

To

Date: May 21, 2021

Shri B S Yediyurappa
Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka

Subject: Urgent appeal to expand relief measures

On 27th April, the Karnataka government announced a “close down” for 14 days. Subsequently a full lockdown was imposed from 10th to 24th May. As per news reports, [an extension of this lockdown](#) is possible. While we welcome the announcement of the [Rs. 1250/- crore relief package](#) made on 19th May, **in this letter, we seek to draw your attention to urgently expand the coverage of relief measures.**

We are writing to you on behalf of the [Stranded Workers Action Network \(SWAN\)](#). We have been running an all India helpline since March 2020 to support stranded migrants. Over the last year, we have interacted with nearly 40,000 workers and supported them with rations and crowdsourced cash relief of Rs 60 lakhs. Since 27th April, we have received distress calls from Karnataka, mainly from the city of Bengaluru. The needs assessment done by our volunteers for the calls received in Karnataka demonstrate that:

- We received 41 calls covering 264 people of which 5% were women and children
- **71%** earned less than or equal to Rs 500/day or Rs 10,000/month (prior to the lockdown).
- **90%** of the workers we spoke to reported that work (daily and contractual) has stopped due to locally declared lockdowns. On average, workers reported that work had stopped for **24 days**.
- We received calls mainly from Bengaluru (88%) and some calls from Mysuru and Mangaluru.
- **55%** of workers reported that they had not received their full wages or had been paid partial wages for the previous month. However, only **6%** had received any money from their employer since the work had stopped.

In addition to the above we have received requests for help from 2,100 families in Bengaluru that include domestic workers, plumbers, electricians, auto drivers, and street vendors across 19 locations in the city (Annexure 1). We have also received requests in assisting 624 families across Bengaluru with rations.

As this news report indicates, [only a fraction of the unorganised workers would benefit](#) from the current announcement of relief measures. The amounts are one time payments and the processing time is also unclear. Further, the amount is too little as many workers are already in debt. They are unable to buy food and rations, pay rent, electricity and water bills, and purchase gas cylinders and medicines.

The Karnataka High Court [order dated 11th May 2021](#), directed the government to provide 10 kg free ration to priority households (PHH), 10 kgs at Rs 15/- per kg for non-PHH, and supply dry ration kits

sufficient for 21 days to the doorstep of identified individuals. In our conversation, workers said that they are able to access only 7 kgs of rice per member, which after cleaning, dwindles to 5 kg. In the absence of regular income, this gets exhausted in 3 days. Further, 54% did not possess ration cards.

The High Court Order also directed that the government should undertake distribution of cooked food through the Indira Canteens. While this is a timely measure there have been several barriers to access:

1. In some areas, canteens are situated far away from settlements with families in need making it especially difficult for single women with dependent children or elderly.
2. The [BBMP has introduced an app](#) where staff at the canteens have to upload beneficiary name, mobile number, and photograph with the distributed food packets. This is resulting in long queues and crowding around canteens causing health concerns among those who come to collect packets. The queues were often so long that many were forced to return without having received any food packets at all. Often, the app stops functioning leading to long wait by which time the food becomes cold.
3. Ration card is required for anyone needing more than 3 packets. This is exclusionary as many do not have ration cards. For example 55% in Bandepalya and 45% from Nanjappa Garden (See Annexure 1) who reached out to SWAN had no ration card.
4. The quantity of food in each of the packets is insufficient even for a single adult.
5. As detailed in Annexure 1 some of the settlements have 150-300 families and the numbers of food packets are highly insufficient to meet the needs of an individual let alone an entire family.

We request you to announce the below measures in compliance with the [Supreme Court Order of 13th March for migrant workers](#), and extend the same to other workers without the need to produce id cards:

- Increased quantity of dry rations and oil to both PDS cardholders and non-holders alike.
- Provide health kits with masks, sanitisers, sanitary napkins, soaps along with ration kits
- Increase the quantity of food provided at Indira canteens and do away with the requirements of the App.
- Set up additional kitchens in areas not covered by Indira Canteen
- A one time wage compensation of Rs. 7000/-

SWAN will continue to support the workers in distress, but our resources are limited. Informal sector is the backbone of Karnataka's economy. As such we request you to provide immediate assistance not just in the areas we have listed but in settlements of vulnerable groups across the city.

Thank you,

On behalf of the SWAN Team

Rajendran Narayanan, Anindita Adhikari, Seema Mundoli, Anushka Kale

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Annexure 1: Specific locations across Bengaluru city from where SWAN got requests for ration

| No | BBMP Zone | BBMP Ward No. | BBMP Ward Name | Settlement Name | # Kits |
|----|------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Bangalore East | 85 | Donneakundi | Chinnappanhalli | 51 |
| 2 | Bangalore East | 85 | Donneakundi | Kundalahalli | 156 |
| 3 | Bangalore North (Addl) | 114 | Agaram | Nanjappa Garden | 64 |
| 4 | Bangalore South | 148 | Ejipura | Srinivagulu | 100 |
| 5 | Bangalore South | 151 | Koramangala | Mestriplaya | 150 |
| 6 | Bangalore North | 153 | Jaynagar | Tilak Nagar | 20 |
| 7 | Bangalore North | 157 | Gali Anjaneya Temple | Thyagarajanagara | 150 |
| 8 | Bangalore South | 169 | Byrasandra | Nakkalbande | 100 |
| 9 | Bangalore South | 173 | Jakkasandra | Venkatapura | 70 |
| 10 | Bangalore South | 173 | Jakkasandra | Jakkasandra | 80 |
| 11 | Bangalore South | 176 | BTM Layout | GD Mara | 300 |
| 12 | Bangalore South | 178 | Sarakki | Ragigudde | 105 |
| 13 | Bangalore South | 178 | Sarakki | Arasu (Corporation Colony) | 150 |
| 14 | Bangalore South | 181 | Kumaraswamy Layout | Kadrenahalli | 200 |
| 15 | Bangalore South | 190 | Mangamanapalya | Somasundarapalya | 100 |
| 16 | Bangalore South | 190 | Mangamanapalya | Bandepalya slum | 240 |
| 17 | Bangalore South | 191 | Singasandra | Kudlu gate | 20 |
| 18 | Bangalore South | 191 | Singasandra | Rayachandra (Near Central Jail) | 25 |
| 19 | Bangalore South | 191 | Singasandra | Hosapalya | 20 |
| | | | | TOTAL | 2101 |