



ASSOCIATION FOR ADVOCACY AND LEGAL INITIATIVES TRUST (AALI)

Humanitarian Crisis Response to Rising Food Insecurities

A report on humanitarian support extended by AALI and its partners in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand during first wave of COVID-19 from May 2020 to Jan, 2021

2020-2021

Background-

Adapting to COVID-19 the pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown has posed a multitude of challenges for women, especially for those who belong to marginalized identities of caste, class, religion, ability, and sexuality. The pandemic has made women only more vulnerable in a society where they are already at the edges. Women have been faced with the immediate challenge of increased risk for violence and decreased access to protection and remedy, being withdrawn into increased unpaid care work inside the household, deprivation from necessities required for a dignified life, discrimination based on other intersectional identities and losing opportunities of work and income. Even with the ease in lockdown, the nature of the pandemic has also made it more difficult for civil society organizations to intervene on ground with the existing strategy that often requires intensive and prolonged interactions with women and the stakeholders. In such changed circumstances, AALI has also felt the need to modify its interventions to adapt to the immediate needs of the beneficiary groups. It was also important that the interventions are sustainable and contextual to the realities of women at the grassroots.

AALI's engagement in this pandemic situation was through its fellows and caseworkers. Around 47 caseworkers and lawyers who work in 47 districts of three states (Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand) are on their feet to extend support in their intervention sites to the most marginalized communities. Some of them work closely with an organization, some work individually in the field and some are lawyers. These partners aimed to access justice through different mechanisms of justice delivery systems.

Apparently, we all were not ready for this sudden lockdown due to Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic declared by WHO. The team started its planning for engagement with all the fellows and caseworkers through virtual spaces. The idea to use these virtual spaces was very new for everyone. All the fellows and caseworkers were supported by the team to prepare their individual plans for this lockdown period.

Rational of states-

In the background of one of the most socio-economically backward states of India, are women in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand particularly from disadvantaged and marginalized communities who do not get opportunities for holistic development in an equal and secure environment. Women face an everyday struggle on issues such as safe mobility, social security, education, access to entitlements and safe spaces, access to resources such as land, etc.

The constitutional and legal framework in India protects the basic rights of all people, but for women, especially those from marginalized communities, realization of these rights has always been fraught with hurdles. Adding to the already existing challenges faced by lakhs of women in the above-mentioned states, we now have a Covid 19 virus outbreak, a global public health and humanitarian emergency.

The lockdown not only affected the male but pushed back women from jobs. Early research on the impact of the lockdown confirms that the drop in employment has not been gender neutral.¹

Mapping the vulnerabilities of women at grassroot during the Covid-19 Lockdown-Research findings

AALI is a feminist legal advocacy and resource group addressing women's issues through a rights-based perspective. AALI envisions an egalitarian social system that recognizes women as complete individuals and equal human beings through advocacy for women's human rights. Our organization undertakes research, advocacy, and direct response with a strong focus on violence against women and the right to choose, since the organization's founding in 1998.

In AALI's experience, socio-economic environment, public policy, societal norms, any disaster situation etc., impact women's lives as much as the situation within the household. Women's right to life with dignity and freedom includes the right to be free from violence as well as right to sexual autonomy, dignified work, food security, right to health and protection from being exploited in any form, etc.

¹ <https://scroll.in/article/979348/in-uttar-pradesh-the-coronavirus-pandemic-is-pushing-women-out-of-job>

The scale of risk and subsequent fatality from the global pandemic of COVID-19 has compelled the state of India to adopt a range of serious measures to contain its effects. While emphasizing and reiterating the importance of physical distancing, the Government of India has imposed four successive nationwide lockdowns between 24th of March to 31st of June 2020.

The lockdown called for limiting the right to mobility except for access to essential commodities such as food, drugs and fertilizer and essential services such as medical services, law enforcement, electricity, water and sanitation.

The categorization of essential and non-essential services has been reviewed and revised through the subsequent phases of the lockdown, while still calling for strict adherence to the norms of physical distancing and confinement to private spaces. In such a situation our responsibility towards ensuring that the human and fundamental rights of people to live a life of dignity has become more conspicuous and urgent. The central and state governments have also announced several schemes to ensure access to necessities such as food and safe shelter for those who are marginalized or vulnerable due to loss of work, wages, and in many cases, even their shelter. The marginalized find it difficult to reach existing schemes and benefits.

Given this context, it is also equally important to underline that in a situation of global crisis where the marginalized are at great risk, those among them identifying as women are standing further at the margins with compounded vulnerabilities. Women are not only more vulnerable because of already poor health, harmful gender stereotypes and restricted mobility; they are also more likely to bear the larger brunt of the pandemic and the lockdown in terms of its social and economic consequences.

The Need

AALI was able to raise some funds to extend humanitarian support in these communities.

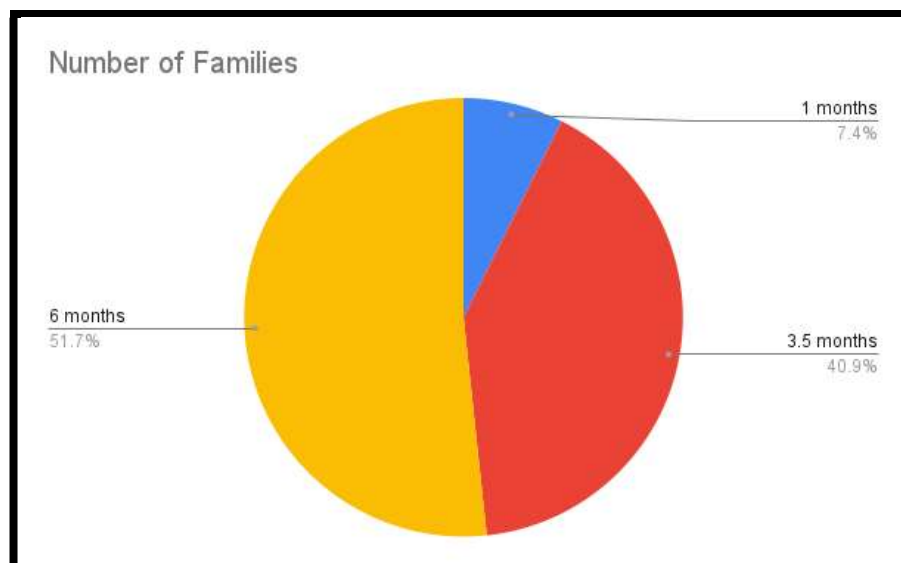
AALI has its presence in the communities through its caseworkers and fellows and lawyers who came forward in this tough time to extend the support to the most marginalized and deprived communities who were

looking towards these frontline defenders with a ray of hope to support them and their families.

In addition to linking the women and other marginalized communities to the government systems in its intervention communities, AALI has also been directly providing monthly ration to the most vulnerable households there. The ration was supported for seven consecutive months so that families can save their small earnings and can be moved more in a sustainable way. AALI through its frontline defenders identified around 50 to 100 families from each district and verified the need for support.

AALI then reached out to a total of 16649 families with immediate food supply. These families were supported for duration of maximum nine months. These families belong to the most marginalized communities of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand and do not have access to PDS services or have a limited access.

Duration of support-



Insight-

- All the families were supported for a minimum of 1 month and extended up to 9 months.
- The duration was extended on the basis of needs of the families.

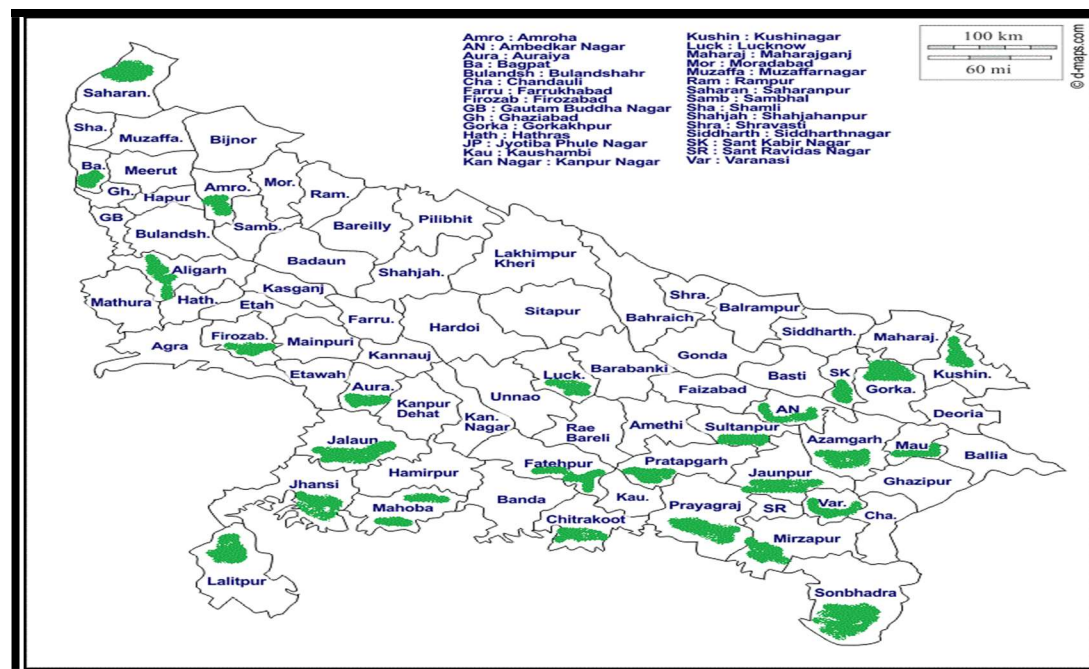
- Team did follow ups with the families who were supported
- In some cases families reached out with the request for extended support.

While our frontline defender extended the ration support to the families, they also ensured that families are made aware of the government schemes like PDS, MANREGA, JAN DHAN YOJNA, etc.

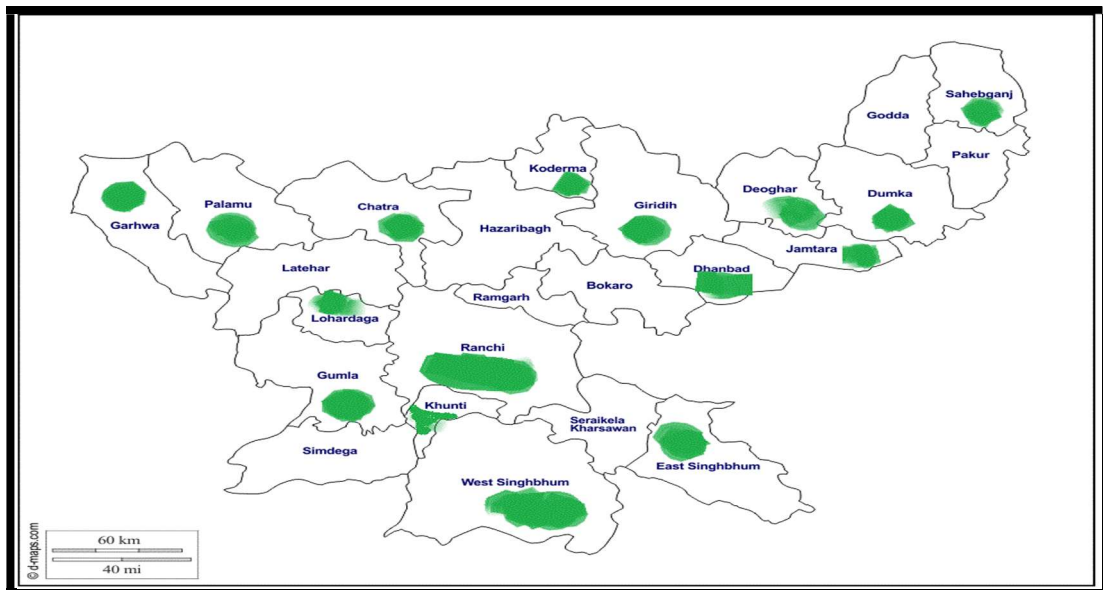
A total of 626 families were supported to access the government schemes out of which 489 are from UP, 117 from Jharkhand and 20 from 1 district of Uttarakhand. Their access to schemes will ensure that the intervention remains sustainable.

Intervention Area

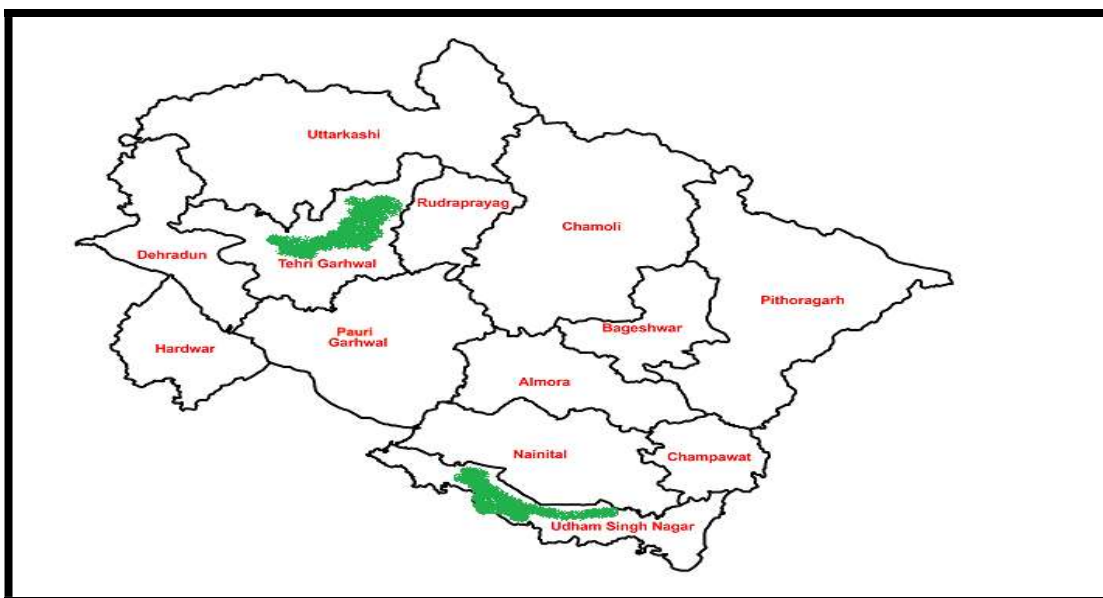
Humanitarian Response in 27 Districts of Uttar Pradesh Saharanpur, Baghpat, Amroha, Aligarh, Firozabad, Auraiya, Jalaun, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Lucknow, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Allahabad, Jaunpur, Ambedkar Nagar, Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Mau, Azamgarh, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Sonbhadra)



Humanitarian Response in 16 Districts of Jharkhand (Sahebganj, Dumka, Girdhi, Dhanbad, Deoghar, Jamtara, Koderma, Chatra, Palamu, Lohardaga, Ranchi, Garhwa, Gumla, Khunti, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum,)



Humanitarian Response in 2 Districts of Uttarakhand (Tehri Garhwal, Rudrapur)



List of essential items which were provided to each family to support.

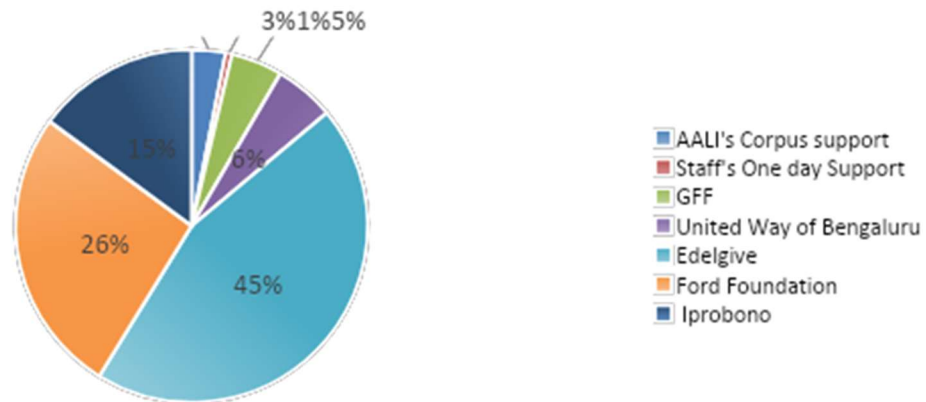
| | Essential Items for distribution in the most marginalized Communities |
|--------|--|
| Sl. No | Essential Item |
| 1 | Wheat Flour-(7kg) |
| 2 | Rice-(7kg) |
| 3 | Sugar-(2 Kg) |
| 4 | Pulse-(3 types) |
| 5 | Salt-(1 Packet) |
| 6 | Basic Spices (1 Packet each) |
| 7 | Edible Oil (1.5 Litre) |
| 8 | Soap (Washing) + Soap (Bath) |
| 9 | Surf |
| 10 | Tea Packet |
| 11 | Powder Milk (In case if Pregnant Woman, Children, Elderly people) (250gms) |
| 12 | Sanitary Pads |

Utilization Report

The organization was able to raise funds through funders and contributors (AALI's corpus and Staff one day contribution) amounting to Rs. 90,52,929/- for Rashan distribution. We expended Rs. 30,85,397/- from April to September, 2020 and further from October to Jan '2021 remaining amount is expended.

100% of the raised amount is spent.

Fund Utilization



Challenges faced on ground

- The process to access government schemes took longer than expected time because of challenges like, no documentation, most of the govt departments were not operational (Supply office etc.)
- Due to restricted mobility and travel the community was not able to access the medical facility.
- Lack of documentation caused difficulty in getting access to these covid relief schemes.
- In many districts the team and caseworkers did advocacy with the different state departments and ensured ration reaches the people in the community on urgent bases.
- Unemployment and loss of jobs were seen at each socio-economic background due to which people had suffered.
- Rise in domestic violence was also seen due to insufficient essential items in home.

Stories from the ground

Case Study-1 -Shashi (Name Changed) from Khunti in Jharkhand. Her family makes a living by making bamboo items. There is a ration card, but her name was not in the list of Kotedar, so she was not getting government ration. When everything was closed in lockdown, both

money and ration were exhausted. After this there was neither money to buy bamboo for making items nor any money to buy ration. For a few days they borrowed food supplies from the ration shop but then the shopkeeper also started asking for money. Shashi said, 'Sometimes I was living on eating only rice and sometimes potato-roti'. In such a situation, when the ration was received from AALI, at least the worry of eating was over. Then when the lockdown opened, she could start making bamboo products again after saving a little money from wages.

Case Study-2- Sanju (Name changed) hails from Thana-Hyder Nagar, District- Palamu, Jharkhand. There are 5 members in the house. All responsibility in the house rests on Sanju's husband. Due to which Sanju's husband started getting very upset and would subject Sanju to mental harassment. The family was deprived of all the benefits provided by the government due to lack of proper documents. They have ration cards but due to not taking the thumb machine, they do not know the ration is available. A situation of starvation ensued in Sanju's family. During the survey conducted by Aali to find a PTA on the status of women, we spoke with Sanju and came to know about their economic status. Seeing the situation, the relief material was offered to Sanju. After receiving the relief material, Sanju got tears in his eyes and thanked the team, "You don't even know me personally nor am I a resident of your village. Even after you help us, I will never forget this help. "

Case Study-3- Gayatri Devi (Name changed), about 37 years old, resident of Mohalla Elan Nagar in Firozabad district of Uttar Pradesh. A year ago, her husband died due to stomach Cancer. Gayatri Devi has three sons and a daughter. All four children are still minor and one son is handicapped. Mother-in-law's responsibility is also on Gayatri Devi. Father-in-law has suffered from a paralysis disease a few years ago. After the husband passed away, the financial condition of the house started deteriorating. Gayatri Devi and her children used to work as bangle makers, but due to the lockdown, the bangle work was also stopped. The financial situation became even more miserable due to lack of work. There is a ration card, but for most ration you'd still have to spend a little money. Only rice is available for free. As soon as the ration material was made available by a fellow of AALI, happiness was

shown on Gayatri Devi's face and she said that in this time of our crisis, Aali team has become our support.

Case Study-4- Rekha (name changed) has visual disability. Her husband also had a partial visual disability. Rekha's husband works as a laborer in the village. But they are not able to earn properly because of their disability. Because of Covid 19 related lockdown, they lost whatever limited opportunities of earning they had. The disabled pension remains their only support, which is available once in 6 months. Rekha and her husband had to go hungry for several days. Rekha had to beg for food from nearby houses. According to Rekha, when she asked for food from the people, she faced a lot of embarrassment, so it was more appropriate to stay hungry. The caseworker came to know about this family through the survey. After getting ration, Rekha said that now we will not have to go hungry nor will we have to bear embarrassment from anyone,

Case Study-5- Roshni (Name changed) of Rajipura of Jalaun district of Uttar Pradesh wanted to pursue a degree in BSc. The financial condition of the house was not too great. The father was raising his three children as a laborer. His father also agreed to Roshni's insistence. After this the lockdown took place and all the work came to a standstill. The father said that it is difficult to maintain the family, then where will the cost of admission and education come from. When AALI's caseworker came to know about the financial condition of the family during the survey, he gave a ration kit to this family. After this, the caseworker also talked to the father about how important the study of Roshni was. Now he had no problem of food, so he agreed to continue the education of his daughter. Roshni is very happy with this. She wants to study and get a job.

Glimpse from field









THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 IS NOT YET FINISHED SO LET US JOIN OUR HANDS TO SUPPORT THE MOST MARGINAZED PEOPLE IN ACCESSING THEIR RIGHTS.....