Suo-moto cognizance of death of 12 children in Nagada Village located in the forest of Odisha’s Jajpur District

9th August – 10th August, 2016

Visit Report by:  
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Background of the Visit

The primitive tribes of Orissa and their health scenario presents a kaleidoscopic mosaic of various communicable and non-communicable disease profile keeping in pace with their socio-economic development. Among these there are communities who still depend primarily on hunting and food gathering as primary source of livelihood. The wide spread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary conditions, poor maternal and child health services, ineffective coverage of national health and nutritional services, etc. have been found, as possible contributing factors of dismal health condition prevailing amongst the primitive tribal communities of the country. Many of the infectious and parasitic diseases can be prevented with timely intervention, health awareness and IEC activities. Some of the intervention programmes can be included in the national programme also. The noncommunicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension are conspicuously absent indicating that the primitive tribal communities are still far away from the modern civilization and developments. In spite of the tremendous advancement in the field of preventive and curative medicine, the health care delivery services in these primitive tribal people are still poor and need to be strengthened in order to achieve the goal of Health for all in the country.

Orissa Health Strategy 2003 has advocated for improving the health status of tribal population by reducing mortality and morbidity. It indicates that the tribal people suffer disproportionately from malaria, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, genetic disorders like G6PD deficiency, sickle cell anaemia as also nutritional deficiency diseases. These are some of the special health problems attributed to these communities. The situation analysis of health indices of the tribal population in Orissa are worse than the national average: Infant mortality rate 84.2; under five mortality rate 126.6; children under weight 55.9; anaemia in children 79.8; children with acute respiratory infection 22.4; children with recent diarrhoea 21.1; women with anaemia 64.9 per 1000. A high incidence of malnutrition has also been documented in the tribal dominated districts of Orissa.

Nagada and Guhliasala are two revenue villages situated on hill top of Cingudipal Gram Panchayat, Jajpur district at a distance of 8-9 kms away from base land Ashokjhar located . The villages are inaccessible and no road connecting is available to Guhiasal and Nagada village. It has also and elephant corridor and maoist inflicted village of hill top. These two villages comprises of five hamlets as mentioned below:

**Total population : 579**

**Child population : 273 (0-5 years: 127; 6-14 years: 146)**
National Commission for Protection of Child Rights took suo-moto cognizance of the newspaper on incidence of death of 12 children in Nagada village, located in the forests of Odisha’s Jajpur district. In the absence of an Anganwadi or school, children are deprived of the basic lifeline available to most poor children in the region i.e nutritious meals. Several Nagada children suffered from bronchial pneumonia, which often occurs among malnourished children.

**Composition of the Team**

The Commission taking cognizance of the matter, constituted a team to investigate the matter. The team comprising of Mrs. Rupa Kapoor, Member NCPCR, SCPCR Member Sandhyabati Pradhan, Ms Priyanka Singh, JTE NCPCR and Programme Manager Manoj Tripathy, State Child Protection Council (SCPC) visited Ashokjhar and Deogaon village at the foothill from August 9th-10th, 2016, to get first hand information about these child rights violations.

**Objectives of Visit of the Team**

- To find out the reason of infant deaths of the village and status of health condition of other children.
- To find out status of implementation of food security programme, implementation of ICDS scheme and other welfare measures taken up by the district administration.
- To study the socio-economic condition of the Juang tribals, reason of hunger and malnutrition.
- To assess the intervention of the administration to address the problem of the people and to control malnutrition.
- Remedial measures needed to be taken up to address the problem of the tribes in a sustainable manner.

**Visit to Ashokjhar & Deogaon, Jajpur District**

A visit to Ashokjhar and Deogaon, Jajpur district was made on 09.08.16 and 10.08.2016. Heavy rainfall prevented team from moving towards the villages located at the upper levels of the hills. The villages are inaccessible as transportation through any means is not there. To reach these villages one has to walk on foot. The team interacted with some men and children of the Juanga tribe from Ashokjhar village and enquired about their problems. They discussed about the education facilities, Anganwadi programmes and healthcare facilities provided to them and various developmental initiatives being implemented by the district administration.
Salient general findings which emerged are:

- Nagada village was untouched till the news came in light. No Govt. official nor Anganawdi Worker has visited this village earlier. There is neither Anganwadi Centre/PHC nor primary school in the Nagada village.
- There is no road connected to the village. Rocky mountainous track is the only path and medium of communication for the tribal people from their village to Gram Panchayat and rest of the world.
It was observed that all the people were thin and short. Almost all children within the age group of 0 to 4 years and adolescents girls seems to be malnourished and anemic.

It was observed that a private school (pre-primary education centre) is running in the Ashokjhar village managed by ASPIRE, an NGO which operates from New Delhi. But they are not able to reach to all children due to lack of connectivity and safety issues of children.

Infant death in Nagada village was due to health hazard from medical point of view. It is a case of chronic hunger of Juang tribals leading to malnutrition of their children and subsequent death due to lack of medical treatment. The same situation lies in Ashokjhar and Deogaon villages.

Situation of children, mothers is poor and this is due to sheer negligence of the administration in charge of monitoring and implementing various programme. This village has been left out of development project of the state Govt. for years together.

Due to lack of road connectivity and medical facilities like ambulance, people could not bring their children to hospital for treatment.

Food insecurity is a biggest threat to their life and livelihood. The people consume only rice, root and salt without any vegetables added to their meal. There is no cultivation in the village. Rice available to them under PDS is not at all sufficient to them. They do not consume any nutritious food. To get nutritious food for the children is distant dream for them. It was found that every woman and children are suffering from malnutrition.

There is no Govt. school in the Nagada village. Due to callousness of the administration, the children have been deprived of getting free education guaranteed under Right to Education Act. As there is no school, the children have been deprived of getting Mid-day-Meal. There is one government school in Deogaon which covers nearby areas. But there were no teachers in school, children are not getting midday meal on regular basis as they do not come regularly to school.

Iron tablets are not distributed on regular basis among adolescents and pregnant womens.

It was also observed that immunization was also not done as a routine activity of ICDS scheme.

The ICDS team is not proactive in the area. The services are not reaching to children, pregnant women, lactating mothers etc.

There is no electricity and pure drinking water facility in the area.
Meeting with the District Officials, Jajpur District

NCPCR Member, Rupa Kapoor held discussion with the Jajpur District Collector, CDMO, DCPO, Child Welfare Committee (CWC) officials and other officials to review the condition of children in Nagada village and nearby villages and measures taken to improve the situation. Shri Satya Kumar Mallick, Collector & District Magistrate has submitted the action taken report to the Commission (Annexure I). Shri Satya Kumar Mallick mentioned that new developments at Nagada village has been done like providing hot cooked meals, distribution of mosquito nets, identification of 37 SAM children and treatment in NRC. Beside this, few new initiatives will be taken up like setting up of 4 mini Anaganwadi centers in Nagada, Guhiasala and other hamlets of the same area and setting up of atleast 2 schools at Guhiasala and Nagada vilage. Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS), the CSR wing of Tata Steel with the support of Administration has also taken few intervention in Nagada village to improve the situation of children.(Annexure II).

The team held meeting with Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) to discuss their strategy and action plan to overcome the situation. A team from Odisha State Commission also visited Nagada village and has shared their factual report along with some corrective measures to state government (Annexure III).
Recommendations

- Ms Rupa Kapoor suggested the government needs to identify cut off villages like Nagada and take necessary steps to avoid recurrence of the incident.

- Juang tribes should not be displaced and rehabilitated in another locality. They are accustomed with their environment and cultural habit. Displacing them to other areas is not the solution to address their problem. It is a fact that they have been deprived of benefits for years together for which they have suffered. So, the implementation of all the development projects under Tribal Sub-plan scheme and Juang Development sub-plan scheme and food security programme, ICDS scheme and various activities under Agricultural and Horticultural scheme will no doubt enhance their livelihood and capacity to survive and grow more to compete with modern world.

- Responsibility must be fixed on the officials responsible for implementation and monitoring of development projects and food security programme in this Gram Panchayat.

- Priority must be given for ensuring road connectivity to the village. Due to lack of road facility, the Govt. Facilities/schemes/programs could not reach to the beneficiaries in the village.

- A permanent school should to be set up in Ashokjhar and Nagada village with proper implementation of RTE Act. Mid day meal should be distributed in the area itself. At present children are coming to Deogaon for schooling which is the only school they have. This is a reason for dropouts because the distance is too much and due to no road connectivity it is not possible for them to come daily. Exclusive Ashram School should be opened in Nagada village to provide education to all the children of Juang tribe.

- One PHC/Medical unit to be set up in Ashokjhar, Nagada and Deogaon. In tribal region among Primitive Tribal Groups where infant/children’s death is due to malnutrition and hunger with lack of medical accessibility and facilities.
• Mamata Yojna benefits should be provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers in which a monetary support to the pregnant and lactating women is given to enable them to seek improved nutrition and promote health seeking behavior

• As per guideline of Antodaya Anna Yojana, all the Juang families are entitled to get 35 kg rice per month. In Nagada and nearby village, most of the Juang families have been deprived to get benefit under AAY on regular basis. Responsibility must be fixed on the officials responsible for it. The State Govt. must carry out work on war-footing way to ensure 35 kg rice to each family of Nagada village.

• The State Govt. should start NREGA work immediately in order to provide employment to people living in Nagada village. The people do not get employment for their livelihood. To provide employment to the poor rural people, the state Govt. Should focus on implementing NREGA in rural and tribal areas.

• The State Govt. should open a special ICDS centre in the village with appointment of all staff and availability of all facilities. A trained Anganwadi worker must be appointed to take special care of Juang children.

• Solar electrification and Drinking water facilities through setting up Tube-well should be done on war footing way in the village.

• The State Govt. should monitor the utilisation of CSR fund and ensuring fund to be utilised for development of tribals including Nagada village.

• The families should be facilitated for opening up of bank accounts to avail the benefits provided by government.

• 100 per cent coverage of Adhar Card must be ensured.

• The district administration should start allotting pucca house to all Juang families and other tribes under Indira Awas Yojana and Biju Pucca Yojana.
• The State Govt. must go for complete assessment of the situation and status of implementation of all development work in all tribal districts. This can the opportunity for the state to enhance its administrative capacity to enforce implementation of its plan and programme meant for tribals across the state.

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Bad weather prevents NCPCR team from reaching Nagada

Jhargram: A two-member team from National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), which was scheduled to visit Nagada village where 13 children died of malnutrition in the last three months, had to return midway due to inclement weather and inaccessible road today.

The team, comprised of Member Anjali Pande and Commissioner adviser Prabhat Singh, was scheduled to visit Nagada after attending a seminar in Haldighati. But due to inclement weather, the team had to return midway.

Team member Rupa Kapoor and Commission adviser Prabhat Singh yesterday held discussions with the Jhargram district administration, CDAC and child welfare committee (CWC) officials in the meeting in the relief camp.

NCPCR team visits Nagada village

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Bhawanipur: A two-member Central team will visit Nagada in Jhargram district to take stock of situation that led to deaths of as many as 13 infants due to malnutrition.

The team belonged to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and comprised two member Rupa Kapoor and technical adviser Prabhat Singh.

According to sources, the Jhargram district officials are accompanying the team, which would conduct an on-site inquiry into deaths of infants and would hold talks with villagers and block officials regarding implementation of disbursement of welfare schemes in the village.

It may be noted that two other Central teams had visited the village earlier.

Odisha malnutrition deaths: Central team to visit Nagada today

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The team will visit Nagada, a malnutrition hotspot in Jhargram district of Odisha today following the death of at least 13 children due to malnutrition. The team is expected to meet the local administration, child welfare committee (CWC) officials and villagers in the area today.