



**Sampark Project:
COVID 19 Relief for Migrant Workers and Their Families
in the Construction Sector in Bangalore**

1. Background of Sampark

Sampark is an Indian based, non-profit, non-governmental organization, with 28 years' experience of successful developmental initiatives throughout India. Since the past 12 years, Sampark has worked on the issues of migrant workers in urban Bangalore with a special focus on women and children. Sampark works towards enhancing the voice of these workers and with the philosophy that all women, men and children have the basic human rights to dignity and self-determination, and that all people should have the opportunity and choice to enhance their own potential and well-being. Sampark works with those communities which are most vulnerable in terms of poverty and discrimination and are unreached.

2. The COVID-19 Context

In Bangalore, currently there are more than 400,000 migrant construction workers from other states Odisha, Rajasthan, Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh need our support.

In the context of Coronavirus, currently the migrant workers face several new challenges as a result of the government imposed nationwide lockdown to fight the pandemic. The impact of the lockdown is more pronounced for some sections of the society than the others. Most of the migrant workers in the big cities, working in low paying jobs and earning on a daily wage basis, have been amongst those who are left jobless, hungry and struggling to make ends meet. A sudden halt in the flow of income has resulted in a severe shortage of money to sustain themselves in the big cities since their savings is insufficient to meet contingency needs.

For over three weeks (since the government declared nation-wide lockdown since March 25, 2020) the workers have not earned any income as all construction-related work has been halted. These workers have run out of whatever little savings they have and are currently not able to have even one meal a day. They need pay to buy potable water and are also being pressurised to pay rent. These additional expenses would not be necessary if they could return to their villages.

Often stigmatised as potential 'virus-carriers', they're unsure if they will even be allowed to enter their home villages if they were to attempt a return. Some of the migrant workers, especially the ones from North India, stay in Bangalore alone while their families are in their villages. In most of the cases, these workers are the sole providers of their families. Given the current lockdown, they are neither able to provide nor able to go back to their families. The children are out of school and the women are out of work as well. This has resulted in a lot of stress and trauma for them.

3. The Current and Emerging Needs

Since the onset of the Coronavirus crisis in early March, Sampark has created awareness about the methods to prevent the COVID 19 and provided access to food and sanitation products to workers in Bangalore. The background to the current COVID Relief project is as follows:

Migrant construction workers are under a total lockdown in the labour colonies and are unable to access any support from either the government agencies like the Bangalore City Municipal Corporation (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) or the non-government organisations (NGOs) who are involved in the distribution of relief kits (dry ration) or cooked food. The team also learned that during the first week of the lockdown, the builders supported the workers by giving them advances to buy grocery. However, this support withered after the first week. The builders themselves have been impacted as their cashflow has stopped due to a halt in the sale of houses due to the lockdown. Moreover, as per reports, the construction industry is likely to take longer to recover from the current crisis, even when the lockdown is lifted. The central government has estimated that real estate sector is suffering a loss to the tune of Rs. 100,000 crores (USD 13 billion). Along with a lack of cash in hand, the migrant workers also face isolation as they are not socially networked in Bangalore.

Although official schemes for food support have been pronounced, they do not reach migrant workers, whose state entitlements do not operate outside their home states, leaving them disenfranchised as inter-state migrants. Sampark continues to make efforts towards providing these vulnerable people a voice. This creates a dire need for support from an NGO.

Sampark has direct access to migrant workers in 40 sites through its long-term project 'Empowerment of Migrant Workers for the Sustainable Livelihoods at Destination in Bangalore' project. These workers are either contracted by a builder or engage in freelance construction work. Sampark also has access to several other needy and vulnerable migrant workers, through network of volunteers and small organisations who have identified them and reached out to Sampark for support. Sampark has also identified the specific issues and needs of female workers. Thus, Sampark has identified 4,000 such workers and their families (12,000 people) who have been impacted by the nation-wide lockdown and wants to provide assistance to them.

4. The Proposed Project

Due to the continual spreading of COVID 19, the Government of India has extended the nation-wide lockdown to May 3, 2020. **Moreover, given the current economic situation, the construction industry is unlikely to recover for a long time impacting the income of these workers.**

Given this background, Sampark plans to provide as much humanitarian assistance as possible to help these workers sail through this crisis. Thus, Sampark plans to distribute COVID 19 relief kits with essential provisions to 4,000 workers and their families, to prevent hunger and destitution during the COVID 19 lockdown period when workers cannot earn or return to their villages. It will provide nutrition to women and children too, reaching 12,000 persons. The details of the items included in each kit is mentioned in Table 1. Worker leaders will monitor the distribution protocol. Sampark will work to gain official entitlements for the migrant workers. It will prevent social unrest arising from the desperation of the workers.

4.1 The Objectives

The main objectives of the projects are as follows:

- Provide access to food and sanitation products by providing 4,000 COVID 19 relief kits to 12,000¹ for workers who are working with builders and workers staying in (private lands) non- builders' sites.
- Provide nutritious cooked food to up to 6,000 workers in cases where they do not have food even for one day
- Create awareness about methods to prevent the spread of the Novel Coronavirus

4.2 The Implementation

This project will provide provisions for a family of 3 members for 3 months. Each kit will provide provisions to last for a week, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Details about materials in the COVID 19 relief kit

Sl. No	Name of the Item	Quantity
1	Rice	12 Kgs
2	Pulses	2 Kgs
3	Edible oil	2 liters
4	Sugar	1 Kg
5	Salt	1 Kg
6	Turmeric powder	100 grams
7	Chilli powder	200 grams
8	Clothes washing detergent	2 pieces
9	Bath soap	2 pieces
10	Toothpaste	100 grams

In addition, those workers who do not have food for even one day, Sampark will provide cooked food too. The project will request food from the government so that after two or three weeks, government can begin to support them.

Frontline workers will provide awareness about COVID19, its prevention and where to seek help in case someone shows symptoms.

Sampark has developed several protocols during the implementation of relief activities, as follows:

- **Organizational preparation for relief work.** Soon after the crisis started, Sampark has obtained permission from the police and the Municipal Corporation for its workers and food vehicles to move around the city during the lockdown.
- **Ensuring the supply chain:** Sampark has identified 6 wholesale dealers who can supply the required grocery and sanitation products needed to prepare the COVID 19 relief kits.

¹ One relief kit covers 1 family with 3 members (4,000x3=12,000 workers)

- **Preparing individual family kits:** Once the wholesale material is received in Sampark office, the Sampark team packs the kits, each kit sufficient for one family, or a group of 3 single men. These are then loaded on to the trucks for taking to workers' sites.
- **Leveraging support from the builders:** Sampark has negotiated with the builders, with whom it has been working, and received permission to utilize the space and their workers to pack relief kits and distribute it in their labour settlements. This support helps the Sampark team to speed up the process of packing and distribution of relief kits and reach a greater number of workers in a shorter period which is necessary during this lockdown situation. It also reduced the time and cost spent on transporting the kits from the place of packaging to respective labour colonies.

Sampark has developed a simple protocol for its team that is engaged in packing and delivering the kits. Masks are used by all those who are involved with packing of the relief kits, and those who distribute them. The workers make queues with 1-2 meters of distance between them, and the distribution is completed before sunset, so that the Sampark team can return home before 8 pm. The team has been working very hard, and the collaboration of the team with builders, vendors, local labour leaders and the workers has been excellent, making the work possible without mobbing and endangering the workers. Protective equipment like suits will be ordered as the team continues with its relief efforts, as greater protection has become essential. In addition, Sampark will make a provision for medical support in case any of the project team members contracts COVID 19 despite all precautions. The current insurance cover of the team is limited to treatment in government hospitals and at a limited cost. In case anyone falls ill, they are likely to need support for medical and related expenses.

4.3 The Expected Impact

The project is expected to impact 12,000 persons, women, men and children, and prevent them from hunger and under-nutrition, and enable them to stay safe in the lockdown period. The workers will be better informed about the disease and its prevention and will actively take measures to protect themselves. The measures taken will help them gain access to official support from the government agencies in due course. It will help them deal with the initial impact during this lockdown, strengthen the workers and their union, to coordinate relief work and gain a voice to demand their human rights as inter-state migrants. This project will provide social protection till workers regain livelihoods.

5. The Project Budget

A total amount of USD 909,900 is required to reach out to 4,000 workers and their families (12,000 persons) in order to provide them COVID 19 relief kits as well as cooked food wherever essential. The break-up of the total budget is available in Table 3.

Table 3: The Budget Details

Cost Particulars	Per unit Cost (USD)	No. of units required (for 3 months)	Total cost incurred for 3 months (USD)
Ration and sanitation products kit per family per week	15	4,000 families	720,000
Finance transport for relief provisions for 3 days	100	30	3,000
Costs of youth for monitoring and data base maintenance for a month	200	3 months	600
PPE for 70 relief workers of Sampark per month	500	3 months	1,500
Nutritious cooked food for 250 workers per day	250	30 days for 6,000 workers	180,000
Medical Cost of 70 relief workers per month	600	3 months	1,800
Cost associated for core Sampark team member engaged with relief work	1000	3 months	3,000
Total			909,900

The project is expected to be implemented from April to October 2020. It is expected that if the lockdown is partially lifted in May, some workers may return to their villages, so some of the pressure for food and rations will reduce. However, many workers may remain in Bangalore, and given the slowdown in the construction industry, may continue to need food support for longer. As in all relief related projects, the situation will need continuous monitoring and adaptation to ensure hunger and undernutrition is avoided at all costs, for the 12,000 persons to be covered under this project.

Smita Premchander,
Secretary, Sampark.
April 19, 2020