MAKAAM RELIEF WORK DURING COVID-19

Sanvedana, Washim
WHO ARE WE

- MAKAAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch): a national level network working on the issues of women farmers

- In Maharashtra focus on women farmers from suicide affected households, women sugarcane cutters and forest workers

- Currently 20 organisations working across 14 districts of Maharashtra are associated with the network

- SOPPECOM (Society for Participative Ecosystem Management) – a Pune based NGO – works as the Secretariat of MAKAAM Maharashtra (www.soppecom.org)
EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN RURAL MAHARASHTRA

To contain the spread of COVID-19, a nationwide lockdown was declared on 25th March 2020. Following the lockdown, a series of conference calls were conducted by the secretariat team at SOPPECOM with network partners to understand how the lockdown is affecting rural areas, and especially women farmers.

Issues that came up during these discussions included

- Migrant workers (cane cutters and brick kiln workers) stranded away from their homes
- Problems in harvesting rabi crops for farmers
- Inability to sell the produce due to closure of weekly markets, transportation problems and in some instances closure of procurement centres.
- Unavailability of work for labourers and closure of NREGS
- No cash inflow leading to inability to purchase even basic necessities,
- Delays in PDS supplies,
- Rocketing prices of food grains and vegetables,
- Unavailability of midday meals in anganwadis,
- Increase in cases of depression
- Increase in domestic violence
- Insufficient health care systems
- Overall fear among people due to uncertainty

MAKAAM STRATEGY DURING THE LOCKDOWN

A Considering the range of issues, MAKAAM decided to work at two levels.

- To engage with the government: We established dialogue with district governments, as well as at the state level to suggest various measures required to support affected rural groups. The response was positive both at the district as well as at the State level.

- Fund raising for immediate relief work: For the relief work we decided to focus on single women, and to support their food supply for the coming weeks.
WHY SINGLE WOMEN’S FOOD SECURITY?

- Single women are among the most vulnerable groups and a situation such as the present one worsens their plight. Moreover, MAKAAM has been working with them (especially with women farmers from farm suicide affected households) for past 2 years
- Almost all of them depend on agriculture labour to fulfil their daily needs and with the lockdown, have not been able to work for days
- Without any cash in hand they are not able to purchase nutritious food, and even ration through PDS
- Many don’t have ration cards as it is, or have not yet fulfilled the online registration process. So, they are unable to get benefits of government schemes like free ration
- While other issues like work availability, and support for agriculture will have to be tackled in the next phase, in the current situation providing them sufficient food for the coming weeks is crucial

FUNDS RAISED

We prepared an appeal, and started raising funds on 31st March. We circulated the appeals to our own contacts, as well as put it on the crowdfunding platform Milaap.

So far, the appeal has generated Rs 1,96,400

Apart from that, a grant of Rs 5,59,500 was provided by AID (Association for India’s Development) – a US based organisation that supports grassroots organisations in India for various initiatives in education, livelihoods, health, natural resources, agriculture, and women’s empowerment. (https://aidindia.org/)

Our initial target was to support 500 single women, but since we received more funds than our initial expectations, we were able to extend the support to 100 more women. We are also hoping to extend support to more women also by way of agricultural inputs since the Kharif season is coming soon.
WHAT WE ARE DOING

Our process of relief work has included:

- The funds were received by SOPPECOM, and then transferred to partner organisations, who took responsibility of procuring and distributing the food supplies
- There are 20 organisations currently carrying out this activity in 14 districts of Maharashtra: Raigad, Nandurbar, Beed, Osmanabad, Nanded, Parbhani, Latur, Hingoli, Washim, Nagpur, Amravati, Wardha, Yavatmal, and Gadchiroli
- Each organisation prepared a list of 30 single women from their work area, who are especially vulnerable
- They got permission from block administration to carry out relief work during lockdown
- Since it was not possible for women to come to their offices and collect supplies, they also took responsibility of traveling to villages and distributing the food kits
- The volunteers have been given instructions for the social distancing and other safety protocols they have to follow during the relief work, in order to protect themselves

THE FOOD KITS

- We have prepared a comprehensive list of what should be included in the food kit
- The idea is to provide some nutritious food (pulses), as well as items necessary in daily consumption which are not provided by the PDS.
- The list is a guideline, and the organisations are making changes based on food habits from their areas, availability in the local market, as well as what has been provided through PDS.
- The list includes: Wheat, jowar, rice, tur dal, chavali, matki (moth beans), pohe (flattened rice), peanuts, cooking oil, sugar, masala, tea, and soaps
- The price for each food kit varies from Rs 900 to 1200, depending on the area, and the items included.
WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARY WOMEN

Along with the lists of women, the organisations are also documenting information of these women regarding their access to ration card, Jan Dhan accounts, and job cards. Here are some facts that show vulnerability of these women:

- 527 (85%) out of 621 women are widows
- Of the total widows 192 (36%) are from suicide affected households
- Only 320 (52%) have separate ration cards in their name
- Only 104 (17%) currently have active Jan Dhan accounts
- Only 138 (22%) have MNREGA job cards

Aamhi Aamchya Arogyasathi, Gadchiroli
Aanandashray, Nanded
Paryay, Osmanabad
Prakriti, Nagpur
Prerna Gram Vikas Sanstha, Ralegaon
Srujan, Yavatmal
LATEST UPDATE

Here is the current status of the relief work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. no.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name of the organisation</th>
<th>Current status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Latur</td>
<td>Gramin Mahila Vikas Sanstha</td>
<td>Food kits provided to 29 women across 8 villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yavatmal</td>
<td>Prerna Gramvikas Sanstha, SRUJAN</td>
<td>Prerana Gramvikas Sanstha has supplied food kits to 40 women across 14 villages Srujan – food kits provided to 30 women in Zari Jamani and Kelapur tehsil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Beed</td>
<td>Jagar Pratishthan</td>
<td>Food kits supplied to 30 women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gadchiroli</td>
<td>Aamhi Aamchya Aarogyasathi</td>
<td>Procurement complete, distribution ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hingoli</td>
<td>Ugam Gramin Vikas Sanstha, Sahyadri Bahuuddeshiy Sanstha, Prerna Gramvikas Sanstha</td>
<td>Food kits supplied to 30 women by each organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nagpur</td>
<td>Prakriti</td>
<td>Procurement complete, distribution ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nanded</td>
<td>Anandashray Pratishthan, Gramin Vikas Sanstha</td>
<td>Food kits supplied to 30 women by each organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Osmanabad</td>
<td>Halo Medical Foundation, Paryay</td>
<td>Procurement complete, distribution ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Parbhani</td>
<td>Rajlaxmi, Saad Samajik Sanstha</td>
<td>Food kits supplied to 30 women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Raigad</td>
<td>Ankur</td>
<td>Distributed food kits to 35 women in Wardha, Selu and Deoli tehsil across 12 villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wardha</td>
<td>Urja Foundation</td>
<td>Distributed food kits to 42 women in Akola and Washim districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Washim</td>
<td>Samvedana</td>
<td>Yet to start the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Amravati</td>
<td>Swarajyamitra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nandurbar</td>
<td>Janarth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Click on the logo or link to follow our social media handles:

We are sharing regular updates through Twitter. Please follow us for more updates: @MahilaKisan

Volunteers distributing the food kits, are also talking with these women, documenting the problems they have. We are uploading the small video clips to MAKAAM YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCtyiYx-c8q7KH58lfOdw5DIs4P26JEbR

Please follow us on Facebook for regular updates: https://www.facebook.com/MahilaKisanAdhikaarManch/

Please follow us on Instagram for regular updates: https://www.instagram.com/mahilakisan/

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We thank you for contributing to this effort. We will send another update towards the end of this activity. And we hope that you will continue your support to MAKAAM activities in the future.