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SAVE INDIAN FARMERS

Report by Save Indian Farmers : Washim district Maharashtra

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ABOUT US

Save Indian Farmers (SIF) is a registered non profit organization in United States focused on addressing issue of farmer suicides in India for last 4 years. SIF has been actively working in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and other parts of India to help widows of farmer suicides, start their own small business. We are also investing in water conservation projects and working with local NGOs as well as local administration and state officials to make positive impact in the lives of farmers. The report compiled here is for understanding the ground level issues and not place blame on any individual or politically motivated. We believe the objective of all concerned citizens of India (whether in India or abroad) should be to 1) Understand issues that lead to suicides in different parts of India and 2) Address issues with short term, mid term as well as long term projects, policies and directives to bring about change in the overall situation of farmers.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was compiled by volunteers of Save Indian Farmers by visiting 20+ families from 7 different Talukas of Washim district, where a farmer committed suicide in August/September 2015. The list of families was provided by Mr. Kishor Tiwari, Maharashtra's state minister who is heading Vasantnao Naik independence mission for farmers. We are submitting this report to Mr. Tiwari, the current district collector Mr. Rahul Dvivedi and also making it public for people to read. This report is NOT exhaustive and does NOT address systemic issues in large population. Those studies are already available. The objective is to understand on the ground situation case by case basis. These 20 families may not be representative of all the problems farmers are facing but they certainly are microcosm of the ground reality. We hope this provides framework for further discussion on how NGOs and local government officials can collaborate to address some of the issues mentioned in the report.



Farmers' suicides issue is complex one, different agro-socio-economic factors are responsible. Not a single factor is responsible for this. Many factors are responsible for this issue. Please note that many of these reasons are NOT specific to Washim district but are applicable to other districts of Maharashtra or even other states in India. Also as many earlier reports suggest, there is not one single reason for the suicides but we commonly notice 2 or more of the reasons below.

- 1) Illiteracy
- 2) Family disputes
- 3) Disputes with neighbor/distant relative regarding land
- 4) Addiction to alcohol and superstition
- 5) Uncertain rains and lack of water conservation at village, taluka and district levels
- 6) Most of farming is rain-fed (dry land), leading to the crop failure of weather dependent crops
 - 1) No crop diversification/rotation
 - 2) Mono-cropping of only soybean or cotton
 - 3) Higher cost of cultivation through fertilizers (overuse), resowing of seeds
 - 4) Crop failure due to natural calamities like drought and floods, unreliable monsoon season
 - 5) Crop failure due severe incidence of pest and diseases (not common but is on the rise)
 - 6) Unable to repay the crop loan or loan from money lenders
 - 7) Fluctuation in market prices for their produce
 - 8) Market prices prevails below the MSP (Minimum Support Price)
 - 9) Unable to pay the Fees for higher education of son/daughter
 - 10) Dowry system and spending more on marriages by taking crop loan or loan from land lord
 - 11) Health issues: Unable to cover the medical expenses of a family member
 - 12) Lack of information about government schemes
 - 13) The limitation of government officials for reaching up-to the poorest of poor
 - 14) Insufficient alternative livelihood sources

There have been more than 60,000 farmers who committed suicide in Maharashtra in the last decade, out of which more than 70% farmers belong to the 11 districts of Vidarbha region. This is mainly because of the infertility of the land, lack of sufficient and timely supply of water, lack of new technologies in farming, water conservation and prolonged ignorance of society towards the needs of the farmers. The main crop in Vidarbha is cotton, but the farmers growing cotton (or soybean) do not get minimum support price from the government, which leads to the high distress among them, leading to the massive suicides.

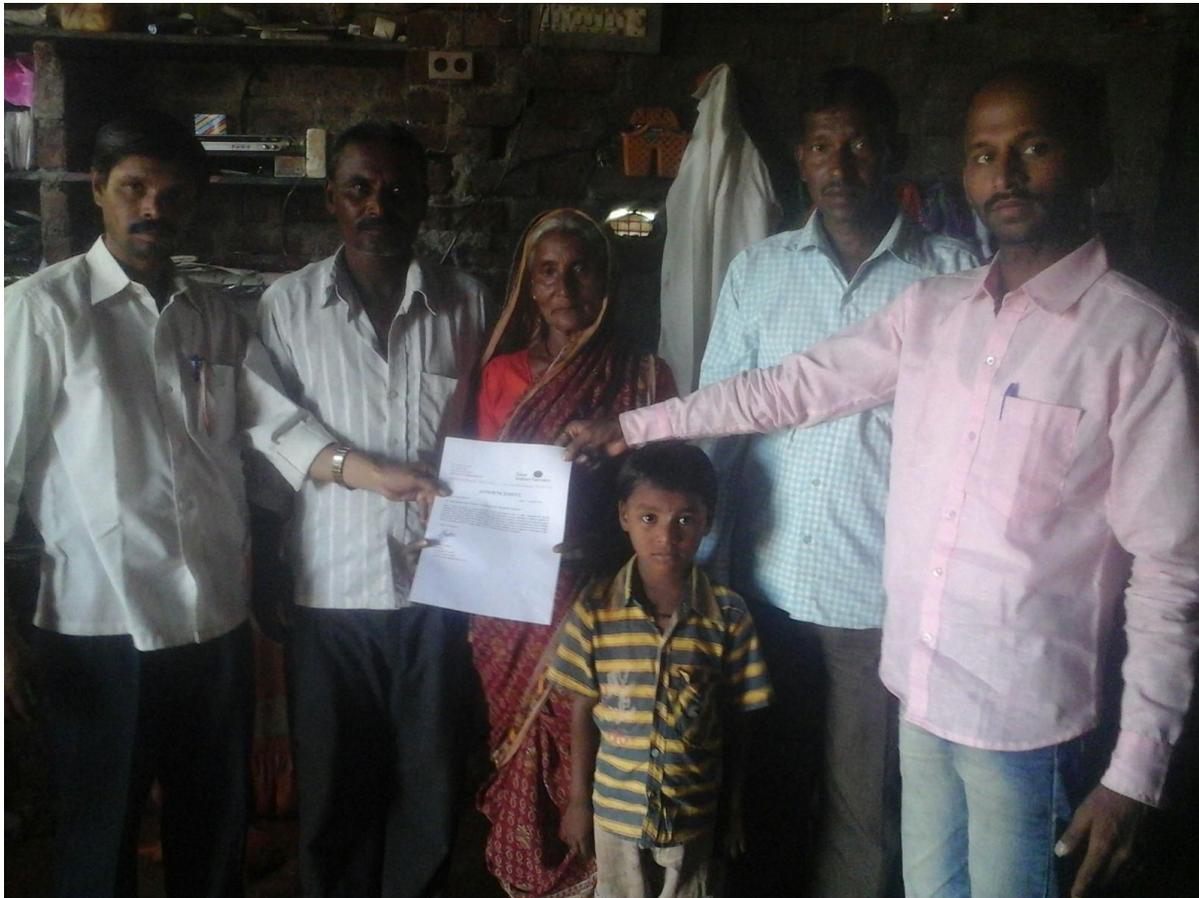
Farmer name	Gender	Age	loan 3 yrs	land acres	Date of suicide
Sumanbai Kisan Wagh	Female	60	150000	8	05.08.2015
Prahlad Bhika Kankal	Male	60		2.5	06.08.2015
Dinkar Narayan Bhagat	Male	45		2	16.08.2015
Ramesh Vishwnath Dighade	Male	58	41000	4	16.08.2015
Rukhmabai Atmaram Gawali	Male	45	225000	13	16.08.2015
Vishnu Ashru Walukar	Male	50	300000		17.08.2015
Satish Bhimrao Dhavak	Male	34	170000	10	20.08.2015
Ganesh Satyavijay Jadhav	Male	23	50000	8	21.08.2015
Indrjit Prakash Thakre	Male	22			24.08.2015
Santosh Ashok Thakre	Male	30	80000	6	24.08.2015
Ulhas Hansraj Jadhav	Male	45	140000	5	26.08.2015
Shamrao Gabaji Sanap	Male	56	35000	2.5	27.08.2015
Varsha Jagannath Ninghot	Female	35	100000	8	30.08.2015
Shivaji Datta Sabale	Male	32	50000	2	30.08.2015
Sunita Santosh Rathod	Female			1	31.08.2015
Vitthal Kisan Khirade	Male	45	200000	9	03.09.2015
Keshav Pakhmode	Male	35		4	03.09.2015
Dipak Prabhudas Gulkar	Male		420000	8.5	alive
Sheshrao Manvar	Male		107000	10	alive

Due to the absence of any responsible counseling either from the government, NGOs or society in general, there were many farmers who did not know how to survive in the changing economy. Such stresses pushed many into a corner where suicide became an option for them.

In October 2015 Save Indian Farmers (SIF) representatives Mr. Sachin Karawade and Mr. Samadhan Aghade visited the 20+ distressed families in Washim district and documented their detailed socio-economic conditions. The data and photos were collected to better understand

situations that lead to these farmers resorting to suicide. These are some of the cases we present in this report.

Late Shree Keshav Pakhmode from Girat village in Manora Taluka of Washim district passed away on 3rd September 2015. On 10th October SIF representative Sachin Karawade and Samadhan Aughade visited the family and gathered the detailed information about the socio-economic conditions that lead to the suicide. Keshav left behind his mother Durgabai, Wife Shakuntala (age 30), and 3 sons. They have 4 acres land and used to grow soybean as a crop. The main reason for suicide seems to be the ever increasing financial stress and continuous crop failure for last few years. The family not received any government or other help.



Durgabai (Mother of Late Shri. Keshav Pakhmode) and extended family with SIF representatives Samadhan (left of the picture) and Sachin (Right most)



Old mother Durgabai showing the portrait of her son

Late Shree Ramesh Dighade of village Umbarda Bajar of Karanja Taluka left his family behind on 16th August 2015. On 7th October SIF representatives visited the family. His wife, Shrimati Chandrakala (age 48), Shital - age 28 (daughter-Married) and sons Mahendra (age 26), Anil (age 26) were present. Mahendra has completed the Food Processing course. Family owns 4 acres land and soybean is the main crop. Mr. Dighade was unable to repay the loan taken from landlord (Rs 1,50,000) for the marriage of daughter and father's funeral. Changing weather conditions and inability to adopt to better farming techniques, lack of government assistance to marginal farmers lead to multiple crop failures for three years. Government has provided help for this family of Rs 29,500.



Wife Shrimati Chandrakala ji with 2 sons

Late Shrimati Rukhmabai Gawali of jawala, in Washim Taluka was less fortunate by many accounts. On 11 October SIF representative Sachin Karawade and Samadhan Aughade visited the family and gathered the detailed socio-economic information of family. We met with Shree Atmaram (age 45 - husband), daughter Godawari (19 years), and son Dyaneshwar (17 years). Godawari want to pursue BSc course or Computer course but lacks financial support to get higher education and improve their economic conditions. Family owns 13 acres land and cropping pattern includes Soybean and Tur (Arahar) Currently over 2 Lakhs in loan amounts are still not paid. They have received no help from the government or any other NGO.



Father Atmaram ji with daughter and son

Late Shree Santosh Thakre of village Gavha in Manora Taluka committed suicide on 24th August 2015. On 10th October, SIF volunteers Sachin Karawade and Samadhan Aughade visited the family as the first organizational representatives to visit them since the suicide. We met with Shrimati Chhaya (age 28 - wife), Son Sonam (7), and daughter Radhika -(1.5 years old) The land of 6 acres is owned by the Thakre family and the cropping pattern is Soybean and Cotton. Reason for suicide was detailed as inability to repay loan due to scanty rainfall, crop failures and re-sowing of cotton and soybean due long dry spells. The loan amount of Rs 80,000 was to be paid at an interest rate of 12 % per annum. The family has received no help or assistance from the government.



Shrimiti Chaya ji with son and daughter

Other than the distressed farmers, we also visited with head of the village (sarpanch), school teachers, social workers, school principals and other relevant individuals.



Chaya Khade, Takali village Sarpanch



Village panchayat at Umbra Bazaar



Takali Village School - Roof missing

Yevata village school is in a very bad conditions and students of this village need better facility for education.





Mr. Sheshrao Manvar has lost entire Soybean crop due to fire and he is unable to pay off installment of his Rs 2 Lakhs loan. He has attempted suicide 3 times so far but was saved by someone each time. Mr Manvar needs relief from Akola Bank which will raise his rates since he has not made a payment. We would like District Collector Mr. Dwivedi to speak with Branch Manager of Akola bank so that the bank does not increase his interest rate but maintains it at the original promised rate.



Some of the strategies for addressing issue of farmer suicides have already been discussed and implemented at various districts across India. We are merely proposing these strategies and by no means this is complete list. We would also like to draw attention that these are NOT solutions but strategies that could lead to better farming lifestyle for the citizens of the district. These strategies are not suggested in any particular order.

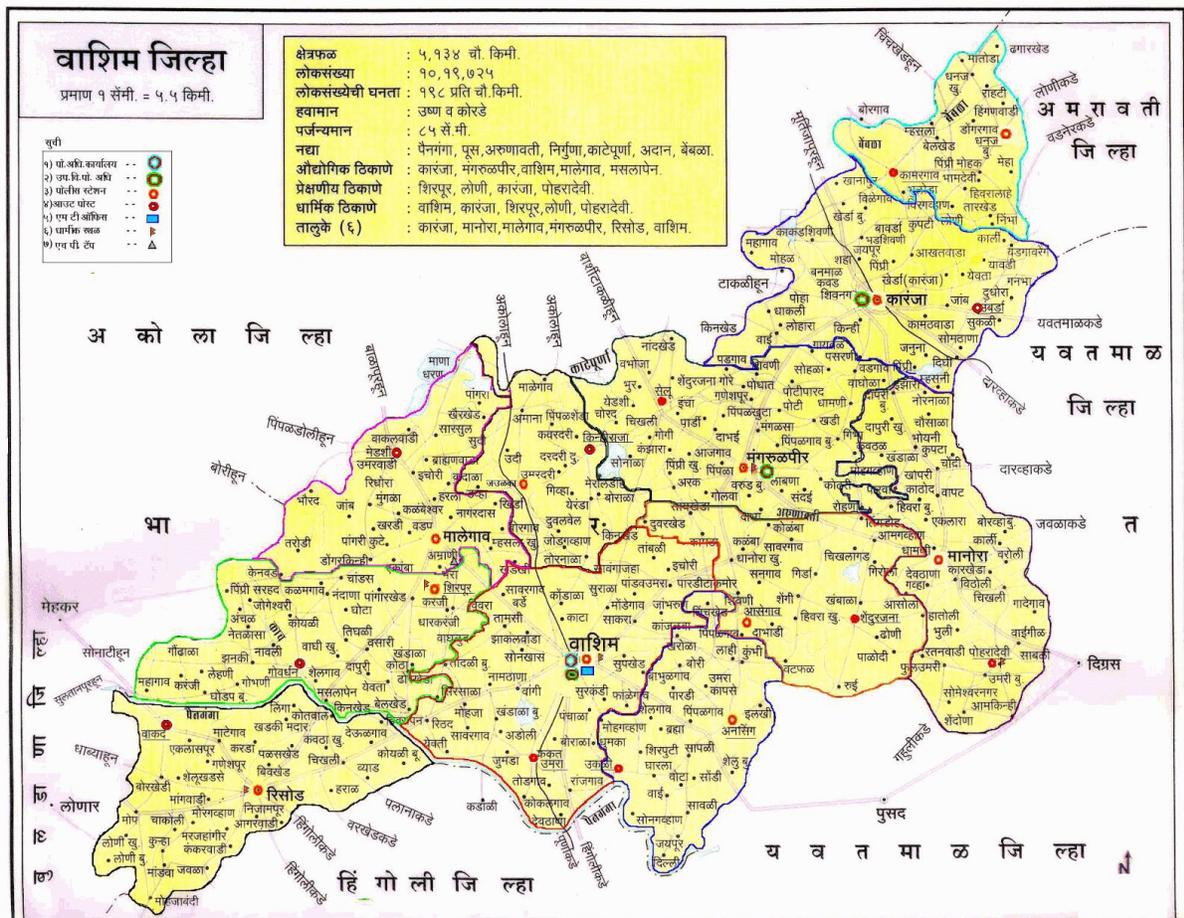
- 1) General awareness campaign - door to door campaign in every village, Taluka level to listen to grievances of the farmers and addressing basic issues of electricity, ration card, education will help build morale and raise awareness about government schemes and subsidies farmers can take advantage of.
 - 2) Resolving family disputes - Apart from legal recourse, we suggest building institutions that can address family disputes in a manner, which alleviates the stress on the farmer.
 - 3) Resolving disputes with neighbor regarding land - long pending legal battles are detrimental to the health of the village.
 - 4) Awareness about demerits of addiction to alcohol and tobacco - Addiction rehab camps to raise awareness as well as incentivizing villages that promote prohibition and similar activities.
 - 5) Creating water storage structures - At a small scale, water conservation efforts need to be highlighted.
- 1) Crop diversification - Diversifying crops is a strong monetary strategy as well.
 - 2) Guidance on more crop output by decreasing cost of cultivation - Promoting organic and natural fertilizers will also reduce the cost of cultivation.
 - 3) District specific contingency plan for facing natural calamities like drought and floods - This plan exists for most districts but needs to be revamped and executed properly at local levels.
 - 4) Providing optimum market prices for their produce - Creating demand and processing raw materials to sell processed goods will provide farmer with more cash for his crop. Also, government needs to include Minimum Support Price model for farmers. We cannot stress enough importance of setting MSP each season at state government level with allowed fluctuations to accommodate market conditions.
 - 5) Campaign about education loan: Higher education of son/daughter - Many farmers are sending their sons, daughters to far away places for higher education, which puts extra burden on the farmer.



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- 6) Awareness campaign about `Samuhik Vivah Sohala/yojana` - Cost of marriage is a burden, farmers can't seem to repay. Promoting group marriages is a strategy that will bring economic betterment for the farmer.
- 7) Promotion about government Health related schemes - Often government hospitals lacks the facilities, that are needed for long term care and complex health situations. Private hospitals cost money that the farmer cannot pay off without lending more money.
- 8) Campaign about government schemes for farmers - Many farmers we talked to are not aware of government schemes and even calls to Kisan Vikas Kendra often go unanswered.
- 9) Creating alternative livelihood sources (livestock, goat, poultry, fishery etc.) We have successfully created farm-supportive model where agro-support businesses such as goat grazing bring extra money home.
- 10) Building the institutions of the poor farmers (Farmers club), encouraging farmers club or farmers co-operatives for building a small-scale agro-base businesses is an initiative that has produced distribution of wealth in other parts of India.
- 11) Training/Guidance soil analysis and recommend suitable crops & Fertilizer suits particular Soil/Crop to give better crop yields.

The district had a population of 1,197,160 of which 17.66% were urban as of 2011. Washim is located in the eastern region of Vidarbha. Akola lies to its north, Amravati lies to its north-east, Hingoli lies to its south, Buldhana lies to its west, Yavatmal lies to its east. River Penganga is the main river of the district. It flows through the Tehsil of Risod. Later it flows through the boundary of Washim and Hingoli districts. River Kas is the main tributary of Penganga. River Kas meets Penganga about 1 km from the village of Shelgaon Rajgure. River Arunavati and its tributaries originates in the Tehsil of Washim and them flows through the tehsils of Mangrul Pir and Manora into the district of Yavatmal. River Katepurna originates in the hilly areas of the district and flows northwards through the tehsil of Malegaon and enters the Akola district.



There are hilly ranges extending from through the tehsils of Malegaon, Washim, Mangrul Pir and Manora. There is plain region in the basins of River Penganga in the Risod Tehsil. The important cities are Washim, Risod, Karanja, Malegaon, Mangrul Pir, Manora and Shirpur. Washim is the largest city in the district. There are many well-known hospitals, Schools, Colleges and Banks in Washim City. It is especially famous for its Balaji Temple. It also has a

railway junction. By railway is connected to Akola, Purna, Nanded and Khandwa. Karanja is another city. It has another railway junction. There are some parts covered by the forests.

There are mainly two regions. Both the regions are protected under Katepurna Wildlife Sanctuary and Karanja Sohul Wildlife Sanctuary respectively.

This district is divided into 2 sub-divisions, namely, Washim and Mangrulpir. These are further divided into 6 talukas (tehsils). The talukas are Malegaon, Mangrulpir, Karanja, Manora, Washim and Risod.



Presently, there are 3 Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) constituencies in this district. These are Karanja, Risod and Washim. While, Risod is part of Akola Lok Sabha constituency, Karanja and Washim are part of Yavatmal-Washim Lok Sabha constituency.

In 2011, Washim had population of 1,197,160 of which male and female were 620,302 and 576,858 respectively. In 2001 census, Washim had a population of 1,020,216 of which males were 526,094 and remaining 494,122 were females. Washim District population constituted 1.07 percent of total Maharashtra population.

The district has a population density of 244 inhabitants per square kilometer (630/sq. mi). Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 17.23%.

Important links

1. Washim District Rainfall (2009-2013) <http://www.imd.gov.in/section/hydro/distrainfall/webrain/maharashtra/washim.txt>
2. Washim district collector <http://washim.gov.in/>
3. Washim geo-economic indicators https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washim_district
4. Washim district census <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/340-washim.html>