



घर बचाओ घर बनाओ आंदोलन GHAR BACHAO GHAR BANAQ ANDOLAN



संलग्न : जन आन्दोलनों का राष्ट्रीय समन्वय	Allied with : National Alliance of People's Movements
पता : द्वारा केमिकल मजूर सभा, २९-३०, ए-विंग, हाजी हबीब बिल्डिंग, नायगांव क्रॉस रोड, दादर (पू.), मुंबई-४०००१४. Address : C/o. Chemical Mazdoor Sabha, 29-30, A-Wing, Haji Habib Bldg., Naigaon Cross Road, Dadar (E), Mumbai-400014.	Email : gbgbandolan@gmail.com Phone : 022 - 24109148 Website : www.gbgbandolan.org

Date: 12th April, 2020

To,

1. The District Collector,

Mumbai City

Mumbai City Collectorate,
Old Custom House,
Fort, Mumbai – 400001

and

2. The District Collector,
Mumbai Suburban District,
Collector Office
Mumbai Suburban District,
10th Floor, Administrative Building,
Near Chetna College, Government Colony,
Bandra (East), Mumbai – 400 051

Re : Order dated 8th April 2020 passed by the Hon'ble High Court, Bombay in Public Interest Litigation (L) No. 22 of 2020 filed by Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan & Ors.

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are representatives of Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan (GBGBA), the Petitioner No. 1 in the above matter. Vide order dated 8th April 2020, the Hon'ble High Court, Bombay permitted the Petitioners in the above matter to file representations with your goodself pointing out the areas of the district where benefits/facilities have not been provided. A copy of the said order dated 8th April 2020 is attached herewith for your reference.

Background

Complete lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 has created a situation of starvation in poor communities, who have lost their daily income and source of livelihood. In addition to this, basic amenities like water, electricity, housing, sanitation, healthcare etc. which are constitutional guarantees are not accessible to the poor communities in the situation of lockdown, either due to unaffordability or unavailability, exposing them further to the disease. Further, protective gear like PPE suits, N95 masks, gloves and medical equipment like ventilators are not available in adequate quantities, adding stress to the already stretched out public healthcare system and exposing the medical professionals and staff to

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great risk and hardship. However, this situation can be avoided with proper coordination and outreach, such that no person in the city is made to suffer.

A number of big and small organisations including GBGBA are doing relief work in the current situation of lockdown. We at GBGBA have been providing dry food ration, cooked food, protective gears and other essential items to poor and needy persons. However, it seems that even the combined efforts of voluntary organisations and government are not able to reach out to the abundant poor population of the city (which has half of its population living in slums / informal settlements) in order to provide relief. While there are gaps in the schemes introduced by the government to address issues of food and other requirements of the poor, daily wage earners and marginalized groups on account of this lockdown, there are also gaps in the implementation of the existing schemes.

Here are some issues we found that are being faced by poor persons living in slums due to the lockdown to contain COVID-19.

Food:

Though MCGM has reportedly opened more than 4,000 (to be verified) camps for homeless and migrant workers in which food and other facilities are available but there is still a huge population living in slums which is not able to afford lockdown. Due to the lockdown, people living in slums especially the daily wage earners, migrant worker, auto-rickshaw drivers, domestic helps etc. and other informal sector workers who survive on daily wages have lost their livelihood for over a month and also exhausted their meagre savings. Hence, affording as basic a necessity as food has now become impossible for them. In this lockdown one cannot expect the poor persons to spend on the basic and essential commodities and services. If the state does not provide for them, they will not be in a position to sustain this lockdown.

Ration under the Government Schemes

Free ration announced by the Central Government has still not been distributed in any of the bastis / informal settlements we have reached out to, in spite of over 2 weeks having elapsed. In any event, the free ration only includes 5 kg Rice or Whole Wheat and not any other items necessary for cooking a basic meal like cooking oil, vegetables, masala, salt, sugar, tea, milk etc. While 1 kg pulses per family for a month has been announced, the same has not been made available and in any event, 1 kg dal for the entire family for a month is highly inadequate to meet even basic nutritional requirements. Also none of the free ration schemes are available to the non-ration card holders, who are the most poor and marginalized sections, requiring state support. Also those migrant workers with ration card in other districts/regions and not in their city of work, are also deprived of benefits of the ration schemes and implementation of government directives to ration card holders to supply ration to those outside their jurisdiction. ***It is pertinent that the free ration scheme be made immediately available to all and be expanded to provide other necessary food items and include non-ration card holders.***

As far as the existing subsidised ration schemes are concerned, 'priority' ration card holders are being given ration @ Rs. 3 / kg for Rice and Rs. 2 /kg for whole wheat only. These commodities are not enough

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to cook a basic meal. Other essential items like cooking oil, vegetable, masala, salt, sugar, tea, milk etc. are unaffordable during the lockdown with loss of livelihood and hence, should also be provided by the government.

The ration at the subsidized rate is being provided to only 'priority' ration card holders. One becomes eligible for 'Priority' ration card only if he/she has an annual income of Rs.59,000/- or has a monthly income of around Rs. 4,916/-. This leaves out a large population who even after earning Rs. 15,000/- a month per family in an expensive city like Mumbai find it difficult to meet their basic requirements. This standard is not suitable in this lockdown and even otherwise.

Non-ration card holders

There is again a large number of people living in slums who do not possess ration card of any kind. They are migrant workers either living with their families or in a large group in a very small shack/ room. We have supplied dry food rations and food packets to such groups in Chembur, Govandi, Kurla, Sion, Chunabhatti, Worli, Bandra, Vile Parle, Andheri, Malad, Kandivali, Thane and Navi Mumbai, who have not had access to any of the ration schemes, in spite of their meagre means and complete loss of income, which clearly shows the existing need which is not being met. ***The government needs to provide food rations to these groups of people without ration cards or not eligible under the ration schemes on an urgent basis.***

Cooked food

In some areas, MCGM is also providing cooked food packets but not able to cover all the needy population. For example in whole of 157 part of 'L' Ward of MCGM, only 400 packets are being distributed by MCGM which has around 1500 households. By the time food comes to this area, it becomes stale. ***Cooked food which is being provided must be fresh, edible, healthy and nutritious and its supplies need to be expanded to cover all the poor and needy populations.***

Cooking fuel / LPG:

Central Government also announced that cooking gas is to be provided free of cost to 83 million women registered under Ujjwala scheme. In Mumbai majority of the women are not registered under this scheme. Several others who are registered in the scheme have not received a single gas cylinder as of yet. Cost of a gas cylinder is Rs. 780, it is a very expensive price at a time when daily wagers have lost their livelihood. We have received requests for cooking fuel from migrant workers who are unable to access or afford it, but are not in a position to meet these demands. ***Gas cylinders and cooking fuel must be given free of cost, irrespective of registration in the Ujjwala schemes and must also be reached to those eligible under the Ujjwala scheme.***

All in all in this lockdown, without proper support, poor families will not able to afford a cook basic two time meals. Only alternative left is to provide them cooked free food so as to ensure that nobody sleep hungry in this lockdown. While the government is providing cooked food to some areas in Mumbai city, it

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is only meeting a minuscule fraction of the demand. We have also been providing cooked food in some areas in Ambujwadi, Chandivali, Mahul etc. but to meet the current needs, **the government will need to step in and upscale the cooked food supplies to the communities that need it.**

A possible Solution to sustain efforts:

Community Kitchen: reaching out to each household seems impossible in this time of social distancing. One practical and feasible solution is to set up of community kitchen street-wise in each slum community with the help of community members. **Dry food rations, vegetables and other food items, cooking fuel etc. can be made available by the government for the purpose of the community kitchen.**

Here is the list of some areas from where we have received repeated distress calls from. We can help coordinate in these areas for relief and setting up of a relief camp.

1. Ambujwadi, Malvani no. 8, Malad
2. Siddharth Nagar, Char Bungalow, Andheri West
3. Mahindra Quarry, Chandivali
4. Bheemchhya, Kannamwar Nagar-1, Vikroli, East
5. Ambedkara Nagar, Kurar Village, Malad East
6. Sathe Nagar, Govandi
7. Bheemnagar, Mankhurd
8. Rathodi, Malvani
9. Sanjay Nagar, Shivaji Nagar, Govandi
10. Ambedkar Nagar, Cuffe Parade
11. Khar-Golibar, Khar East
12. Mandala, Mankhurd
13. Rafiq Nagar, Govandi
14. Jai Ambe Nagar, Indian Oil Nagar, Chembur
15. Mahul PAP Colony, Chembur
16. Machimar village, Worli Koliwada
17. Antop Hill
18. Dharavi

Women hygiene, child care and reproductive health :

Pursuant to our request, the MCGM has made provisions for sanitary napkins for women, although they still need to be reached to women in communities across the city. **The government needs to provide sanitary napkins to women on an urgent basis since women are unable to afford sanitary napkins during the lockdown,** which are not considered a priority in many families concerned about their daily survival issues. We have been providing sanitary napkins in some areas and can help coordinate supplies so that they reach the women in the communities.


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No schemes have been announced so far to look into the reproductive health of women and health of children, and those falling in the category are left to their own resources. ***Baby food supplies, milk and nutritious food to lactating mothers is also a need of the hour. Along with this diapers, hygiene products need to be given to newborns, toddlers and their mothers. Also pregnant women need to be provided nutritious food and reproductive care during the lockdown bearing in mind the health and vulnerability of both women and child and to ensure safe pregnancy.***

Electricity, water bills and rent :

As stated above due the lockdown, people living in slums have lost their livelihood and do not have enough means and resources to afford a basic meal, it will be impossible for them to even pay electricity and water bills. Even after the lockdown is lifted, people engaged in informal sector will take time to find a new job. So keeping this in mind, all the electricity bills and water bills should be waived off from the time of start of the lockdown to next three months. Many migrant workers have complained of being evicted or threatened to be evicted due to non-payment of rent either by themselves or their employers. ***It is pertinent that rent payment be waived completely during the lockdown to prevent homelessness which can exacerbate the crisis and that the government takes steps against offending employers / landlords to ensure strict implementation of the directive.***

Sustenance monies :

Many migrant workers and daily wage earners have not been paid for their past services upon announcement of the lockdown. Also employers have laid off workers immediately upon announcement of the lockdown or have stopped paying wages, creating joblessness and job insecurity. Also many informal sector workers have not received wages since the lockdown due to loss of livelihood and means to work. Such categories of workers need to be identified and where the employers cannot be made to follow Maharashtra government advisory / directive for continuing wages during the lockdown, ***the government must announce payment of basic sustenance monies to these categories of workers who have lost their livelihood and income.***

Containment areas :

We have received distress calls from Worli Koliwada and Dharavi which are declared as 'containment areas'. In the initial days of declaring of 'containment area' to Worli Koliwada, the local residents ran out of essential supplies required for cooking food. In the absence of any immediate relief or food ration supply from the Government, a lot of voluntary organisations like us tried to supply them with dry ration but the police did not allow entry even for providing ration nor did it suggest any way to send the supplies. It is only after few days when the matter was highlighted in media that the police allowed us to supply. But in Dharavi, we are still not being allowed to supply. Had the government ensured food supplies to these areas before or simultaneously upon the containment, people would not have been left in anxiety and we would not be getting distress calls.



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There has to be a plan in place to ensure adequate food ration and cooked food supply as required to each and every family in the containment / quarantined areas, taking all precautions in mind. **The government must put in place a protocol for containment areas which includes delivery of provisions, free food and amenities and also visibly display the same in the localities to ensure that both lockdown / containment regulations are followed and food and other amenities reach the last person.**

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene :

Residents in many bastis were already facing water supply issues prior to the lockdown and were buying water at high rates through their own resources or taking it from their employers. Post lockdown however, due to loss of livelihood, income and access to facilities and transport options due to restrictions, they have been unable to access water. This is also resulting in chaos and crowding over sparsely available water supply points. In one such basti in Andheri, after our intervention, the Hon'ble Environment Minister and MCGM have provided tanker for drinking water supply. Due to lack of storage, we at GBGBA are providing a water tank to store water and prevent crowding and chaos through proper storage and distribution of water.

However there are many bastis which are still facing water cuts, lack of drinking water supply. ***The government needs to immediately ensure that bastis without water supply and/ or who need to pay exorbitant amounts to secure water due to lack of supply, are provided water being the most basic and essential commodity and important to maintain hygiene which is required to fight this pandemic, during the entire period of the lockdown and pandemic crisis.***

Public toilets and bathrooms are charging for use even during this crisis, as has been reported in several bastis. ***It is of utmost importance that the government immediately make all public toilets free of cost and pay CBOs managing them monies to keep the toilets clean and maintain high standards of hygiene to prevent community spread.***

Accessibility to Government helplines and quick remedial measures :

While Government helplines have been set up for addressing migrant workers and food ration problems, the same are overloaded and frequently inaccessible. It is necessary to set up a more efficient system and increase the lines and allocate more staff to handle calls, and also take help of voluntary organisations so that the needs of the people can be met. Further, quick responses to the urgent needs of the people is still wanting. The turn around time to address the demands and complaints needs to be much better and it would be worthwhile to put in place mechanisms to ensure quick remedial measures, including a maximum response time.

Healthcare:

Lack of COVID-19 testing:



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A lockdown will only work, if it helps in identifying and containing the COVID-19 positive cases. This requires rapid testing drives which are lacking at this moment. One cannot afford extended lockdown economically, physically and mentally. The testing drive must take place both in containment zone and non-containment zone, especially in symptomatic and contact cases. There have been reports of inadequate testing at a time when mass testing alone can provide a solution to the crisis. Also without mass testing, the true extent of the spread of the infection will never be known and it may take longer to deal with the crisis. This needs to be urgently addressed. It is pertinent to implement the Supreme Court direction for free testing for Covid-19 and also provide free treatment for Covid-19 patients.

Lack of Protective Gears:

Medical professionals and staff, aid workers, police personnel and those who are providing relief at the local level lack enough protective gears, putting them to much risk and hardship. Protective gears like N-95 masks, gloves, PPE suits must be available in abundance to those who are present on the ground and in hospitals to mitigate and combat COVID-19. We have provided protective gear to medical professionals, volunteers in some facilities but there is a need for much more and only the state can fulfil the requirement. The government must ensure that all medical professionals, doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, helpers and other staff as well as volunteers, aid workers and police professional are provided protective gear to make their working environment safe and also restrict the spread of disease.

Ventilators:

With the increasing number of Covid-19 cases, more ventilators will be required since it is a disease that targets the respiratory system and causes problems in breathing. We must be prepared in case the number of cases increase far in excess of our bandwidth and hence manufacture and procurement of ventilators in numbers is also a need of the hour.

Continuation of TB medication and special care for the patients:

TB patients under treatment are finding it difficult to get Injectable in their regimen (which may go on for 4-6months). A lot of patients are not getting ration to have proper meal in a day. It is not advisable to take medicines for TB on an empty stomach. Many of the TB patients do not have ration cards so they are not able to get free rations. Hence, special care should be taken for TB patients so as to ensure that they get proper medication and food. This will not only help them in treating the disease but will also discourage the disease to become contagious.

Cancer :

Cancer patients are not only at risk due to co-morbidity but also a vulnerable group under lockdown when access to cancer medication, drugs and treatments are not easily available. The government must ensure that cancer patients are provided at-home delivery of drugs, special facilities to ensure continuation of treatment and safety and care during treatment and also financial help for treatment, where required.

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Access to Dialysis and compulsorily free COVID-19 testing for Dialysis patients :

Dialysis patients require frequent visits (sometimes few times a week) to the dialysis clinics / centres. During the lockdown this has become difficult to arrange and many dialysis patients are finding it difficult to get their dialysis treatment done. It has also been made compulsory for dialysis patients to undergo mandatory Covid-19 testing before undergoing dialysis, which can get very expensive, especially for poor and elderly patients without financial means. Hence, in light of the Supreme Court judgment on free testing and also as a special case for dialysis patients, Covid-19 testing must be made free of cost. The government must accordingly ensure that the dialysis patients have access to dialysis clinics/centres and also compulsory Covid-19 testing for dialysis patients should be free of cost.

We accordingly request you to please look into these issues and address them on an urgent basis. Please feel free to contact us for any further information or particulars and for any assistance that may be required.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,



Bilal Khan

Akhilesh Rao

Uday Mohite

Jamila Begum

Anita Dhole Patil

Contact: 9958660556

Copy to:

1. CMO Maharashtra
2. Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority
3. District Legal Services Authority
4. Mumbai Municipal Commissioner
5. Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department, Government of Maharashtra