

6 April 2020

To,

The Chief Secretary,  
Government of Telangana,  
Hyderabad.

Sub: GHMC's new strictures restraining food and ration delivery by private parties & civil society groups – Widespread hunger in the city - Need for Urgent Review – Reg

Sir,

We the undersigned civil society groups, relief workers and social activists, working under the broad umbrella of **Advocacy COVID 19 Lockdown Group**, are surprised and concerned about the overnight decision of GHMC, restraining all relief supply by individuals and social organizations and warning of legal action, if any one does so, without permission of the Government. According to news reports (Links below), the GHMC has asked all donors to deposit their supplies with a centralized pool to be supervised by Ms. Priyanka, Addl. Commissioner and is deputing 10 DCM vans for collection / delivery of these supplies.

While we completely value the concern that 'social distancing' must be maintained during relief distribution and also acknowledge that there have been some sporadic instances of this caution not having been practiced with due care, we would also wish to bring to your notice a few basic facts about the current situation.

1. A lot of individuals, groups and organizations are already working with the GHMC, the local police and the government in supplying cooked food and dry rations to the needy across the GHMC. DGP of Telangana had on fact given a call to interested individuals and community organisations to input their details so that the delivery could be efficient and effective. Many of us have been working with officials at the local and higher level during the Lockdown period.
2. With a few exceptions, most independent relief initiatives in the GHMC limits have been meticulously following social distancing norms in the past 10 days of lockdown and have reached out to thousands of stranded workers and families in distress.
3. The scale of hunger and need / demand for both cooked food and rations is over-whelming amongst the huge migrant and indigent population in the twin cities and it would not be possible for the GHMC alone to undertake this, without a robust plan & resources and without active support from civil society groups, especially in the interim. Our group has got requests from atleast 17,000 people and the requests are still pouring in.

While we agree that the government must lead the relief initiatives with due regard to the COVID 19 concerns, such overnight decisions might result in stopping distress-support to the hungry population and is certainly not in the interest of the thousands of people currently dependent on such initiatives. We fear that this might further create a difficult (and avoidable) law and order situation that needs to be avoided at this juncture. Considering the diverse and massive needs of people across the cities, it seems to us that 10 vans would barely be sufficient to ferry food to all the nooks and corners of the sprawling city.

We urge you to kindly consider the following proposals from our Advocacy COVID 19 Lockdown Group and to make necessary modifications to the GHMC strictures issued yesterday with immediate effect

(a) GHMC should facilitate and network with the several independent civil society initiatives to provide relief to the people in distress, with due regard to social distancing;

(b) the GHMC staff or ward member should accompany any group/individual intending to distribute more than 15 packets of grocery for the needy and for the local police should to be informed of the same.

(c) allow the GHMC to permit to networks and civil societal organisations that have been working since the lockdown to provide relief.

(d) immediately conduct a correct assessment of the numbers of migrant workers and families, and homeless and destitute; and use the information that our group has gathered regarding the migrants who are receiving food through civil society initiatives;

(e) arrange at the earliest for all the needy persons, whether migrants, homeless or destitute to be brought into the government support systems, in consultation with civil society groups which have been supporting these people.

We also write to request you to permit members of our group Advocacy COVID19 Lockdown Group distribute dry rations and cooked food, gloves and masks and bedsheets and towels.

Yours sincerely,

Anuradha K, Aman Vedika

Sajaya Kakarla, Social Activist

Ashalatha, MAKAAAM

Rubina Mazher, SAFA

Vasudha Nagaraj, Advocate  
Malini Subramanyam, Social Activist  
Padmaja Shaw, Journalist  
Samyukta, Social Activist  
Brother Vergheese, Montford Social Institute  
Sister Lissy, Domestic Workers Union  
C.Vanaja, Journalist and Social Activist  
Masood, SQ, Social Activist  
Sarath Davala, India Basic Income Network  
Satyavati Kondaveeti, Bhumika Helpline  
Ravi Kanneganti, Rythu Swarajya Vedika  
Anjaneyulu Madduluri, Action Aid  
Mazher Hussain, COVA  
Meera Sanghamitra, National Alliance of People's Movements  
Ambika AV, Activist  
Vijaya Rukmini Rao, Gramya  
Kalamani, Centre for World Solidarity  
Jeevan Kumar, Human Rights Forum  
Khalida Parveen, Amoomat Society  
Prashanthi, Deeksha Centre for Learning and Action  
Rachana Mudraboyina, Transvision  
Sujatha Surepally, Social Activist  
A.Suneetha, Anveshi RCWS

Enclosed: Newslinks: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/ghmc-threatens-action-if-food-is-distributed-without-govt-approval/articleshow/74975409.cms>

<https://www.thehansindia.com/telangana/dont-distribute-food-relief-directly-to-needy-ghmc-615543>,

Screenshot of DGP Telangana's tweet dt. 3rd April, 2020

<https://www.siasat.com/ghmc-asks-people-distribute-food-through-official-network-18690>