

Avehi Abacus Project
Request for COVID Specific Relief

As Mumbai Municipal Corporation schools are closed, we are currently continuously in touch with 7231 students in 272 neighborhoods. In this proposal, 46 of the most vulnerable neighborhoods have been selected. While, even though we would like to help all the children we are in touch with, we have chosen the neediest areas based on the budget boundaries.

Reasons for choosing these settlements

These settlements are densely populated and the economic and educational conditions of the settlements are a great cause of concern. Some settlements are in remote tribal areas while some settlements are on footpaths. All the students from these communities go to Mumbai Municipal Corporation schools. The proportion of students without mobile phones in these neighborhoods is high so they are deprived of the 'online classes' conducted by the school teachers. Most students don't have smart phones; some students lack the means for recharge of internet-packs.

Parents are involved in casual, manual jobs. Addiction is also rampant. Some parents, especially fathers have fallen prey to alcohol addiction. So along with the mothers, boys and girls are also working. Occasionally students from these slums are also seen begging.

In some settlements, the Municipal Corporation demolishes houses without due notice, families lose what little they have but rebuild their homes and live there since they have no other place to go to. This impacts education deeply.

Some of the settlements are on the foot-paths and living conditions are dire. Four walls are erected on the sidewalk with the help of some plastic sheets. Meals are cooked and eaten on the street. The house is used only for shelter from elements and for storage. Basic requirements of water, toilet, electricity is absent. People use public toilets by making payments. They often go without a bath if money is scarce.

Why is the current situation particularly challenging for these settlements?

The situation is very dire in the settlements that have been selected. Every month, lentils, gram and rice are being distributed to the students by the BMC Education Department. So, they are making do with the dry rations they get from schools.

Due to the current 'lock-down', the government has provided free rice and wheat to the Public Distribution System (ration) cardholders for a month. But those who do not have 'ration cards' or whose children are not in school do not have access to food. Due to lack of employment, payment towards house rent is also pending. People who have lost their jobs have left for the villages.

Compared to last year, some members of the household are seen working. But even that employment is not guaranteed. Most are engaged in food delivery. In many places, women domestic workers have started working. Many women, men, children are assembling imitation jewelry, bindies, etc. The people are under tremendous pressure due to the second phase of lockdown, they are worried that even a one-time meal will be difficult to come by. Many students have started working doing anything they find, and are out of education stream. In these circumstances health is the last priority.

Distribution of Items

Distribution of masks, sanitizers, hand washes and tablets of Vitamin C, Zinc and Calcium is being planned. We are planning to provide all the 2000 children with masks, sanitizers, hand washes and Vitamin C, Zinc and Calcium tablets in need-based manner. (Sanitary napkins for girls could be considered if necessary.)