

## Press Release

### **COVID-19 pandemic actions are failing children under six years of migrant families**

*Mobile Creches is tracking close to 20,000 migrant households affected by the lockdown implemented due to the COVID 19 pandemic, in 12 cities across 9 states and union territories of India. Majority of these families have young children stranded with them in these very distressing and uncertain times.*

**Delhi:** In its report released on 7th April, ILO estimates 40 crore unorganised sector workers will be pushed deeper into poverty due to the lockdown and containment plans of the government. This is further expected to impact the health, nutrition, development, and future possibilities of estimated 5.6 crore children under six years of age. There are painful visuals of little children walking besides their parents as hundreds and thousands of migrant workers tried walking back to their villages immediately after the lockdown was announced by government on 25th March.

During this period, Mobile Creches (MC), a fifty one year old organisation working for the rights of vulnerable young children under the age of six years, for quality Early Childhood Development, has continued to remain connected to the poor young children and their migrant working parents across construction sites and urban slums.

In a rapid assessment conducted by NGO Jan Sahas, in April 2020, it is learnt that forty two percent of the daily wage workers interviewed, did not have food rations to last beyond a day. In the construction industry that contributes nearly nine percent to the country's GDP, the report pointed out that ninety four percent of the construction workers interviewed were not registered, ruling out the possibility of them benefitting from the cash benefits announced by state governments from the Building and Construction Workers Cess Funds.

MC and its network of local NGOs are in contact with these migrant families to track their health and safety, and provide food to these families. They are directing the support to families of women working as construction labour, domestic workers, waste pickers, street vendors, daily wagers, and other informal occupations, who have lost their livelihoods and stare at an uncertain future. Since the nationwide lockdown was announced, they have ensured food for basic survival to more than 14,500 households across 12 cities in nine states and union territories.

In its COVID-19 emergency relief response, governments are not adequately addressing the unique needs of young children such as their need for care, balanced nutrition, health and hygiene and early learning has taken a backseat. A recent study (February 2020) commissioned by Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) has found that more than fifty percent households in Delhi's JJ clusters still practice open defecation due to lack of toilet facilities. When twenty seven percent of Delhi's under 5 children are stunted (low height for age) and nearly sixty percent children are anaemic (NHFS IV), the risks of increasing malnutrition levels is very high as a result of increased hunger amongst children during the pandemic. In the food distribution packets, MC has included additional protein supplements like sattu, soya granules, and fresh milk. However, government has to address the risk of malnutrition burden by implementing the Supreme Court order of 18th March that "the schemes for providing nutritious food to the children and nursing and lactating mothers are not adversely affected" during the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19.

Kiran's two year old toddler has been attending the Naraina Vihar crèche run by MC. She works as a domestic worker in the neighbourhood and is the only earning member in her family of four. Since the announcement of the nationwide lockdown, she has been unable to collect her last month's wages from the homes she worked in, and is left with no money to buy groceries to sustain her family. "I don't have a ration card so the shopkeeper will not give me atta and dal. The ration I received from you will help me feed both my children", says Kiran.

**Sumitra Mishra, executive director, MC said:** "As India responds to the humanitarian crisis facing its people, the first responsibility of MC has been to respond to the immediate hunger and survival needs of its communities. Thousands of people, including young children are living across construction sites, labour camps, temporary shelters, urban slums without access to basic food, health, safety and protection systems. Our community teams have been the real heroes, individually tracking families and ensuring they have food provisions through the ration shops or community kitchens set up by the government. For unregistered workers and those who are just not able to access free rations from PDS shops, MC and its many partners are stepping forward to meet food and other survival requirements."

## Notes to editors

Mobile Creches (MC), since its inception in 1969, works with young children of women working as construction workers, domestic helps, waste pickers, street vendors, and other types of vulnerable daily wage work, through its crèche and daycare centres.

The organisation has always stepped up as a first responder in the times of crisis, like the Delhi riots 1984, displacement during Asiad games in 1980s, or more recently during the Commonwealth Games 2010, Delhi riots 2020, and in the recent Coronavirus pandemic crisis, supporting the most vulnerable families and their young children.

- Crèche teams call each family daily to ensure children are safe, healthy and fed. Families are safe, staying at their locations and have enough food to survive on a day-to-day basis.
- Frontline teams are supporting community leaders/ construction site in-charges to map households in the area, track supplies, and inform about immediate food requirements.
- Team leaders are ensuring correct information about precautions, prevention against coronavirus infections are communicated daily through frontline teams to individual families, and checking on practices.
- Team leaders are communicating government announcements about lockdown, food, shelter, testing, helplines, community kitchen and similar messages that are relevant for each city/area, to the frontline teams for onwards awareness creation.
- MC is coordinating with local organisations, youth clubs, *kirana* stores, government teams to expedite linking dry ration / cooked food to most needy communities on the ground.
- MC is collaborating with partners who run crèches at construction and urban poor sites across India, offering resources, and solidarity.

MC has been able to provide relief through e-mail/WhatsApp groups with government, networks, CSOs – local, state administration, builder partners, Zomato Feeding India and MC direct intervention.



Distributed dry food items to 350 families of daily wagers in Haiderpur,, Delhi with help of local SHO.

Dry ration and basic amenities were distributed for about 60 families at Delhi Narela A4 construction site with the aid of Zomato Feeding India  
Nearly 250 families of construction site workers were provided with ration at Narela Pocket-13 construction site with the cooperation of Zomato Feeding India.



Nearly 250 families of construction site workers received dry ration and survival kit at Bawana, Delhi construction site.

Not less than 300 families of construction site workers received immediate relief at M3M construction site, Gurgaon.

Dry ration was distributed in the urban slum area at Seemapuri, Delhi to families whose income are mostly depended upon woman working as street vendor and domestic workers.

PS: Photo Captions are from Left to Right

For images visit: [https://mobilecreches-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/khusnuma\\_p\\_mobilecreches\\_org/EjNXHwRpV2NGhjrAaAkGdmIBhRv0xijtETeaUHLu36TjA?e=aDUW6M](https://mobilecreches-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/khusnuma_p_mobilecreches_org/EjNXHwRpV2NGhjrAaAkGdmIBhRv0xijtETeaUHLu36TjA?e=aDUW6M)

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