

Dear Dinah

Greetings from Fr Anil and Fr Arun. You may have heard the stories of half Karnataka and full Kerala being in the floods last month. We has priests had to pray to God to stop the rain in Kodagu, Chik Mangalore and Kerala.

On the other hand, the whole of North Karnataka is reeling under severe drought. We had to pray on the same alter to stop rain and for rain. Our farmers are just waiting for the rain. Every year at least some rain we used to get in august where they used to saw and some rain used to come in September. With this, they used to get some crop. This year there has been no rain at all. All the fields are just vacant for kilometres together.

Many who thought rain would come went ahead boldly sowing the seeds but it has been a disaster. Just see the below stories. Sad stories of our farmers continue...in and around Manvi taluka of Raichur district of Karnataka.

**Ramappa** a small farmer with two acres of land at Umbli hosur village in Manvi taluk has taken 20 acres on lease from the village landlord at Rs. 6,500 an acre annually. He has sown cotton on 10 acres. Sowing is yet to be done on the remaining ten acres. The germinated cottonseeds died due to heat stress. Mr.Ramappa has taken a loan of Rs. 1 lakh from a trader on the condition that the crop would be sold to him. He does not know how he is going to feed his six-member family and repay the loan.

**Hanumanthappa**, another farmer in the same village, owns eight acres. He has taken another 16 acres on lease at Rs. 7,000 an acre per year. He has sown red gram in eight acres and cotton in another eight acres. While his cottonseeds have died, the young plants of red gram are counting their days. **“But, I will not commit suicide. I will face the situation,”** he said. He is preparing to leave the village either for Bengaluru or for Pune, along with his wife and children, to work as a construction labourer.

These are not isolated and rare cases. I can give you many examples from each family. Disheartening stories of young plants, drying and sown seeds dying on the vast tracts of fields unfold across Manvi Taluk, which is facing the worst drought situation in recent years.

#### **Deficient rainfall**

As per the information provided by Department of Agriculture, Raichur district received hardly any rainfall. The situation of the farmers is grim and they are literally struggling. Of the 3, 03,410 hectares of cultivable land in the district, sowing has been done only on 10 per cent of the land. In almost all the sown areas, either the seeds have died or the young plants are dying.

The farmers along the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal are hopeful as the Tungabhadra Reservoir holds good amount of water thanks to better rainfall in the Malnad region. But their hope is drying as no water has so far reached their area of cultivation. However, since vast tracts of land in the upper reaches of the canal are being illegally irrigated, the fields at the lower reaches in Raichur and Manvi taluks are likely to face water crisis as is usual every year.

#### **The main effects:**

1. People in many villages are facing severe drinking water crisis.
2. There is no fodder for domestic animals. due to this the income, which used to come from the milk and drastically reduced.
3. Mass migration is seen everywhere. Many are going to any place that the work is available.
4. The worst hits are women and children. they are at the receiving end
5. Two of our children from Kapepaladi have already migrated to Bangalore. Many more from other schools have already left
6. We have accommodated many now in the hostels too.

This is the public TV news item telecasted on the 8th of August. This video gives us the sharp contrast of those districts of Karnataka where they had excessive rain and districts like Raichur where there is hardly any rain. How farmers are struggling because of lack of rain is seen in this video link. <https://youtu.be/LPgeIajLVFc>

In such a situation, we cannot keep quiet anymore seeing the distress of the people.

**Everyday people come and ask us to help them with food or work. They say give us work and pay us so that we can at least have a meal.** This has been increasing day by day.

To be in solidarity with poor and hungry this year we request you to provide them with some immediate help may be a bag of Rice or two, which will be of more use to them. With the bag of rice, at least we could expect smile on their faces. We have about 1080 women. The rates of everything have gone up. Therefore, a bag of rice is 25 kilos. Per kilo, it is 32 rupees. Therefore, we need **1080x25x32=8,64,000/-** We need this much amount for the SHG women alone. This would be a big contribution from your side for the battling women children and the farmers. Thank you.

With good wishes and Prayers

Fr Arun Luis SJ