



HOW FAMILIES OF CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ARE COPING WITH THE LOCKDOWN

RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT II
APRIL 2020
MUMBAI

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A. Introduction

It's almost been 2 months since the nationwide lockdown was enforced to contain the spread of COVID-19. Soon after the complete lockdown was imposed, we initiated the process of reaching out to 250 child victims of sexual abuse and families with whom we have been working with since 2015. Majority of these families belong to the lower-socio economic groups. Their livelihood, nutrition, education of children and other basic necessities were almost immediately impacted. Even as State & Central Governments announced relief and aid, the families mentioned obstacles to access. This Needs Assessment Report is our continued attempt to contextualize access to basic necessities, aid & relief with lived realities, needs & requirements of the families of child victims of sexual offences in Mumbai.

In the last week of March, we conducted our first round of needs assessment with 127 families and released 1st Rapid Assessment report on 5th of April 2020. The objective of the assessment was to understand if the families were safe, healthy & capable of sustaining through the lockdown. While administering the questionnaire over the phone, the families were given general information about the lockdown & pandemic, related government schemes as well as health & hygiene measures.

Post the assessment, the immediate requirements of ration, hygiene kit and medicines that were mentioned by the families were addressed by Aarambh India. Between mid- March until end of April 2020, a total of 17 hygiene kits, 78 dry ration kits consisting of supply of 1 month's ration were distributed and we reached out to more than 700 individuals (adults & children) across Mumbai.

24th of April 2020 marked one month since the lockdown. Our periodic phone follow ups with the families now indicated issues like lack of receipt of due salaries, insecurity about jobs, deepening requirement for ration, etc. The extension of the lockdown has made the precarity quotient in their lives significantly higher.

A 2nd Rapid Assessment was administered to reassess and contextualize the situation w.r.t health, food & accessibility to key Government schemes that were announced. The assessment also attempts to capture the psycho-social support required by the families, challenges faced by them during the lockdown, their financial status, their plans in terms of the education of the children, their work and whether or not they would choose to migrate out of the city once the lockdown was lifted. Based on the results of this assessment, the 2nd phase of intervention with the families will be strategized and implemented in order to ensure that the families' requirement in terms of basic ration and psycho-social support are met.

B. A Range of On-Ground Challenges

- Families Stuck In Other Districts Due To The Lockdown

When we first contacted the families in March 2020, we found that some were visiting their villages to celebrate the festival of Holi. Due to the sudden enforcement of the lockdown, they were stranded in their villages with no means to return to Mumbai. While few families had their own houses in the villages, most of them were visiting their relatives. Due to the lockdown they have been dependent on their relatives for the past 2 months.

Challenges faced by families stuck in other districts:

- a. The families have ration cards; however, they are registered to their Mumbai addresses and thus they cannot avail of any ration being distributed in the villages.
- b. In few cases, the families are stranded in remote villages in the less developed parts of districts. They have limited access to ATMs and online banking systems. Thus they have not been able to access the money in their bank accounts.
- c. The grocery shops in the villages did not have online payment facilities nor were the shopkeepers comfortable with direct transfers to their bank accounts. This presented a significant challenge in supporting these families with ration.

Strategies used to overcome the challenges:

In order to support families, we tapped into our established convergence models and reached out to the child protection functionaries and NGOs in the said districts.

- a. For the family stuck in the interiors of Ratnagiri district in Maharashtra, we reached out to the chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee of the district with a request to assist us in

supporting the family. The chairperson directed the Probation officer and the counselor from the District Child Protection Unit to provide aid to the family. With the consent of the family, we connected the family with the CWC and DCPU of the district and the family was provided with basic ration for 1 month.

- b. For another family stuck in a small village of Hanumangarh district in Rajasthan, we approached the NGO Vishakha, who helped us in connecting the family to the Sarpanch of their village. The Sarpanch of the village had been providing people with ration in their village, who supported the family with ration supply for 15 day periods.

- **Families Who Migrated Out Of Mumbai Before The Lockdown**

Some families that we continue to work (on-going POCSO cases) with had left Mumbai and migrated back to their villages or other districts prior to the COVID 19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown. The major issue faced by these families were:

- a. They had not changed the addresses on their ration card post the migration, due to which they were unable to access ration in the new locations.
- b. The ration shops did not have sufficient ration to meet the needs of all the residents of the village even as they were directed by government schemes to provide the same.

We initially attempted to link them with a local resource that may be able to provide necessary aid & support. However, after coordinating and mapping of resources, when it emerged that arranging such aid would not be possible; we directly supported the procurement of their ration for a period of one month.

- Families Put Under Quarantine By Municipal Corporation Of Greater Mumbai (MCGM)

In the month of April 2020, following the detection of a positive case of Covid-19 in a neighborhood in the western suburbs of Mumbai, one family consisting of 4 members (including the victim child) were placed in a quarantine center by the health officials of MCGM.

Challenges Faced:

- a. All the residents of the neighborhood were displaced from their homes and quarantined at a hotel in the nearby vicinity without any prior notice. The families did not have enough time to prepare and/or pack their essentials nor were they provided with any comprehensive information about the process and procedures to be followed.
- b. One of the family members had recently undergone a brain surgery and was required to take his food and medicines in a timely manner. The family mentioned that they faced immense trouble in terms of quantity, quality and timing of the food being provided to them during quarantine.
- c. The families reported unhygienic conditions in the rooms they were placed in. They were not provided with cleaning kits that they could use to keep their rooms and toilet clean. And even procurement of cleaning kits was challenging since no one was allowed to visit them.
- d. Because of a lack of adequate information & because they were being referred to as 'patients' at the quarantine center, the families believed that they were COVID positive. This caused further panic.

Strategies used to overcome challenges:

The following steps were taken to ensure the family felt safe while in quarantine:

- a. We contacted the Municipal Corporation helpline and asked for the contact details of the relevant authorities for the Ward in which the family was quarantined. We were provided with contact details of the Chief Development officer (CDO) and the Medical Officer (MO) of the ward.
- b. We gathered all the information w.r.t the process, procedure of the family being quarantined, and communicated the challenges faced by the families to the authorities. While the MO informed and updated us with the procedures and process of quarantine. The CDO noted the food related challenges and assured that it would be sorted. The issues with regards to food & sanitation were resolved within a week's time.
- c. We kept in contact with the MO of the ward on a regular basis to understand the timelines and the protocols that were being followed and kept the family updated with the information.
- d. As the family was distressed and showed signs of stress, they were referred to our in-house counselor immediately to provide mental health support. The family was released from the center after 14 days of quarantine. The team continues to provide psycho – social intervention to the family.

- Unaccompanied Minors

The above-mentioned family that was quarantined in the hotel also informed us that there were 5 children who were in the same quarantine center without their parents. Their parents had not been at home when all the people in the neighborhood were being taken to the quarantine center. We were further informed that the eldest sibling (a 16-year-old girl child) had to take care of her younger siblings that aged 3 years, 6 years, 11 years and 14 years and was finding it difficult to manage without parental support.

The counselor initiated telephonic sessions with all the children and the sessions continued for the entire duration of the quarantine. Parallely we tried to locate the contact details of the children's parents but were unable to do so. Our point of contact – the aforementioned family in quarantine, worked with us & supported us by checking in on the well-being of these 5 children on a regular basis.

Once the children were released from the quarantine and restored home, we found out that the parents of the children had gone to the hospital since the mother was pregnant and due for delivery. It was during that time when the children were picked up from the community & put in the quarantine center. The counselor continues the telephonic counselling sessions with the children, while the social workers continue to follow up with the parents in order to make sure that the family and children are safe and are taking the required precautions.

- Legal Status Of The POCSO Cases

Out of the 128 families, 94 (73%) families have their POCSO cases pending at various stages at the Sessions courts in Mumbai or the Juvenile Justice Boards.

Due to the pandemic and ensuing lockdown, the courts have been functioning for two to three days in the week via Video Conferencing. The courts have only been hearing matters that they deem as emergency cases. None of the 94 cases have proceeded since the lockdown. This has resulted in increased anxiety among some victims' & families w.r.t how long will it take for the cases to reach their conclusion & how long will the families have to be involved in this matter.

The families were also informed that the Supreme court had passed an order stating that the court could not penalize any individual for not appearing before the court during the time of the lockdown. But the families continue to be in a state of constant worry and fear that since they are unable to be present in the court, the courts would pass an order that is not in their favor and would penalize them. We are constantly following up on each case via the court website and keep the families updated about the status of hearing and the next court date as it is uploaded on the site.

- [Children Placed In Child Care Institutions \(CCI\)](#)

While following up with the families of the children who were institutionalized, one common concern that emerged was the inability of the families to visit the CCI and meet the children. Further they were unaware of the protocol being followed by the CCI and therefore did not know when they may call to speak with the child.

On the other hand, the CCI staff informed that the children were concerned about the whereabouts of their families due to COVID19 and the children worried if their family members were safe and healthy. Some of the children had not spoken to their family members for more than a month.

In order to bridge this gap, we worked with the staff at the CCIs and the families of the children. We facilitated phone calls to ensure that the parents spoken with the child.

However, the social workers from our team were unable to speak with the children during the lockdown over the phone. We continue to follow up with the CCI staff on a regular basis and keep track of the wellbeing of the children placed in institutions.

- [Psycho-Social Support For The Families](#)

The pandemic is not only causing physical and financial discomfort but also mental and emotional discomfort for child victims & their families. In this light, we expanded the mandate of psycho-social support to include not just the child but also the family members of the child.

While the social workers continued to follow-up with the families in order to make sure they were healthy, safe and had access to all the basic essentials required; the counselor continued the sessions not just with the child victims but also some of the family members. Based on the assessments & need, the counselor decided on taking sessions either every alternate day, twice

every week, once in a week, once every fortnight or once a month. Meticulous notes of the sessions and reports of the follow-ups are maintained by the counselor and social workers to help us plan for the subsequent sessions and follow-ups.

- [Need for Government Aid](#)

As mentioned above, one of our efforts during the lockdown has been to connect the families with local support systems where they can access relief, aid and support. It was always encouraging and inspiring to come across individuals and institutions working in remote locations providing relief to distressed families. Also, as we experienced through our online fundraising page, common citizens have been opening their hearts and donating to support the relief work.

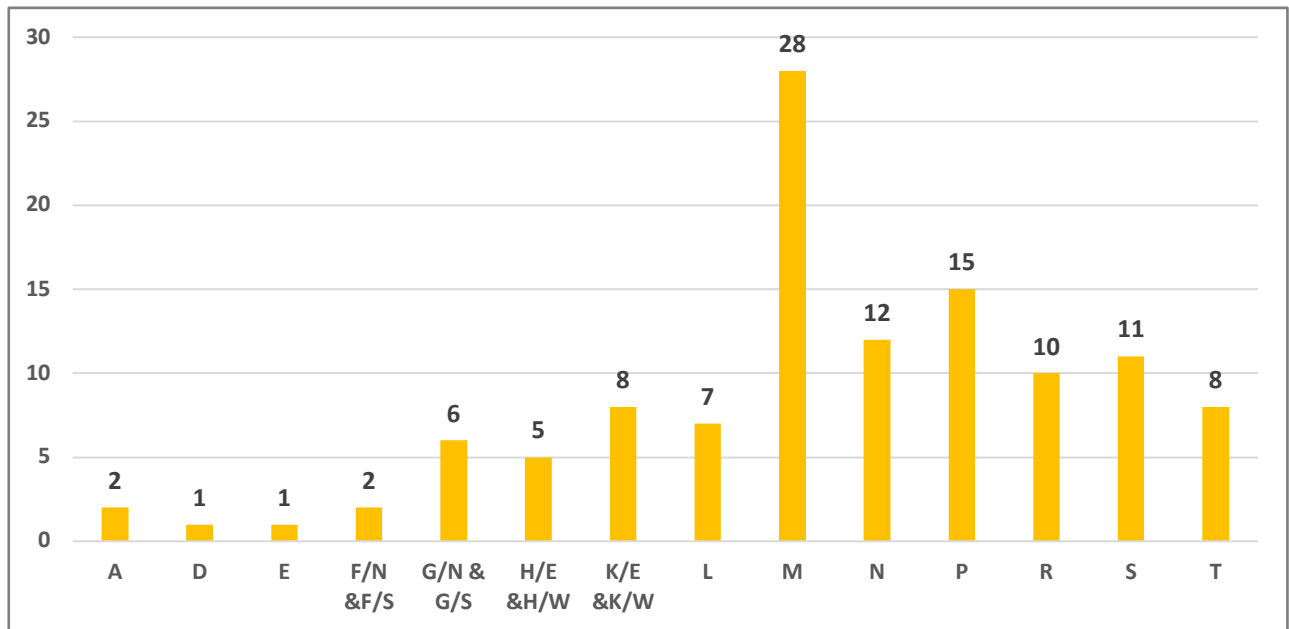
However, in the last few weeks, the need from the ground has seen an exponential increase. Some of the organizations that we reached out to mentioned that they have been consolidating their relief work and were in no position to expand to accommodate more beneficiaries. Even at Aarambh India, we have been unable to look beyond the existing families. Our existing activities are focused on keeping the families stable and secure till the lockdown is lifted. Once, the lockdown ends and the families attempt to get back to their lives and livelihoods, the range and scope of what they will require to sustain will be much larger.

Millions of vulnerable families have put their lives and livelihoods at risk in cooperating with the Government in execution of the lockdown for over two months now. The citizens have already taken the lead. It is essential & about time for the governments to step in and supplement their efforts with a wide range of direct & accessible relief and aid so that the most vulnerable families & most vulnerable areas are cared for in a sustainable manner.

C. Findings from the Rapid Assessment Survey of Families of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse in Mumbai

- **Number of families covered:** 128
- **Total Number of individuals (including children) in the families:** 747
- **Total Number of children in the families:** 300
- **Ward wise distribution of the families:** Out of the 128 families, 116 reside in Mumbai. The ward wise distribution of the families is given below. 12 families have migrated to the adjacent districts of Thane, Raigad, Palghar, Pune and Pandharpur.

1: Ward wise Distribution of Families Living in Mumbai

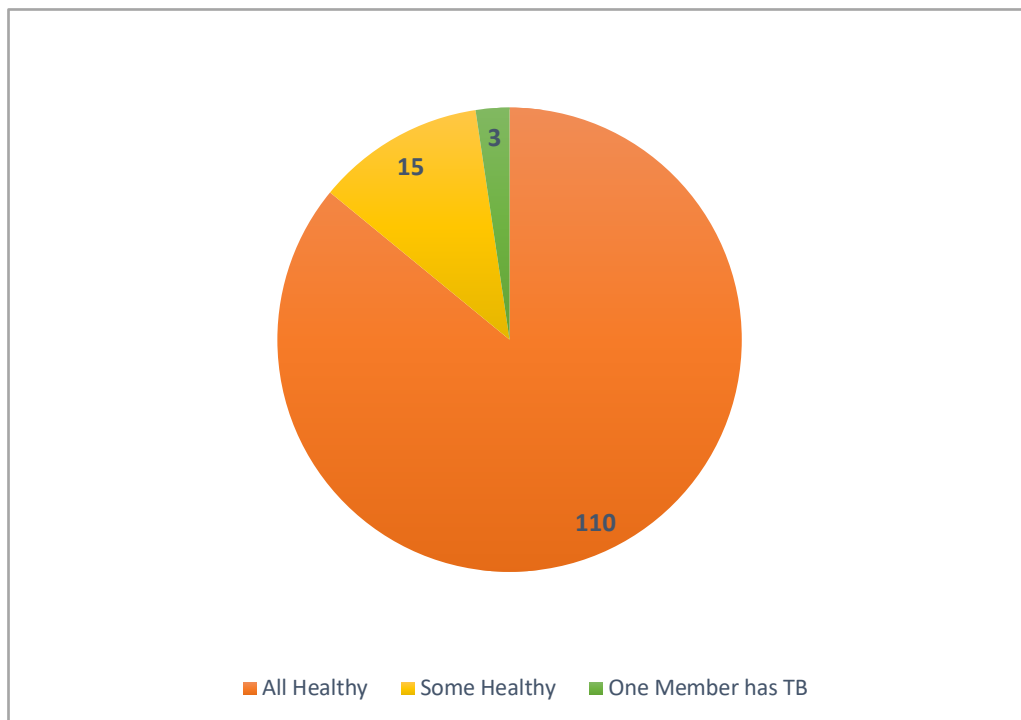


- **Current Health Status of the Family**

85% of the families we spoke to i.e. 110 families mentioned that everybody in their family was healthy as on date. None of the families were showing symptoms of COVID19.

As on date, 15 families (11%) had one or two family members that were unwell. This is an 8% increase over the previous assessment. 3 families reported one member suffering from tuberculosis and currently under medication. Other families informed that members were unwell due to common cold, fever, stomach ache and previously identified disease such as acidity, thyroid, cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure, paralysis, heart surgery etc. The families were members were suffering from common cold and fever visited the general physician and were taking prescribed medication.

2: Health Status of Families

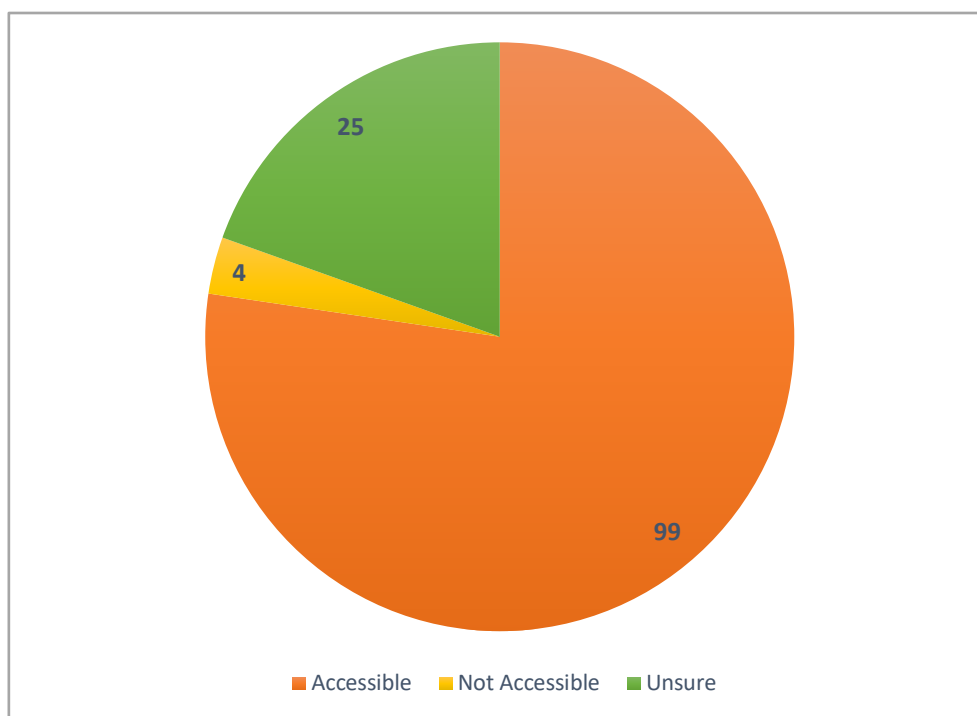


- **Status of availability of Health Services like Pharmacy, General Physician in the area of residence of the families**

4 families (3%) informed that they were unable to access these services in their vicinity.

99 families (77%) mentioned that they have access to health services like pharmacy, private general physician and DOTS¹ centers. 25 families (20%) were unsure if the services as they had not checked to see if the services were available.

3: Access to Health Services

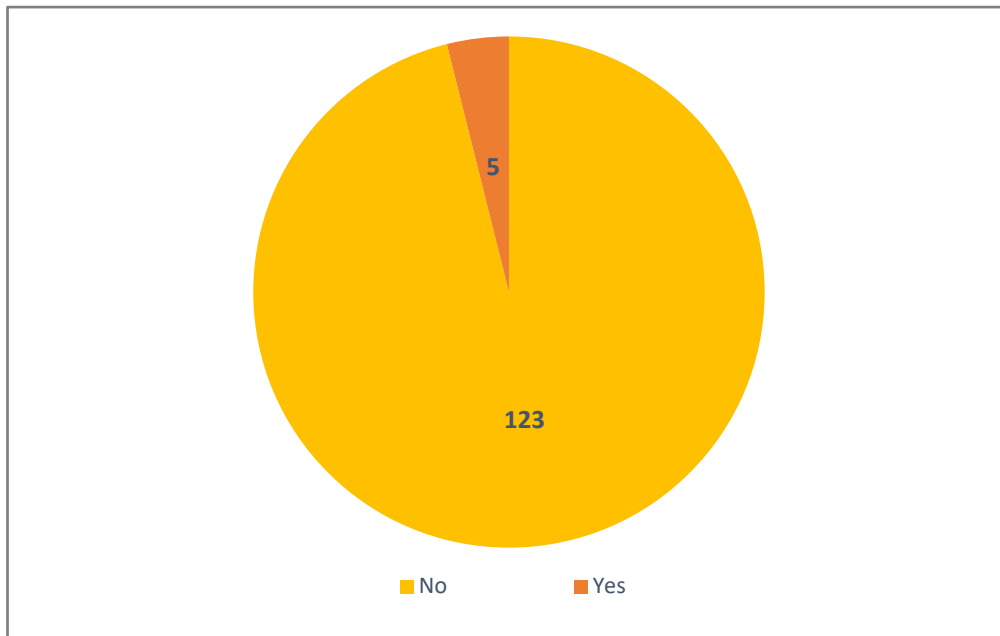


¹ DOTS center: Directly observed treatment center for curbing Tuberculosis

- **Effect of containment on families**

Majority of the families i.e. 123 families informed that they were not under containment. 5 families mentioned that area of residence or their buildings were under containment.

4: Families in Containment



The families in containment informed that they are not allowed to leave the premises of their *chawl*, area and building. Containment zones or the hotspots are the areas that have active cases or a high doubling rate of confirmed cases of COVID19. Even the purchase of essential items such as food, medicine etc. is highly regulated & restricted. At selected time slots decided by the Municipal Corporation they are given permission to leave their houses and step out to purchase ration if required. In case of medical emergency, they have been provided with the ambulance number that they can reach out to. It was further informed that there was a tight police security in these areas.

- Status of Employment & Income: During & Post the Lockdown

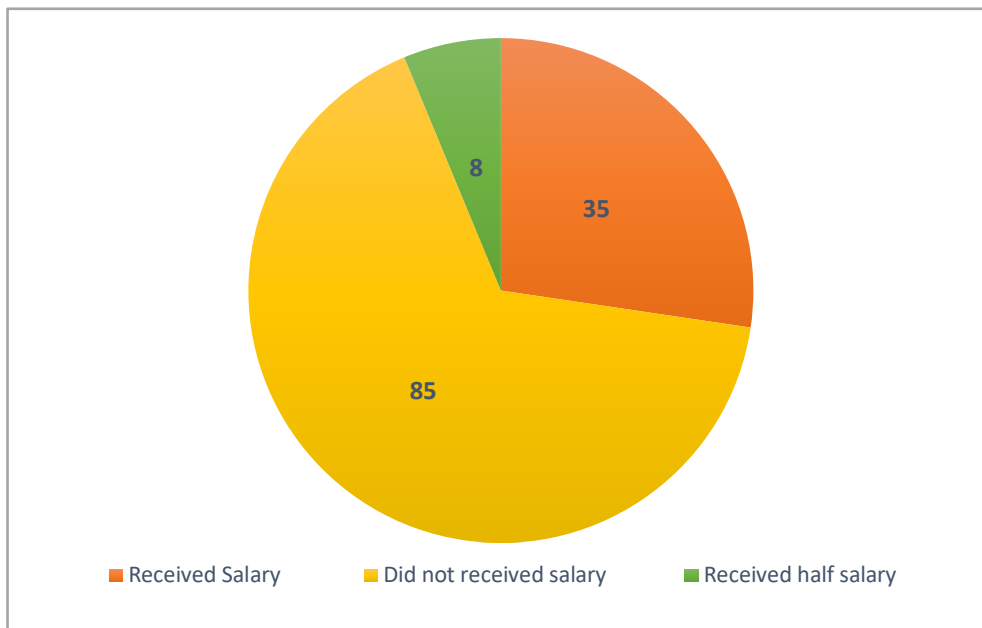
Income for the Month of March 2020

As confirmed by the first rapid assessment report, 93% of the employed members in the families work in unorganized sectors.

During the 2nd assessment it was confirmed by 85 families (66%) that they did not receive their pay for the month of March 2020. 8 families informed that they received only half salary for the month of March 2020.

The remaining 35 families (27%) received payment but of these there were a few families where the gross income still took a significant hit as only one earning member of the family received their salary.

5: Income for the Month of March 2020



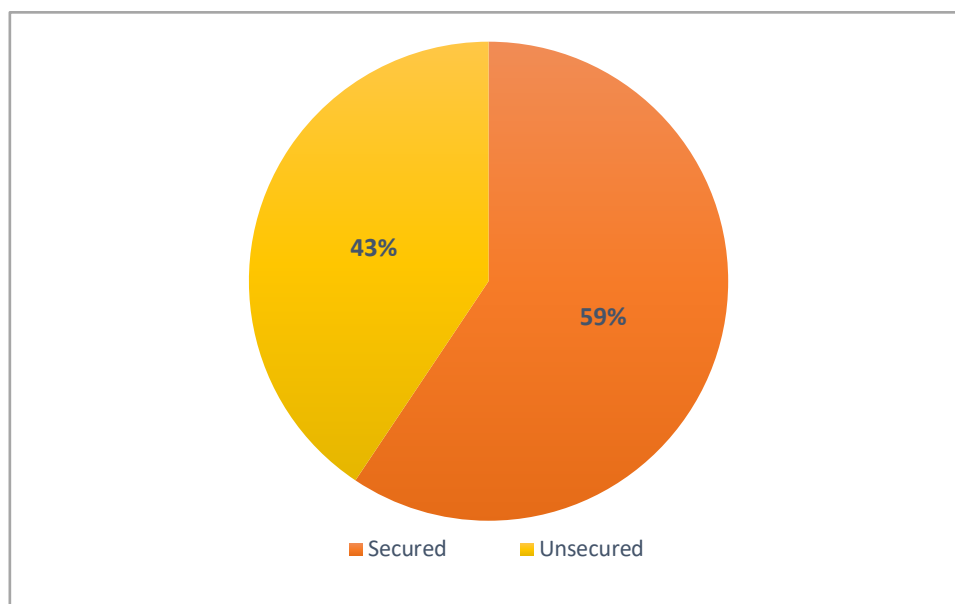
Status of Employment & Income in the month of April 2020

103 families (80%) mentioned that the working members of the family did not go to work due to the lockdown. 25 families (20%) mentioned that in spite of the lockdown at least one member of the family had to report to work. Out of these 25 families, 13 worked in unorganized sector as domestic workers, vegetable and fruit seller, watchman, driver, shoemaker, plumber, sweeper for the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

What is the status of their employment post the lockdown?

76 families (59%) mentioned that the jobs of their family members were secured. The remaining 56 (43%) families were unsure. Many had not yet heard from their employers. Those who were engaged in small businesses were unsure if they would be able to restart their food stall, embroidery work store, second hand clothes stall, bangle making store etc. once the lockdown ends. They were unsure as to where the capital needed for a restart could be secured from.

6: Will they have secured jobs post the lockdown?



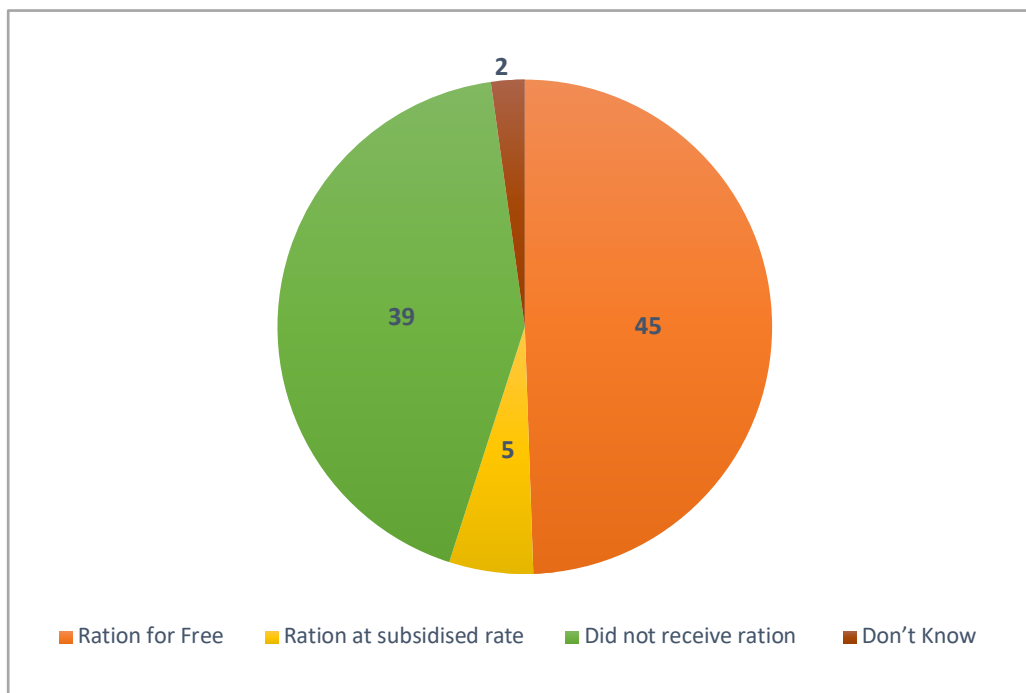
- Status of Ration

How many families received ration from the ration shop/ relief received under the *Prime Ministers Garib Kalyan* scheme?

The quantity of the ration given is based on number of names registered under a ration card. Every name is entitled to either 5 kgs rice or 5 kgs wheat or both based on the availability at the ration store. Other items such as pulses, sugar, salt etc. were not provided nor available at the shops. These had to be purchased from the local *Kirana* shops.

In the first needs assessment, we found that only 91 families (73%) had ration card. Out of these 45 families (49%) mentioned that they received rice or wheat or both for free from the ration shops. 5 families mentioned that they received the ration at a subsidized rate. (rice at Rs. 3 per kilo and wheat between Rs. 2 to Rs.6 per kilo.) **39 families (42%) did not receive ration in spite of having a ration card.**

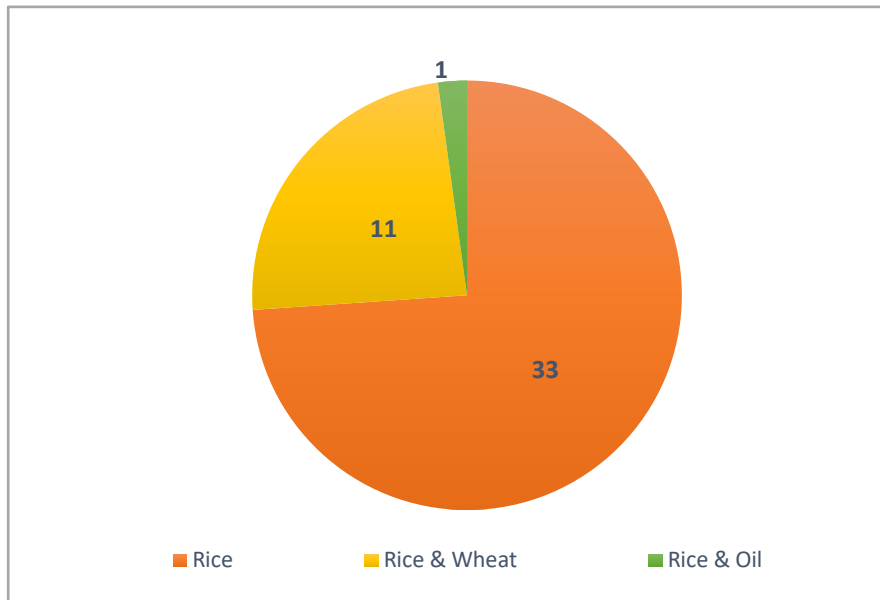
7: Status of Ration Received under the Central Govt. Scheme



Details of Free Ration Received:

Out of the above 45 families that received free ration, 33 (74%) families mentioned that they had received only rice. 11 mentioned they had received both rice & wheat. 1 family received rice & oil.

8: Free Ration Received



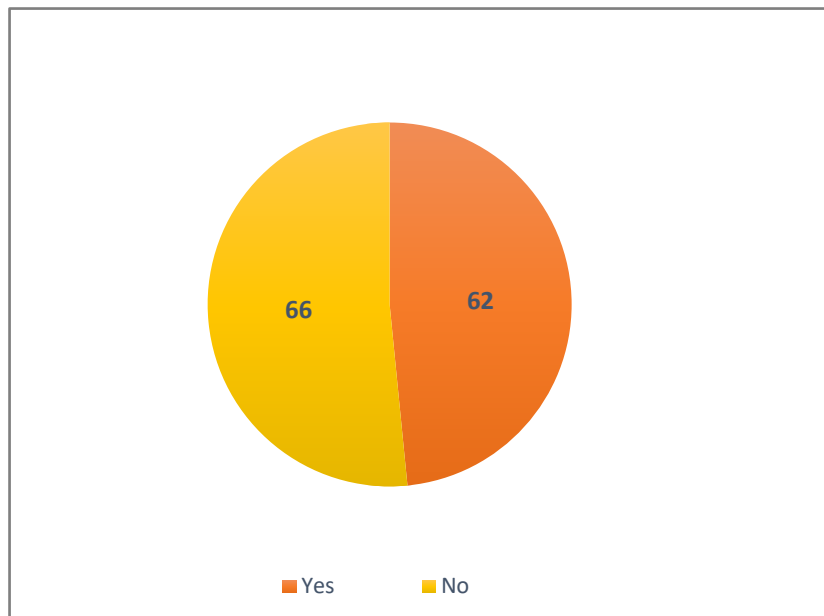
Important: 76 families (59%), (includes 39 families who did not receive the ration & the 37 families who don't have ration cards) have been unable to avail of the ration facilities under the scheme. Note that 39 families (43%) families did not receive any ration from the ration shop. This was primarily because stocks were depleted or the Aadhaar Card linkage failed.

Do you have enough ration to feed everyone in the house?

As on date, 66 families (52%) informed that they did not have enough ration to feed everyone in their family- an increase of 10% when compared to the previous needs assessment report.

62 families mentioned they had enough ration as on date to feed their families for more than a week at least.

9: Do you have enough ration to feed everyone in the house?

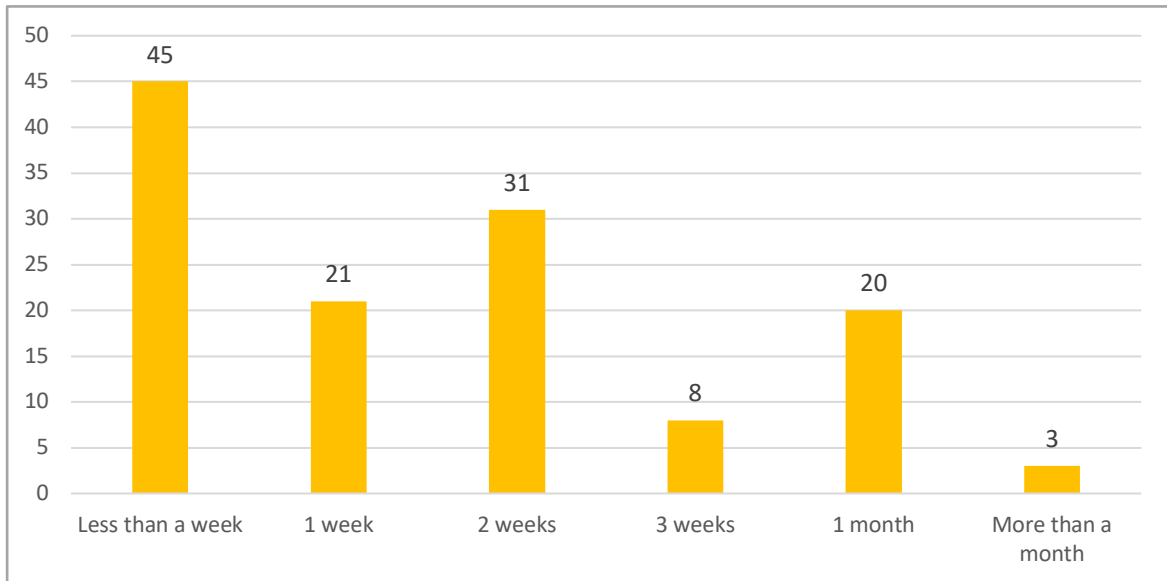


How long will the ration last?

45 families (35%) mentioned that their ration would last less than a week. 21 families mentioned that they will run out of ration in a week's time. 39 families mentioned that they could sustain for ten days to two weeks with their current stock.

23 families mentioned they have enough ration that could last up to a month or more. (9 of these families were supported with 1 month of ration supply in the second week of April by Aarambh India.)

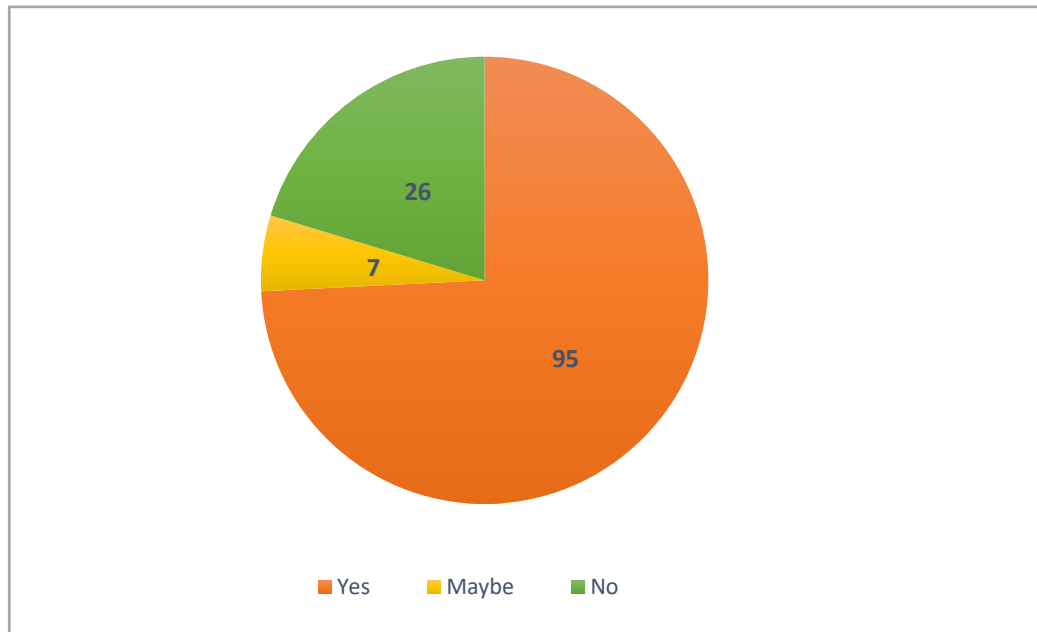
10: How long will their ration last?



Does the family require support for ration?

There has been a 20% increase in the number of families that need ration support since March 2020.

11: Do you need support for ration?

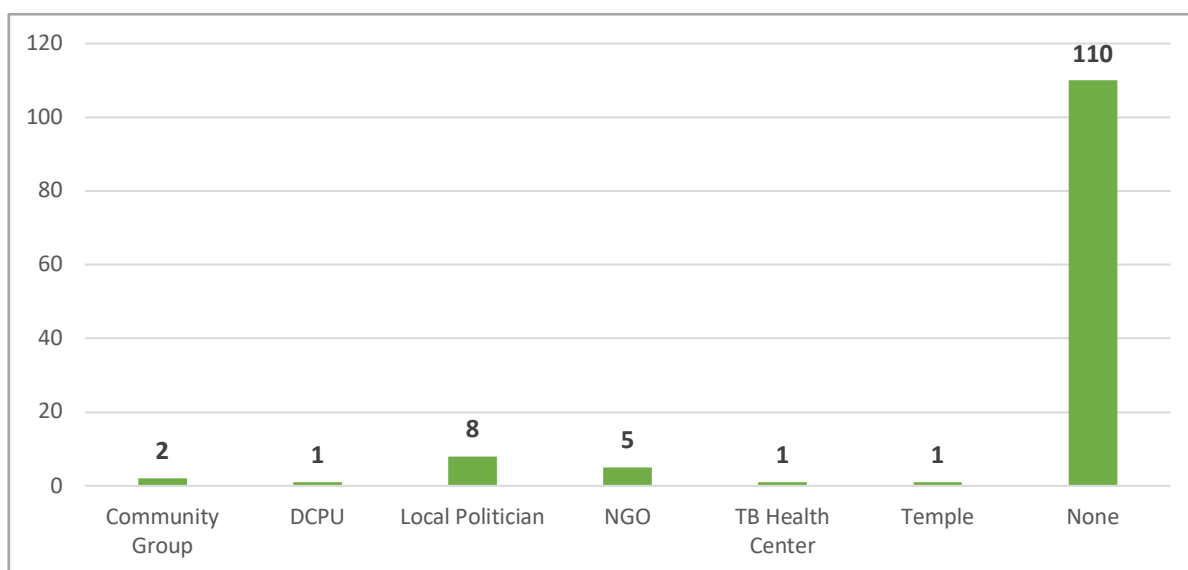


95 families (74%) said they need support for ration. 26 (46%) said they don't need ration as on date. 7 families mentioned that they might require support for acquiring ration incase income generation does not resume soon.

Have you received support from the Government or any other NGO /Institution /Private donor etc. (apart from Aarambh India)?

Since the last assessment, the number of families receiving external support has increased by 11%. Other than the support received from Aarambh India, 86% families have not been able to access any form of government or non-governmental support or aid. In the month of April 2020, 18 families mentioned that they received support from community groups, local politicians, NGOs, DCPUs, TB Health Center and Temple.

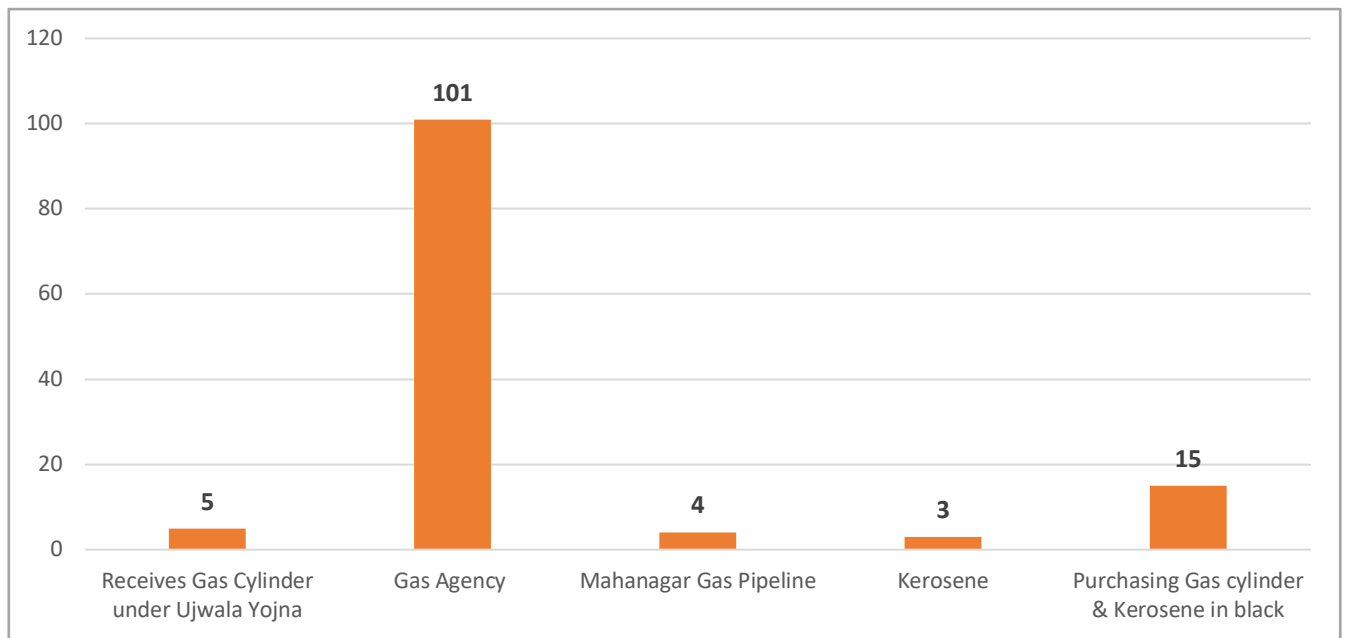
12: Have you received support from the Government or any other NGO /Institution /Private donor etc. (apart from Aarambh India)?



How does the family acquire gas for cooking?

101 families (79%) mentioned that they purchase gas cylinder from authorized gas agencies for prices between Rs.700 to Rs.900. 15 families purchase gas cylinder or kerosene through the black market which costs them between Rs.900 to Rs.1200.

13: How do you procure your cooking gas?



Have the families been able to recharge their phones to keep the basic communication going?

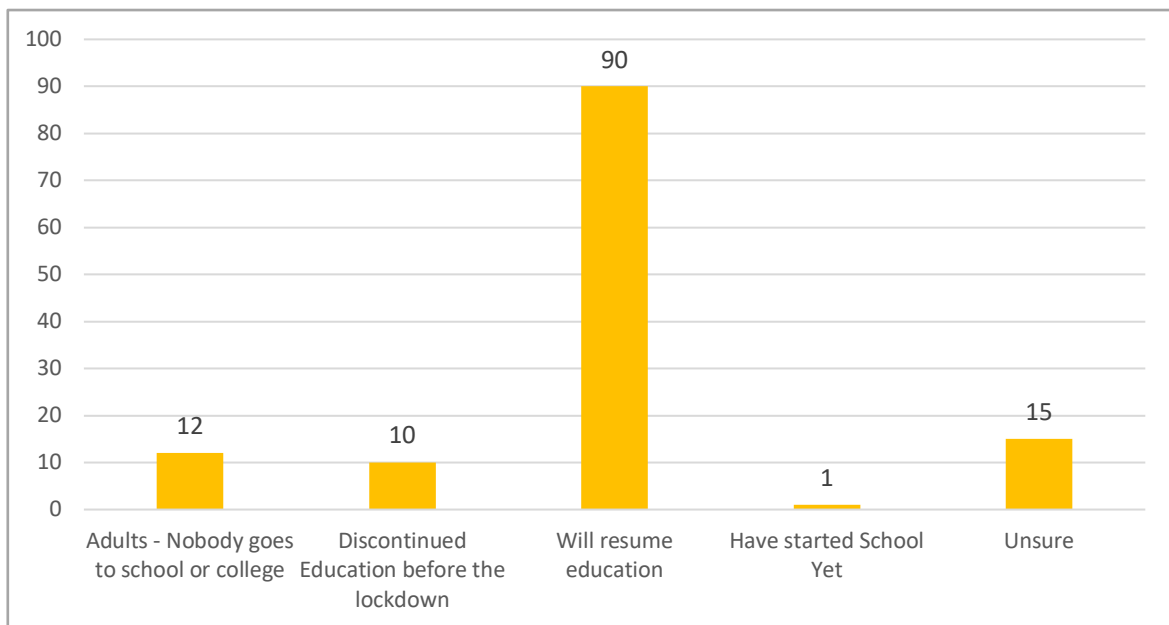
98 families (77%) families informed that they have been able to recharge their phone. The remaining families mentioned that they had a limited amount of money and had to choose between rations and phone recharge. It is important to highlight that out of the 30 families that could not recharge their phones, 4 families had their incoming calls barred as well. In order to reach out to these families, their phones were recharged with minimum amount to keep the incoming calls active.

- Education of Children Post Lockdown

90 families (70%) mentioned that they intend to resume their children’s education as soon as the schools and colleges start post the lockdown. 15 families mentioned that they were unsure if they will let their children resume education, as they weren’t sure if they would be bear the educational expense of their child.

In remaining 23 families, there was no one in studying in the school or college because the children had either discontinued their education before the lockdown or they did not have school or college going children.

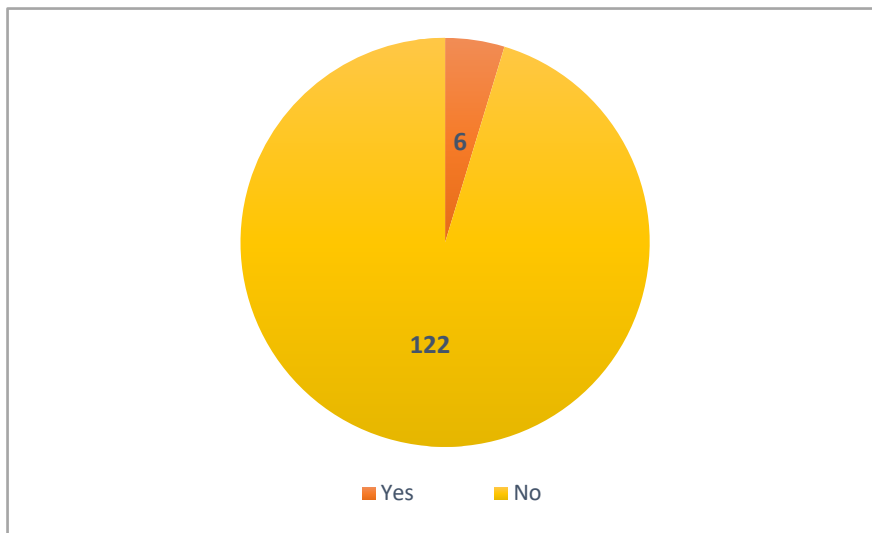
14: Will you continue education of your children post the lockdown?



Are you planning to migrate post the lockdown is lifted?

122 families (95%) mentioned that their current place of residence was their home and that they would continue to stay there. 6 families mentioned that they will migrate to their village post the lockdown. Some families mentioned that they would come back after sometime once everything gets settled.

15: Will you migrate post the lockdown?



- **Biggest Challenges Faced By The Families During The Lockdown**

The three major challenges pointed out by the families were:

- 1. Financial Constrains:** 85 families (66%) mentioned that they were facing financial constraints and crises due to lockdown as they had little or no source of income. Some families were about to exhaust their savings as well.
- 2. Challenge to acquire ration:** 50 families (39%) mentioned that acquiring ration throughout the lockdown has been challenging. This was due to multiple reasons – lack of availability of the ration, ration shops were shut, financial constraints, long queues at the ration shops, etc.
- 3. Unemployment:** 31 families mentioned unemployment as one of their biggest challenge during the lockdown.

Apart from these, families also mentioned that they found it difficult to keep their children engaged, that family members were getting bored, and that there was growing stress amongst the family members especially among those whose area was under containment.

Couple of families were stuck in their village or at their relative's place, which was mentioned as their biggest challenge as the family found themselves dependent on the relative's family during the lockdown.

Some families also mentioned that using public toilet during the lockdown was a challenge, as they are under constant fear of getting infected by Coronavirus.

- Coping Mechanisms & Precautions Followed By The Family During The Lockdown

a. How is the family coping with the lockdown?

The families mentioned that they were going through a lot of fear and stress. It was mentioned in the context of the uncertainties that lay in the futures including their employment status, finances, loan repayments etc. They reported being stressed about the current situation of the lockdown including acquiring ration, and meeting the current basic requirements of the family. The families mentioned that they largely dealt with their emotions by setting a routine for themselves and keeping themselves busy.

Many parents informed that their children were getting bored and it was becoming very difficult for them to keep their children engaged. Many families informed that they weren't following any set routine, and they let children do whatever they wanted inside the home.

The adults in the house kept themselves busy by

- doing household chores and cooking
- Keeping the children engaged by helping them in their studies or playing with them
- Playing board games with the family in the evening. Ludo and Snakes and Ladders were the most played games.
- Watching television shows and new channels
- The women in few families were also doing embroidery & arts and craft work
- Many families mentioned that the grocery shopping was majorly done by the men in the house.

The children in the house are kept busy by

- While some children continued their study by reading textbooks; some children were studying and completing their assignments given by their class teacher through WhatsApp to complete.
- Watching television shows and new channels
- Playing games in-house with their siblings or parents
- Some of them support their parents with the household chores
- Some of them watched YouTube videos on painting, dancing, funny videos

b. What are the Special precautions taken by families' during COVID19?

When enquired about precautions the families have started taking since COVID19, following measures were informed by the family:

- Staying at Home
- Wearing Masks whenever they go out
- Social Distancing
- Children are not sent out to play or purchase ration or vegetables
- Family members wash handwash regularly
- Some families also use sanitizer
- Consumption of Hot Water, Turmeric Milk
- In many families- the family members bath or wash their feet, hands and face once they return home whenever they go out to purchase ration, groceries or to use public toilet.

It is to be noted that 100% families followed at least the basic precautions by staying at home, wearing masks and regular handwash. In addition to this, 44% families (56 families) followed other precautions such as drinking hot water, milk with turmeric, drinking water with *tulasi*, taking a shower as soon as they come back home from outside & sanitizing their living spaces regularly along with the basics .

It is important to highlight here that all the families understood the importance of the lockdown and have not let their children out of the house in order to make sure that they are not infected.

D. Way Forward

The 2nd assessment report highlights that as the lockdown extends, there will be a rise in number of families that will require support not only in terms of finance, ration and health but also emotional and psychological. One of the key issues that will face case managers is to ensure that the ongoing cases are also dealt with in a timely manner, which would be a challenge given the backlog of cases at the judiciary. There is a need to ensure that the cases of child victims of sexual offences is given priority & the matters are taken up as soon as the courts start functioning.

There is a sense of anxiety, panic and insecurity which is gradually rising in the families as they are uncertain about their future, especially once the lockdown is lifted. There could be migration once the lockdown has been lifted, because many of the families are feeling anxious about their jobs. This might have an impact on the victim child's ongoing rehabilitation & case work.

It is important to understand that the concerns and fears of most families we reached out to are around income, livelihood and survival. They are projecting a greater scale of uncertainties once the lockdown is called off. Some families mention that they are even unsure about the continuation of their child's education.

The POCSO cases that they are currently engaged in have been remarked on by the families as an added stressor. Under the circumstance, it needs to be seriously considered if 'justice' will remain a priority for the families. The Criminal justice system must take into account the profoundly debilitating effect of the pandemic and the lockdown has had on the families. It must take on the responsibility of affirmatively motivating the families to access justice. They

must understand the material & emotional realities of the families and be supportive. And least of all, it must take care to not penalize the victims in any manner.

There will also be a need to redefine “child friendliness” under POCSO once the lockdown is lifted in order to ensure that the Criminal justice system takes on the responsibility of affirmatively motivating the families to access justice and not pressurizing them. The material & emotional realities of the families has to be taken into account & systems have to be supportive towards child victims & their families.

There is a need to facilitate close coordination between the health systems & the child protection systems to ensure that there is a proper management & protection provided to children who are affected due to quarantine. Currently the teams are working closely with the department to ensure there is some protocol followed where minors are involved during the quarantine process.

Though there are multiple services and schemes announced by the government, the translation of these schemes on ground need to be further strengthened, in order for the families to benefit from them.

In order to ensure that all the families that require support to our teams will be closely monitoring the situation of these families to ensure that all of them have access to the psycho-social support, adequate supplies and are able to access key Government schemes.

Further, the results of the assessment will be utilized while strategizing our on-ground intervention and long-term advocacy with the Government to ensure that child victims of sexual offences & their families are not left behind amidst this pandemic.

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