

7th April 2020

To
The Chief Secretary
Government of Telangana
Hyderabad

Reg: Social distancing and biometric at the PDS ration stores in the city during the COVID 19
Lockdown

Sir,

We, on behalf of the Advocacy COVID 19 Lockdown Group appreciate the efforts of the Telangana government in reaching out to the vulnerable and needy workers in the informal economy at this time, despite the shortage of personnel. We wish to bring to your notice certain facts and issues regarding the availability of rice and other necessary rations and the need for maintaining social distancing during this period. We have enclosed certain photographs for your reference.

Due to the sudden stoppage of work there is widespread uncertainty and fear about food grains among most informal sector workers who have ration cards. Many PDS shops have instituted a token system to maintain social distance and have been issuing only a few tokens per day. While this is a laudable move, many older people, patients and single women or those with small children or those who are sick are unable to do the rounds of the PDS stores. In addition, people told us that the server failures are also leading to delays. At a few places like Baghlingampally social distancing is being maintained but at many places it is not.

Given the situation, we request you to kindly consider some of our suggestions about the PDS stores in the city.

1. Publicising, through loud speakers, that the PDS rations would be given to every card holder as soon as possible. That there is no shortage of grains for people.
2. Appealing to the communities to prioritise the needs of the older people, pregnant women, those with small children and sick people.
3. Discontinuing the biometric system as it is potentially a source of infection to prevent spread of

COVID 19 virus among the community. Shifting to the verification of physical ration cards from a distance.

4. Maintaining social distancing in the queue with the help of lines or circles drawn with chalk and continuous announcements at the ration shops over a loud speaker. Community volunteers or COVID 19 volunteers could also be involved in the maintenance of social distancing.

We, the Advocacy COVID 19 Lockdown group would be happy to work with the government at the community level, wherever possible.

Thanking you,