

**Fact Finding Report of Hunger Death at
Bhula Bheda Village. Gram Panchayat
Bhula Bheda, Binpur II Block. Jhargram
District. 9th-10th August 2022.**



Sanjay Sardar's wife and two children

Right
to Food and
Work Campaign
West Bengal

খাদ্য ও কাজের
অধিকার অভিযান
পশ্চিমবঙ্গ

1 Introduction

On 4th August 2022, Gonoshakti newspaper(electronic) published the news of the death of Sanjay Sardar of Bhula Bheda village in Jhargram and the cause for death was given as hunger and starvation. The Right to Food and Work Network was very disturbed about such news and immediately called on their partner organisations to form a team to visit the site of death. The team's objective was mainly to meet the family and get an understanding of what was the ground reality and hence reason or reasons that had led to Sanjay Sardar's death. The team would also try to meet the District Administration and others whom seemed important for the case.

1.1 Jhargram at a Glance

The district of Jhargram lies in the south western part of West Bengal and shares its borders with the states of Jharkhand and Odisha. It was formed in 2017 from the district of Pashchim Mednipore becoming the 22nd district in the state. Jhargram as the name suggests has a major forest cover and a tribal population of almost 30%. The area is categorised as drought prone.

It lies in the midst of the erstwhile Jungle Mahals that have been witness to a history of the earliest uprisings against the British and Zamindari system. There is a strong continuity of the district with the neighbouring Chotanagpur Plateau geographically and culturally. The district in the recent decade has seen extreme Left Wing activities and this has forced the state to take up many initiatives to curb such violence with an influx of security forces. The government has also undertaken a number of development initiatives to 'mainstream' the populations of this region. Along with the standard ration allocations, an additional package of 5 kgs is provided to families in Jungle Mahal region by the state government. However, looking at the National Family Health Survey 5¹, results, the condition of health and hence nutrition seems very poor. Anemic women have increased to 82% from 67% and Breastfeeding children age 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet is only 20.9 % from NFHS 4 figures of 32.3%.

In terms of rights over natural resources, the state has not been able to make much progress either. The area unfortunately does not get covered by the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA). The concept of self-governance through institutions like a Gram Sabha at the village or hamlet level, is very rare. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act has hardly been implemented, especially with respect to community forest resource rights.

¹ National Family Health Survey 5 was conducted in 2019-20. National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS 4) was conducted in 2015-16. The findings are for Paschim Mednipore but can be considered for Jhargram as well.

2. The Findings



On the morning of 9th August 2022, the team straight headed to the village of Bhula Bedha to meet Sanjay Sardar's family. The younger brother of the deceased, Ranjit Sardar had been contacted prior to the visit to make sure that it was alright for the team to visit and talk to the family members.

Sanjay's immediate family comprises of his wife Saraswati Sardar (27 years old) and their two children Gita (9 years old) and Sudip (6 years old). Sanjay and his brother Ranjit have been living with

their father's brother since a young age after their father had passed away.

Saraswati and Ranjit were both asked about Sanjay's death and how it occurred. Apart from that Saraswati was specially asked to explain the situation of food that the family had access to since the past 2-3 months.

The Fateful day

On 3rd August 2022, at 5:30 approximately, Sanjay Sardar, like every other day went to the village pond. On his way back he suddenly fainted and fell in a neighbour's backyard before reaching his own home. He was picked up and brought home as they waited for the ambulance to come. On taking him to the hospital the doctor checked his vitals and in a while he was declared dead. No reason was disclosed. They were simply told that the post mortem report will come 15 days after the death and the family can wait for that.

Ranjit, was made to write a letter requesting the police for permission to take his brother's dead body and perform the last rites. The body was handed to them at almost 4:30 pm in the evening.

Work Situation

It was found that Sanjay was a migrant worker who had been taken like many others by a contractor to work on the railway lines in Odisha. When the national lockdown was announced in March 2020, Sanjay like million other migrant workers, was forced to make his way home himself.

Once back Sanjay struggled to find work nearby and this is when the situation of him and his family began to go from bad to worse. Sanjay and the others in his family, ie his brother and wife had applied for job cards under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act but never got it.

Sanjay and his family like most tribal families in the region do not own any land and would work on others' land in return for daily wages which ranged from Rs 250-Rs 150 depending on the work and time and lasted for not more than a cumulative 100 days in a year.

Food Insecurity

Saraswati Sardar clearly stated that her family was skipping meals since a long time now. Food like milk and non-vegetarian items had completely stopped. They would manage one meal a day during most of the days. Saraswati and Sanjay had eaten even less in order to give their children first priority from the little food that they could manage. Saraswati had often asked her mother who lives almost 50km away for some food when the family had no other means. On the week leading to Sanjay's death, the family had been eating only one meal a day or the quantity of one meal divided over two times.

Access to Food Schemes

During lockdown due to almost no work available and not having access to government rations, the family survived on the dry rations which the children's schools were providing.

The family of four had two ration cards (RCs). Both these RCs are in the name of Saraswati and Sanjay Sardar and are Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana II cards (RKSII). The allotment under these cards is 2 kgs of foodgrains per head per month at the rate of Rs 9 per kg for wheat and Rs.13 per kg for rice. These two cards have been invalid since the past 6 months almost since the digital cards have become compulsory. The family was not being able to pick up ration for the past 6 months hence.

The ration cards for the children had been applied for but there has been no news of these as yet.

The other extended family members ie Ranjit and others had also applied for new cards but had not received them.

Access to other Schemes

Sanjay had been diagnosed with tuberculosis in June 2022 when he went for a self-testing. He had been taking his prescribed dosage of medicines since then and Saraswati felt that his cough had improved. He had been given a TB identity card and was regular with his check-ups. However, they did not know about the provision of Rs 500 per month under Nikshay Yojana , the central scheme for TB.

Saraswati had been receiving the Lakshmi Bhandar Scheme but instead of the Rs 1000 that was eligible for as an Scheduled Tribe person, she getting only Rs 500. The reason for this was that neither she nor anyone else in the family has a Scheduled Tribe certificate.

In 2006, the government was giving land titles to tribal families and Sanjay's family had also received one in his father's name. but since Sanjay had been migrating for work at that time, when he got back and enquired , he could not acquire it anymore. Ranjit had also made repeated trips to the Revenue Department but they said that they could not find the concerned papers anymore.

In May 2021, the family's name had also come up for PM Awas Yojana², in the panchayat list but they were yet to receive any instalment or confirmation regarding it.

² Formerly known as Indira Awas Yojana – housing for the rural poor.

After Sanjay's death, a request for Somobyathi³ scheme was put across to the Block but they had not accepted it and Ranjit was told to rephrase the letter and give it to the Pradhan. The family had done the needful. The request letter did not mention the scheme's name though and had not been given to them till the team met with the family i.e. 6 days after Sanjay's death.

Meeting with other Villagers

The team visited other houses in the village. Bhula Bheda is a small village with approximately 30 households of which 7 are ST. There were a number of grievances which came up against the local ration dealer. These comprised complaints such as not receiving receipt of the quantity that they were picking up; not being allowed to take their previous month's rations in the present month if they had for some reason been unable to pick it up; being denied rations if the fingerprints were not matching; not allowing any other family member to pick up rations on behalf of other members etc. Other people met on the road outside the village as well, expressed dissatisfaction and helplessness with the governance situation. One man complained that Gram Sansad meetings were not taking place the way they should and hence the villagers had no platform to express their problems. Another complained that whenever they go to any government office for any help now, they are told to go to the Duare Sarkar Camp.

Just outside the village, while talking to other villagers, the team came across an old man, Sapan Sahish, from nearby Amar Dubi village, who was found begging. On speaking to him it was found out that he had a ration card but was unable to get rations from it after the biometrics system had been introduced. The team saw that due to leprosy he had hardly no fingers which could be used for fingerprints. On that pretext the ration dealer (the same Ration Dealer) had been denying him rations. Sapan Sahish had been taken to the Block Office however, to rectify this wrongdoing but there had been no outcome so he has resorted to depending on alms for his food. In fact, he remembered that almost 2 years back he had given an application to the Block office for his problem.

Meeting with Ration Dealer

Though the ration shop was shut, the team went outside and waited for the ration dealer and while waiting it was found that the dealership was in the name of Anju Halder but was being run by her son. On meeting him, the team asked him about few of the grievances that had arisen but he outrightly denied all. Secondly, when Sanjay's cards and his family's cards were shown he seemed quite ignorant and said that they should have come to him earlier. Ranjit had however clearly told the team that they had come to him repeatedly.

Meeting with ASHA & ANM

The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Shadhana Haldar, was met and asked about Sanjay's TB health condition. She claimed that she knew about it but she could not give too many details. She reported that he would go to the hospital by himself and take his medications. On being asked about the Nikshaya Yojana she was again not very sure so she asked us to talk to the ANM worker (Auxiliary Nurse Midwifery). The team spoke to the concerned ANM, Ms Nila Mandal, on the phone in the ASHA worker's presence. She said that there had been some problem with disbursing Sanjay's amount of Rs 500 which he was entitled to monthly under the Nikshaya Yojana. The team also asked her about the general situation of the areas she was

³ A state government scheme providing Rs 2000 to needy families to perform the last rites of the deceased.

looking after and she reported that the TB cases seemed to be rising. She also shared that there was a high prevalence of malnutrition and anaemia.

Meeting with Block Development Officer

The BDO of Binpur II block, Mr Barendra Nath Bandyopadhyay, was met in his office on 10th August 2022. Despite our pleading, only two members of the team were permitted to meet with him. The team requested that Ranjit also be present during the meeting and the BDO obliged after the initial ten minutes of the meeting.

The BDO had not heard of the case and called in the Food Inspector, Mr Dhanonjoy Haldar, for his inputs. The Food Inspector had not heard of the death either. Ranjit was carrying the acknowledgement slips of few of the ration cards which they had applied for and the Food Inspector checked the status of those. He announced that 5 new cards had been issued, and these were in the names of the other family members, not the Late Sanjay or his wife and children. The BDO and Food Inspector both said that the checking of ration card status could be done anywhere now since it is all online and hence the Sardar family could have checked it earlier themselves. The Food Inspector informed Ranjit that the cards had been dispatched but the Aadhar linkage had not taken place and hence were lying inactive. He assured Ranjit that if he got the Aadhar cards of all the concerned members he would do the linkage immediately.

There were two men handling the MGNREGA project who were called to the BDO's office. One of them said that the district had stopped issuing new job cards. The team stressed that Sanjay was a migrant worker and hence it was mandatory to give them work during lockdown. The BDO intervened and assured that if there was a need for job card it would be issued. The BDO also made a call to the BMOH (Block Medical Officer of Health) and since he was not available physically, the BDO suggested to meet some representative officer of his.

The team informed the BDO about the Somobyathi request which had already been put in by the Sardar family to the Pradhan, and requested him to see that it was done soon. The team also urged that immediate support in terms of food and money be given to the family. The need to issue GR was shared with the BDO to which he agreed. Regarding the Somobyathi he said he would look into it too. He assured the team that whatever problems the people are having they should come to the Block office and get it sorted.

When the team shared that there were in general a number of grievances with the concerned ration dealer, he suggested that the local people should submit a mass petition regarding the same and then some action could be taken.

The team handed him a written one page with their major findings and demands which the BDO accepted to keep but did not agree to receive it officially. The team informed him that the final report will be shared with him.

Meeting with representative of BMOH

Since the BMOH was physically not present, the team members met with Mr Jayanta. He checked his records and informed the team that Sanjay was very regular in coming to the Block hospital. When asked about the Nikshaya Yojana's entitlement for Sanjay, he checked the government portal and showed that an amount of Rs 1000 (ie for two months) had been credited to his account on 28.7.2022. The team requested for a proof of the same since the family did

not know about this. Mr Jayanta agreed to generate a snapshot of the portal for the team's reference. He also mentioned that a third instalment was due at the end of August.

Meeting with District Magistrate cum District Collector

The District Magistrate(DM) & Collector, Mr Sunil Agarwala was met in his office on 10th August by two representatives of the team since all were not permitted to meet. The DM was aware of the death and shared that an enquiry into the same was ongoing, the results of which could be made public after 4-5 days perhaps. He was very sure that it was not a death linked with hunger. He was of the view that the 2019 deaths which had taken place in Lalgarh were not genuinely starvation deaths but were politically made to appear that way.

The DM was of the opinion that enough ration is being given to the tribals in the region and in fact many sold their ration to get money. He mentioned that illicit liquor and drinking was a major problem in the district. He shared how Jhargram was leading in the number of ST certificates issued. He also shared that a lot of livelihood initiatives were being taken up with tribal women through SHGs.

The team informed him that from their observations and interactions, hunger was the reason for Sanjay Sardar's death. He was also asked to take a review of the situation of PDS and health services since a great lack of awareness existed among the people and also service-providers. The team members expressed the Right to Food & Work Campaign's long-term plan to start work and create awareness among the people and the DM was welcoming about it. He said such plans could be shared with him over mail etc. The team members, informed him about the wrong cards being given to the Sardar family ie RKSYS II and he made a note of it. He also took a note of the grievances arising around the local ration dealer. Regarding the Awas Yojana scheme, he mentioned that there are names pending still from the 2019 list and it was something which was completely controlled centrally hence it was not in control of state or district. He shared that the only existing housing scheme at present is the PMAY. The team also asked him to review the state of ration cards and job cards in the district.

The same document which had been handed over to the BDO was given to the DM as well. (Annexure I)

3. Post-Visit Developments (In order of Occurrence)

On the evening of 9th August after the team had visited Sanjay's family, the ration dealer also visited their house and threatened Ranjit. He asked him to sign on a piece of paper declaring that his brother had died of Tuberculosis and not hunger. On refusing to sign he would call the police on Ranjit and his family, threatened the ration dealer. Ranjit did not sign any paper.

On 10th after the meeting with the BDO, a GR was issued for a single unit of 12 kgs against Ranjit Sardar's name. The Food Inspector said that it will take 15 days for the card linkage to take place and for RKSYS I cards to be issued to Saraswati Sardar and her family.

On 14th August, a group comprising CI (F&S) of DCF&S SCF&S, BWO, and STS of health on the verbal orders of the BDO visited Late Sanjay Sardar's house in the absence of his brother and produced a report after apparently talking to the deceased's wife Saraswati Sardar. The major points of their report were that the family's RKSYS II cards have been converted into RKSYS I but they have not contacted the concerned sources since they were mostly migrating for work. Hence, they could not have received rations from the ration dealer but on

humanitarian grounds the ration dealer did provide them 10kgs ration per month. Their report also mentions that Sanjay Sardar was drinking regularly even after being diagnosed with TB and he was receiving his DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) regularly.

There were two more pieces of paper produced before the family stating that the ration dealer provides them with their due allotment and the second stated on Saraswati's behalf that her husband would drink regularly despite his TB illness; ending with the confession that the undersigned had no complaints regarding the ration system. Neither of the papers were signed on.

4. Analysis & Conclusion

From the findings emerging during the course of the visit to the family it was clear that they were suffering from a situation of severe food insecurity. It is a well-established fact that low nutritional intake over a long period of time is a major cause for illnesses such as Tuberculosis.

There is no denying the fact that the family had been unable to pick up rations for the past 6 months and also that they had wrongfully been entitled RKSII cards when they are eligible for Antodaya Anna Yojana(AAY) cards. As a result they were denied not only rations of 35 kgs as per AAY card but also the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana(PMGKAY) which is an additional free 5 kgs of foodgrains, announced by the PM, to ease the food scarcity faced by the NFSA (National Food Security Act 2013) ration card holders during lockdown. The ration allotment under RKSII is only 2 kgs of foodgrains and that too at Rs 9 per kg for wheat and Rs.13 per kg for rice. The behaviour and corruption of the ration dealer is evident not only in Sanjay Sardar and his family's case but also from all the other oral complaints the team received. Instead of taking action against him, the Food Inspector and others in charge were aiding each other. A classic example of the powerful in society and the government joining forces against the marginalised.

The District administration's desperate attempt to cover up their mistake is apparent from their reactionary measures taken after the visit of the fact finding team. The pieces of paper which the family was being coerced into signing is ample proof of that. If there was no mistake on the part of the government functionaries and service providers then why the need to self-exonerate?

The cause of death should have been given by the Doctor on duty and the Post Mortem report. Neither has any doctor said anything yet nor has the Post Mortem report been released; then how the overconfidence that Sanjay died of TB and drinking and not hunger?

The reasoning that the family was away migrating for work and hence did not access any of the government schemes meant for them is also highly flawed. Apart from the family's account which differs from the government officials'; it can be well argued that if the family was away for more than 20 days a month on work then how was Sanjay Sardar going for his regular TB check-up and medicines almost on a weekly basis? There are government records of the same-his TB card and if the official portal is accessed.

Another crucial gap when it comes to the government functionaries is not simply in implementation but also disseminating information. Sanjay received his Nikshay entitlement in his account only one week before his death whereas he had started treatment two months

back. Saraswati is receiving Lakshmi Bhandar but only half the share because of not having a ST certificate.

Apart from the glaring gaps existing in the government machinery, that Sanjay's death brings forth, there is another complex dimension to be dealt with. These allegations against Sanjay and his family is reflective of the larger attitude that the State holds towards the marginalised. In the case of the Adivasis in our country, the false stereotypical perceptions of their laziness, backwardness, illiteracy, drinking and merrymaking, still form the predominant perceptions of often blaming them for their own plight.

5. Demands

- The family be provided AAY cards.
- The central PMGKAY rations should be extended post September 2022.
- Job Cards for all the adult members (including Ranjit Sardar and his family).
- Scheduled Tribe Certificate be provided to all members of the household.
- An immediate assessment of the Public Distribution System in the entire district.
- An immediate assessment of the ICDS functioning and Mid-day-Meal in schools.
- Strict action against Anju Halder's ration dealership.
- TB patients be provided with supplementary nutrition apart from DBT.

Fact Finding Team Members:

Priyanka(RTFWN Secretariat West Bengal)
Sandeep (Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity)
Dipyaman (Pashchim Banga Khet Majoor Samity)
Paromita (Uddayani Social Action Forum)
Sujata (Sampurna Nari Kalyan Sangathan)
Mrinalini (Research Scholar, TISS Mumbai)
Sakhya (Economics graduate from Jadavpur University)

Annexure of Photos

Sanjay Sardar and Saraswati Sardar's RKSY II ration cards

 **পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার**
খাদ্য ও সরবরাহ দপ্তর
রাজ্য খাদ্য সুরক্ষা যোজনা ২
Ration Card Id : RKSY-II 1209664174
RKSY-II Beneficiaries

Name of the Card Holder : SARASWATI SARDAR
Name of Father/Husband : PURNA SARDAR
Head of the Family LAXMIMANI SAREN
Age as on 01/01/2018 35
Dealer Name : ANJU HALDER(134402500015)
Dealer Address : "BHULA BHEDA, PO- BELPAHARI; BLOCK :BINPUR - II;"

Address :
BHULAVEDA

Ward :
Village/Municipality : BHULA BHEDA
Gram Panchyat : BHULAVEDA
(For Rural Areas)
Block : BINPUR - II
District : JHARGRAM
Sub-Area :

Date : 01/01/2018 Signature of Issuing officer

32873583

 **পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার**
খাদ্য ও সরবরাহ দপ্তর
রাজ্য খাদ্য সুরক্ষা যোজনা ২
Ration Card Id : RKSY-II 1209664181
RKSY-II Beneficiaries

Name of the Card Holder : SNJOY SARDAR
Name of Father/Husband : LAXMAN SARDAR
Head of the Family SNJOY SARDAR
Age as on 01/01/2018 21
Dealer Name : ANJU HALDER(134402500015)
Dealer Address : "BHULA BHEDA, PO- BELPAHARI; BLOCK :BINPUR - II;"

Address :
BHULAVEDA

Ward :
Village/Municipality : BHULA BHEDA
Gram Panchyat : BHULAVEDA
(For Rural Areas)
Block : BINPUR - II
District : JHARGRAM
Sub-Area :

Date : 01/01/2018 Signature of Issuing officer

32873590

The Report submitted by the team of Government Officers formed by the BDO and sent to Sanjay's house

To
The B.D.O
Binpur-II Block
Belpahari, Jhargham.

Sub: Enquiry report in regards to death ^{case of} Sanjay Sardar of Vill + PO - Bhubaneswar, Belpahari, Jhargham.

Sd/-, As per verbal order, I the following undersigned visited the deceased family on-14/08/22, at about 11-30 AM, accompanied with C.I (F&S) of D.C.F&S and G.C.F&S, B.W.O., STS of health, and interrogated with the wife of deceased Sanjay Sardar ^{named} Saraswati Sardar and with the other family members and relatives observations are as follows:—

That the said family already receive the RKSY-II ration cards ^{these after that cards are converted into RKSY-I, but unfortunately the said family has failed to contact with the M.R dealers and different Govt helping sources as they are not staying in the dwelling place for migrant labour. Oftenly the said family went to Egra, Kharapore, Hooghly, Dakshinerga for migrant labour in more than twenty days basis, per month. As a result they could not getting food grains from ration shop, regular basis. But after interrogation with the Saraswati Sardar, it appears they received the food grains 10 kilos per month as in humanitarian ground from M.R dealers as and when required previously.}

Chief Inspector (F&S)
D.C.F & S - Jhargham

F.T.O.

Alcohol That, the deceased Sanjay Sardar was T.B. patient from 30/05/2022, (as per govt record), in spite of that he was regular drinking person since long, and also received the DBT allowance accordingly.

That the Swahagwati Sardar has already received the facility of Lakshmi Bhandari till know.

That, the said family has received the special G.R. rice (12 kgs) and clothes, and Samebathi (Rs 2000/-) after death.

Submitted for your kind information.

[Signature]
Chief Inspector (A&SI)
D.P. & S. Jhargram

[Signature]
14/8/22
BWO Bir-4

[Signature]
14/8/22
C.I. H.O.

[Signature]
S.T.S
Belpahar R.H
14/8/22

[Signature]
C.I. P.S.
14/8/22

Sapan Sahish has been denied rations because of biometrics . He had leprosy and hence his fingers were damaged



The written Observations submitted to DM and BDO on 10th August

To
The Block Development Officer
Binpur II Block
Jhargram

Date- 10.08.2022

Subject: Interim Observations of Fact Finding Team from Right to Food & Work Campaign West Bengal , on the starvation death of Mr Sanjay Sardar of Bhula Beda village,

Dear Sir,

This is to inform you that the Right to Food and Work Network is a national level coalition of organisations and individuals who work on food and work related issues. On coming across a news about the starvation death of Mr Sanjay Sardar. We were very disturbed and immediately tried to form a team for visiting the aggrieved family and understanding the situation at ground. On 9.8.2022 we visited the concerned family along with few other families in the village. We present to you our observations and requests in brief:

- The family of four members, Late Sanjay Sardar (30 years) his wife Saraswati Sardar (26 years old) their two children (6 and 9 years old) have been suffering from acute food insecurity since lockdown. Even at the event of Sanjay Sardar's death, the family (including his younger brother Ranjit Sardar) have been continuously harassed and disrespected. The Medical Officer on duty did not even share the cause of the death with the family and has only asked them to wait for the Post Mortem report.
- Late Sanjay Sardar was a migrant worker and since his return after the first lockdown in March 2020, he has been engaged in daily labour which was irregular and underpaid.
- There are only two ration cards in the family – which are Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana II cards and have been dysfunctional since the past 6 months almost since the digital cards have not been received. Ration cards for the children have been applied for but neither have those been received. Hence the family has been unable to pick-up any ration from their ration dealer since the past 5-6 months.
- Both the adult members had applied for Job Cards under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act but it had not been provided and hence were forced to look for work themselves.
- Late Sanjay Sardar had started TB treatment from June 2022 onwards and had been regularly taking his medicines. His wife felt that his health was improving slowly but he complained of severe body ache and weakness due to not eating sufficiently for a long period now. His entitlement of Rs 500/month as per the central scheme Nikshaya Yojana had not been credited into his account yet.
- On further conversation with the family it was found out that the family had been struggling to eat even one meal a day. Since the husband had stopped to go to work the wife was trying to get some work and then buy food for a few days with that money. However, the agriculture work was very less due to not enough rains and she was not finding any work. On the days before Sanjay's death, he and his wife had been eating very small quantities of only one meal during the entire day since whatever little they were getting they had to give their children first.

In this context, we make the following demands to the Block Development Officer.

- Kindly issue an immediate GR issuing food aid to the family

- To convert their RKSII cards into RKS I without delay and issue the same for the children. Since though they are eligible for AAY cards but that will not be possible at this time.
- Immediately issue job card to the wife
- The pending amount of Rs 1000 should be credited under the Nikshaya Yojana
- The widow , Saraswati Sardar, be immediately be provided with monetary support; starting with the pre-existing Lakshmi Bhandar Scheme which she has not received even once though she is an eligible ST woman. She should also be covered under the pre-existing SSY (Samajik Suraksha Yojana)
- The request for the state scheme- Shomyobaithi , which has already been submitted to the Pradhan, must be converted into action immediately.



We would like to draw your kind attention to the prevailing larger issue in your Block since this is not an isolated case. From past happenings of starvation deaths (2004, 2019) and from our interactions with other villagers and organisations working in this area, we have learnt that there is a complete breakdown of government machinery. Their basic rights to food and work are being denied over a long period of time and has been amplified with the Covid induced lockdown. Many have tried to reach out to the Ration Dealer, Panchayat Pradhan and Block Office etc. and also through Duare Sarkar camps, but the response has been negative.

We earnestly urge you to look into these gaps of implementation and reach out to these helpless populations in order to avoid such further gross human rights violations and deaths.

Thanking you

Mrinalini
Paromita Dutta
Sujata Chiti
Sakya Mukherjee
Sandip Singha

Copy to
The District magistrate and District Collector
Jhargram

The screenshot showing the account of Sanjay Sardar with the TB DBT status which was credited only end of July 2022



