

Report on Relief Activities During COVID-19 Lockdown – Pudukkottai BAU

Introduction

The humankind in totality on this earth have been imposed to confront the demonic COVID-19 since the last month of the calendar year 2019. The pandemic outbreak wreaked havoc across the globe and forced the human beings to refrain from their worldly activities and imposed them to undertake preventive and remedial measures to save their lives which have been put in peril. In similarity to the other parts of the world the epidemic started exposing its cruel face in India too, during the month of March 2020.

In this hour of adversity, the nation had taken innumerable measures and implemented various strategies to encounter this epidemic to ensure that the citizens remain unscathed and safe from the cruel hands of COVID-19. As part of the remedial tactics the entire country was brought under a complete lockdown for 21 days from 25th of March 2020 with relaxations applicable only to the essential services, thereby bringing all regular activities to a halt. The hard decision was taken knowing well on the implications which would emerge on account of the lockdown, the nation chose to give the foremost priority to the wellbeing of its citizens over economic repercussions and other consequences. The lockdown which was slated to end on 14th of April was however extended further till 03rd of May as the situation was not much improved to the level of expectations.

Background

As anticipated, the lockdown had its own effects and generated hardships to the citizens of the nation. The lockdown had not only jeopardized the nation's economy but even the routine day to day life of the common citizen. This disastrous situation was no different in Pudukkottai and the lockdown started leaving a sore throat in one's mouth from day one as people encountered difficulties in procuring essential commodities especially the vegetables in Thiruvarangulam and Karambakudi blocks where Vrutti's interventions are in progress under the 3-fold model since 2016 through 3 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO). The inadequate supply of the commodities had not only created panic and commotion among the people but made them running helter-skelter which ultimately defeated the rationale behind social distancing and other precautionary measures which were to be adhered.

To make matters still worse in the hour of crisis some vested interests were trying to make quick money by fixing exorbitant prices for the commodities and forcing the helpless people to pay through their noses for their daily needs. On one side the demand for vegetables was growing higher and higher whereas the other part of the story depicted totally a different

picture where our shareholder producers of all the 3 FPOs were unable to sell their fresh vegetables and stranded in their farms due to lack of transport facilities from their locations.

At this juncture, the Pudukkottai Business Acceleration Unit (BAU) flexed its muscles to lend its helping hands to the smallholder farmers, for whose betterment they have been working for years together in 3 clusters devised ways to wipe out their difficulties and provide solace and strength which was the need of the hour. The team wasted no and chalked out plans instantly to procure the stranded vegetables from our shareholders and other farmers at their farm gate and cater to the needy people in Alangudi town and other nearby locations.

Updates on Activities

As the primary step the team took initiatives and obtained permission from the district administration which was mandatory for the movements of goods vehicles and staff members for market facilitations. The ever active and enthusiastic field warriors of the BAU ventured into the bedlam with commitment and dedication to match both supply and demand of the vegetables and provided relief to the hardships of the small producers and the common man as well.



The procurement of vegetables was started on 30th of March 2020 from the shareholders in the nearby villages and facilitated to cater the local consumers in all the 3 FPO clusters. The FPOs initiated this activity

not as a profit generating business but a timely service to the farmers. This prompted the FPOs to fix a nominal price for the vegetables. As the FPOs started reaching out to the farmers in remote villages for procuring their vegetables and the necessity of transport vehicles resulted in difficulties to meet out the transport expenses every day. Still the FPOs continued to offer the services and borne the transportation expenses of about Rs.1200 -2000 per day with much difficulties. On successful supply of vegetables to remote villages for a week period the FPOs sensed the need of groceries for the families and hence started supplying groceries at a



reasonable price at their doorsteps. As days moved the operational cost for the FPOs were soaring high but decided to move forward for the benefit of the farmers at the FPO's cost.

At this point of time Vrutti approached its partner, **Friends of Women's**

World Banking (FWWB) for support to take forward the relief activities. FWWB has been supporting the Pudukkottai BAU in its 3-Fold journey since 2019



through 1) credit facility to farmers on promotion of animal husbandry enterprises for income diversification 2) Capacity building training to BoDs and leaders of the 3 FPOs. On realizing the field situation, FWWB stepped in to offer financial support to carry forward this noble cause and help the farmers through other means too. Based on the situational needs, FWWB had consented generously to contribute an amount of **Rs.91,370** towards the vehicle expenses for vegetable transportation and supply of Personal Protective Equipment kits (PPE) to the BoDs and leaders of FPOs, staff members and volunteers. This arrangement was agreed through a MoU between FWWB and Vrutti and the allocation of funds are as follows:

- **Transportation cost for LMV towards vegetable procurement and supply – Rs.50,000**
- **PPE Kits (Mask, Hand glove, Sanitizer) distribution to BoD and staff members of the 3 FPOs – Rs.41370**

The timely support offered by FWWB turned out to be a boon for the FPOs in taking forward the relief activities uninterrupted but with more zeal and vigour. As part of the service to the Alangudi town consumers the FPOs joined hands with the local administration and distributed vegetables through Alangudi Town Panchayat Office. The FPOs in all the 3 clusters continued to procure and supply vegetables and groceries to the families at their doorsteps till some relaxations were introduced in the 3rd phase of the lockdown period during the first week of May 2020. The procurement and sales details are furnished below.

Details of Vegetables Procurement & Sales							
S. No	FPO	Procured Qty (Kgs)	No. of Farmers	No. of HH (Sale)	Procurement Amount (₹)	Sale Amount (₹)	Gross Profit (₹)
1	Ambuliaaru APCL	4579	80	1412	84886	100643	15757
2	Mukkanicholai APCL	5889	22	869	72555	87213	14658
3	Karambakudi Pasumai APCL	1444	11	384	31485	33415	1930
Total		11912	113	2665	188926	221271	32345

Overall, a total quantity of 11,912 Kilograms of vegetables worth of Rs. 1,88,926 were procured from 113 farmers across the 3 FPOs. The procured vegetables were supplied to a total of 2665 households with a gross revenue of Rs.2,21,271 during the first two phases of the lockdown period.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) - With the support from FWWB, the FPOs procured PPE kits consisting of mask, hand gloves and sanitizers and distributed to the staff and volunteers involved in the field to ensure their personal safety and that of the consumers and farmers as well. The details of the PPE kits are given below.



Details of PPE			
S. No	Particulars	Units	Total Cost
1	Mask	500	10000
2	Hand Glove	280	12600
3	Sanitizer	302	18770
Total		1082	41370



Purchase Details - PPE					
S. No	Date of Purchase	Particulars	Units	Cost Per Unit (₹)	Total Cost (₹)
1	24-04-2020	Gloves	50	45	2250
2	24-04-2020	Mask	100	20	2000
3	25-04-2020	Sanitizer	50	160	8000
4	28-04-2020	Gloves	50	45	2250
5	28-04-2020	Mask	200	20	4000
6	29-04-2020	Gloves	50	45	2250
7	29-04-2020	Mask	200	20	4000
8	29-04-2020	Sanitizer (85ml - Himalaya)	150	42	6300
9	02-05-2020	Gloves	130	45	5850
10	02-05-2020	Sanitizer (85ml - Himalaya)	80	42	3360
11	04-05-2020	Sanitizer	22	50	1110
Total			1082		41370

Conclusion

Even under such an alarming circumstance due to COVID-19 and lockdown the most promising aspect is that the entire mankind exhibits brave faces to encounter the deadly disease single mindedly with extraordinary courage and determination. The Pudukkottai BAU team which has been working for the betterment of farmers for years together ventured into the bedlam with commitment and dedication to support the community members across the clusters to overcome the hardships in their daily lives by all possible ways and means. The initiatives undertaken with the timely support from FWFB helped the farmers and consumers immensely at the time of distress. Vrutti and the BAU are determined to continue in serving the farming community through their unflinching and tireless efforts by all means to overcome this COVID-19 situation with the support of valuable partners such as FWFB and others.

Annexure

Transportation Expenses Details (Vegetables Procurement & Sales)

Transportation Expenses Details		
Ambuliaaru APCL		
S. No	Date	Amount (₹)
1	08-04-2020	1800
2	09-04-2020	2000
3	10-04-2020	500
4	13-04-2020	1200
5	14-04-2020	1200
6	15-04-2020	600
7	16-04-2020	1000
8	17-04-2020	1200
9	18-04-2020	1200
10	20-04-2020	1200
11	20-04-2020	1200
12	21-04-2020	1200
13	21-04-2020	1200
14	23-04-2020	1200
15	23-04-2020	1000
16	24-04-2020	550
Total		18250

Transportation Expenses Details		
Mukkanicholai APCL		
S. No	Date	Amount (₹)
1	10-04-2020	500
2	11-04-2020	1500
3	12-04-2020	1500
4	13-04-2020	1500
5	14-04-2020	1500
6	15-04-2020	1500
7	16-04-2020	1500
8	17-04-2020	1500
9	18-04-2020	1500
10	20-04-2020	1500
11	22-04-2020	1500
12	23-04-2020	1500
13	24-04-2020	1250
Total		18250

Transportation Expenses Details		
Karambakudi Pasumai APCL		
S. No	Date	Amount (₹)
1	11-04-2020	1500
2	12-04-2020	1500
3	13-04-2020	1500
4	14-04-2020	1500
5	15-04-2020	1500
6	16-04-2020	1500
7	17-04-2020	1500
8	18-04-2020	1500
9	19-04-2020	1500
Total		13500

