

A CRY FOR HELP, IN TIMES OF CORONA: KIRAN'S STORY

An on-the-ground report from One Billion Literates Foundation



"I haven't seen my construction supervisor in two weeks", he said, his eyes clouding over with tears. He was responding to my question about whether the supervisor responsible for the construction project was taking care of people who were working for him. "I am already five thousand rupees in debt, and I get food from wherever I can", he continued tears streaming down now.

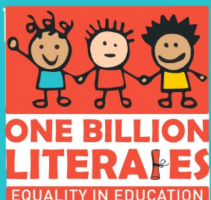
Kiran is a 28 year-old construction worker from Bihar living in a small shanty with fifteen others; abandoned by his employers, Kiran has no one to complain to; no one to seek redressal from; he had come here to Bangalore three years ago, lured by the prospect of a booming construction industry trying to serve this city already bursting at its seams. Today, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, he - and his cohort of fifteen co-workers - are amongst the millions of daily wage earners who have been left completely adrift; and completely bereft of any income;

To heap insult to injury, the only 'social distancing' Kiran and his fifteen house-mates can practice in their two-hundred square feet shanty is to have a filthy bandanna tied across their faces; the resigned looks in their eyes tell a thousand stories - not the least of which is one of desperation for food; and the abject fear that makes grown men cry.

OBLF - a non-profit which has been working for the last decade, at the intersection of education of rural under-privileged children, and skilling & empowerment of rural women - decided that the communities that we work with would be best served at this juncture by us volunteering our time, our resources and our money to buy people like Kiran the most basic essentials; and the dignity of knowing that they will not be reduced to begging.

Our decade long association with this Anekal sub-division of Bangalore which has 227 villages, and the fact that our women para-teachers belong to many of these same villages ensures that we are able to identify and specifically target pockets of migrant and non-migrant populations who are the most deserving of help; This small army of OBLF's women para-teachers has come together to procure and prepare individual food kits with food rations for one month for a family of four; which then get distributed based on the acuteness of need; the local police-station has also been very helpful in guiding us to the right locations.

The need is immense; the pain insufferable; And, this is where you come; this is what you can help us build on and sustain for some more time; for as low as Rs 2000 per month (\$30/month), you can help support a family of four for one month. Come, join us in helping make the lives of abandoned families like this slightly more bearable; give them something to look forward to.



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