

ESSENTIALS DRIVE CONDUCTED DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD

**[REPORT ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF MASKS
AND FOOD PACKETS IN AGRA, U.P.]**

Abstract:

This event was spearheaded by a Paralegal Volunteer from Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S Noida. As India languished under the economic fallbacks of the very necessary lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Volunteers of the Legal Aid Centre also worked tirelessly in order to mitigate the worst effects of this “lesser evil” during the troubling and turbulent times.

Due to the unpredictability of the pandemic’s duration and the uncertainty revolving around state response to the containment and curtailing of employment, the daily wage labourers were among the hardest hit. Stripped of their sole source of income and thereby their dignity, they are in dire need of essentials. With the support of the nongovernmental organisations as well as the encouragement of the local administration, the PLV thus thought of this initiative to distribute essentials to the masses.

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1. Concept Note :-

In these hard times of lockdown, stocked refrigerators and safe shelters are big blessings to have. However, not everyone has the means for this. The two months nationwide lockdown to control the spread of coronavirus in India has affected the livelihood of crores of people. While slum dwellers and daily wage workers are struggling to earn their daily bread, migrant labourers have also been left without work, with some having walked back to their hometowns on foot.

The Members of the Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA never stays behind when it's about the society and the country, during this Country wide Lockdown volunteers of the cell acted as front line warriors who not only engaged in a number of activities but also did these tasks with full dedication and to show that though they are not government volunteers but when it's about the country and the citizens they will be always ready to support. The PLV was worried about the ongoing situation in the country specially his hometown where the number of positive cases blasted like anything making the city on top in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The administration was taking all possible steps to feed the hungry citizens but still they were unable to feed all, being an active member of various NGOs the volunteer with his team decided to move to the streets himself to strengthen the back bone of the local administration and act like front line warriors. The aim was distributing not just cooked and uncooked food kits, but also sanitizers and face masks, with a focus on the economically weaker sections, especially the migrant workers and their families.

2. Objective :-

The main objective of the volunteer was to help the hungry and under privileged people of the society who were most affected by the lockdown, specially daily wage earners and migrant workers waking miles and miles back to their villages. Also to support the local administration in as many activities possible on our behalf and to make sure no one sleeps



without food and water. To prepare masks at cheaper prices and the earnings were used for the betterment of the helpers.

3. Preliminary Preparations :-

Certain important steps were taken in order to better prepare for the essentials drive:-

- a. Requesting help from various NGOs in order to act as an intermediate with the local authorities.
- b. Mobilising the privileged sections of society to donate any funds and essentials they could spare.
- c. Inquiring into the logistics of distributing safety and food kits to the masses.
- d. Equipping the volunteers with gloves and masks as well as ensuring they follow the necessary requisites of social distancing.

4. Conducting the activities :-

The activities started with making food packets in a small garage where we prepared 200 packets on the first day, as the demand and the funds increased we shifted the kitchen in a bigger space and the number of packets increased to 1500 pieces per day. This went for around Ten days but we saw that a number of organizations are coming up with the same and the food has now started getting waste as the requirement was less and as its summers it lasts for less time. So we started providing raw food kits which were enough for a family of five to have for a month.

Along the food packets distribution simultaneously half of the volunteers arranged for the production of masks which were prepared by womens of an ashram who earlier used to make carpets, they made around 20000 masks during the lockdown and these masks were handed over to those in need. This had the added benefit of empowering the women of the community and ensuring that they were able to feed their own families in turn, having the effect of killing two birds with one stone.

5. Conclusion :-

While concluding I would say that in India, the poor are always an afterthought. It seems strange, given that it is a country where millions of people live in extreme poverty, but that is how things have always been. And it wasn't any different in this lockdown. The decision, although necessary, wasn't inclusive of many marginalised sections of the society like daily wage labourers, the homeless population, beggars, slum-dwellers, several low-income groups as well as the elderlies who live alone. Also, as we enter the lockdown phases it is becoming increasingly evident that the true challenge for such people won't be to evade the coronavirus but just to get enough food to stay alive.

There are many ways in which we can serve society. Serving our fellow human beings is bound to please the Supreme One. With this I am carrying on to volunteer myself for the betterment of the society. This all won't be possible without the support and guidance of the administration and my organization members who are working day and night just to ensure no one sleeps hungry. Also I would thank the LAC of my college who keeps me motivated and encourages to perform activities which are for the betterment of the society.

(The photographs relating to this program are attached as annexure 'A')

ANNEXURE – A





