

PANDEMIC EMERGENCY PROVISIONING MEASURES TO BE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

Necessary orders have been passed to put into effect the lockdown for the next 21 days implying that, in effect, there will be a full lockdown for a period of more than a month in the state. Supporting the Government's decisions and actions in implementing the lockdown to fight the spread of COVID-19 is imperative. Given the obvious implications this has on the food security and other needs of the population, we suggest the following steps be considered as immediate measures to address the same and enable the people to focus on protecting their own health as well as that of others by participating in the lockdown without any fear of hunger and loss of wages or jobs.

We highlight the following specific measures that the Government of Karnataka can consider:

I. Need and Entitlement:

| Need | Entitlement | Implementing agency/ Delivery mechanism | As provided under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package and further steps needed |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| A. Food security | 1. Universal allocation of food packets to last a period of 1 month including rice/wheat/ragi, pulses, cooking oil, jaggery, garam masala, soap, etc. to households irrespective of whether they have ration cards or not | Doorstep delivery by Local Bodies, Food and Civil Supplies Department | All those with ration cards will be provided double their entitlement over 3 months. 1 kg pre family of pulse will be provided. Inadequacies: 1. Universal coverage has not been ensured 2. The quantity of ration remains very low and insufficient to lead a healthy life |
| | 2. Free Cooking gas cylinder for all households | | Gas cylinders, free of cost, would be provided to those under Ujwal Scheme for the next three months. Inadequacy - This oly covers those registered under the Ujwal Scheme (8 crore), whereas as per the Scheme itself there are 80 crore poor. Cooking gas cylinder must be provided |

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| | <p>3. Ensure availability of cooked meals twice daily at least till the end of May. Anyone willing to access these should be able to.</p> <p>4. Reduce price of vegetables, fruits, eggs, meat and make it available through Hopcoms.</p> | <p>Kitchens for Mid-day meals, anganwadis, Indira Canteens, shelter homes, Stadiums, school grounds, etc. Local Bodies, Food and Civil Supplies Department</p> <p>Hopcoms should be kept open and stocked</p> | <p>universally.</p> <p>No scheme made available</p> <p>No scheme made available</p> |
| | <p>5. Initiate Notification preventing hoarding of food and regulate prices to prevent opportunistic hikes.</p> | <p>Horticulture Department</p> | <p>No scheme made available</p> |
| <p>B. Emergency Relief</p> | <p>1. Emergency relief grant of Rs. 14,000/- per household for the months of April and May to be disbursed to households that are identified under the NFSA and to those in migrant/workers camps.*</p> | <p>All payments in cash delivered to doorstep</p> <p>Local Bodies and Revenue</p> | <p>20.40 crore PMJDY women account-holders would be given an ex-gratia of Rs 500 per month for next three months.</p> <p>3 crore Senior citizens (above 60 years), widows and Divyang will be given Rs 1,000 for next three months.</p> <p>Inadequacies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The relief offered is to a very limited population and should be made universal 2. The amount offered is very minimal and insufficient. |

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| C. Financial security | 1. Notify all employers to assure paid leave to all employees, including contract and sub-contracted workers. | All payments in cash delivered to doorstep by the employers for those without bank accounts. | No scheme made available |
| | 2. Clearing of dues of MGNREGA workers by the end the first week of April. | | MNREGA wages would be increased by Rs 20 with effect from 1 April, 2020 Inadequacy: No statement on pending dues. No statement on whether work would continue, which would allow workers to earn the increased amount. |
| | 3. Pay all registered MGNREGA workers their full wages during the lockdown period. | | No scheme made available |
| | 4. Ensure an immediate transfer of the remaining instalment of the PM-Kisan scheme. | All payments in cash delivered to doorstep Revenue Department | The first installment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 under the PM KISAN Yojana. Inadequacy: The amount of Rs. 2,000/- was already due. Additional 2 installments of PM-Kisan Scheme i.e. Rs 4,000 is required to be made. |
| | 5. All beneficiaries of social security pension in Karnataka should be paid all pending dues immediately. | | No scheme made available |
| | 6. Ensure advance payment of 3 months' pensions (April, May, June) to be given to each pension holder under NSAP on the 1st of | | No scheme made available |

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| | April. The pensions may be doubled. | | |
| | 7. Ensure clearance of all pending instalments under the PMAY programme and the SBM programme. | | No scheme made available |
| | 8. Declare moratorium on recovery on loans to farmers, agricultural labour and all workers. At the least repayment to be postponed with no interest. Defer loan payments by small-scale industries, self-employed persons such as auto, taxi and other owners and those with EMIs below Rs. 20,000 per month. Period of repayment to be identified after the 'lock-down' period ceases. | Finance Department | No scheme made available |
| | 9. Automatically enrol all MGNREGA workers as registered workers under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) Act so that workers can access the social security benefits available to the latter in the form of insurance, scholarships for education of children, pensions etc. | Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department | No scheme made available |
| D. Job security | 1. An executive order be passed by the State Government prohibiting retrenchment / termination/refusal of employment to any worker, and also prohibiting reduction in wages by any employers in case of absence from work during the lock down period. The Order should cover all employers, private or | Labour Department | No scheme made available |

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| | public. The worker must be deemed on duty on purposes of payment of wages. The Order must clarify that it applies to all workers, whether directly or indirectly employed in the establishment. This needs to be communicated through newspapers, whatsapp etc. | | |
| E. Precautionary measures | 1. Health camps and awareness camps in all slums and migrant worker centres. This should include migrant workers from within the state and from other states | Health Department, Local bodies and Karnataka Slum Development Board | No scheme made available |
| | 2. Ensure Protective gear, daily check ups, secure transport, mental health counselling for all frontline workers including Powrakarmikas, hospital workers. Risk Allowance to be paid to all workers | Local Bodies | Safai karamcharis, ward-boys, nurses, ASHA workers, paramedics, technicians, doctors and specialists and other health workers would be covered by a Special insurance Scheme. Any health professional, who while treating Covid-19 patients, meet with some accident, then he/she would be compensated with an amount of Rs 50 lakh under the scheme. Indequacy: No details of the Special Insurance Scheme is forthcoming. |
| | 3. Set up a network of information Mithras who will disseminate information on whatsapp, TikTok and over phone till the mohalla, village level – on avoidance, testing centres, helplines, availability of transport and | Health Department | No scheme made available |

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| | essential goods | | |
| | 4. Ensure cleanliness of areas surrounding the homes, especially in slums and migrant workers clusters | Health Department, Local bodies and Karnataka Slum Development Board | No scheme made available |
| F. Health | 1. An executive order be passed by the State Government to ensure that all Primary Health Centre's, Community Health Centres and Taluk public hospitals are functional. This will ensure provision of basic health services at a decentralised level and also to prevent rush of people to district and other large hospitals. | Health Department | No scheme made available |
| | 2. A helpline needs to be made available where people who need urgent medical help can call. This might include patient in need of care who do not have care takers (senior citizens, people with disability, etc.), those who do not have own transport etc. | | No scheme made available |
| G. Shelter | 1. State Government to pass necessary executive orders prohibiting eviction of tenants for non-payment of rent. | Urban Development Department | No scheme made available |
| | 2. State Government to declare that there will no demolition of houses or slum evictions. | | No scheme made available |
| | 3. Relaxation of electricity, water bill payment for two months. | All ESCOMS, BWSSB and KUWS&DB | No scheme made available |

II. Delivery Mechanism*

This immediate relief package should be done as doorstep delivery and handed to people as cash along with the 3 months of ration advance. There can be a box with rations, an envelope with the cash and a pen (to be kept by the household) to sign upon receiving the entire package of rations and cash.

State Government could take the help of SHGs in disbursement of cash in the Gram Panchayat. Records pertaining to cash distribution may be kept in registers and also be publicly disclosed through multiple online and offline channels.

The delivery of rations along with the cash corresponding to the emergency relief package, MGNREGA wages, pensions, PM Kisan instalments etc can be done in at least one of two ways.

- (a) Through a doorstep delivery process where the basket of ration supplies are given and cash is given along with it.
- (b) Distribution at ration shops with designated times for each part of the village to pick up supplies to make sure that members of more than 10 households do not gather at the shop.

III. Dissemination of Information on Emergency Provisioning Measures:

Once the emergency package is finalised, the information about who are the eligible beneficiaries, the amount and content of the package, and the process and structures of delivery must be disseminated widely. Both audio messages via phone messages and WhatsApp should be done.

IV. Grievance Redressal Structures and Processes:

There should be an agency to address issues of non-receipt / poor delivery / leakages / misappropriation of the emergency provisioning measures. This unit should be decentralised (at local, district level and linked to the panchayat in rural districts and to the municipalities/corporations in the urban areas) and should be easily accessible to citizens who can seek redressal. The agency should have powers to act on grievance redressal. Unions, civil society organisations, and field workers should be recognised as observers and monitors. A helpline should be immediately operationalised for this purpose.

V. Supervision:

The State Government must immediately set-up an inter-departmental "Task Force" to supervise and oversee the implementation of the various decisions of the State Government towards ameliorating their immediate situation. The Task Force would strive to achieve each of the above objectives.

*Acknowledgements: Some of the suggested measures are replicated from the document/petition that Prof. Jean Dreze and others have made to the Central Government (March 24th/2020) and another document submitted by various organisations in Karnataka.