

The Social Work pledge as adopted by National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI) calls for every Social Worker to “Walk with the marginalised and engage people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing”.

The team named *Ek Prayas* is operating from *Muzaffarpur, Bihar (India)*. The team comprises of eight members, of which three are undergraduates, two pursuing post-graduation and the other are two doing schooling.

Days after the Prime Minister called for a nation-wide lockdown (on 25th March) news of daily wage labourers and homeless people finding it difficult to have their needs met started pouring in. It was at this point that we started planning an intervention to help such groups meet their daily needs. Of the nine strategies of crisis intervention outlined by *Myer and James (2005)* one calls for providing support, wherein the short term strategy is to help the client group with the long term goal being to empower. Being an emergency situation we decided to work on the short term approach. Difficult times call for collection action and this is precisely what we banked upon. The idea was to utilise the family and friend’s circle (*Social Capital*) to collect finance and utilise it to buy ration for the target groups. The target group was selected based on the degree of vulnerability. Through various visual and print media we got to know about the most vulnerable groups: Daily Wage Labourers, Rickshaw pullers and homeless. A packet of ration was prepared containing the following-

1. Rice- 5 kg
2. Chana Dal- 1 kg
3. Salt- ½ kg
4. Turmeric powder- 50 gm
5. Biscuit-1 packet
6. Dettol soap-1 piece

While rice along with Chana Dal, salt and turmeric powder makes for a complete meal (for a family of four the ration provided can last for 4 days) Dettol soap was provided to maintain hygiene. The team was involved in making packets from 1st April. Distribution began from the next day. Initially the target group was rickshaw pullers and daily wage labourers because they are most affected by the complete lockdown. Locations for distribution were identified a day before. The team went to locations, enquired about daily wage labourers and then called a family member from each household to hand over the ration. Since most of the rickshaw pullers are still on road to earn their living they were provided packets while they were on road. The homeless were identified while the team was distributing ration. They were either elderly or person with disability. While distributing the team was

equipped with masks and maintained social distancing. By 6th April we had distributed 300 packets to the targeted groups. We plan to distribute more in the coming days. During the entire work the team was guided by two Trainee Social Workers who are pursuing Masters in Social Work from the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi. Their experience of working during the Delhi Riots proved very effective in identifying the right family and designing the process of distribution.

There were news (in the local media) of police personnel not getting access to drinking water during their daily duty. On the first day (1st April) the team decided to provide drinking water to all the police personnel working in the area. On police personnel's need the team then provided tea. Next day the team provided them squash. The motive was to pay respect to those front line workers who are continuously working for our safety during this pandemic.

The density of the target locations presented challenges for the team. Each time the team went for distribution, people came running for taking ration. This prevented us from spreading awareness about COVID-19. The team plans to work upon such challenges in future.

Ayush Poddar and Piyush Poddar

Trainee Social Worker at Department of Social Work, University of Delhi (India)

poddar306@gmail.com