

LEORA TRUST¹ - COVID19 FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROJECT
<http://www.leoratrust.com/projects2020-21.html>

How it all started

One week into the lockdown (which was really a curfew), we were asked if, as a non-profit organization, we had any intention of distributing food to the many in need, a need that was becoming painfully obvious. All our programs in education which are heavily contact based, were in abeyance. A tide of hunger and starvation had already begun. We were not sure how to handle this complex task of determining and verifying need, then purchasing and supplying dry rations, by our remnant two-member team. We took a leap of faith and jumped into the fray.

Leora Trust raised Rs 531,000 for the food distribution program. By mid-July we had already spent all of this with some stock in hand for the occasional need that arose every now and then. Many people rallied to help us; without whom this work would have been impossible. Without the big hearted help of *Quarantine Student -Youth Network (QS-YN)* in Delhi, who did the bulk of the ground work, it would have been impossible for us to have the reach that we did. This group of university students worked 24 × 7 for days on end, to identify, verify, purchase bulk amounts, pack and distribute. Similarly *Santa Sylvia*, working with *Anna Karunalaya trust*, were our foot soldiers in Bangalore.

DELHI

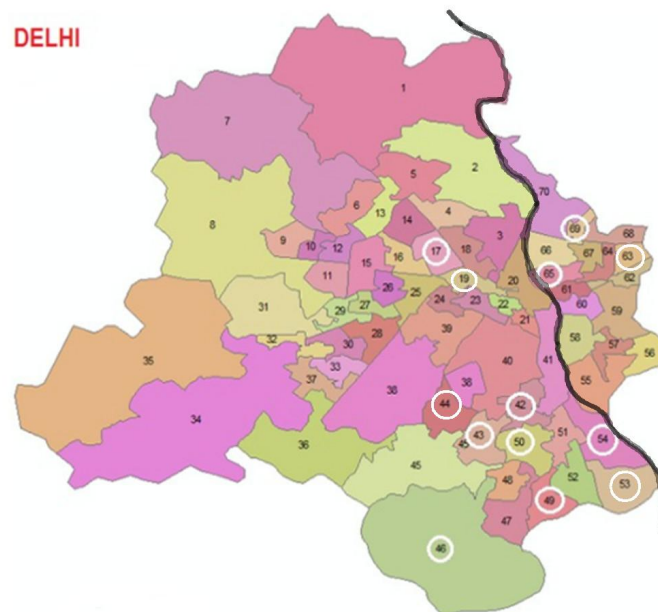


Figure 1: Map not to scale. Black curve is the Yamuna River. White circles are areas named in Table 1

Our distribution in RK Puram, Delhi, got off to a start in early April, almost as soon as the first donation arrived. The upcoming severity of the problem was emerging in March itself. People would run up to slowing cars at traffic lights to ask for food. Women were spotted at street corners, asking for anything that could be spared. There was an increase in children scavenging in the market among discarded fruit and vegetables. Our two member team identified these small clusters of 5 to 10 people as being potentially in dire need.

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As a first step we noted their names, contact information and then checked that their need was urgent. Our goal was to pre-empt starvation. We used our existing relationships and contacts built during our education programs. Leora Trust employee Anuradha, used her wide network of friends familiar with poor neighbourhoods, to conduct a due diligence. The next step was to procure food and package it into kits for families of different sizes. Our ration kit in Delhi consisted of rice, daal, atta, oil, sugar, salt, tea and soap, enough to last about 3 weeks to a month. Families with very small children were given Horlicks in addition. To begin with, rations were procured from local shops that were willing to package according to our instruction. Distribution involved the challenge of once again meeting the identified people and distributing while following social distancing. This meant that the recipients had to bring an identity card with them, be masked and willing to be photographed (for audit purposes). With a shortage of food, people were foregoing recharging their mobile phones, adding to the complexity of reaching and identifying. In every instance of distribution, more people gathered than on our our list. We would note their names down and follow our process again. In the first fortnight of April 2020, we distributed to 200 people in RK Puram and the surrounding areas. Leora Trust was limited to areas local to its office, as we did not have a curfew pass.

The need for rations was increasing and our ability to keep up was flagging. The work was not manageable by 2 people and a couple of volunteers. We sought to identify and partner with other organizations, to expand reach. In a tremendous stroke of luck, we connected with *QS – YN*, who were distributing dry rations in Delhi and other cities in India . Their goals and process of due diligence was identical to Leora Trust's. They had the additional benefit of a team of dedicated young people, contacts to buy wholesale grains at cheaper rates, a storage space for the food and vehicle to transport large numbers of ration kits and permissions to move during a curfew. They had a need for funds which Leora Trust as an established non-profit could raise . *QS – YN* was known among the migrant workers as they had worked in Delhi to rehabilitate individuals who had suffered at various points in time. As word got around, either *QS – YN* or Leora Trust started getting SOS calls, helping us to identify areas of need in Delhi. These calls were from groups ranging in size from 3 or 4 families to 100 families or stranded workers in need.

Food distribution (of rice and wheat), for the poor in India, is done via ration cards, which also establishes local domicile. However, people with legitimate entitlements through ration cards were sometimes being turned away during the lockdown. Stranded, jobless workers, from other states, living in Delhi, regularly send a majority of their earnings home to their families, and so did not have excess cash on hand. Their ration cards are used back in their villages to procure food for families left behind. During April there was much desperation. People without ration cards are low on the totem pole of entitlement. Many domiciled in Delhi, normally eligible for a ration card, could never manage the bureaucracy to obtain one, (which possibly included paying bribes). The government announced a one time, temporary ration card, for the poor, entitling them to free rations for 3 months. The only way to obtain this, was to apply online. The scramble by uneducated individuals lacking smart phones, created a whole new chaos, which had not ended as late as mid-June.

On April 8, 2020 the government put out a notice inviting non-profit organisations to buy bulk rice and wheat from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) which had over 82 million tonnes of grains sitting in silos. Rice was offered at Rs 22,000 per ton. Leora Trust applied for and obtained approval from FCI to purchase 2 tons (=2000 kgs) of rice (see figure 2). The process involved paper pushing, but was relatively painless. When Debojit Thakur from *QS-YN* showed up with a truck to pick up the rice, he was given the run around about the type of vehicle he had brought with him. It took three trips instead of one, to move the rice from the FCI depot. The added cost and the hassle, resulted in no particular gain, by purchasing at a "discount" from FCI, and a poorer quality rice to boot. Leora Trust had also written to the Managing Director of Hindustan Unilever Pvt. Ltd., (HUL) requesting a supply of soap bars. HUL generously delivered 9,936 bars to our doorstep in the first week of May. Figure 3 shows 6,500 bars being picked up for distribution. With *QS – YN* the ration kit consisted of rice, chana daal, potatoes, onions, mustard oil and soap, enough to last for 2 weeks per person.

In early May, there was finally some momentum in governments's ration distribution, though the reach was

Map Key	Locality	# Adults	# Children
17	Wazirpur		281
19	Anand parbat	267	207
42	Kotla Mubarkpur (Kasturba Nagar)	264	13
43	Shahpur jat 1	447	
43	Shahpur jat 2	409	
43	Malviya Nagar	109	
43	Khirki Extension	100	
44	R K Puram	130	99
46	Chhattarpur	43	
49	Sangam Vihar	9	
50	Chirag Delhi	4	
53	Meethapur (Badarpur)	95	
54	Madanpur Khadar Gas Plant	655	
54	Madanpur Khadar	250	
54	Madanpur Khadar JJ colony Pocket A and B	196	111
63	Seemapuri	100	
65	Seelam Pur	35	
69	Mustafabad	148	53
	Total Served	3261	764

Table 1: Areas in Delhi where dry rations were distributed. Refer to map to identify location within city.

uneven. As of this writing (June 30, 2020), there are people who have yet to get the promised rations for 3 months that they signed up for ². Applications for temporary ration cards have gone unacknowledged for several people, people who do not know how to follow up. The inconsistent handling of this crisis, admittedly a challenging task, has created tremendous food insecurity. We identified the following groups as being most in need, to whom we distributed:

1. Workers who had moved to Delhi alone from other states to work
2. Families of such workers if living in Delhi
3. Poor families in Delhi who had no ration cards, no jobs and no money.

Table 1 summarizes areas in Delhi and number of people reached between April 2, 2020 and June 16, 2020. The adults overwhelming reflect people from outside Delhi (mostly men), living and working in the city. who have left their families behind. These numbers do not reflect multiple distributions made to the same people. For example, 281 children in a Wazirpur *basti* were provided milk, bread and bananas on a daily basis from April 21, 2020 till May 6, 2020. Table 2 provides detail of total food distributed between April 2, 2020 to June 16, 2020 in Delhi.

BANGALORE

At the end of March 2020, we received an SOS from Santa Sylvia, a social worker in Bangalore. She mobilized a small team of volunteers on the ground and partnered with Anna Karunalaya Trust as early as end March. Leora Trust joined hands with them, funding food to families in Bangalore. Following the same process of identifying, checking, buying and distributing food, 30 families in need, in various parts of Central Bangalore were served over a period of three weeks. Each family received a packet (consisting of rice, toor daal, oil, wheat atta, ragi atta, maida, rava, salt, sugar, spices, tea, soap, sanitary pads and toothpaste), enough for a month. At Rs 2,000 per family of five, we spent Rs 60,000 in Bangalore.

Many daily wage workers have now gone back to their villages and some have returned to jobs in the city. Lockdown has been lifted to some extent. We do not know exactly where the dire need for food is currently,

²<https://thewire.in/government/food-grain-distribution-migrant-workers-anba>



Figure 2: Two Tons Rice from FCI



Figure 3: Soap from HUL

Item	KGs	Cost Rs.	% of Total
Milk	2248	73920	17.0%
Bread	1011.6	33600	7.7%
Bananas	449.6	34000	7.8%
Rice	4063	99946	0.6%
Daal	2060	118335	23.0%
Cooking Oil	540	39133	1.4%
Soap	102.01	2465	27.3%
Wheat flour	189	5952	1.0%
Potatoes	1008	8200	1.9%
Onions	509	5112	1.2%
Cash		4254	1.0%
Misc	91	4499	1.0%

Table 2: **Total spent Rs 4,33,722**

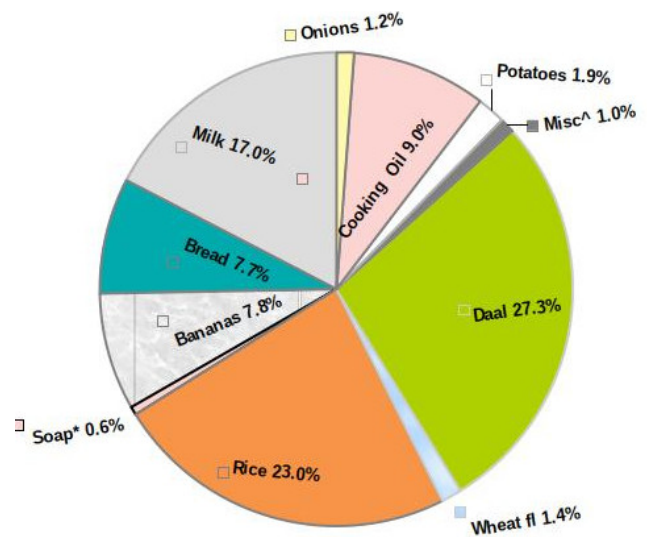


Table 3: Chart shows % of total spent on each item. Donation from **Hindustan Unilever Pvt. Ltd.**, of 9936 bars of *Lifebuoy* soap is not reflected here. Misc. includes tea, sugar, spices

besides in identified communities (i.e people living permanently/long-term in Delhi), who have lost their jobs, do not have ration cards and have to pay monthly rent. Our distribution activity is now focused on the latter group and is largely based on calls we receive. Our last large distribution (by *QS – YN*) was on June 4, to 307 people in JJ Colony, Madanpur Khadar.

Please visit our website <http://www.leoratrust.com/projects2020-21.html> for regular updates and information. We also share some stories there.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL DONORS and OUR WELL WISHERS!!