibility for financial compensation and rehabilitation of these two tribal families. In addition, the BMDA will have to bear all the costs of handling the two cases of abetment to murder of Abhinath and Robi Marandi.
- Effective steps should be taken to remove the alarming situation of fear in Santal villages and restore confidence among the affected people.
- BMDA should take proper measures to eliminate corruption and water management. In this case, overall management including operator recruitment management should be rearranged.
- Those responsible for mismanagement and irregularities in irrigation should be brought under punishment.
- The water-distribution system should be rearranged through setting up irrigation pumps.
- Minor castes and marginal farmers should be given the opportunity to create seedbeds and get free water-irrigation.
- Transparency should be established in the recruitment of the pump operators and in particular, members of ethnic minorities should be recruited for this job.
- BMDA's water management is completely dependent on groundwater. Instead of this underground water dependent system, surface water-irrigation management should be developed immediately. Otherwise, there will be more conflicts and deaths over water, which will be very unfortunate for us as a nation.