

Oasis

Hope in the time of pandemic

INCLUSION | JUNE 2020



Dear all,

The entire world is now accustoming to this new norm and many are hit with the hard realities of poverty and hunger. During this time, we have been conducting our second phase of relief work across India with the hope to make lives a little better for those in need. Here are a few updates from our work!



Oasis India's Response to COVID-19

Bangalore Relief Work



Ration kits for 256 families in
Hallegudadhahalli, Bangalore

www.oasisindia.org

#HopeOverFear





Chennai Relief Work



Ration kits for 238 families in Kannigapuram
and Basin Bridge, Chennai

www.oasisindia.org

#HopeOverFear





Mumbai Relief Work



Ration kits for 520 families in Mumbai



Change agents supplied 5 families with ration kits in Bandra, Mumbai

www.oasisindia.org

#HopeOverFear





Punganur Relief Work - Phase 1



Ration Kits for 472 families in Punganur

www.oasisindia.org

#HopeOverFear



#MomentsOfHope

COVID-19 has crippled businesses and has devastated the lives of several marginalised people across India whose stories are that of struggle and hopelessness. Our staff have been working towards meeting the needs of many such individuals and here are those few #MomentsOfHope



During the lockdown, Meghala Manickam, our livelihood coordinator in Chennai saw a great need in the community where she lives. Identifying these people, Meghala began her relief work by connecting 231 widows in the Perumbakkam resettlement area with an individual who supplied dry ration for them.

Beginning here she felt the need to reach out to more people in the rural areas who have not received any relief support yet. In her search, she found people in Tirukazhukundram in Chengalpet district who had received relief support once but there were many in need. All of these people are dependent on agriculture for work but due to the lockdown their work has been on a hold. There were also daily wagers in that community. Meghala says, “This particular area had no electricity, no water or street lights. I was fortunate enough to connect with a friend who provided dry ration for 31 families in that area.”

Meghala then connected with some of her friends and started looking for more places with people in need. They identified Irulas, a Dravidian ethnic group who were living with no basic amenities in the most interior places of the Chengalpet District. During field visit, Meghala’s team found that this tribal group lived in damaged houses, with no proper water or food and their children were clearly malnourished. Meghala began speaking with the people and listing down their needs. Touched by their miserable state of life, she connected with Madras Christian College’s social work department through which 300 families were provided with dry ration. Also in collaboration with the Social Work Department, Meghala hopes to assist the Irula families in receiving legal entitlements, government proofs, etc which will qualify them for government schemes and benefits.

Meghala says, “My team at Oasis was my greatest support. I am happy to have been able to bring some kind of change and support for the people around my community at this time of need.”



When a lockdown is announced, what is the first place we rush to? We go to a grocery store to stock up. Have we ever thought about the state of our farmers whose businesses have been greatly affected during the lockdown?

Daniel Jabaraj, our Programme Leader - Anti-human Trafficking - South, in Bangalore was approached by Jagdish, a socially conscious industrialist employing and helping transgenders. Our team was requested to sell tomatoes for a farmer and his story was a heart wrenching one.

A farmer approached Jagdish in Ramnad, Karnataka and proceeded to give him a whole bag of tomatoes for free. As Jagdish probed, the farmer said that he had worked for years in the city and saved money to lease a land. Finally when he did lease the four acres of land to grow and sell tomatoes, the pandemic and the lockdown crippled his business. The farmer said that he was going to give away all his produce and die by suicide. He is a father of 4 children whose lives depend on his livelihood.

Jagdish approached our team at Oasis and requested to sell the farmer's produce. In collaboration with Jagdish and his connections, we were able to see tomatoes for the farmer and give him the money. A small gesture such as these can save the lives and businesses of farmers in need.

How can you help?

When you receive word about farmers or migrants struggling, you can connect them with non-profit organisations and other institutions that are providing aid at this time. A small act of help can cause a ripple effect of change.

What is the state of migrant women and children?



While many of us in the cities are grappling with our privileged obstacles, several migrants stuck in different cities are walking back home or are staying to get their salary that is due for over three months as they battle to get one meal a day. This is the reality of India today.

According to the Indian Census, 30 percent of India's population are migrants who travel within the country. All the migrants are either below the poverty line or are in poverty. During this pandemic, they have been pushed into extreme poverty as a result of many problems. In this situation, the most affected are children and women. According to a study conducted by UNICEF and Save the Children reports that the number of children living in poor households across low and middle-income countries could increase by 86 million to reach 672 million by the end of 2020 due to the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. This means that children who are attending school may drop-out due to poverty. They will face various other issues like lack of access to health care, education and nutrition. Children of migrants are also at a higher risk of being sexually abused due to them living in groups and in temporary shelters during the lockdown.

In Punganur, Andhra Pradesh, where we work, 20 percent of its rural population working in the cities as daily labourers, small scale business owners and those from the informal sector have returned back to their villages. This has led to the increase in the number of women and children being abused.

The National Commission for Women reports that during the national lockdown there has been a 50 percent rise in domestic violence cases. 32 percent of the cases are due to abuse from husband and relatives. Victims of domestic violence are at-risk of acquiring chronic disease, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse. Crime rates against children have also increased during this lockdown.

According to the Government helpline for children, they have received 92,000 calls on child abuse and violence in just 11 days. What should be a place of protection and safety is an extended captivity not just for many women but also for children trapped in the house of their abusers.

In response to this situation, our team is spreading awareness among the beneficiaries through calls and WhatsApp groups. We are also actively partnering with like-minded organisations to develop strategies in protecting children and women from violence in a time of crisis. We are committed to implementing a robust mechanism of prevention as we work towards developing a network system with the State and Civil society.

What is the future of sex workers in India post this pandemic?



This coronavirus pandemic has not only affected migrants but has also affected sex workers in Mumbai. Sex workers are also daily wagers. They depend on their everyday earnings to take care of their families and their basic needs. With the lockdown imposed strictly in India, the women and children in the brothels have been severely affected.

In Mumbai, we work in Kamathipura and Grant Road which are major red-light areas with many sex workers living there with their families. During the initial lockdown, the pimps and many sex workers who are also migrants, left for their hometowns, leaving behind the women in the brothels with nothing but the available food and the little money they had. With the business being shut down temporarily, the women are at the mercy of the relief support that is given by the government and non-profit organisations. Shraddha, our Project Manager in Kamathipura says, "In the initial stage of the lockdown, a lot of relief work was done in Kamathipura by the government and many organisations. So most women received food ration. Some did not have the official entitlements, hence they missed out on the Government

relief work there. Even today, women call and ask us for help with food and medicines. Women in the red-light areas have many medical complications as several of them are HIV positive and they depend on their medications to survive. So We get in touch with grocery stores and pharmacies which can provide the necessary for these women.”

While Kamathipura has received a lot of support, women in Grant Road have been suffering in silence. Michael Almeida, our Project Executive in Grant Road says, “Women find it difficult to pay their monthly rent and they have been asked to vacate the houses, leaving them to live on the roads of Mumbai. This also affects women with HIV whose immune system is already low. We have provided relief support for many families in the red-light area but there are many more in need.”

As women in the red-light areas are faced with never ending challenges as such, many reports suggest that red-light areas need to be closed until further notice to avoid the spread of COVID-19. According to the scholars from Yale School of Medicine and Harvard Medical School’s research done on ‘Modelling the Effect of Continued Closure of Red-Light Areas on COVID-19 Transmission in India’, it is reported that Indians are at a much lower risk of getting COVID-19 if red-light areas are kept shut as this could avoid the peak of COVID cases and deaths by 63 percent.

Having stated this, many women from the red-light areas are seeking alternative employment due to this indefinite challenge. We, at Oasis, encourage women and guide them in taking up training for other employment opportunities. Our staff are in touch with the women and children through calls and Whatsapp, enquiring their well-being. Even with the relief support provided during the pandemic, the future of sex workers and their livelihood is unclear.

GIVE.TODAY.

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