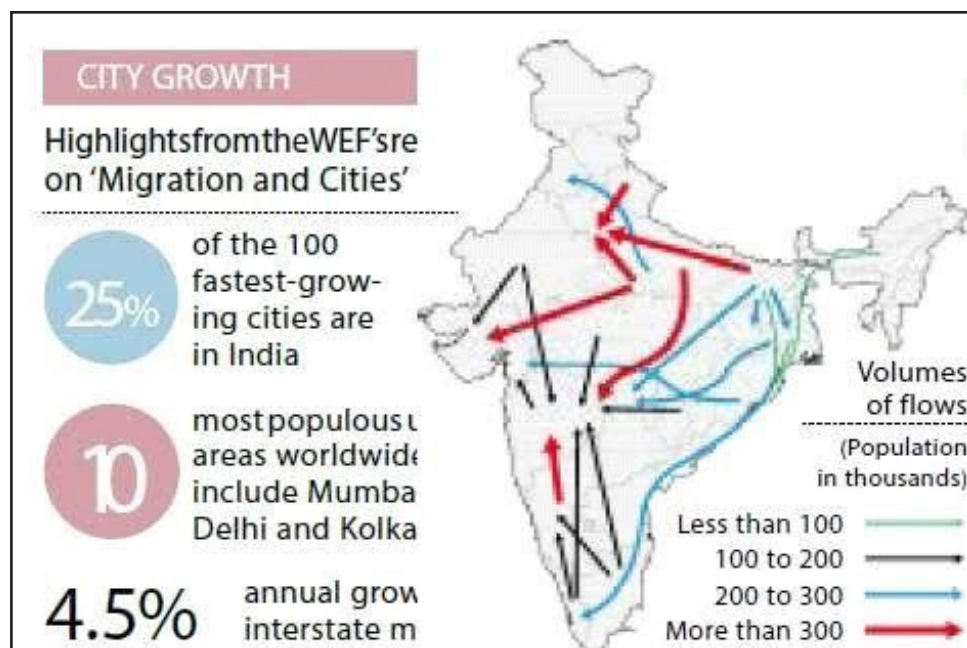




# Impact of COVID19 crisis on migrant workers in Tamil Nadu and the response from civil society

Himakiran Anagula

Tamil Nadu being a heavily urbanized state with a large degree of industrialization has attracted workers from all parts of the country in search of livelihoods. The spread ranges widely both in terms of geographical origin and the educational qualifications. People from the North Eastern states come to work in the BPO, hospitality and beauty care sectors. Educated youth from across the country through the IT/ITES, MNC, industrial sectors and blue collar workers from the Northern and Eastern states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bengal come to work in the construction/infrastructure, restaurant sectors as well as in several small and medium level enterprises. Recently, there is a small percentage of farm labour too.



Source: World Economic Forum report on Migration and its impact on cities.

Apart from Chennai, the industrial clusters of Ranipet, Sriperumbudur-Oragadam-Chengalpattu in the Northern region, Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Namakkal in the Western parts of the state, Tiruchy, Madurai and Kanyakumari hosted a substantial population engaged in various contractual jobs. Conservative estimates range from 15-20 lakh migrant workers being present in Tamil Nadu with over 5,00,000 in Chennai region alone.

## Early days of the crisis

In an already tottering economy, the arrival of a potent virus spreading at a pace beyond the capabilities of our preparedness was the proverbial death blow. The failure of the Union Government to recognise the enormity and virulence of the pandemic by not closing the borders of the country in early to mid-February and not shutting down inter/intra state transport till the third week of March led to Tamil Nadu especially Chennai region becoming a hotspot quite early. During the period of January 18 to March 23, an estimated 15 lakh people arrived in India from other countries.

Chennai being an international hub and Tamil Nadu being a state with a large volume of international arrivals was hit badly with many hotspots. The first lockdown was announced by the Tamil Nadu Government on the 23rd of March for a period of 8 days starting midnight on the 24th till 31st of March. This set off a panic movement of people in the cities towards their native places within Tamil Nadu. When the Union Government announced a 3-week lockdown on the 24th of March with just 4 hours' notice, everything was shut down with zero movement of people, goods in any direction, with exceptions being essential goods including food and medicine.

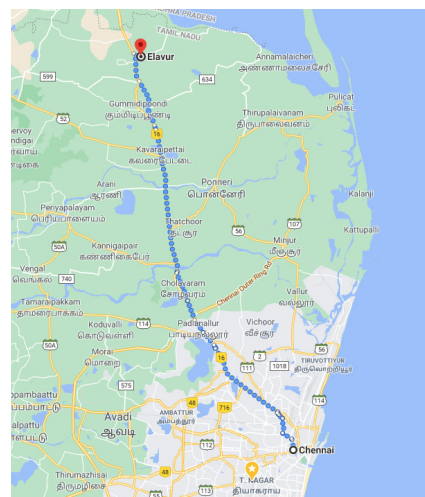
Most of the migrant workers here are tied to contractors who get orders from larger contractors or companies to execute various work. People are housed in temporary accommodation on the project sites or nearby low-cost housing, often in crowded conditions. In most cases, the contractors provided some food assistance during the first lockdown. Civil society volunteers, NGOs who are well networked and experienced in relief work due to the work done from Tsunami times to the 2015 Chennai floods stepped up and started food distribution measures.

This coupled with access to inexpensive food through Amma canteens in the urban areas helped in mitigating the impact of the crisis in the short term. When the lockdown was extended to the first week of May, things started heading downhill. Contractors and house owners started asking the workers to leave the housing as rents were not being paid. Most of the contractors themselves were not paid for the previous 2-3 months by their clients. Tamil Nadu Government announced a token relief measure of Rs.1,000 per ration card holder. This, in a state like Tamil Nadu with a higher cost of living, did not amount to much.

## Response by Local Civil Society Volunteers

When the lockdown was relaxed on the 4th May, people started moving towards their hometowns in Tamil Nadu as well as other states. Migrant workers started moving towards the northern end of the state - Thiruvallur district which borders Andhra Pradesh.

On April 22nd, a group had crossed Elavur, a border town about 50 kms from Chennai. Our colleague, S. Thilak Raj who runs Sevai Karangal (<https://sevaikarangal.org.in>) an NGO in the region chanced upon them and gave them some food and water. By the first week of May, they had reached their homes in the district of Visakhapatnam, 715 kms away.





Himakiran, who farms in the region and visited his farms every day, saw workers on the highways headed out of Chennai towards Andhra during the first ten days of May. The numbers were increasing daily with police stopping people and sending them back. Thilak had set up a relief centre at Elavur providing food and water by tying up with local volunteers from Arul Jothi Vallalar Arakkattalai and Uravu Palangal a team of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the Gummidipoondi camp for the workers.

On the 12th May, Anantha Sayanan of Safe Food Alliance, Tamil Nadu had posted on Facebook that he along with a few others was visiting the area to meet and express solidarity with the walking workers. He reported at the end of the day that the situation was getting worse with about 1500-2000 people walking and that we had to initiate relief work. Apart from Thilak and Anantha Sayanan, many from our network of volunteers, activists like Ariwarasan, Raveen Carr, Prasanna Gandhi, Parthasarathy, Krishna Kumar decided to get involved in relief work. The Elavur relief centre was the hub for all the on-field coordination while there was a backend team of volunteers led by Subha Bharadwaj, Radhika Rammohan of Restore who set up a call centre to register migrant groups with technical support from Dilip Srinivasan. Nityanand Jayaraman collected data to be used in the PIL filed by a team member asking the Madras High Court for a direction to the government to take steps to mitigate the situation. Suresh Lakshmiopathy of Organic Farmers Market helped maintain accounts, monitor fund collection and disbursal.

**Anantha Sayanan** is with **Aparna Krishnan** and 35 others  
13 May · 🌐

\*Pl read fully, u can help for sure\*

So, went to the Kolkata highway on the northern outskirts of Chennai and followed the walking migrants till Tada (AP Border). I had the ever-ready volunteer [Ariwarasan Ai](#) joining me. (i called him 630am and he was ready to join me in 15 mins!!).. we set off to the Kolkata road.

we saw 100s of them walking..its a sad scene..  
some of them with kids, youngsters and ladies, all of them walking...  
Each holding a sack full of stuff on head..and walking in this sun..to note that, one sack is all their asset is another sad story..

Most of them are walking bcos they don't have work or food or money here..  
they all had come here to work in various places (mostly restaurants or as daily labour) and since March they have all been struggling..some of them were helped by their employers for short periods after which they also left them.. Not a single one was angry or said anything in accusatory tone..

"last I ate was yday morning and previous to that was one day before.."  
"we will walk all the way home.. yes, I know its more than 1000 kms what else to do?"  
"I have no job or money or food.. what to do? And staying here means starving and paying rent"  
"yes I have to walk with the kid and wife..no other way"  
"no trains, no word from govt.. no food too.. what to do"  
"even if they leave trains now, we can get tickets only after a month..so no other go but to walk"

its such a pathetic scene..and to see so many of our fellow citizens walking is such a sad sight..and to know that they have no other option and no money left.. I saw one man limping but catching up pace with rest every now and then and continuing..

So this is what we did..we took lotsa bread, fruits, biscuits and distributed to them..and we were very happy to see some locals had kept water bottles on the road side in a dabba for the walking migrants to pick up..

As we were distributing also we saw some locals come and distribute food packets..  
That is Real India! Rural india!!

So what we can all do is :  
1/ Pl try and contribute as much as u can asap. , its just that a few of us volunteers got together and are trying to help these poor people..so cash or biscuits or fruits or breads is best.  
2/ If u want to transfer, pl do so to 'Sevai karangal' with whom we work closely. I fully vouch for them and their founder [S Thilak Raj](#) a close friend n co-traveller. PM me to get their details.  
3/ when I told this to [Prasanna Gandhi](#) on the way, he immediately felt so touched and jumped in. even b4 I cud reach Chennai he had talked to few people and organised for 1000 loaves of bread and water bottles. U can do something like that. He is already on the way to Gummidipondi / Kolkata road.  
4/ Prasanna was suggesting something else too: he said some 10 of us shud go in 10 vehicles and pick up as many in our vehicles and drop them some 10-15 kms away or in AP border.  
5/ when I was told the AP police in the TN-AP border are not allowing. People like KK have assured to take it up to some higher officials and ensure no harassment and even help - like water and drops in tractors for groups of ppl. (that has been done in some parts of AP by the govt officials!!), U can pitch in here too.  
6/ if u cant reach us, u can reach the walking migrants directly.. go to the redhills area (on kolkatta/Tada road) there will be hundreds walking in groups.  
7/ I also saw some youngsters cycling..i also spotted a young man carrying a pump tool but still..

7/ I also saw some youngsters cycling..i also spotted a young man carrying a pump tool but still..  
8/ we shall note down some of the numbers and keep a tab..just to know about their progress. A team that left Chennai on april 22nd reached Vizag on 2nd May.. yes all of them! We were mutually so happy:-)  
9/ I shall share a route of theirs soon..with all towns enroute. if u can pass it to ur friends and ask them to help with water, food or what ever, it will be great.. we all owe that much to these beautiful people..  
10/ PLEASE pitch in and asap for the help is needed NOW..  
-Ananthoo 9444166779



You, Rama Subramanian, Aparna Krishnan and 243 others · 119 comments 264 shares

Like Comment Share

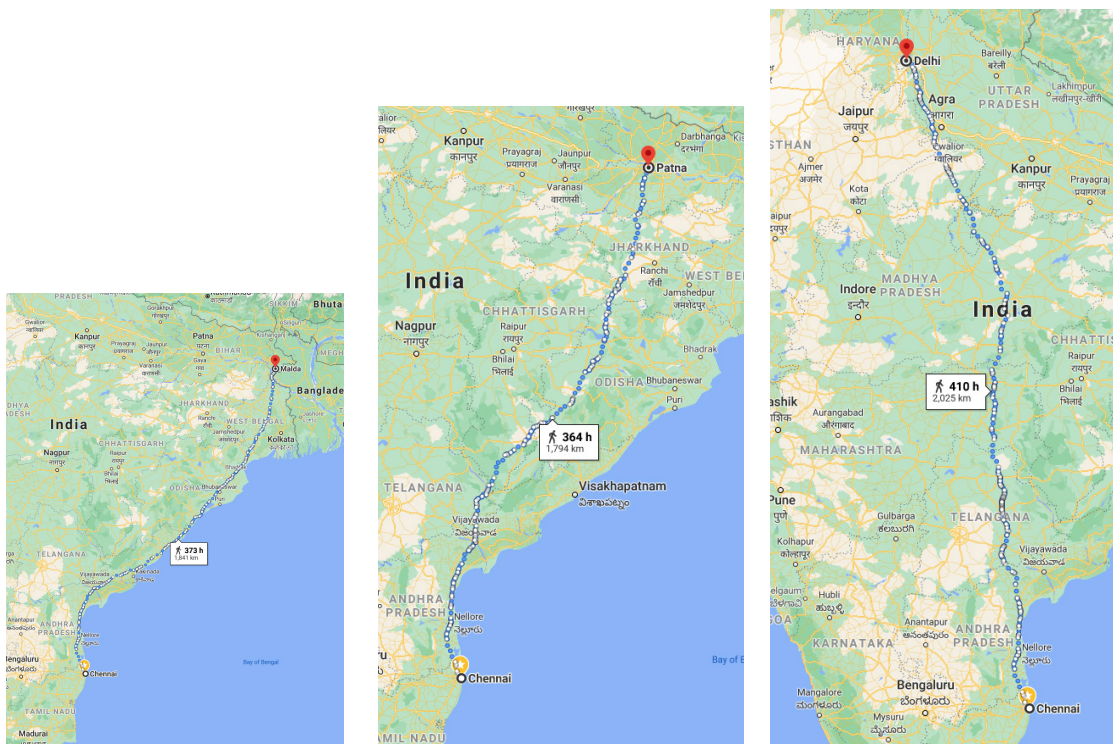
Himakiran suggested that we connect to the network of civil society activists, agro ecological organisations along the three main routes out of Tamil Nadu heading into the Northern, Eastern states.

Chennai to Bengal and the Northeast via Coastal Andhra, Coastal Odisha.



Chennai to Eastern UP/Bihar via Coastal Andhra, Telangana, Chhattisgarh.

Chennai to Delhi via Coastal Andhra, Telangana, Vidarbha, Madhya Pradesh, UP.



The plan was to have a relief centre every 50-60 kms along the route manned by volunteers. With careful planning and coordination, the team set up a network along these routes, with help from Kavitha Kuruganti of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture who connected with many volunteer groups across the country. Akshay, John, Samuel from Krea University in Sri City, Andhra, Asha Kranti at Vijayawada, Sai Pallavi at Nellore, Rythu Swarajya Vedika in Andhra and Telangana, Living Farms in Odisha and many more such groups stepped up to manage the situation along the way.



Some of the team members at the Elavur relief centre.

## Registration

Initial relief work involved stopping the workers, giving them bread, biscuits, glucose, and water. Pain balms were also given to some of them. Registration was done with the following details collected; names, location from where they started, which district and state they were headed to, number of people including men, women, and children. Apart from this, depending on the size of the group, mobile numbers of one or two people in the group as point of contact with instructions to keep only one of the phones powered on, to save battery power. The workers were also given phone numbers of any one of the volunteers they had met with instructions to call them in case they faced any issue down the road. We had assured them that, we have talked to our friends in different states and they would be met with food and water every 50-60 kms. Once registration details were noted on paper, photos of the same were taken and sent by WhatsApp to the backend team for entry into the database.

The forms used to collect, collate information, and track relief work, status of the migrant groups.

Occupation of Head of Family \*

☐ Auto/ Taxi Driver
☐ Gardener
☐ Electrician
☐ Security personnel
☐ Self Employed/ Business
☐ Plumber
☐ Mechanic
☐ Other...

What is needed? Amount or article that can help \*

Please enter the amount that would be of help in INR or article as sewing machine etc

Short-answer text

Other Remarks

Any other detail which needs attention or immediate action

## Entry Form - TN Migrant Relief

Details of Migrant Groups From Chennai

\*Required

Primary contact name \*

Your answer

Primary contact mobile number \*

Your answer

Primary contact number network provider \*

- ☐ Airtel  
☐ Jio  
☐ Vodafone  
☐ Idea  
☐ Other:

Primary contact Aadhar number \*

Your answer

Destination state \*

- ☐ Andhra Pradesh  
☐ Assam  
☐ Bihar  
☐ Chattisgarh  
☐ Jharkhand  
☐ Karnataka  
☐ Madhya Pradesh  
☐ Maharashtra  
☐ Nepal  
☐ Orissa  
☐ Rajasthan  
☐ Tamil Nadu  
☐ Telangana  
☐ Uttar Pradesh  
☐ West Bengal  
☐ Other:

Destination Address \*

Your answer

Destination village / town / city \*

Your answer

Destination District \*

Your answer

Current stay in Tamilnadu \*

- ☐ Where they used to reside earlier  
☐ Moved to shelter home  
☐ Road  
☐ Other:

Residence address in Tamilnadu \*

Your answer

If shifted to shelter home or some other place, mention the address below

Your answer

Occupation

Your answer

No of people in group \*

Your answer

No of women in group (fill as 0 if none) \*

Your answer

No of children(under 16) in group (fill as 0 if none) \*

Your answer

For how many years did the group stay in Tamilnadu? \*

- ☐ < 1 year  
☐ Other:

Did the group register in Tamilnadu portal for train journey? \*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

If yes, acknowledgement number?

Your answer

Did the group start their journey back home? \*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

If yes, mode of journey?

- ☐ Walk  
☐ Cycle  
☐ Truck  
☐ Train  
☐ Other:

Any distress?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

If yes, what is the distress?

- ☐ No food  
☐ No shelter  
☐ Issue with landlord  
☐ Police trouble  
☐ Other:

Monetary assistance required? \*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

If yes, for what?

- ☐ Food  
☐ To go back home  
☐ Mobile recharge  
☐ Grocery  
☐ Other:

Comments (if any)

Your answer

## Migrant workers Account Details Covid19

To help in relief and rehabilitation of migrant workers and others affected by Covid 19 pandemic.

ENSURE CAPS IS ON.

To Avoid Errors Do not Cut & paste from External Sheet, MANUAL ENTRY please.

\*Required

Case Number \*

Mention as 0 if it is a new case, else fill in existing case number

Your answer

State \*

Choose

Phone Number \*

Phone Number of the Migrant Worker

Your answer

Volunteer Name \*

Choose

Member Serial Number \*

Eg: If the case has 10 members and assume that details of 2 members are filled already using this form, you mention as 3 while filling the form for 3rd member.

Your answer

Member Name \*

Ensure that CAPS LOCK IS ON

Your answer

Bank Account Holder Name \*

Ensure CAPS LOCK IS ON

Your answer

Bank Account Number \*

First character should be apostrophe and ensure absence of space

Your answer

IFSC Code \*

Ensure that CAPS LOCK IS ON & Check Validity of IFSC Code <https://ifsc.bankifsc.com/>

Your answer





Registration and relief material being given.

## Government machinery and the realities of ground level administration

All arrangements were done by the team with food being made available for a few hundred people on a short notice by Ravin, Prasanna and Thilak. Himakiran, Thilak, Krishna Kumar, Parthasarathy, Ariwarasan and Vedhan Shiva spent time tracking groups of migrants on the roads and collecting initial details, assigning case numbers, and registering them in the backend. The backend team would upload all information to the database and a volunteer who spoke the language of the group was assigned to them. They served as the point of contact for the group till they reached home, and sometimes even after. Many a friendship was made this way.

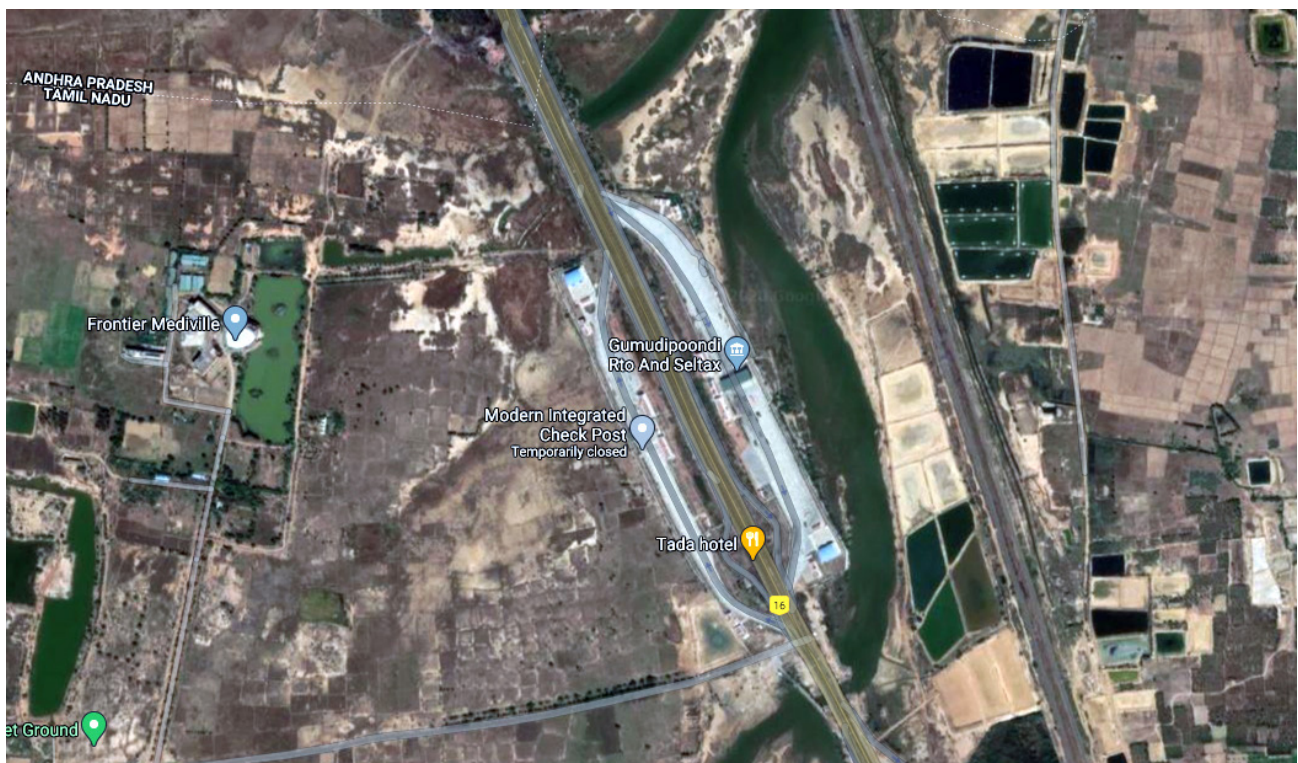






The reality of the unplanned lockdown in an image.

After we started guiding workers to the border, we realised that the Tamil Nadu police, and the Andhra police were not allowing people to cross over. The border is close to a lagoon and many workers tried wading through water and walking in the night to cross into Andhra.



We went up to the check post to demand the police let people cross over, but they refused. The Andhra police was even picking up workers who had walked 30-40kms into the state and dropping them back at the border. From the border the Thiruvallur district police were chasing people away or sending them in vehicles to be dropped off at the Chennai District police limits. The same was seen between local police station limits. The approach taken by the officials was to move the workers outside their jurisdiction, thereby making it a problem for someone else to deal with.



The officials did not have a clue on how to handle the situation, which was also complicated by the workers not knowing English/Tamil and the officials not knowing Hindi. On May 13th and 14th this situation escalated with thousands being chased away in either direction. It was quite frustrating for the volunteers to see their efforts being wasted as the workers were being sent back. A lot of the images and videos were sent to friends in the media and posted on social media with a request to highlight the same for the authorities to see. On the very day we had registered 700 workers within a five hour period, the Chennai Corporation commissioner replied to a question from the media stating, a few people might have left due to anxiety.

<https://twitter.com/ahmedshabbir20/status/1261247917471367174>

## Public Private Partnership

It was decided that this matter would be taken up with the higher officials in the Tamil Nadu government. The Tamil Nadu government had appointed a nodal officer for migrant worker movement, Mr. Atulya Mishra IAS. The team got in touch with him and Special Coordinator for Chennai region, Mr. Pankaj Bansal IAS to take cognisance of the situation and provide relief. We requested that they set up relief centres to house the workers and arrange for trains for them to go back home. On the night of the 15th, the police were taking away many of the workers and the team pursued them and demanded to know where they were being taken. After a lot of pressure, the police arranged for them to be housed at TJS Engineering College for a few days.



Workers being registered at the TJS Engineering College RC.

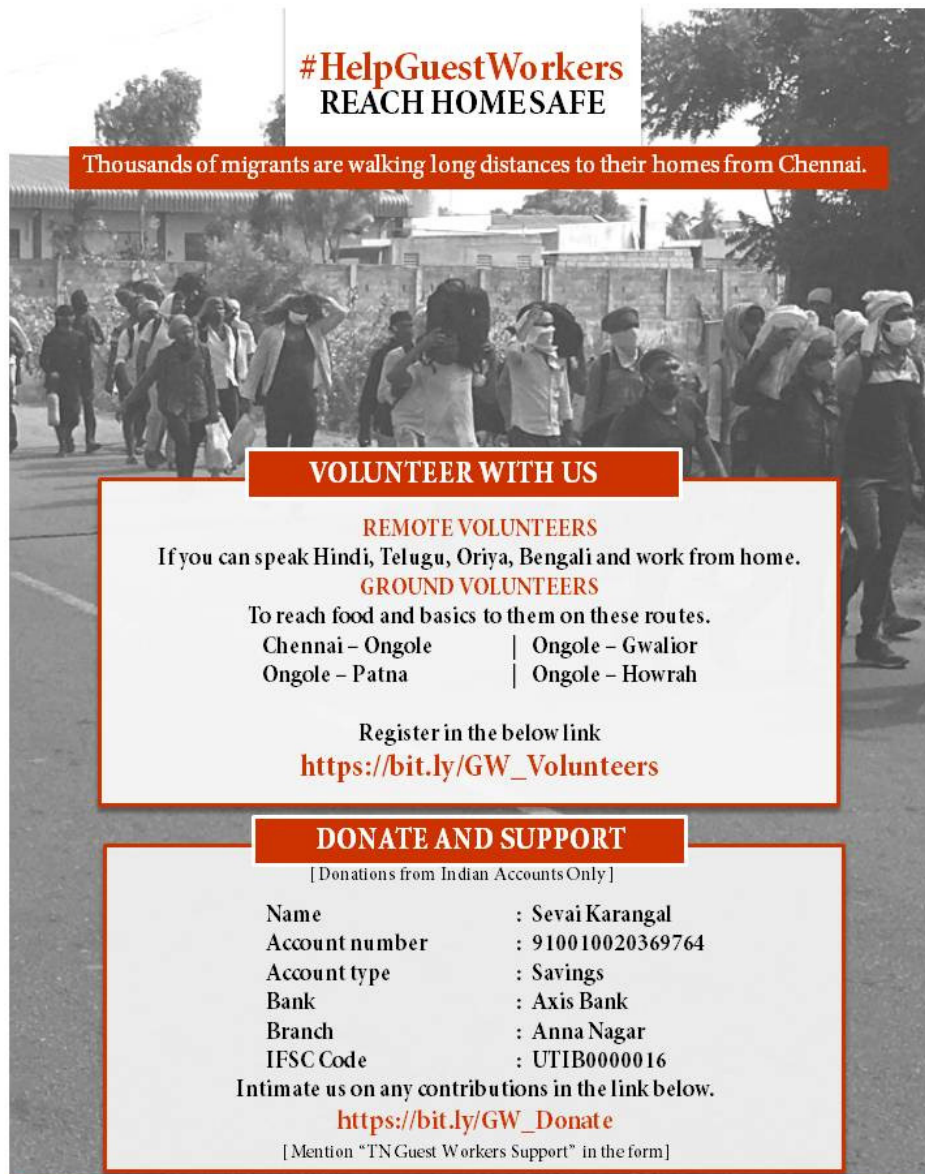
After a day or so, we were given a list of 25 relief centres (RCs) that had been set up in Thiruvallur district. The team split into two groups of 2-3 people each and visited each RC on the 20th of May. At each RC, we would ask the officials for state wise details of workers who have left the previous day, who will be leaving that day and currently staying. Apart from this, the



available capacity and food needs were noted down. In most cases, the revenue officials who were handling the RCs sought help for food and this was provided with over 1000 meals being sent to different RCs three times a day.

Once this system was effective, we urged the administration to replicate the same in Chennai, Chengalpattu, and Kanchipuram districts which together with Thiruvallur district form the KTCC Greater Chennai region. Over the next few weeks, we set up a system where workers identified in any part of the districts would be added to the database, volunteer assigned, and revenue officials of the block informed. The backend volunteer team would follow up to ensure the workers were registered at an RC and travel arrangements had been made over the next few days. Trains were being run from Chennai Central, Egmore, Thiruvallur, Chengalpattu stations with a frequency of 4-5 per day, apart from other cities of Tamil Nadu. This helped streamline the process of sending workers back home.

## Impact and Reach



**#HelpGuestWorkers  
REACH HOMESAFE**

Thousands of migrants are walking long distances to their homes from Chennai.

**VOLUNTEER WITH US**

**REMOTE VOLUNTEERS**  
If you can speak Hindi, Telugu, Oriya, Bengali and work from home.

**GROUND VOLUNTEERS**  
To reach food and basics to them on these routes.

Chennai – Ongole	Ongole – Gwalior
Ongole – Patna	Ongole – Howrah

Register in the below link  
[https://bit.ly/GW\\_Volunteers](https://bit.ly/GW_Volunteers)

**DONATE AND SUPPORT**  
[ Donations from Indian Accounts Only ]

Name	: Sevai Karangal
Account number	: 910010020369764
Account type	: Savings
Bank	: Axis Bank
Branch	: Anna Nagar
IFSC Code	: UTIB0000016

Intimate us on any contributions in the link below.  
[https://bit.ly/GW\\_Donate](https://bit.ly/GW_Donate)  
[ Mention "TN Guest Workers Support" in the form ]

Contact | Mr.Himakiran: 98409 04244 | Mr.Ananthoo : 94441 66779

We had used Sevai Karangal as the official entity to collect and disburse funds. A total of Rs.37,31,672/- was collected and spent during the process. The full details can be seen here: <https://sevaikarangal.org.in/migrant-workers-expense-accounts/>



HOME ABOUT US HOW COULD YOU HELP PROJECTS PASUMAI VOLUNTEER DONATION

Date	Description of Expense	Beneficiary Count	Unit Cost	Amount	Category	Paid From	METRICS	
02-Apr-20	Korattur Migrant workers	9	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 9,900.00	FOOD	Thilak account	₹ 37,31,672.99	Total
14-Apr-20	Ramachandrapuram	6	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 6,600.00	FOOD	Sevai Karangal account	₹ 37,31,672.99	Total
22-Apr-20	Kulathu Medu	21	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 23,100.00	FOOD	Sevai Karangal account		
22-Apr-20	Peddakuppam	7	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 7,700.00	FOOD	Sevai Karangal account	₹ 0.00	Balance
08-May-20	Mask	470	₹ 5.00	₹ 2,350.00	MEDICAL	Cash	17123	No of
08-May-20	Migrants from Lucknow	2	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 2,200.00	FOOD	Cash		
08-May-20	Migrants from Vizainagaram	12	₹ 1,100.00	₹ 13,200.00	FOOD	Cash		
08-May-20	Biscuit packets for Migrant workers	500	₹ 10.00	₹ 5,000.00	FOOD	Cash		
08-May-20	water Bottle	500	₹ 12.00	₹ 6,000.00	FOOD	Cash		
08-May-20	Transportation			₹ 1,516.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
11-May-20	Transportation			₹ 2,134.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
13-May-20	Food Through ARULJOTHI VALLALAR ARAKATTALAI	100	₹ 20.00	₹ 2,000.00	FOOD	Cash		
13-May-20	Biscuit packets for Migrant workers	192	₹ 4.50	₹ 864.00	FOOD	Cash		
13-May-20	Water dispenser		₹ 125.00	₹ 250.00	FOOD	Cash		
13-May-20	Transportation			₹ 2,272.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
13-May-20	Ready to drink milk to Migrant workers	30		₹ 2,700.00	FOOD	Sevai Karangal account		
16-May-20	Breakfast Groceries for Migrant workers	100		₹ 1,400.00	FOOD	Cash		
16-May-20	Stationary			₹ 440.00	OTHERS	Cash		
16-May-20	Transportation			₹ 2,210.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
16-May-20	Groceries for Lunch for Migrant workers	250		₹ 2,000.00	FOOD	Cash		
16-May-20	Groceries for Dinner for Migrant workers	200		₹ 1,600.00	FOOD	Cash		
16-May-20	Transportation of Food			₹ 500.00	TRANSPORT	Cash		
16-May-20	Refreshments to volunteers	20		₹ 350.00	FOOD	Cash		
17-May-20	Water Bottle	94	₹ 15.00	₹ 1,410.00	FOOD	Cash		
17-May-20	Groceries for Breakfast and Dinner	150	₹ 765.00	₹ 1,465.00	FOOD	Cash		
17-May-20	Transportation of Food			₹ 500.00	TRANSPORT	Cash		
17-May-20	Advance Travel charges for 3 Vans to Orrisa	30		₹ 20,000.00	TRANSPORT	20k Thilak account		
17-May-20	Advance Travel charges for 3 Vans to Orrisa	30		₹ 28,000.00	TRANSPORT	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
18-May-20	Groceries for Breakfast and Dinner	200		₹ 1,750.00	FOOD	Cash		
18-May-20	Transportation of Food			₹ 500.00	Transport	Cash		
18-May-20	Food to Sona Gauda & Group	21		₹ 4,200.00	FOOD	paid through Suresh		
19-May-20	Groceries for Breakfast and Dinner	150		₹ 1,640.00	FOOD	Cash		
19-May-20	Transportation of Food			₹ 500.00	TRANSPORT	Cash		
19-May-20	Food & water For Padi Migrants	30	₹ 1,495.00	₹ 1,495.00	FOOD	Cash		
19-May-20	Transportation			₹ 1,700.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
19-May-20	Balance Travel charges for 3 Vans to Orrisa	30		₹ 29,400.00	TRANSPORT	Thilak account		
19-May-20	Groceries for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner	400		₹ 3,500.00	FOOD	Thilak account		
19-May-20	Food for 21 people, 2 days at 100/meal	21		₹ 4,200.00	FOOD	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Grocery for 5 people	5		₹ 500.00	FOOD	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Transport costs for 4	4		₹ 4,000.00	TRANSPORT	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Food for 10 ppl at Lucknow	10		₹ 1,000.00	FOOD	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Unable to reach, so recharged	1		₹ 49.00	OTHERS	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Unable to reach, so recharged	1		₹ 49.00	OTHERS	Spent through Suresh/UPI		
19-May-20	Transportation to Dharmadurai R. Group (13)	13		₹ 2,000.00	TRANSPORT	Sevai Karangal account		

A total of 4600 workers were impacted by the efforts in the form of food and medicine relief, transport support, rental support. After the peak period of May 12- May 31 was over, it was decided to continue coordination with the government to register and send migrant workers by the Shramik trains and also to disburse remaining funds to the families of the workers. A separate team was set up to handle the same and a team of volunteers who were mostly North Indian students in Chennai stepped up and helped call migrant workers, get detailed information including Aadhaar and bank accounts, verify the same and submit it to the finance team for fund transfers. Each family got anywhere between Rs.1000-2000 depending on the size and need. An additional 1215 people were helped this way.

A baby was born in Itarsi to a couple we sent to Uttar Pradesh. They were fortunate enough to get a space in the Shramik trains run by the government.

**Radhika Rammohan**

1 hr

Since around the 19th of this month, we have been in touch with two families. Both very young women pregnant, and one, Prabha was into her 9th month of pregnancy, with one two year old child. Bama Govindarajan who volunteered to support this group through their need to get back to their home in Sonbhadra UP, worried a lot about her traveling in advanced stages of pregnancy. The stress of the family, I imagine, was extreme... not having an income for two months, and stuck in the "kuppam" of Ambattur Chennai. The baby was officially due Jun 5th

Relentless follow up by Bama, trying to get them train seats, and we provided monetary support for grocery and food allowance. She also found that their deadline to move from their rented space here was May 31 (rent advance deducted), and they were not prepared to consider staying back in Chennai. A very helpful policeman, Mr. Himanshu Bhat of Ambattur helped in securing train seats on Tuesday 26th night and they set off with all of our prayers.

Last evening after the train crossed Nagpur the labour pains began. At Itarsi junction, police got the family off the train and she delivered a baby boy at Itarsi railway hospital yesterday at 11 pm. Yet to be named, this beautiful child was born right in the middle of India, to "migrant workers", helped along in the process by two decent and helpful officers of the much-maligned police force, and one loving, caring Chennai lady calling the family every few hours for the last ten days.

