

Fact-finding in Lukhi Murmu's death in Hiranpur block of Pakur (Jharkhand)

30-year old Lukhi Murmu of Dhawadangal village in Ghagharjani Gram Panchayat (Pakur, Jharkhand) died on 23 January 2018. A fact-finding team of the Right to Food Campaign comprising of Anand Prakash Tudu, Ankita Aggarwal, Siraj Dutta and Suraj visited Dhawadangal on 28 January and spoke with Lukhi Murmu's family members, their neighbours, the local Sahiya and the ration dealer. The next day the team met with the Block Development Officer (BDO), the Block Programme Officer (BPO), the District Supply Officer (DSO), the District Superintendent of Education (DSE) and the Deputy Commissioner (DC). It spoke on the phone with the Marketing Officer (MO) and the Block Education Officer (BEO). Based on these discussions the team established that Lukhi Murmu died due to prolonged weakness and inadequate nutrition. October 2017 onwards, Lukhi Murmu's household was unable to access rice from the Public Distribution System (PDS) due to failure of Aadhaar-based biometric authentication. The administration maintains that Lukhi Murmu died due to illness.

Details of the family

Thirty-year-old Lukhi Murmu was the oldest amongst five sisters. According to the neighbours, Lukhi never married in order to look after her sisters. Their parents died about 11-12 years ago. Three of Lukhi's sisters, Rani (20 years), Talamalay (25 years) and Ansu (18), are married. Their youngest sister, Phulin (14 years), lived with Lukhi. All the sisters except Phulin are illiterate. Phulin has studied till the fifth standard. She had to drop out of a school run by Christian Missionaries about two years ago after her family could not pay her fees. Lukhi's household has about 15 decimal of land (mostly upland). It is sowed with paddy only when Lukhi's sisters' husbands plough the land. It yields about half a quintal of rice. Lukhi and Phulin were wage labourers. During the agricultural season they got work for about three days a week. They received Rs 100 and a meal for a day's work. They last worked in December 2017. Lukhi last worked in NREGA before 2016.

Lukhi lived in a kuccha house on about 3 decimal land. The fact-finding team found a few clothes, some utensils, a blanket, a few bags of paddy from their field and a few bags of rice given by the block administration. A room of the house was broken (see annexure 1) but Lukhi was unable to get it repaired (see annexure 2 for another photograph of Lukhi's house). Lukhi owned two cows. Lukhi had two bank accounts. In one of them she had taken a Kisan Credit Loan of Rs 14,000 in 2013. This account has a balance of Rs 196 (see annexure 3). There were no entries in the passbook of the second bank account. The sisters could not tell why this loan was taken or whether it was repaid. Lukhi had also taken a loan of Rs 200 which remained unpaid. She used to take small loans regularly as well which she returned by working for the lender's household. Lukhi was not part of any self-help group. She did not have mobile phone. The family did not have any other assets such as a cycle, chicken, goats etc.

Details of the death

Lukhi Murmu died at about 4:30 pm on 23 January. In the absence of rice, no food was cooked in her house that day. One of Lukhi and Phulin's sisters was also in the house on the day of the death. The BDO and MO visited the household after the death. The BDO gave 60-70 kg of rice and a blanket. He also promised to admit Phulin in the local Kasturba Vidyalaya.

Lukhi's health

According to her sisters, Lukhi did not have any major illness. She was weak for a couple of year, but her condition deteriorated around last Durga Puja. Her neighbours said that she used to tire easily

after doing manual labour. As per one of the neighbours, Lukhi was also very worried about her sisters' future. Lukhi used to seek medical treatment from the local "desi" doctor who she was unable to pay regularly. As per the neighbour and the local Sahiya, Lukhi had lost considerable weight over the past few months. On 6 January 2018, the local Sahiya took Lukhi to the local community health centre (see annexure 4 for the doctor's prescription). Lukhi was then tested for tuberculosis and kala azar in January 2018, but they were both negative. As per the Sahiya, Lukhi took the medicines prescribed by the doctor, but there was no improvement in her health. The Sahiya also said that lack of adequate food and nutrition contributed to her death.

Access to PDS rations

Lukhi's household was initially issued an Antyodaya ration card (number 202001407489) under the National Food Security Act. This card was later converted into a Priority ration card. The card includes the names of Lukhi, Phulin and two of their other sisters. As per the information available on Jharkhand Government's PDS website (aahar.jharkhand.gov.in), Lukhi and Phulin's Aadhaar number is linked with their ration card. As per the ration card entries (annexure 5) Lukhi Murmu's household received 35 kg grain per month till April 2017, with some missing entries in the preceding months. The household received 20 kg of grain per month from June to September.

Lukhi Murmu's household was unable to access its PDS grain. It seems that Lukhi Murmu was unable to go to the ration shop due to weakness. The ration shop is about a kilometre away and requires an uphill climb. When asked whether anyone in the village considered taking Lukhi to the ration shop on a motorcycle, no one gave any reply. However, as per PDS transactions available on aahar.jharkhand.gov.in, Lukhi Murmu transacted 2.5 litres of kerosene oil on 9 November 2017. No one in her family could confirm this. Phulin went to the ration dealer a few times but was denied grain as she was unable to authenticate herself biometrically. She last went to the dealer on the day Lukhi died. Others in the village claimed to have urged the dealer to give some grain to Phulin on 23 January, but the dealer did not give any. One of the other sisters said that even she went to the ration shop once to get grain, but the dealer only gives grain to those who are able to authenticate themselves biometrically.

Access to nutrition

Lukhi and Phulin would together consume about half a kilo of rice per day. Sometimes they ate rice with potatoes and saag. At times they would eat rice only with salt. Phulin could not tell when they last cooked dal or eggs. Since Lukhi and Phulin stopped getting their PDS rice, they were often forced to ask their neighbours for food. As they had to work at these households in return for the food they received, they could not repeatedly ask them for food. A few days before Lukhi's death, their neighbour Kalidas gave them 5 kg of rice which got over on 22 January. His wife used to sometimes give Lukhi and Phulin cooked food as well. Sometimes they would sleep hungry. After Phulin returned empty handed from the PDS shop on 23 January, she soaked some of the paddy at their house to extract rice from it. However, this is a four-day process and Lukhi died on that day itself. The paddy was threshed and brought home about a week before Lukhi's death. This paddy is usually saved for emergencies. Lukhi and Phulin were hoping to get rice from the PDS.

Village's access to services

Dhawadangal is a village of 40 households. It is 6 km away from Hiranpur block and 3 km from the Gram Panchayat office. The closest Public Health Centre and bank are in Hiranpur. There is no all-weather road till 1 km of the village, which makes commute during the rains very difficult. The village has electricity and mobile phone connectivity.

Eleven households in the village do not have a ration card. Of these five are certainly poor. Also, names of several people are missing from their ration card. As per people in the village, the dealer did not distribute any grain in May 2017. This was confirmed from the entries of four other ration cards of the village (annexure 6). A few cardholders said that the dealer gives 32 kg instead of 35 kg. Upel Murmu was unable to get grain for two months due to biometric failure. People also complained that the dealer does not give the printed receipt. They said that he distributes rice and kerosene on separate days and refuses to give rations to households that do not come on the day of distribution of rations.

As per the people we spoke with, no household in the village has its Job Card with it. Some Job Cards may be with the local contractors. No NREGA work took place in 2017. In 2016, some land levelling and pond construction took place, but at least some of this work was through machines. The village has one self-help group which is not active. Hiranpur is an “intensive block” of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society, the state National Rural Livelihood Mission.

There is a primary school in the village. Eggs are served very irregularly in the midday meals. The middle school is a kilometre away. Small children of the village do not go to the anganwadi as the closest anganwadi centre is 1 km away. This centre operates from someone’s kuccha house. Pregnant and lactating women receive supplementary nutrition and immunization from the anganwadi. At least one social security pensioner of the village was removed from the pension list after he/she was declared ‘farzi’. The fact finding team was also told that a person with 40 per cent disability does not get disability pension.

Discussion with the ration dealer

When the ration dealer (Chaitan Marandi) was asked about the household’s PDS transactions, he said that Lukhi Murmu did not come to collect rations in the past few months. Initially he denied that Phulin had come to collect her family’s rations, but after some probing admitted that she came a few times but was denied grain due to authentication failure. He claims that he was not given any instruction by the MO to distribute rations even in case of Aadhaar-based authentication failure. The dealer also claimed to not know about Lukhi Murmu’s transaction last November. He denied all complaints levelled against him by the villagers. He said that Antyodaya cards were converted into Priority cards by the department, and now there are only three Antyodaya cards in Dhawadangal. He did not know anything else about this conversion (see the video testimony of the ration dealer).

Discussion with the BDO

When the BDO was asked why the ration dealer did not give any ration to Lukhi Murmu’s household in the last four months, the BDO said that he will have to ask the dealer about this. The BDO said that Lukhi Murmu’s Antyodaya ration card was converted into a Priority ration card as Antyodaya ration cards are only for Pahariyas. He accepted that he was unclear about the criteria for issuing Antyodaya ration cards. The BDO said that the administration is making arrangements to enrol Phulin in the local Kasturba Vidyalaya. He added that Lukhi’s household will be compensated under the National Family Benefit Scheme. The BDO informed that no post mortem was conducted.

Discussion with the MO and DSO

The team spoke with the MO on the phone. As per the MO, all dealers are instructed to also distribute rations to households whose members are unable to authenticate their identity through their fingerprints. The MO said that he didn’t know that the dealer did not give ration to Phulin

Murmu as the ePOS machine did not authenticate her fingerprints. When asked what action will be taken against the dealer, the MO said that this will be decided by the DSO.

As per the DSO, they are instructed to issue Antyodaya ration card to all Pahariya households. In order to do so, they are converting the Antyodaya cards of non-Pahariya households into Priority cards. As per the DSO, new ration cards are being issued and names of missing members are also being added to the ration cards. Applications for both these are to be made online. Block officials are to verify the people who have applied for a ration card or addition of names and forward their report to the district.

Discussion with BEO and DSE

When the BEO was asked about the erratic distribution of eggs in Dhawadangal's primary school, he said that funds for procurement of eggs have not been released for several months. As per a functionary in the DSE's office, in 2017-18 funds were received for the distribution of eggs for only five days. As per the DSE, schools are to procure eggs from the "cooking costs" of midday meals. The DSE was unable to explain how this is possible.

Discussion with the DC

As per the DC's letter, no member of Lukhi Murmu's household collected PDS grain since September. However, the ration dealer told the fact finding team that Phulin Murmu came to collect the grain a few times, but her fingerprints were not authenticated. When the DC was asked about these two accounts, he said that dealers can be fickle and can easily change their statements. The DC reiterated the facts stated in his letter to the Food Secretary (see below).

Official account of Lukhi Murmu's death

The DC submitted a report on Lukhi Murmu's death to the Jharkhand Food Secretary on 25 January 2018 (see annexure 7). As per this report:

- Lukhi Murmu died of illness. Some political parties have alleged hunger as the cause of Lukhi's death for political gains.
- Lukhi Murmu's age is between 40 to 45 years.
- Lukhi's Antyodaya ration card was converted to a Priority ration card in order to issue Antyodaya cards to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group households.
- Lukhi's household was given 20 kg grain per month till September 2017.
- As per women of Dhawadangal, the Mukhiya of Ghagharjani Gram Panchayat and the local gram Pradhan, Lukhi Murmu was ill for the past 3-4 months and she was undergoing treatment in a hospital. Medicines were found in Lukhi's house after her death. As per some women of the village, Lukhi had kala azar in the past, but no official or government doctor was informed about this.
- About 1 quintal of paddy was found in Lukhi's house after her death. Soaked paddy was also found in the house. Ash was found at the chulha and also some cooking equipment. As per Lukhi's younger sister, the family cooked rice and dal during the day on 23 January and Lukhi died between 3 – 4 pm. Lukhi had two cows. As per the report of the revenue officer, Lukhi Murmu owned "3 bigha 3 kattha 11 dhoor" land. These facts confirm that Lukhi died not because of shortage of grain, but because of illness.

- As per the ration dealer Chaitan Marandi, Lukhi or her sister did not come to collect their PDS ration after September 2017. The dealer has the household's stock of grain since September 2017. As per online records, the dealer distributed grain to 77 per cent of the cardholders in January 2018 and to 90 per cent of the cardholders in December 2017. On 23 January 2018, the dealer distributed PDS grain to 50 households through the online system. These households claim that they did not see Lukhi Murmu's sister at the ration shop on 23 January.

Annexure 1: The broken part of Lukhi Murmu's house




Annexure 2: Phulin Murmu (in front) at her house with one of her sisters



Annexure 3: Entries in Lukhi Murmu's bank account passbook

DATE	PARTICULARS	CHEQUE NO.	DEBIT	CREDIT	BALANCE
(Control) 5002850 2946 30576136624 15/12/09 10/8/11 Date has been archived for the period from 15.12.2009 to 03.05.2011.					
06.05.11	INT. BCD	5002850 2946 30576136624 15/12/09	1000.00		75.00Cr
15.12.09	INT. BCD		5000.00	0.00	1000.00Cr
30.06.11	INTEREST CREDIT			13.00	88.00Cr
31.12.11	INTEREST CREDIT			2.00	90.00Cr
30.06.12	INTEREST CREDIT			2.00	92.00Cr
31.12.12	INTEREST CREDIT			2.00	94.00Cr
30.06.13	INTEREST CREDIT			2.00	96.00Cr
05.12.13	TRF FROM LUKHI MURMU			14000.00	14096.00Cr
05.12.13	CASH WD. HELP		13000.00		8.00
					196.00Cr

Annexure 4: Lukhi Murmu's medical prescription

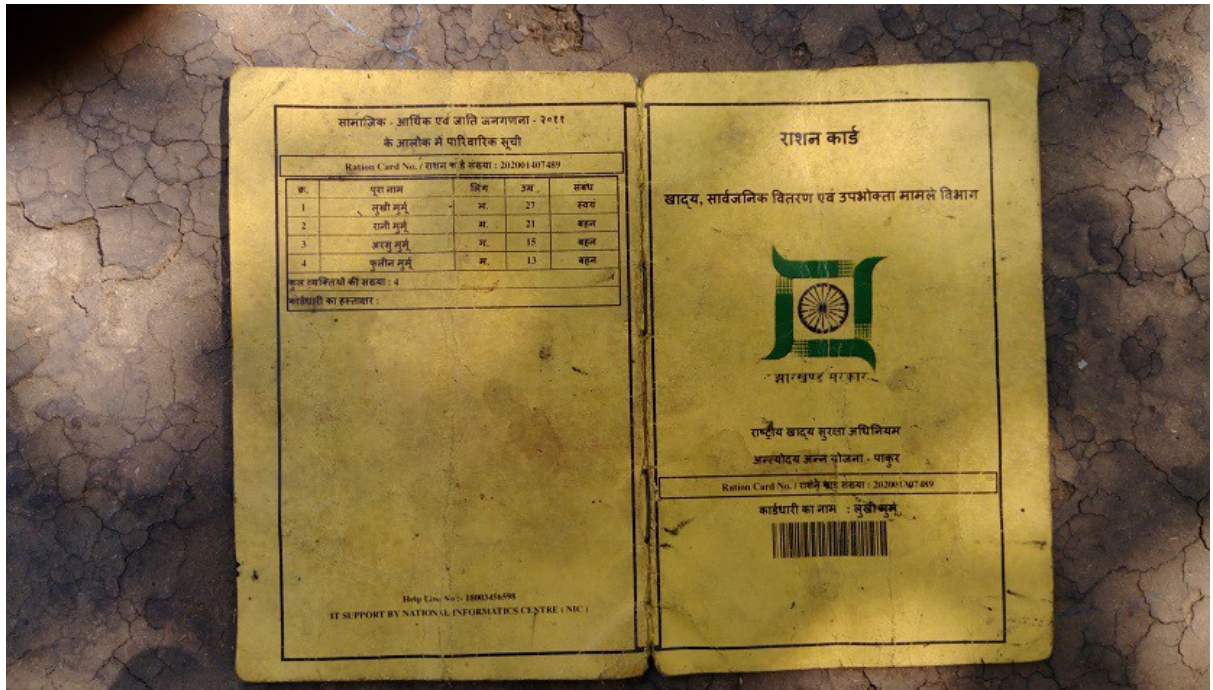

सामुदायिक स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र, हिरणपुर
 बाह्य विभाग पर्ची

पंजीकरण संख्या 330 दिनांक 6/1/18
 रोगी का नाम Lukhi Murmu उम्र 28 वजन _____
 पिता/पति का नाम Mistri Murmu
 ग्राम Dhondasagar पोस्ट Darapur
 थाना Hiranpur जिला Rajnagar प्रदेश Jh.

H.B. Fever on off. 1 yr
 Preg. cl. Headaches
 UPE Test Vertigo
 Para Check Pain abt.
 RK-39 H. Negative R₀
 Urin Alb. Sug. (17) (1) cl. pen &
 Blood Sug. (17) (2) cl. glucose &
 Sputum for AFB (17) (3) cl. pen &
 B/O Widal (17) (4) cl. pen &
 VDRL (17) (5) cl. pen &
 ABORh (17) (6) cl. pen &
 HIV (17) (7) cl. pen &
 USL (17) (8) cl. pen &

अस्पताल में प्रसव सुरक्षित नौ - सुरक्षित बच्चा
 टीकाकरण अंतर करवाना।
 ममता वाहन कॉल सेंटर नं० - 8434392825

Annexure 5: Lukhi Murmu's ration card



वर्ष - 2016

माह	चावल	गेहूँ	नमक	धीनी	केरासम तेल	दुकानदार व रु० एवं तिथि
अप्रैल			2		4	23/4/16
मई	35/8		2		4	10/5/16 16/5/16
जून	35/8				4	14/6/16 29/6/16
जुलाई	35/8	1				20/7/16 22/7/16
अगस्त	35/8				4	14/8/16 26/8/16
सितम्बर	35/8				2	28/8/16

Annexure 6: Entries in four other ration cards of the village



Annexure 7: Report of the Pakur DC on Lukhi Murmu's death



कार्यालय

उपायुक्त-सह-जिला दण्डाधिकारी, पाकुड़

(जिला गोपनीय शाखा)

पत्रांक . 79 . / गो 0

प्रेषक,

उपायुक्त,
पाकुड़।

सेवा में,

सरकार के सचिव,
खाद्य, सार्वजनिक वितरण एवं उपभोक्ता मामले विभाग,
झारखण्ड, राँची।

पाकुड़, दिनांक 25.01.2018

विषय :- ग्राम-धोवाडांगाल, पंचायत-घाघरजानी, प्रखण्ड-हिरणपुर, पाकुड़ में मृतका लखी मुर्मू के मृत्यु के कारण से संबंधित जाँच प्रतिवेदन का प्रेषण।

महाशय,

उपर्युक्त विषय के संबंध में कहना है कि दिनांक-24.01.2018 को अधोहस्ताक्षरी के संज्ञान में यह लाया गया कि प्रखण्ड-हिरणपुर के पंचायत घाघरजानी, ग्राम-धोवलडंगा में एक आदिवासी महिला की मृत्यु हो गयी है, जिसे कुछेक राजनीति दलों द्वारा एक नया मुद्दा बनाकर राजनैतिक लाभ लेने की मशा से भूख के कारण मृत्यु होना बताया जा रहा है।

मामले की त्वरित स्थल जांच करने हेतु संबंधित प्रखण्ड विकास पदाधिकारी, हिरणपुर एवं जिला आपूर्ति पदाधिकारी, पाकुड़ को दूरभाष पर निर्देशित किया गया। जिला आपूर्ति पदाधिकारी, पाकुड़ द्वारा स्थल जांच के पश्चात् एक तथ्यात्मक जांच प्रतिवेदन (संलग्न) समर्पित किया गया है। जांच में निम्नलिखित तथ्य उजागर हुआ है :-

1. यह कि मृतका लखी मुर्मू, उम्र लगभग 40-45 वर्ष अविवाहित थी एवं अपनी छोटी बहन फूलीन मुर्मू (अविवाहित) के साथ ग्राम - धोवाडांगाल में निवास कर रही थी। उनकी तीन अन्य बहनें भी हैं जिनका नाम रानी मुर्मू, अरसु मुर्मू एवं तालामय मुर्मू हैं। ये तीनों बहनें विवाहित हैं एवं अपने ससुराल में रह रही हैं।
2. यह कि पूर्व में इनके नाम AAY राशन कार्ड निर्गत किया गया था, परन्तु आदिम जनजाति परिवार को AAY योजना अन्तर्गत शामिल करने के क्रम में इस परिवार का राशनकार्ड परिवर्तित कर PHM राशन कार्ड का लाभ दिया जा रहा था।
3. यह कि मृतका लखी मुर्मू के परिवार में वर्तमान में स्वयं मृतका लखी मुर्मू एवं उनकी अविवाहित बहन फूलीन मुर्मू कुल दो ही सदस्य थे जिन्हें माह सितम्बर 2017 तक प्रतिमाह 20 Kg चावल की दर से राशन उपलब्ध कराया गया है।
4. यह कि मृत्यु के कारण के संबंध में वहाँ उपस्थित ग्रामीण महिलाएँ, घाघरजानी पंचायत के मुखिया श्रीमती लुईसा हेम्ब्रम ग्राम प्रधान भी रावण हेम्ब्रम की उपस्थिति में पूछताछ किया गया, इस क्रम में उनलोगों के द्वारा बताया गया कि मृतका लखी मुर्मू विगत तीन-चार महीने से बीमार रह रही थी एवं उनके द्वारा अस्पताल में ईलाज कराया जा रहा था। जांच के समय घर में दवा उपलब्ध पाया गया। ग्रामीण महिला द्वारा यह भी बताया गया कि मृतका को पूर्व में कालाजार बीमारी भी हुआ था परन्तु इसकी जानकारी किसी भी पदाधिकारी अथवा सरकारी चिकित्सक को नहीं दिया गया। इस क्रम में ग्रामीण महिलाओं द्वारा डीलर से माह अक्टूबर से अनाज प्राप्त न होने की बात भी बताई गई। पूछताछ का वीडियो रिकार्डिंग कराया गया जो कि जाँच प्रतिवेदन के साथ संलग्न है।

25.1.18

5. यह कि मृतका लखी मुर्मू के घर का भी विडीयोग्राफी कराया गया, जिसमें यह पाया गया कि मृतका के घर में बोरा में लगभग 01 क्विंटल धान तथा धान से चावल तैयार करने के लिए उसना हुआ धान भी रखा हुआ था। मृतका के घर का रसोई बनाने की जगह का भी जांच किया गया एवं पाया गया कि चूल्हा में राख था एवं रसोई बनाने का समान भी पड़ा हुआ था। मृतका की छोटी बहन फुलीन मुर्मू द्वारा पूछ-ताछ के क्रम में यह बताया गया कि कल दिन में भात-दाल बनाकर खाया था एवं लगभग 3-4 बजे अपराहन में दीदी की मृत्यु हुई। मृतका की छोटी बहन स्वस्थ है। इसके अतिरिक्त मृतका के पास दो गाय भी है। राजस्व कर्मचारी के जांच प्रतिवेदन के आधार पर मृतका लखी मुर्मू के हिस्से में 03 बीघा 03 कट्टा 11 धूर जमीन धारित है। इससे इस बात की पुष्टि होती है कि मृतका की मृत्यु अनाज की कमी से नहीं अपितु बीमारी के कारण हुई है।
6. यह कि मृतका के परिवार का राशनकार्ड संख्या 202001407489 की जांच किया गया। जांच में यह पाया गया कि मृतका लुखी मुर्मू द्वारा माह सितम्बर 2017 तक का अनाज का उठाव किया गया है। लाभुक के कार्ड में कुल 04 सदस्य अंकित है एवं इस आधार पर उनके द्वारा प्रति माह 20 किलोग्राम चावल का उठाव किया गया है। इस संबंध में यह पाया गया कि वास्तव में वर्तमान में उक्त कार्ड के मात्र 02 ही सदस्य स्वयं मृतका लुखी मुर्मू एवं उसकी अविवाहित छोटी बहन फुलीन मुर्मू एक साथ रह रहे हैं। कार्ड में अंकित अन्य 02 बहनों की शादी हो जाने के पश्चात् अपने ससुराल में रह रही हैं।
7. यह कि जन वितरण प्रणाली विक्रेता श्री चैतन मराण्डी से इस संबंध में पूछे जाने पर उनके द्वारा यह बताया गया कि माह सितम्बर, 2017 के बाद से लुखी मुर्मू (मृतका) एवं उसकी अविवाहित बहन फुलीन मुर्मू द्वारा खाद्यान्न का उठाव करने दुकान पर सितम्बर माह के बाद नहीं आई है, जिसके कारण उसे खाद्यान्न नहीं दिया जा सका एवं अतिरिक्त खाद्यान्न मेरे भंडार में सुरक्षित है। जन वितरण प्रणाली विक्रेता का वितरण प्रतिशत जांच ऑनलाईन किया गया जिसमें यह पाया गया कि जन वितरण प्रणाली विक्रेता द्वारा माह जनवरी, 2018 में अबतक 77% लाभुक परिवारों को खाद्यान्न वितरण किया है एवं पिछले माह दिसम्बर, 2017 में उनके द्वारा वितरण का प्रतिशत 90% है। दिनांक-23.01.2018 को जनवितरण प्रणाली विक्रेता द्वारा कुल-50 लाभुकों को ऑनलाईन खाद्यान्न वितरित किया गया। दिनांक-23.01.2018 का खाद्यान्न प्राप्त करने वाले लाभुकों से पूछने पर उनके द्वारा यह बताया गया कि उनलोगों द्वारा मृतका लुखी मुर्मू की बहन को खाद्यान्न प्राप्त करने हेतु जनवितरण प्रणाली के दुकान पर नहीं देखा गया।

निष्कर्षतः यह पाया गया कि मृतका लखी मुर्मू की मृत्यु बीमारी के कारण हुई है न कि भूख से।

सादर सूचनार्थ प्रेषित।

अनुलग्नक:-जिला आपूर्ति पदाधिकारी, पाकुड़ का
जांच प्रतिवेदन पत्रांक-113/आ0, दिनांक-24.01.2018
सभी अनुलग्नक सहित।

24/1/18

विश्वासभाजन
24/1/18
उपायुक्त,
पाकुड़।