

For the Favour of Publication:

PROTECTING AND UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE

Petition for Corona pandemic response required from the Government of Karnataka: The way ahead

From the Concerned for Working Children

Ten days into the lockdown in Karnataka has brought to the fore agony, anguish, uncertainty and vulnerability of the most marginalised communities in our country, the brunt of which they began to bear a fortnight before March 23rd. They have had to face extreme humiliation to the extent of having disinfectants sprayed on them and the scale of the horror they are collectively experiencing is unprecedented. The medical crisis created by COVID-19 has taken on gigantic proportions due to the unpardonable degree of lack of foresight, empathy, planning, coordination and commitment to the wellbeing of the most vulnerable of the citizens. The overall systemic cracks are showing up as ravines and large sections of our society in the country and in our State have been irretrievably hit. In some places, the violence meted out in the name of 'protection' is alarming and has to be put an end to. Irrespective of what we do now, it is already too late, and millions are teetering on the edge of survival.

However, the situation is undoubtedly going to further worsen if the government does not step up speedily, with appropriate immediate, intermediate and long-term measures. It is clear that holistic robust responses with attention to minute details at every level are urgently required and there is not a minute to waste. In the midst of all the chaos it is important to sincerely appreciate the support of the medical and other essential service providers and to acknowledge the progressive steps taken by Karnataka. Commendable work of several officials who are firefighting and facing the brunt of the delayed actions of the Central Government are appreciated. Civil society groups are rising to the challenge, but there is still an enormous level of disconnect in their response at this point in time.

The primary onus to address the challenges lies with the government.

The way ahead:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Concerned for Working Children renowned for our work in Children's rights and political decentralisation. We have been thrice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and you can find more details about our work here: www.concernedforworkingchildren.org. We are also the Secretariat of the Grama Panchayat Hakkottaya Andolana (GPHA) which is a movement of Grama Panchayat and Grama Sabha members, with members in all 29 rural districts of Karnataka. More details are available here: <http://gpha.weebly.com/>

Taking into account our ground level experiences of the past four decades and taking into account our specific observations during the past week, in urban and rural Karnataka, we have drafted our recommendations focussed on specific constituencies which are among the most vulnerable and also belong to the economically deprived communities. They are:

- Children below the poverty line not enrolled in angawadis or government schools
- Children of migrant communities in transit
- Children enrolled in angawadis
- Children enrolled in government schools
- Working children and working adolescents
- Children in Child Care Institutions
- Migrant workers in their place of work & Urban poor
- Migrant workers in transit to their places of origin
- Workers taking part in MGNREGA
- Rural Communities
- Grama Panchayats

Recommendations:

We recommend the following in relation to each constituency. The elected grama panchayats/local governments have to be the fulcrum of local level responses – planning, implementation and monitoring as mandated by the Constitution of India and the Karnataka Grama Swaraj Act.

For each of the recommendations, there is need for the State Government to specify grievance redressal mechanisms in relation to every line department for non-compliance or failure of the duty bearer to perform their designated role.

Constituency	Situation	Immediate response	Mid-term response	Responsible Department/agency
Children below the poverty line not enrolled in angawadis or government schools	The dry-ration supplies which the government has committed to (GO: MMAE/ICD/CNP-2/Anganawadi Kendra raje/19-20) is not reaching these children as they are not counted.	These children, expectant or new mothers and adolescent girls, need to be identified and provided immediately with dry rations, drinking water and milk in prepacked one week's supply either delivered to their homes or collected by them from the anganwadi or panchayat.		Grama Panchayats/local elected governments ICDS
Children of migrant communities in transit	Children in transit with their migrant families trying to return home have no access to nutrition, mid-day meals, water and are physically at a breaking point. Children in transit are exposed to excessive heat, fatigue and highly susceptible to heat stroke, dysentery, fever and a host of other illnesses	These children, expectant or new mothers and adolescent girls, need to be provided with dry rations, drinking water and milk immediately in prepacked one week's supply either delivered to them in their place of transit. In areas there the workers and their families are congregated, periodic health checks need to be carried out and toll free health line contact details have to be provided for them to reach in times of medical emergencies		Grama Panchayats/local elected governments ICDS ICPS Health Department
Children enrolled in angawadis, women who are pregnant/delivered; adolescent girls	The dry-ration supplies which the government has committed to (GO: MMAE/ICD/CNP-2/Anganawadi Kendra raje/19-20) is not being distributed yet. Regular health check and milestone measures are affected.	These have to be provided immediately to children, expectant or new mothers and adolescent girls, prepacked one week's supply either delivered to their homes, present place of transit or collected by them from the anganwadi or panchayat. Facilities for emergency health support has to be ensured	They have to be sustained for the entire period while the angawadi remains closed. Vaccinations and other regular check-ups have to be continued for children and	Grama Panchayats/local elected governments Department of Women and Child Welfare Department of Food and Civil Supplies Health Department

<p>Special attention must be paid to children with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities. If their care-givers are in quarantine they need to be provided for with special care and empathy</p>	<p>No supply of sanitary napkins/personal hygiene materials</p> <p>It is not clear yet if there are specific provisions for it. The Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens is yet to give specific directions in this regard.</p>	<p>This supply for adolescent girls have to be ensured</p> <p>This must be done the earliest and helpline numbers to seek help in this regard must be ensured</p>	<p>expectant mothers</p>	<p>Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens</p>
<p>Children enrolled in government schools</p> <p>Special attention must be paid to children with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities. If their care-givers are</p>	<p>The dry-ration supplies which the government has committed to (Minutes of the Meeting: 20.03.2020-S.R.S. Nathan) for 21 days has not been supplied</p> <p>Children are out of schools are in homes. There is a need to keep them actively engaged.</p> <p>It is not clear yet if there are specific provisions for it. The Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens is yet to give specific directions in this regard.</p>	<p>This supply has to be ensured immediately</p> <p>Door Darshan and All India Radio to broadcast programmes for children of different age groups. Also share them on WhatsApp for sharing on mobiles.</p> <p>This must be done the earliest and helpline numbers to seek help in this regard must be ensured</p>	<p>This supply has to be continued after 21 days in all districts (not only those designated as flood affected districts) until schools reopen and hot meals supply can be resumed</p>	<p>Grama Panchayats/local elected governments</p> <p>Department of Education/Office of the Commissioner of Public Instruction</p> <p>Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens</p>

in quarantine they need to be provided for with special care				
Working children and working adolescents; children who are out of school	<p>Children out of school have to be provided dry-rations</p> <p>Adolescent children who are working in the construction section have to be provided support for the Construction Worker's Welfare Fund</p> <p>Adolescent workers are not likely to have access to the monthly payment assured to workers in the unorganised sectors.</p> <p>Children are out of work are in homes. There is a need to keep them actively engaged.</p>	<p>This provision has to be instituted by the government as it does not exist now.</p> <p>The Construction Worker Welfare Fund is yet to be activated. This must be activated and young worker should be allowed to access the allocated fund.</p> <p>One-time payment assured to workers in the unorganised sectors has not been instituted yet. This must be instituted, and adolescent workers must have access to it</p> <p>Door Darshan and All India Radio to broadcast programmes for children of different age groups. Also share them on WhatsApp for sharing on mobiles.</p>	<p>This provision has to be continued through the entire period of the lock down and also beyond.</p> <p>The Construction Worker Welfare Fund and all provisions provided under this welfare fund should be available to adolescent construction workers</p> <p>One-time payment assured to workers in the unorganised sectors has to be continued until regular work opportunities are available both for workers and adolescent workers</p> <p>When the situation improves, skill building and other inputs may be provided locally to build the capacities of these youngsters to be able to seek viable employment</p>	<p>Grama Panchayats/local elected governments Integrated Child Protection Service (ICPS)</p> <p>Department of labour</p> <p>Department of labour</p> <p>Department of Audio-Visual Publicity and Prasara Bharathi</p> <p>Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens</p>
Special attention must be paid to children with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities. If their care-givers are	It is not clear yet if there are specific provisions for it. The Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens is yet to give specific directions in this regard.	This must be done the earliest and helpline numbers to seek help in this regard must be ensured		

in quarantine they need to be provided for with special care				
Children in care institutions	<p>Many children in Child Care Institutions do not have access to support as directed in the GO KRMRSO/IEC/K-19/47/2019-20.</p> <p>Many children who were in CCI have been asked to go home – the soundness of how the decision was taken has to be reviewed.</p> <p>Some of these children also require counselling and other support. There are no systems in place now to ensure these.</p> <p>Some children whose parents are in quarantine are to be provided accommodation by State. Not clear how many such children there are and what the provisions are to provide for the physical and emotional wellbeing of those children</p> <p>Children are out of schools are in homes. There is a need to keep them actively engaged.</p>	<p>The provisions explained in the GO have to be ensured</p> <p>This is indicative of the number of children who did not required to stay in the CCI. There must be follow up on the wellbeing of the children who have been sent home. If they are not safe, there must systems to provide protection to them in their home locations</p> <p>A system to receive updates regarding wellbeing of children in CCI has to be set up. Follow up on counselling either at the CII or in their homes have to be looked into and provided for</p> <p>Some CCIs have offered this space, but due diligence has to be carried out to ensure the fitness of these institutions. The Health Department is supposed to provide medical assistance to these children. The system is yet to be functional.</p> <p>Government education department can develop simple worksheets to be reached to children at home.</p>	<p>Some of these good practices have to be ensured up to end of the crises period and beyond</p> <p>It must be reviewed why these children were sent home. If they had sufficient support at home, then the officials are answerable why they had been retained in the CCIs in the first place!</p> <p>This system has to be continued even after the crisis period is over</p>	<p>Grama Panchayats/local elected governments</p> <p>Integrated Child Protection Service (ICPS)</p> <p>Health Department</p> <p>Health Department</p> <p>ICPS</p> <p>Department of Education</p>

		Door Darshan and All India Radio to broadcast programmes for children of different age groups. Also share them on WhatsApp for sharing on mobiles.		Department of Audio-Visual Publicity and Prachara Bharathi
Migrant workers in their place of work and Urban poor	<p>The workers have no work or wages. The GO (No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) is about mitigating economic hardships and providing for the migrant workers and urban poor – the systems to do so are presently gravely inadequate.</p> <p>They have no access to food or grains. They are dependent on the civil society donations – such donations are not guaranteed and are presently not covering even a small fraction of the number of citizens who do not have access to food.</p> <p>Some of them do have ration cards but they are in the villages and have been used by the families remaining in the villages.</p> <p>There is a severe lack of supply of food grains and essential commodities due to lockdown of state boundaries and restricted inner state movement. The poor are the worst hit as they have no reserves of any kind and are struggling to survive.</p> <p>They have no money to pay the rents of the places they are staying in. This has</p>	<p>One-time payment assured to all workers – to be immediately ensured. This should not be subject to any documentation requirement</p> <p>The Construction Worker Welfare Fund is yet to be activated. This must be activated immediately</p> <p>Availability of food and health support to the workers communities has to be made the responsibility of the local elected governments. Cooking Gas to be provided to all, irrespective of their enrolment in the Ujwala Scheme or not.</p> <p>They have to have access to PDS irrespective of whether they have the ration cards or not.</p> <p>The guidelines related to transportation of essential commodities have to be streamlined and the different state governments and district officials have to work in collaboration to ensure citizens are not led into food-riots and violence.</p> <p>The private landowners who have hired out staying premises to workers</p>	<p>This should be continued until job stability of the individual family is ensured.</p> <p>The benefits of the Welfare Fund to continue</p> <p>This support has to continue until the earning capacity of the family is re-established</p> <p>This support has to continue until the earning capacity of</p>	<p>Local elected governments/representatives</p> <p>In collaboration with the concerned department set up for the specific service</p> <p>Overseen by the DCs of each District</p>

	<p>been prescribed in the GO dated (No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A))</p> <p>The workers are scared about the future, emotionally highly vulnerable and raring to go back 'home'. They feel they if they reach home, there is at least some security, especially if they become unwell.</p> <p>The insecurity faced by these communities is aggravated by the hostility, social stigmatisation and discrimination they face. There is a lot of pressure on them to 'get out'.</p> <p>Impossible to practise physical distancing in their places of stay and</p> <p>No access to basic facilities including sanitary napkins and personal hygiene materials.</p>	<p>should be exempt them from paying rents</p> <p>Senior officials should make an effort to personally assure member of the migrant communities in their jurisdiction about providing them food, water, health care and other required support until the crisis passes.</p> <p>Such instances of overt or implied hostility and discrimination must be swiftly acted upon and the perpetrators have to be punished stringently to send out a clear message to the community at large that such behaviour is unacceptable and will warrant action.</p> <p>Where-ever possible, alternate places of stay can be identified and communities may be assisted to shift, to ensure health.</p> <p>Where that is not possible, guidance to be given to the communities to find best possible to ways to remain as safe as possible.</p> <p>For the communities provide basic necessity kits including soaps and other hygiene related supplies, for each family</p> <p>These may also be supplied along with PDS services to every single family –</p>	<p>the family is re-established</p>	
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	<p>On the streets and in the communities there are a large number of animals and birds which are going without food right now and they must be cared for.</p>	<p>whether or not they have the Ration Card or not.</p> <p>These animals and birds need to be cared for and arrangements have to be made to feed them, this can also be done with support from civil society, by giving out a public call for them to care for the animals and birds in their respective localities.</p>		
<p>Migrant workers in transit to their places of origin</p>	<p>There is a crisis of huge proportion with workers trying their best to reach back to their homes. The GO (No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A)) is about mitigating economic hardships and providing for the migrant workers and urban poor – the systems to do so are presently gravely inadequate.</p> <p>In their present locations of stay, they lack safe shelter, water, sanitation, fuel to cook and access to medical services.</p> <p>There is a severe paucity of Information that provides assistance and guidance to the communities. Also there are no avenues for them to bring up their concerns including seeking help, food supplies and support during medical or other emergencies.</p>	<p>There is need to provide them with required services and tangible support to stay in their place of work for in the present time (as described above) and to bring them back to their places of stay</p> <p>These services must include safe shelter space (in their place of stay or in new locations), safe water, effective sanitation, access to good fuel, groceries (or uninterrupted supply of hot meals) and medical services. These services may be mobile and on call.</p> <p>Information centers have to be set up in central locations and important announcements need to be made through mobile centers – reaching out to all areas to ensure no community is left out. These vans can also maintain a regular route and stop in some specific locations so that people can</p>		<p>DCs – in relation to inter District Migration</p> <p>Local elected governments/representatives</p> <p>In collaboration with the concerned department set up for the specific service</p>

	<p>When found in transit, they are being treated very harshly by the police, and abused and cursed. In some states, disinfectants are being sprayed on them which is humiliating beyond belief.</p> <p>People in transit are facing enormous hardships along the way, they include elderly, women, children and those who are physically and emotionally challenged.</p> <p>For inter district transit, there are hurdles in place and stand-offs between districts - causing large numbers of people stranded in district boarders</p> <p>For interstate transit, there are hurdles</p>	<p>also have an avenue to share their concerns and requirements.</p> <p>There have to be toll free numbers to call in case of medical emergencies.</p> <p>The anxiety and the concerns of these communities have to be understood in context. While stopping them, to respect their dignity and to provide them in suggestions and support. Police cannot be allowed to handle them aggressively and be abusive to them. While the discussions are on, they need to be provided with food, water and shelter. For longer transit near tolls, they also need shelter and places to stay.</p> <p>There is need to provide food and shelter to them along the way in designated places. The State can request for civil society and public support to provide these within district jurisdiction so that the challenge can be addressed in a decentralised manner.</p> <p>The DCs of the respective districts have to intervene humanely and provide the best possible solution be it providing safe transit to the place of work or to place of origin depending on the given situation.</p> <p>The Chief Ministers of the respective</p>		<p>Chief Ministers, for interstate</p>
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	in place and stand-offs between states - causing large numbers of people stranded in state borders	States have to intervene humanely and provide the best possible solution be it providing safe transit to the place of work or to place of origin depending on the given situation.		Migration
Workers taking part in MGNREGA	All MGNREGA work has been stopped. Initially because there was an understanding that during the lock down no work is allowed. Now there is a GO that permits it but there appears to be concerns about safety during the work. Also because of the back wages that are due, up to about six months in some situations, there may be reluctance to come to work now.	<p>Back wages of MGNREGA have to be paid by the Centre immediately. The advance payment for MGNREGA work to be paid to the workers and Udyoga Mitras has to be ensured. The new wage revision has to be ensured.</p> <p>All information related to MGNREGA payments to be informed to Panchayats for their records and follow up where required.</p> <p>As physical distance requirements have now been imposed, work that requires large teams to work together, are not feasible. However, other jobs related to agriculture, drainage, sanitisation etc which require small teams or individual workers should be identified and executed.</p> <p>The work guidelines of maintaining physical distances between workers, provisions of sanitisation, food, clean drinking water and such other precautions and facilities have to be adhered to and ensured. .</p>	As very large numbers of community members who had migrated for work have returned back to their villages of origin, the Panchayats have to be provided with bulk of the funds for long term employment generation in the villages and MGNREGA funds have to be directed to the Panchayats	<p>Local elected governments/representatives</p> <p>Labour Department</p>
Rural Communities	The Distribution of Free Rations for two months is not made available yet. In some the rations for the month of March have not yet been distributed.	The backlog of rations have to be reached to all Panchayats and the two month free rations have to be disbursed urgently.	The supply of free rations and all other facilities have to be continued until economic stability of the community is	Panchayats with support from the line departments responsible for providing specific services

	<p>Provisions of basic medical facilities are not ensured, including face masks (where they may be required).</p> <p>There is also a lack of clear understanding regarding what 'social distancing' entails.</p> <p>In some situations, the people undergoing quarantine are not provided adequate support. In some they are also facing subtle or overt ostracization</p> <p>In some communities, workers from other states are residing. In some Panchayats, they are being cared for and provided for to stay on. In some the village members are raising personal donations to take care of the migrant communities or the very poor who do not have their ration cards.</p> <p>Many animals and birds in domestic care and on the streets do not have access to food or fodder.</p>	<p>Medical supplies including masks have to be provided, with very clear instructions about when the use of masks is required.</p> <p>Clear messaging in communities and use of easily understandable IEC materials to be shared within the communities</p> <p>There is a need to identify volunteers in the communities who can assist specific families to cope with their quarantine period including access to food and other supplies. Efforts to ensure there is no ostracisation of the affected persons or those who are quarantined.</p> <p>Such practises need to be highlighted and appreciated in public. So that these become the norm, not the exceptions. The Grama Panchayat has to be provided support by the RDPR to ensure food and other supplies for these communities</p> <p>Food grains and fodder required by domestic animals as well as those which are on the streets have to be provided for by the local governments. Support of civil society may be requested for as well.</p>	reached	
Grama Panchayats	In most places the Panchayats have set	The Task Forces have to be set up in all	These should continue	Department of RDPR

	<p>up the Task Forces. In some however, they have not received the revised GO (GRAAP 86 UKHYO 2019) regarding the composition of the Task Forces including special invitees. However, in some the Task Forces are not even set up yet.</p> <p>According to the Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, the Panchayats have to be provided discretionary funds to respond to disasters within their jurisdiction. This has not been done now.</p> <p>At present the Panchayats are involved in awareness generation and in getting the people returning to villages from other cities/states/countries to undergo a basic medical test.</p> <p>They do not have access to updated information about the latest GOs, guidelines etc</p> <p>Right now officials are reporting directly to their own departments but not to the Panchayats in most cases, even though the Panchayats are the local governments in charge. This is</p>	<p>Panchayats, with active involvement of all officials to ensure coordinated actions</p> <p>The Panchayats must be provided the discretionary funds without further delay.</p> <p>Their role in relation to awareness generation has to be streamlined as many of them do not have access to accurate information or support to ensure certain precautions (for example physical distancing) which they are recommending in awareness generation.</p> <p>Reaching all the GOs that are relevant to them is very important to enable them to demand for services and programmes that the State and Centre have committed to, to ensure the wellbeing of their communities.</p> <p>All officials must be accountable to the local governments in whose jurisdiction they function.</p>	<p>This must continue as mandated in the Grama Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act</p>	
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	<p>mandated in the Grama Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act</p> <p>They require inputs about good practises from other Panchayats so that they can make the best use of the teams and resources within their communities</p> <p>The Panchayat members are not aware of the elements in the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyana Yojana (https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/pradhan-mantri-garib-kalyan-yojana-1585229963-1) and how it translates in terms of implementation.</p> <p>In few Panchayats, elected Panchayat members belonging to SC and ST communities are not being included in Task Force Meeting. This is unacceptable.</p> <p>Going by past experiences, some communities (such as minorities, SC and ST) are likely to be either ignored and neglected in the response of the Panchayat, to the extent of not even creating awareness.</p> <p>In some Panchayats, mask usage is made compulsory and the police are even carrying out lathi charge against those who are stepping out without masks.</p>	<p>The RDPR department and Prasara Bharathi can bring together good practices for sharing on larger platforms for mutual learning and support</p> <p>The details of the Gareeb Kaylan Jojana have to be made available to each Panchayat with timelines for fund distribution from the Centre and the State allocations.</p> <p>Such matters must be recognised as violation of Constitution and action must be taken immediately under those carrying out such discriminatory practices.</p> <p>This has to be closely monitored and acted upon speedily as violation of the Constitution. Action must be taken against those carrying out such discriminatory practices.</p> <p>Mask usage is prescribed only to those who are affected by Covid 19; those who have cough and cold and those who are caring for persons affected by Covid -19. The Police and communities</p>		
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		must be made aware that masks cannot be made compulsory and if that is done, it will create a shortage for those who require the mask. It will also give a false sense of security to those who are using the mask and they are likely to not follow other sanitisation precautions.		
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For more details:

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We thank you for your support to the most marginalised communities:

Kavita Ratna

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