



SATYARTHI

KAILASH SATYARTHI CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

**A STUDY ON IMPACT
OF LOCKDOWN AND
ECONOMIC DISRUPTION
ON POOR RURAL
HOUSEHOLDS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO CHILDREN**





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Published by:

Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation

23, Friends Colony West New Delhi – 110065

Telephone: +91 11 47511111

Website: www.satyarthi.org.in

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world has witnessed a huge economic shock due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown of all social activity followed by most countries. In India, the lockdown started across the States on 24 March 2020 and is still ongoing. While several studies have highlighted the plight of migrants due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, less is known about how low-income households living in rural areas are faring due to the crisis. The present report brings to light the impact of lockdown on the household economy of people from the lowest economic strata and the subsequent increase in the vulnerabilities of women and children.

The present report is based on the primary survey carried out over two phases – an online survey conducted with 53 NGOs working with children and spread across the country in phase-1 (27th April to 5th May 2020), and a household survey of 245 respondents drawn from rural areas of five States of India, namely, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan in phase-2 (17th May to 24th May 2020). These states are the major sources for child labour and child trafficking for various forms of exploitation. The responses of NGOs were sought because of their close links at the grassroots level, the household survey was conducted to develop an in-depth understanding of the impact of lockdown on households from the lowest economic strata.

The survey has brought out some very interesting findings, though not completely unanticipated, on the impact of lockdown on a range of issues, such as, trafficking, child labour, child marriage, and schooling of children; indebtedness, risk of bondage, income and savings of poor households in the rural areas, food security; and their plans to deal with the financial crisis they are facing.

Key findings

Trafficking of adults and children to increase: Survey has demonstrated that there is a very high likelihood of increase in trafficking of both adults and children in the post lockdown period for the purpose of labour as 89% of the NGOs covered by the survey have expressed this concern. 76% of the NGOs surveyed anticipate 'human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation' and 'child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation' to see an upsurge post the lockdown. Incidences of sexual abuse of children, child labour and child marriage are also likely to increase. 77% of the NGOs working in the areas of child abuse, human trafficking and human rights reported that sexual abuse of children in general (with or without trafficking) may go up in the post lockdown period.

Incidents of child labour and child marriage to surge: 93% the NGOs surveyed expect the incidence of child labour to rise. Interestingly, however, the household survey finds that only 21% of the households are potentially ready to send their children into child labour due to their increased

economic vulnerability. Again, while 64% of the NGOs believe child marriages will increase post the lockdown, only 13% of the households indicated willingness to marry their underage daughters off, if they continue to face a financial crisis. Such discrepancies in the findings of the two phases of the primary survey could perhaps be attributed to the increased awareness among people, which often results in households hiding information relating to child labour and child marriage.

Rise in school dropouts: The lockdown has adversely impacted schooling of children as well. Nearly 85% of the NGOs surveyed feel that school dropouts are likely to increase in the post lockdown period. As in the case of child labour and child marriage, the household survey, however, has brought out that only 20% of the respondent households with school going children are potentially ready to consider withdrawing their children from school due to financial crisis and deny them their right to get educated. This also appears to be a case of underreporting by households.

Debt bondage trap to expand among poor households: The economic distress caused by the lockdown is extremely severe. Households belonging to lowest income strata are in the real danger of getting into the trap of debt bondage as 98% of all the NGOs surveyed believe that the number of households under debt shall go up substantially during the post lockdown period, while 81% of them are also of the opinion that households may take cash on credit from local money lenders on high rates of interest.

Drastic reduction in household income and savings: The average monthly household income has been found to have drastically reduced during the lockdown. Nearly 85% of the households reported having absolutely no income at the time of the survey. Before the lockdown, 47% households were in the income range of INR 3,001-10,000 which came down to a meagre 3% during the lockdown. The proportion of those getting less than INR 1,000, dropped from 12% before the lockdown to 5% at the time of the survey. The reduction in income has been the least for agricultural labour who ironically were earning little even before the lockdown. The farmers and non-agricultural labour have suffered substantial reduction in income. Household savings have also been severely impacted. Before the lockdown, 28% of the respondents reported having no savings which increased sharply to 68% at the time of survey.

Food shortage and its severity: With almost negligible average household savings, most of the respondent households (72%) reported shortage of food during the lockdown. Among the broad occupational groups, food shortage was reported least (66%) by non-agricultural labour and most by farmers/cultivators (78%) and agricultural labour (71%). Out of all those households who reported having food shortage during the lockdown (i.e., 176 out of 245), 43% said it was 'severe', while 10% reported it was 'very severe' and for another 13%, it was 'somewhat severe'. The other 34% respondents in this group "couldn't describe" severity of the food scarcity during the lockdown though all of them stated to have experienced the same to some degree.

Receipt of ration during the lockdown: Receipt of food grains by a household in possession of a ration card is a legal entitlement as per the provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013. However,

among the surveyed households, 15% did not receive any ration during the lockdown period. The Government of India soon after clamping the lockdown had also announced distribution of additional food grains to households to save them from hunger. Survey has brought out that only 32% respondent households had received the additional ration.

Plans to mitigate current economic condition: Respondent households were asked about their plans to deal with the financial crisis they were facing. Most of the respondents were ready to cut their household expenditure on food (77%), followed by reduction in expenditure on education of their children (74%). The proportion of respondents ready to reduce household expenditure on food was higher among households with an average monthly income of 'less than INR 1,000' (96%) than those in the income brackets 'INR 1,000-3,000' & 'INR 3,001-10,000' (75%) and 'more than INR 10,000' (70%). This reiterates the fact that that poorer households are most vulnerable to hunger and starvation in times to come.

Conclusion

The present study has brought out that the lockdown has adversely impacted the economy of the households belonging to the lowest economic strata of the society. It has also exposed vulnerable children belonging to the poor households to various forms of exploitation. To restore economic and livelihood stability among rural poor households, so that children are not pushed into labour, and to directly protect children from exploitation of all kinds, there is a need to implement a series of measures ranging from universal free distribution of ration, livelihood support, regeneration of rural economy, renewed and more rigorous efforts for child protection, education for all children, and strengthening public health care infrastructure.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of the study would help the government and civil society organizations in planning and designing concrete and effective strategies to combat the impact of Covid-19 induced lockdown on the household economy of the rural poor and protecting children from exploitation of all kinds.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Child Labour

- (i) To prevent children of vulnerable households from getting into child labour, there should be micro-level surveillance in and around villages on a continuous basis. Panchayats, other villages officials, as well as Block officials should play a major role in ensuring that children do not move away for work and are retained in schools.
- (ii) Compensation amounts due to the child labourers, bonded labourers and victims of trafficking rescued in the past which have been pending for a long time must be released by the state governments immediately.
- (iii) The recent relaxations in labour laws done by some states, must be reviewed and rescinded immediately, especially the dilution of monitoring mechanisms as these are likely to lead to increased incidence of exploitation and abuse of workers and more children joining the workforce. Extended working hours could also impact child-care as parents will not be able to devote sufficient time on care, education and wellbeing of their children.

2. Child Trafficking

- (i) A wide safety net be spread in source areas of trafficking to protect children from being trafficked; schools, communities, and the local administration must work together to control trafficking and bonded labour in villages. Intensive campaign be launched to educate communities about the threat and modus operandi of trafficking agents, especially in the source areas such as Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Assam.
- (ii) Awareness should be created in communities to be more vigilant and take the responsibility to
 - (a) identify any suspicious movement in the village relating to trafficking of persons, especially women and children, b) identify traffickers, and c) report the movement of traffickers to the police or other law enforcement agencies. The Village level Child Protection Committee (VCPC) which are non-functional in several villages, must be activated immediately in all the villages, strengthened and made accountable for execution of this task.
- (iii) The Panchayats should be mandated to maintain a migration register to monitor movements of children in and out of villages. The migration register should be checked and verified by the Block Development Officer regularly. Panchayats in association with the village community members should ensure that children are not allowed to leave the village unaccompanied by their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The introduction of the migration register shall go a long way to prevent trafficking.

- (iv) High alert among law enforcement agencies and other first line responders should be ensured so that they recognize and detect human trafficking in trafficking hotspots and border areas of every state.
- (v) Railways are the most popular mode of transportation used by traffickers and middlemen to transport children from one place to another. Trafficking of children from rural areas, through Railways should be prevented with the help of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) and the Government Railway Police (GRP).
- (vi) The central government must re-assess the efficacy of the existing criminal laws on trafficking and their ability to counter the crime and meet the needs of the victim. The lapsed anti-trafficking bill may be updated and passed in Parliament urgently.
- (vii) Reforms may be carried out to make the police force and other government agencies dealing with children more responsive to the problems and issues relating to them, so that they are not dismissive of complaints of exploitation, child labour and child trafficking. The electronic media be used to raise awareness on child protection issues through regional language infomercials.
- (viii) Since child labour and child trafficking are crimes under the Indian Penal Code, system of SOS messaging to police already exists in several cities. This facility to lodge the report on phone by sending a SMS needs to be expanded and facility for geo location also needs to be added to it.

3. Child Marriage

- (i) To prevent marriage of underage children and make the community aware about ill effects of the child marriage, the Village level Child Protection Committees (VCPC) be activated and their proper functioning ensured. Cooperation of the civil society organisations be obtained in prevention of child marriages.
- (ii) A separate helpline be established for reporting of child marriages.
- (iii) Registration of marriages be made a statutory obligation and compulsory to prevent child marriages and to ensure adherence to minimum age of marriage. Registration of marriages can be a powerful tool to prevent child marriage and eliminate this age old evil tradition.
- (iv) Convergence among village-level child protection committees, child marriage prohibition officers, district child protection units and child welfare committees may be ensured. This collaboration and convergence will ensure the best interests of the child.

4. Child Education

- (i) Efforts to continue education for all children, using the most appropriate technology should be accorded the highest priority. Children may be imparted education online/ through satellite and TV, so that children especially those in rural areas remain in touch with studies. Measures may also be taken to ensure distribution of textbooks for all children, so that they are able to continue their studies.

- (ii) Since the schools are closed, therefore either the children be served hot cooked meals at their residences or should be provided equivalent amount of dry ration at their homes to prevent hunger and malnutrition among them.
- (iii) Anganwadis which take care of pre-school education and nutritional requirements of children upto the age of 6 years, being closed due to pandemic, the supplementary nutrition to which the children are entitled as per the National Food Security Act 2013, should be provided at their residences, further either these children should be served hot cooked meal at their respective residences or their families be provided with equivalent dry ration in lieu of the same.

5. Child Health

- (i) The present pandemic must not be allowed to adversely affect the healthcare and immunization of new born children. Measures should be taken by the state to ensure that pre-occupation of healthcare providers with COVID relief work does not lead to neglect of new born children and their immunization should be done on schedule.
- (ii) Lockdown has resulted in depression, anxiety, insecurity, and frustration among many children. Children may be counselled online and through telephone helplines to help them cope up/ come out of the mental trauma.
- (iii) Other technology-based solutions such as SMS, may also be used to provide help to traumatised children. Self-help groups and networks be created to expand social support, and to reach out to children with no access to phone or internet.

6. Restoration of Economic and Livelihood Stability among Rural Households

Free universal ration: Food grains are recommended to be distributed free to all those who come forward to demand. Possession of a ration card should not be a requirement for receiving the free food grains. This will ensure that no one goes hungry.

Portability of ration card: The rollout of 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme of the central government should be completed across the country at the earliest.

Livelihood support

- (i) States may take steps to ensure that employment guarantee of 100 days per person under the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act ((MGNREGA) is fully realised and there is no gap between the date when the demand is raised and the date on which work is provided.
- (ii) The wage rate under MGNREGA should be increased to at least INR 250-300 per day.
- (iii) The ceiling of total number of days should be raised to 200 days of work /employment. The MNREGA should be extended to the urban areas as well in view of urban distress post the lockdown.

Income and liquidity support

- (i) Cash transfers to poor households should be increased to an amount between INR 5,000-7,000 per month per household depending on the cost of living indices in different regions.
- (ii) A data base of poor households who are economically most severely affected due to lockdown should be created for the suggested cash transfers.

Interest waiver

- (i) For the coming six months, till economy recovers to some extent, loans availed by vulnerable groups such as small farmers, Kisan Credit Card holders, petty businessmen, small shop owners, etc., should be exempted from repayment also interest due may be waived off on request.
- (ii) The tribal population in scheduled areas should be protected from exploitation by moneylenders by way of charging of high interest rates through cash transfers and by providing soft consumer loans through the public sector banks.

Regeneration of rural economy

- (i) The rural sector which houses more people should be provided a big economic stimulus. This should be done by giving a push to income generation activities such as livestock breeding, fisheries, dairying, vegetables and fruit cultivation and food processing and preservation.
- (ii) Agro-based industries as also other micro and small-scale industries should be set-up in rural areas for regeneration of the rural economy.
- (iii) Skill development programmes be started in the rural areas by setting up of ITI's, Polytechnics, nursing colleges, computer training institutes, etc.
- (iv) Micro-finance institutions should be set up in rural areas to help the poor people tide over minor financial crises in their lives post the lockdown period.
- (v) Self-help groups of women should also be created in the rural areas. These SHGs will help each family in generating some additional income, leading to poverty alleviation and thus relieving the families from pressure to send their children to work.

INTRODUCTION

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest global humanitarian crises the world has faced since World War II¹. Across the globe it has infected over one crore individuals and caused death of more than five lakh persons. In India also the infection is spreading very fast and the number of infected persons has crossed six lakhs and is still going up. COVID-19 has not only affected the health of the people, but also affected their livelihood options. With the goal to minimise the spread of COVID-19 infection and using the time to plan and enhance medical preparedness to respond to the crises situation, Government of India enforced almost two and a half months long nationwide lockdown. However, the attempt to curb the infection has triggered a deep economic crisis on nation's economy and adversely affected the lives of its people. According to an estimate², two-third of economy was shut down as only few essential services which included public administration, communications, health services, media, electricity, food and dairy, were functional. India's unemployment rate shot through the roof - at least 5 crore Indians lost their jobs in the first two weeks of the lockdown. The unemployment rate which was 8 per cent in March 2020 shot up to 23 per cent, a 15 per cent rise in April, especially after the lockdown³ Industry body, Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) said that more than half of the tourism and hospitality industry could go sick with a possible loss of over 20 million jobs if recovery in the industry stretched beyond October 2020.

The lockdown has resulted in loss of livelihood and income for many households in the country. There has been a significant decrease in the level of income, with households reporting a fall in income from about nine percent in late February to a whopping 46 percent in mid-April.

The lockdown has hit the informal workforce and their families, hitting women and children, the hardest. Uncertainty looms large on the minds of weekly and daily wage workers. Millions of daily wage labourers both in agricultural and non-agricultural sector, rickshaw pullers in towns and cities coming from distant villages, barbers and washer(wo)men, street vendors and domestic servants, auto rickshaw and taxi drivers, healthcare and sanitary workers have lost their jobs or are anxious about job loss and food security⁴.

1 Gupta, Rajat and Madgavkar, Anu (2019), McKinsey & Company, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/india/getting-ahead-of-coronavirus-saving-lives-and-livelihoods-in-india#>

2 The Federal News, 5 crore Indians lost jobs in 2 weeks of lockdown, says survey, April 8, 2020, <https://thefederal.com/news/5-crore-indians-lost-jobs-in-2-weeks-of-lockdown-says-survey/>

3 The weekly tracker survey of Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) released on April 6, 2020

4 The Telegraph, April 10, 2020, A virus with two heads, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/coronavirus-the-plight-of-victims-of-covid-19-is-vivid-but-victims-of-the-economic-crisis-are-invisible/cid/1763608>

Exposure of children to exploitation

While every section of the society has been impacted by the COVID-19 induced lockdown, it has terribly exposed the poor households to extreme poverty and hardship. It has also made children, one of the most vulnerable sections of our society especially those from the poor and lower economic strata, susceptible to violence and exploitation. There have been reports that domestic violence⁵ and child abuse⁶ have increased during the lockdown. Lockdown has cut off the access to the criminal justice system as well as counselling and other essential health services⁷ to the women.

A recent report on child sexual abuse material in India by ICPF (India Child Protection Fund), an organisation working on child protection and trafficking, points out to a sharp rise in demand for child pornographic content in 100 cities in India like New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, and Indore, ever since COVID-19 lockdown was imposed⁸. This type of sudden spike in demand creates a serious threat to the children especially those who are marginalised and are from the lowest economic strata.

Now that the lockdown is being lifted and manufacturing activities are gradually resuming/picking up, children in rural India are at an increased risk of trafficking as small and medium-sized business establishments will be inclined to cover their financial losses by hiring cheap child labour. They will be looking for an opportunity to exploit distressed and helpless households with no financial backup and food security, who are unable to negotiate their wages or rights and may be forced by circumstances to send their children for forced labour, slavery and commercial sexual exploitation.

Rationale of the Study

There have been quite a few surveys and rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 lockdown in India on internal migrant workers, especially on their household economics, access to healthcare, livelihood & food security; income, social life, and access to essential items, both in urban and rural areas.

Some survey-cum-opinion polls have also been conducted by industry associations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) as well as by international consultancy firms such as McKinsey, Price Water and Coopers (PwC), KPMG, and Earns & Young, which have mainly tried to assess the economic and business costs of the lockdown.

However, no survey has been conducted to assess the increase in various forms vulnerabilities and exploitation of women and children during the lockdown. Whatever information we have so far on

5 Quartz India, In locked down India, women fight coronavirus and domestic violence, April 21, 2020, <https://qz.com/india/1838351/indias-coronavirus-lockdown-leads-to-more-violence-against-women/>

6 The Week, Govt helpline receives 92 000 calls on abuse and violence in 11 days, April 8, 2020, <https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2020/04/08/del120-lockdown-ld-child-abuse.html>

7 Asiaville, Women in Lockdowns, April 6, 2020,

8 Times News Network, ICPF report warns of sharp rise in demand for online child pornography during lockdown, April 14, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/icpf-report-warns-of-sharp-rise-in-demand-for-online-child-pornography-during-lockdown/articleshow/75127399.cms>

this issue is largely based on media reports, and views and assessments of subject experts. Many national and international organisations have also come out with their own reports on impact of COVID-19 on women and children, but these are basically policy guidelines. Considering the fact that women and children face specific risks and heightened vulnerabilities a need was felt to assess the level and extent of vulnerabilities to which women and children belonging to the poor households are likely to be exposed in the post lockdown period.

Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to assess the impact of lockdown on incidence of various forms of exploitation of children and on the household economy of people from the rural areas. The specific objectives of the study are as follows,

1. To assess the impact of lockdown on household economy of the households belonging to lowest strata and the risk of such households falling into a debt trap
2. To assess the increase, if any, in risk of trafficking of women and children belonging to poor households especially the children in the post lockdown period
3. To understand the impact of lockdown on incidence of various forms of exploitation of children such as child labour, child bonded labour and child marriage
4. To make actionable recommendations to protect women and children from exploitation in the post lockdown period

Methodology

A primary study was designed to achieve the objectives. Besides the same, a desk review of literature involving a scrutiny of secondary sources - online survey's/ study reports and media stories specific to impact of COVID-19 lockdown on household economies and exposure of women and children to various forms of exploitation in the country such as trafficking, physical and sexual violence, child abuse and child labour, etc. was also done.

The primary survey was carried out in two phases with two different target groups. In the first phase an online survey was carried out with NGOs working in the field of child protection, child rights promotion, poverty alleviation, trafficking, and child marriage. In the second phase a household survey was undertaken.

Phase-1: Online survey of NGOs working with children

It is a well-known fact that due to their close links at the grassroots level, NGOs possess a good amount of knowledge about the community members, their problems and their wellbeing. Hence, in the first phase of the survey it was decided to seek responses from NGOs on the issues which the study proposed to cover. This survey was carried out between 27th April to 5th May 2020. Around 100 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) spread across the country were randomly selected and

requested to participate in the online survey. In this phase of the survey 53 NGOs voluntarily participated and sent their responses. The online survey used a quantitative research tool (Annexure 1) consisting of two sets of questions – household economy-related questions and extent of vulnerabilities to which women and children are exposed due to the lockdown.

Phase-2: Household survey

In order to build an in-depth understanding of impact of lockdown on households from the lowest economic strata, the second phase of the survey was designed. Approximately 275 households were approached for the survey, and 245 interviews were carried out successfully between 17th May to 24th May 2020. The samples of households were drawn equally from five States of India - namely, (1) Assam, (2) Bihar, (3) Jharkhand, (4) Chhattisgarh, and (5) Rajasthan. In each state two districts and four villages (2 from each district) were selected randomly for the survey. The survey was carried out with the main wage earner of the household. While selecting sample households from the village measures were taken to ensure proper geographical representation of the selected village. The household survey was carried out with the help of KSCF's Associates, partner NGOs and volunteers. The quantitative research tool used in this survey (Annexure 1) for data collection consisted mainly of household economy-related questions, education and exposure of women and children to exploitation, if any, due to the lockdown and also the likely impact during the post lockdown period.

Limitations

The present study, especially the surveys, were conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown period with limited access to resources and mobility. Following are some of the limitations of the study which would have been easily managed if the situation had been normal.

- Since, a majority of the NGOs were engaged in COVID-19 related relief work, the Phase-1 of the survey encountered a significant non-response rate.
- Smaller sample at State level restricts us from deriving State level estimates.
- Due to limited mobility options and rains in Assam one of the selected districts could not be surveyed.
- While monitoring the survey and quality check it was felt by the researchers that face to face training of investigators and supervisors for household survey would have been much more impactful than the online training over video conferencing which was done.
- During the survey and analysis of data, it was felt that a few aspects needed in-depth study which could be done only through qualitative interviews. However due to lockdown this could not be done.

CHAPTER 2

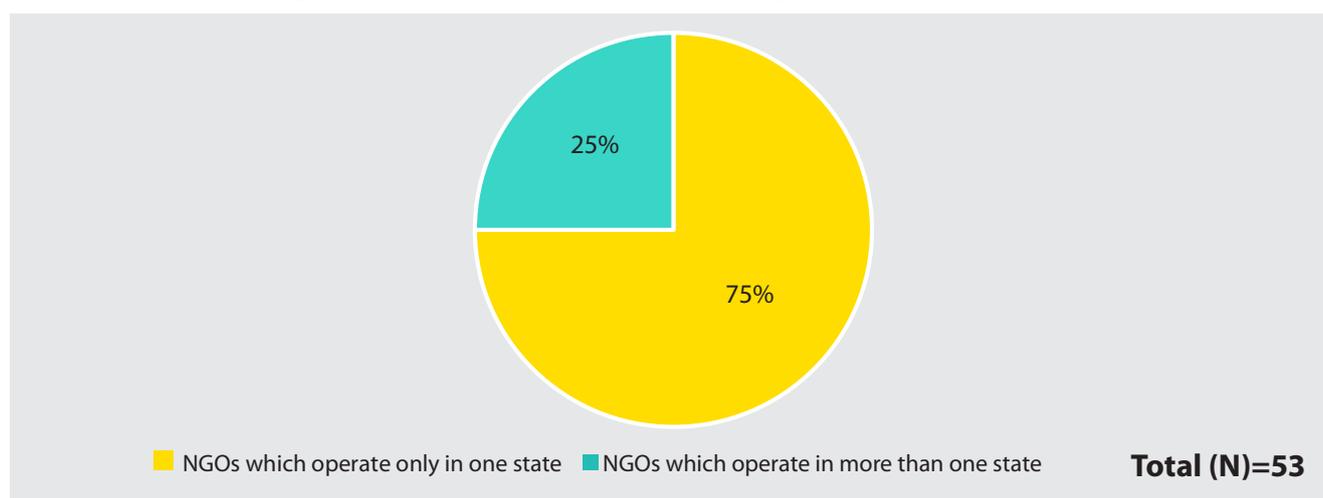
FINDINGS FROM SURVEY CONDUCTED WITH NGOS

As mentioned in the previous chapter, an online survey was carried out with Non- Government Organisations to understand the increased vulnerabilities of poor and economically weaker households especially women and children due to the prolonged nationwide lockdown. The analysis of data collected through this survey and the findings derived from the same are presented in this chapter. The findings are divided in five sections, (a) profile of NGOs which participated in the survey, (b) impact of lockdown on crimes against women and children, (c) impact of lockdown on schooling of children, (d) impact of lockdown on household economy including availability of food and (e) impact on mental health of members of poor and economically weak households.

2.1 Profile of Participating NGOs

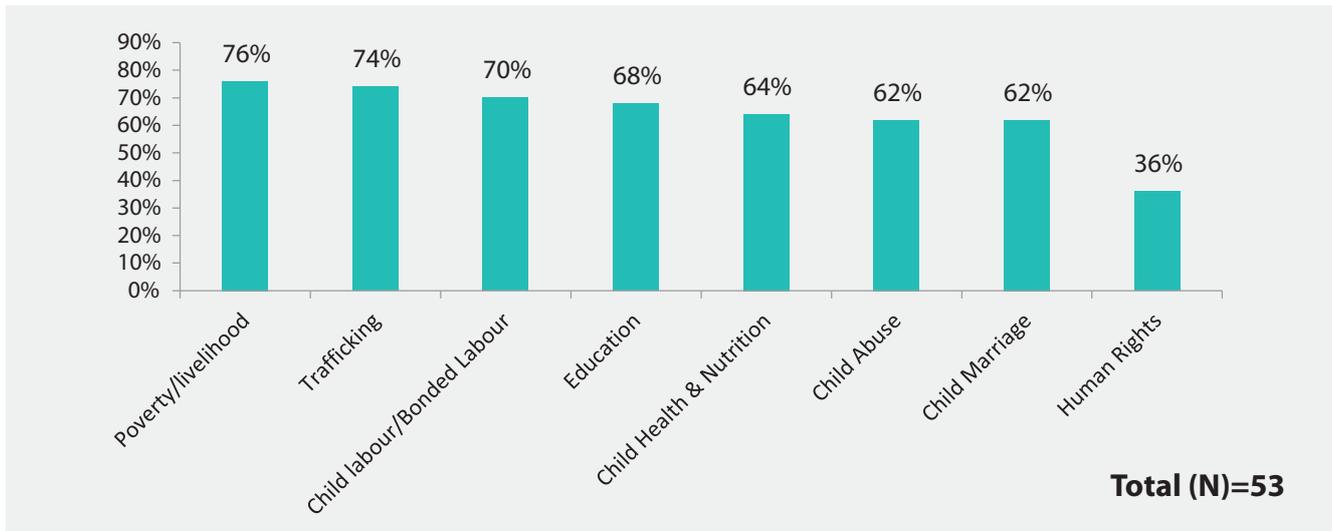
A total of 53 NGOs with their operational areas spread across 15 states participated in the survey. Distribution of NGOs in accordance with their operational areas is presented below in Figure 2.1. It shows that three fourths (75%) of the NGOs which participated in the survey were operating only in one state, while the area of operation of the remaining 25% NGOs was spread across more than one state.

Figure 2.1. NGOs Operational in Single v/s Multiple States



The NGOs were asked to provide information about the primary thematic areas of their work. A majority of the NGOs were found to be working in the areas relating to child rights and child protection. Three fourths of the NGOs reported working in the area of poverty alleviation and livelihood issues (76%), three-fourths (74%) of the NGOs were also working in the field of trafficking of women and children. While 70% of the NGOs were working on issues relating to child labour or bonded labour, about 62% of them reported working in the area of Child Abuse and Child Marriage.

Figure 2.2. Thematic Areas on which NGOs Work

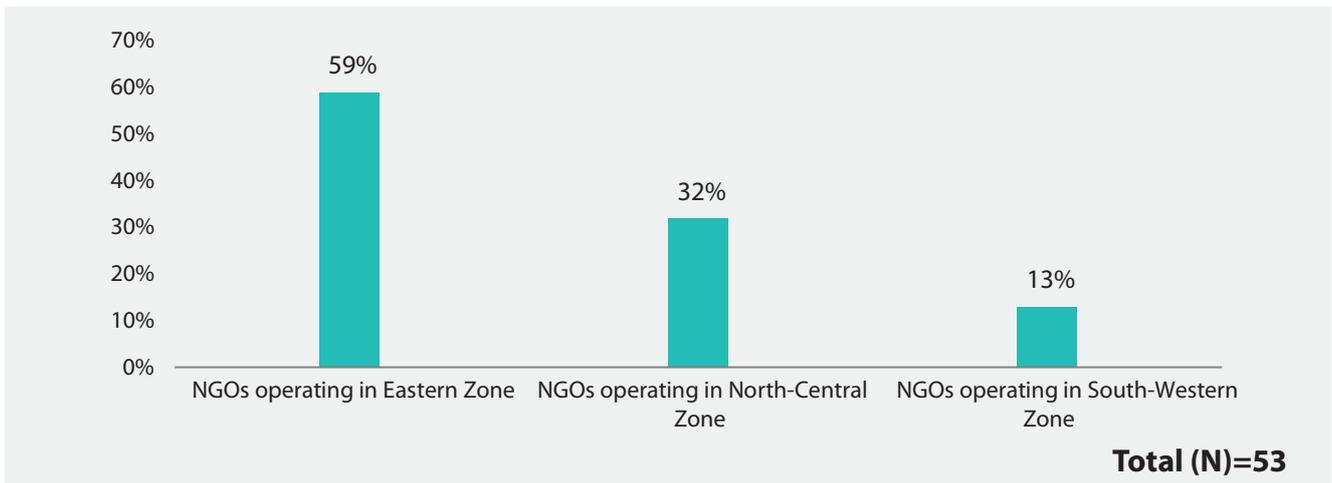


For the purpose of this analysis, the country i.e. India was divided into three geographical zones viz; eastern zone, north-central zone, and south-western zone. Distribution of states under different geographical zones is given below;

Sl. No.	Geographical Zone	Name of the State
1	Eastern Zone	Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam and Sikkim
2	North-Central Zone	Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh
3	South-Western Zone	Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka

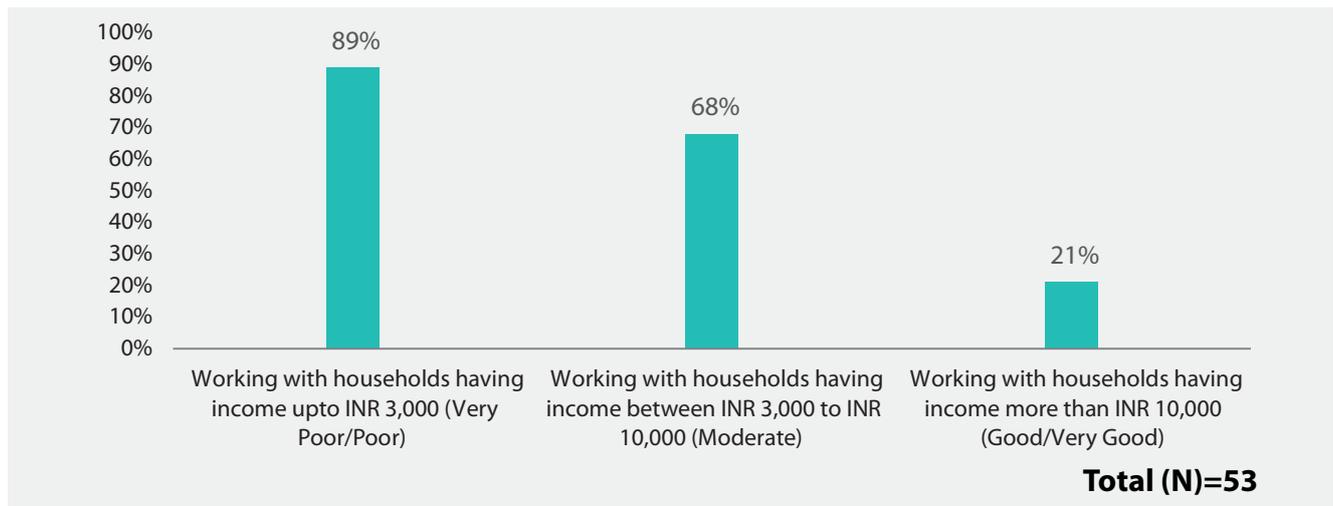
Figure 2.3 below gives a zone-wise distribution of NGOs which participated in the survey. It will be seen that the area of operation of 59% of the NGOs was in the Eastern-zone, 33% of the NGOs reported working in the states included in the North-Central zone and only seven NGOs mentioned states included in the South-Western zone as their area of operation.

Figure 2.3. Geographical Zones where NGOs Operate



In this survey, NGOs were also asked to mention the financial condition of the households with whom they are working. The responses received show that most of the NGOs that participated in the survey were working with households belonging to the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of the society. Forty-seven out of 53 (89%) NGOs reported working with households having a monthly income up to INR 3,000 only. More than two third NGOs (68%) were working with households having an income between INR 3,001 to INR 10,000. Slightly more than one fifth NGOs reported working with households having a monthly average household income of more than INR 10,000 (Figure 2.4).

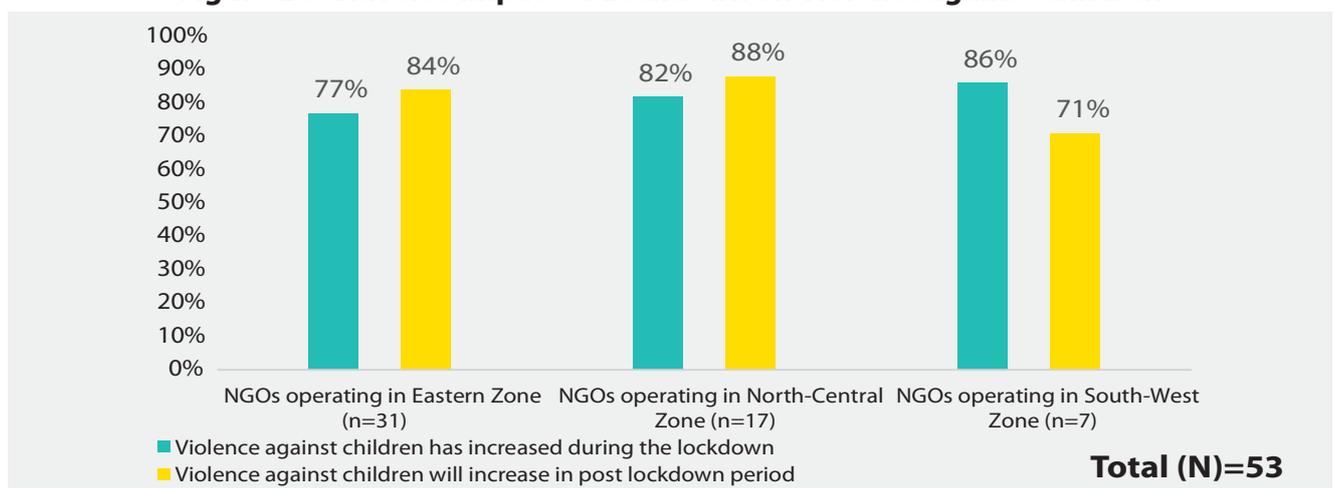
Figure 2.4. Economic Condition of Households with which NGOs Work (Average Monthly Household Income in INR)



2.2 Impact of Lockdown on Crime against Children

Since the respondents are NGOs and not households, hence it is essentially a survey of perception/assessment of the NGOs which were working among the poor households about the impact of lockdown on various aspects of the lives of the poor households and their individual members. Figure 2.5 below gives the assessment of the NGOs surveyed of the impact of lockdown on incidence of crime against children belonging to these households. More than 80% of NGOs are of the opinion that violence against children has increased during the lockdown period and is likely to increase further in the post lockdown phase. It will be seen that this perception/assessment is shared by NGOs working in all the three geographical zones i.e. across the country.

Figure 2.5. Adverse Impact of Lockdown on Violence against Children



In a situation wherein most of the NGOs felt that violence against children is going to increase, an attempt was made to understand their views and assessment about different types of violence against children that is likely to happen during the lockdown period as also after the lockdown. The violence against children was clubbed under the following four major crime heads for collecting information on this point;

- (i) Trafficking
- (ii) Sexual Abuse of Children
- (iii) Child Labour (including child bonded labour)
- (iv) Child Marriage

Findings on above mentioned crime heads have been analysed and presented at two different levels viz;

- i) responses of all NGOs surveyed and
- ii) responses of NGOs working in the relevant thematic area.

Sections below contain a narrative of these analyses and its diagrammatic presentation.

(i) Trafficking

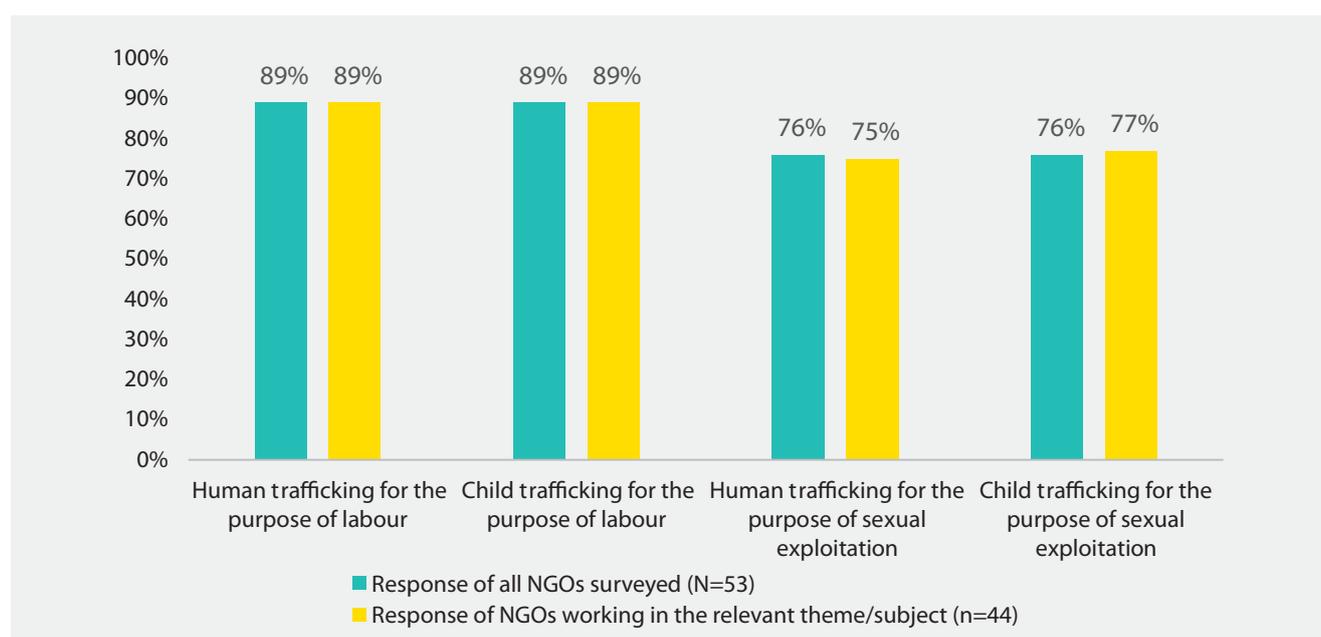
Figure 2.6 depicts the response of all the 53 NGOs surveyed and the 44 NGOs working in the field of human trafficking about the impact of lockdown on human trafficking for different purposes.

It may be seen that there is an overwhelming perception that in the post lockdown period human trafficking is likely to increase. The survey has brought out that there is a very high likelihood of increase of both trafficking of persons and trafficking of children for the purpose of labour. Figure 2.6 will show that this perception is shared by approximately 90% of the NGOs which were questioned during the survey.

A perusal of Figure 2.6 also shows that 75% of the NGOs are of the opinion that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is also likely to increase in the post lockdown period. An equal proportion of NGOs who said so also reported that children are also vulnerable to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Besides this, when the NGOs were asked whether 'girl children and women will be trafficked and/or forced into prostitution in post lockdown period for survival' due to the impact of the lockdown on poor households, 74% answered in affirmative.

Figure 2.6. NGOs which Felt that Trafficking of Persons will Increase



Zonal level analysis brings out an analogous picture as can be seen from Table 2.1. It suggests that all NGOs operating in North-Central Zone followed by NGOs operating in Eastern Zone (94%) felt that human trafficking for the purpose of labour will increase. Percentage of NGOs reporting trafficking of children for the purpose of labour is marginally less.

Table 2.1 also shows that the assessment of the NGOs working in the relevant thematic area (i.e. human trafficking and human rights) is also the same. Eighty six percent of the NGOs working in North-Central zone and 78% NGOs working in Eastern zone are found to be of the opinion that child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is likely to increase in the post lockdown period.

Table 2.1. NGOs which Felt that Trafficking of Persons will Increase by Zone

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Labour	94% (29)	100% (17)	57% (4)	89% (47)	93% (25)	100% (14)	60% (3)	89% (39)
Child Trafficking for the Purpose of Labour	90% (28)	94% (16)	57% (4)	76% (40)	89% (24)	93% (13)	60% (3)	89% (39)
Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation	77% (24)	88% (15)	43% (3)	89% (47)	74% (20)	86% (12)	60% (3)	75% (33)
Child Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation	77% (24)	88% (15)	43% (3)	76% (40)	78% (21)	86% (12)	60% (3)	77% (34)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53	27	14	5	44

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

Data was also analysed to understand the response pattern of the NGOs by the financial condition of the households they worked with. Table 2.2 shows that almost all NGOs irrespective of their areas of work/expertise and financial condition of the households they worked with felt that trafficking overall and trafficking of children for the purpose of labour will increase in the post lockdown period. With regard to trafficking of persons and trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the survey has brought out that households with average monthly income between INR 3,000-10,000 are likely to be most affected and women and the children of these families shall be most susceptible to trafficking post the lockdown period.

Table 2.2. NGOs which Felt that Trafficking of Persons will Increase by Economic Condition of Households

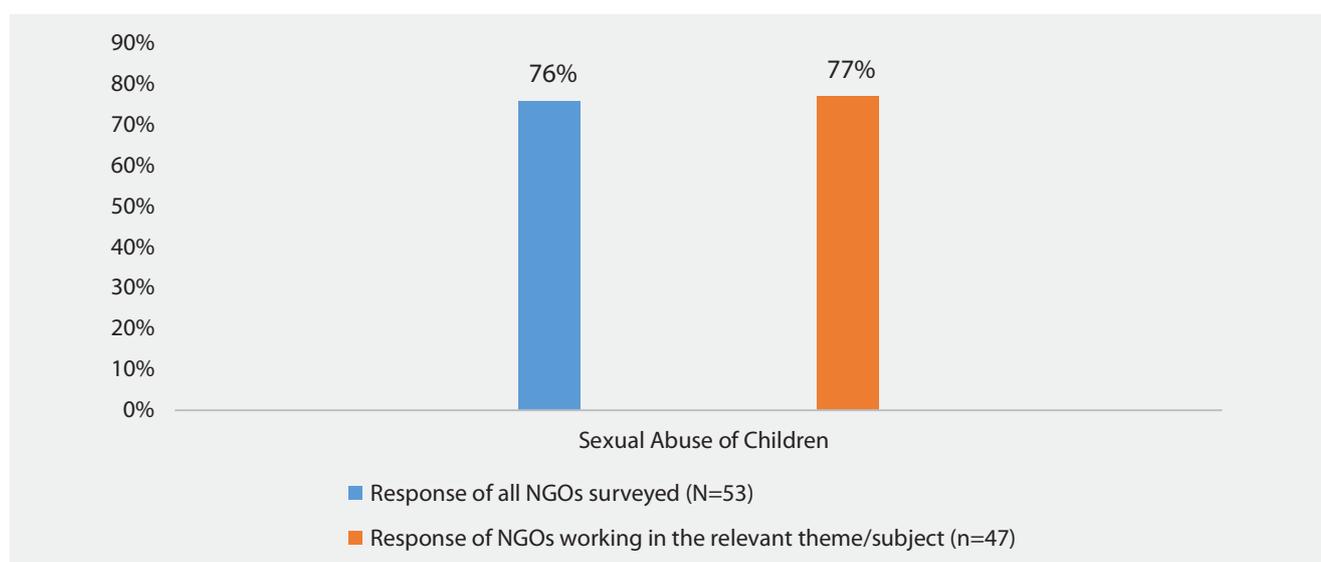
Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Economic Condition of Households			Combined	Economic Condition of Households			Combined
	Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#		Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#	
Human Trafficking for the purpose of Labour	89% (42)	94% (34)	100% (11)	89% (47)	90% (35)	97% (28)	100% (10)	89% (39)
Child Trafficking for the purpose of Labour	89% (42)	94% (34)	100% (11)	76% (40)	90% (35)	97% (28)	100% (10)	89% (39)
Human Trafficking for the purpose of Sexual Exploitation	77% (36)	86% (31)	91% (10)	89% (47)	74% (29)	90% (26)	90% (9)	75% (33)
Child Trafficking for the purpose of Sexual Exploitation	77% (36)	83% (30)	91% (10)	76% (40)	77% (30)	90% (26)	90% (9)	77% (34)
Total (n)	47	36	11	53	39	29	10	44

*Households with income up to INR 3,000; **Households with income between INR 3,000-10,000; # Households with income more than INR 10,000
 Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

(ii) Sexual Abuse of Children

Of the total sample of 53 NGOs, 47 NGOs were found to be working in the areas of child abuse, human trafficking and human rights. Figure 2.7 is the graphic presentation of the response of all NGOs regarding the impact of lockdown on the incidence of sexual abuse of children. The figure also gives the response of the NGOs working in the domain of child sex abuse and human trafficking i.e. NGOs whose domain of work was specifically human trafficking, child abuse, etc. The figure will show that more than 75% of the NGOs irrespective of their area of work are of the opinion that sexual abuse of children is most likely may go up in the post lockdown period.

Figure 2.7. NGOs which Felt that Sexual Abuse of Children will Increase



The responses received during the survey regarding the impact of lockdown on the incidents of child sexual abuse were also disaggregated on zonal basis and were analysed (Table 2.3). The analysis has brought out that 82% of the NGOs operating in the North-Central Zone have the assessment that sexual exploitation of children will increase in the post lockdown period, whereas 74% of the NGOs operating in Eastern Zone expressed this concern.

Table 2.3. NGOs which Felt that Sexual Abuse of Children will Increase by Zone

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
Sexual abuse of children	74% (23)	82% (14)	71% (5)	76% (40)	71% (20)	81% (13)	100% (5)	77% (36)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53	28	16	5	47

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

Findings also suggest that among all NGOs surveyed, hardly any difference was found in response of the NGOs working with very poor/poor households (households with average monthly income up to INR 3,000) and moderate income households (households with average monthly income between INR 3,000-10,000) as in both the categories almost four fifths felt that sexual abuse of children will increase in the post lockdown period. Relatively less proportion of the NGOs (64%) working with households having good/very good income (households with average monthly income more than INR 10,000) felt the same (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. NGOs which Felt that Sexual Abuse of Children will Increase by Economic Condition of Households

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Economic Condition of Households			Combined	Economic Condition of Households			Combined
	Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#		Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#	
Sexual abuse of children	77% (36)	78% (28)	64% (7)	76% (40)	76% (32)	81% (25)	60% (6)	77% (36)
Total (n)	47	36	11	53	42	31	10	47

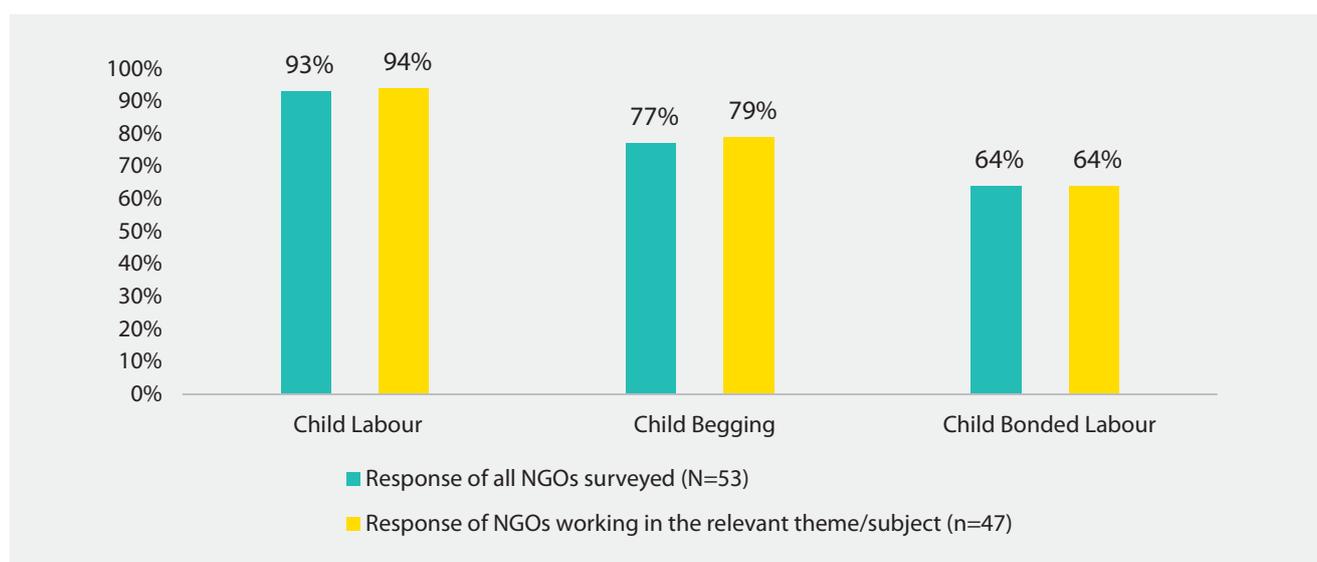
* Households with income up to INR 3,000; ** Households with income between INR 3,000-10,000; # Households with income more than INR 10,000
 Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

(iii) Child Labour (including child bonded labour)

Out of the 53 NGOs included in the survey 47 NGOs have reported working in the areas of human rights, child labour, bonded labour/child bonded labour, poverty and livelihood issues. Figure 2.8 presents the response of all the NGOs who participated in the survey as also the response of the NGOs working in the areas of human rights, child labour, bonded labour/child bonded labour, poverty and livelihood issues about their assessment of impact of lockdown on child labour and child bonded labour.

Figure 2.8 shows that 94% of all the NGOs who participated in the survey as also 93% of the NGOs working in the area of child labour, etc, were of the view that the extent of child labour will increase in the post lockdown period. Similarly, two thirds of the NGOs (64%) irrespective of their primary area of work stated that the number of child bonded labourers is also likely to increase in the post lockdown period.

Figure 2.8. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Labour and Child Bonded Labour will Increase



Zonal level analysis reveals that as per the assessment of more than 90% of the NGOs operating in Eastern and North-Central zone the child labour is likely to increase in the post lockdown period (Table 2.5). A very high proportion of NGOs operating in the South-West zone (83%) also gave a similar assessment about the impact of lockdown on child labour.

Table 2.5. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Labour and Child Bonded Labour will Increase by Zone

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
Child Labour	94% (29)	100% (17)	71% (5)	93% (49)	93%	100%	83%	94% (44)
Child Begging	74% (23)	94% (16)	57% (4)	77% (41)	75%	93%	67%	79% (37)
Child Bonded Labour	58% (18)	77% (13)	43% (3)	64% (32)	57%	73%	50%	64% (30)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53	28	15	6	47

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

The data was further analysed to understand the response pattern of NGOs regarding increase in child labour, child bonded labour amongst the poorest households with whom they were working for each of the three categories taken up for survey. This analysis is given in Table 2.6 below. Perusal of the table will show that almost all the NGOs irrespective of their area of work/expertise and financial condition of the households with whom they were working were of the view that incidence of child labour will increase in the post lockdown period. However, the percentage of NGOs who stated that child bonded labour will increase is substantially lesser than the percentage of NGOs who are of the view that the child labour will increase post the lockdown.

Table 2.6. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Labour and Child Bonded Labour will Increase by Economic Condition of Households

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Economic Condition of Households			Combined	Economic Condition of Households			Combined
	Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#		Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#	
Child Labour	94% (44)	97% (35)	100% (11)	93% (49)	95% (41)	97% (32)	100% (10)	94% (44)
Child Begging	81% (38)	83% (30)	91% (10)	77% (41)	81% (35)	85% (28)	90% (9)	79% (37)
Child Bonded Labour	66% (31)	67% (24)	64% (7)	64% (32)	65% (28)	67% (22)	60% (6)	64% (30)
Total (n)	47	36	11	53	43	33	10	47

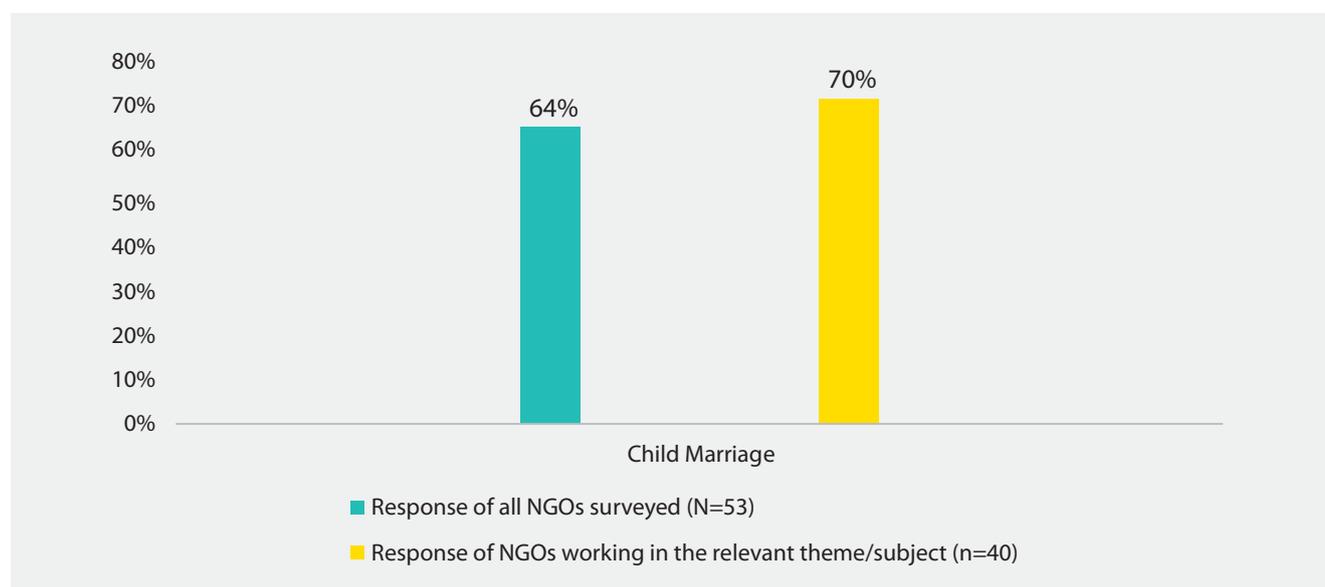
*Households with income up to INR 3,000; **Households with income between INR 3,000-10,000; # Households with income more than INR 10,000
 Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operates in multiple States

(iv) Child Marriage

Of the total sample of 53 NGOs, 40 NGOs were found working in the areas of human rights and child marriage. Figure 2.9 gives both the response of all NGOs included in the survey as also of the NGOs working the field of human rights and child marriage, on incidence of child marriage.

As per the survey, unlike other violence/crime against children, assessment of NGOs of the impact of lockdown on the incidence of child marriage is relatively less. Only 64% of all NGOs have opined that child marriages are likely to increase in the post lockdown period. However, when the NGOs working in the relevant theme were asked to give their opinion about increase in child marriage due to the impact of lockdown on households from lower economic strata, 70% NGOs agreed with the statement that 'due to financial distress poor families will get their underage girls married off'.

Figure 2.9. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Marriage will Increase



Zonal level responses of NGOs working in the areas of child marriage and human rights shows that, 73% of the NGOs operating in North-Central Zone are of the view that incidence of child marriage will increase in the post lockdown period. While more than two thirds (68%) of the NGOs operating in Eastern Zone are of the view that child marriages will increase post the lockdown period.

Table 2.7. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Marriage will Increase by Zone

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
Child Marriage	61% (19)	71% (12)	57% (4)	64% (34)	68% (15)	73% (11)	60% (3)	70% (28)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53	22	15	5	40

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

Analysis of responses regarding the impact of lockdown on incidence of child marriages on the households belonging to the poorest sub-strata of the society is presented in Table 2.8. It may be seen that the percentage of all NGOs surveyed and the NGOs working in the field of child marriage who felt that the child marriage will increase post the lockdown is almost uniform across the three sub-strata of households covered in the survey.

Table 2.8. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of Child Marriage will Increase by Economic Condition of Households

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Economic Condition of Households			Combined	Economic Condition of Households			Combined
	Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#		Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#	
Child Marriage	64% (30)	69% (25)	64% (7)	64% (34)	69% (27)	74% (20)	67% (6)	70% (28)
Total (n)	47	36	11	53	39	27	9	40

*Households with income up to INR 3,000; **Households with income between INR 3,000-10,000; # Households with income more than INR 10,000

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

2.3 Impact of Lockdown on Schooling of Children

Efforts were also made to elicit the opinion of NGOs on the long-term impact of lockdown on schooling of children of the selected households. Out of 53 NGOs, 46 reported working in the areas of education, poverty alleviation and livelihood issues. More than three fourths (76%) of the NGOs surveyed agreed with the statement that 'school closure due to the lockdown has made children easy

prey for traffickers'. Thus the survey has brought out that the closure of schools due to lockdown has enhanced the vulnerability of children from poorest economic strata for being trafficked.

Figure 2.10 presents the response of all NGOs as also of the NGOs working in the field of education, poverty alleviation and livelihood about the impact of lockdown on schooling of children of the poorest households. It may be seen that among the NGOs working in the relevant field, 89% expressed that dropouts of children from schools are likely to increase in the post lockdown period.

Figure 2.10. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of School Dropouts will Increase

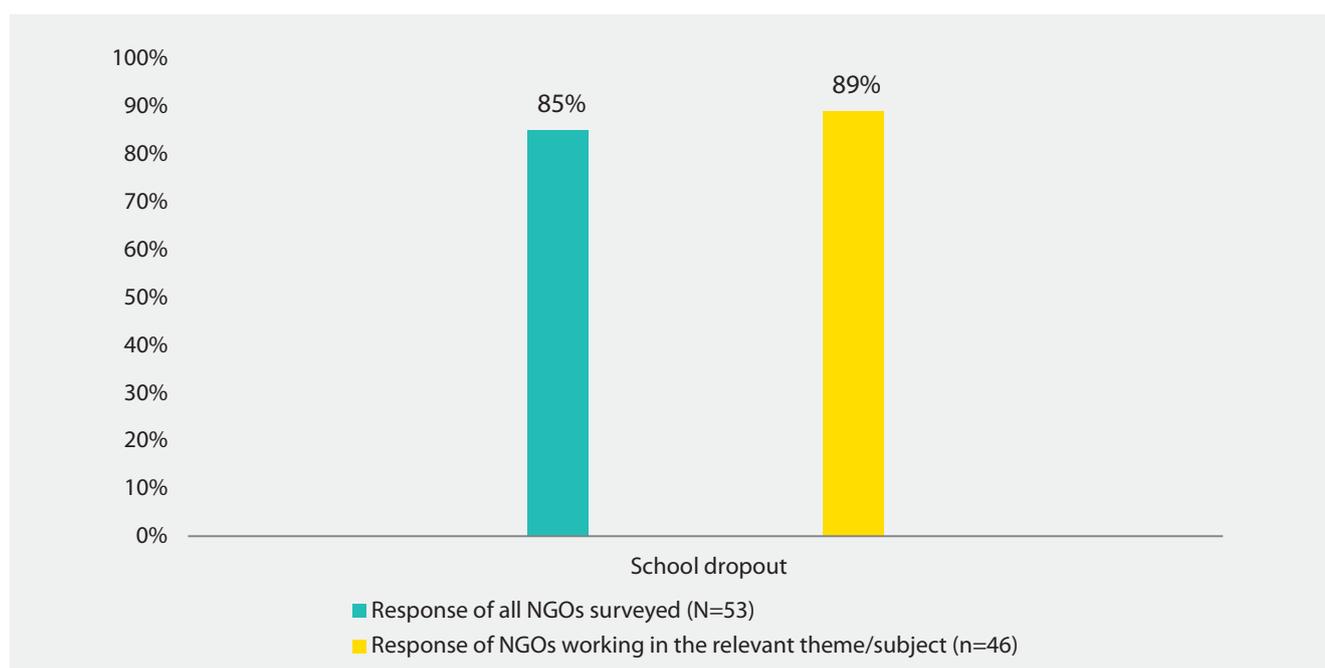


Table 2.9 below presents the disaggregated response of the NGO about the impact of lockdown on schooling of children. It will be seen that all NGOs operating in North-Central Zone irrespective of their area of work/expertise expressed the view that there will be an increase in dropouts of children from schools whereas more than four-fifths of NGOs operating in the Eastern Zone reported so.

Table 2.9. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of School Dropouts will Increase by Zone

	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
School Dropout	84% (26)	100% (17)	71% (5)	85% (45)	89%	100%	83%	89% (41)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53	23	16	5	46

Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

Data was also analysed to understand the response pattern of NGOs about the impact of lockdown on households with different levels of income with whom they are working. The analysis given in Table 2.10 suggests that the majority of the NGOs irrespective of their area of work/expertise and the financial condition of the households with whom they were working felt that child dropouts will increase in the post lockdown period. Further a relatively higher percentage of the NGOs working in the areas of education, poverty and livelihood reported that school dropouts will increase in the post lockdown period.

Table 2.10. NGOs which Felt that Incidence of School Dropouts will Increase by Economic Condition of Households

Type of Crime	Response of all NGOs Surveyed				Response of NGOs working in the relevant theme/subject			
	Economic Condition of Households			Combined	Economic Condition of Households			Combined
	Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#		Very Poor/Poor*	Moderate**	Good/Very Good#	
School Dropout	85% (40)	86% (31)	82% (9)	85% (45)	90% (37)	88% (29)	90% (9)	89% (41)
Total (n)	47	36	11	53	41	33	10	46

*Households with income up to INR 3,000; **Households with income between INR 3,000-10,000; # Households with income more than INR 10,000
 Note: Sample size of different zones may not add up to the combined number of NGO as many NGOs operate in multiple states

2.4 Impact of Lockdown on Household Economy and Survival

The households from the lowest economic strata, such as daily wage labourers, agriculture labourers, casual and workers are the worst affected by the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdown. Hence, an effort was made to get the opinion of NGOs about the level of economic distress caused by the lockdown to the poorest families in the states covered by the survey.

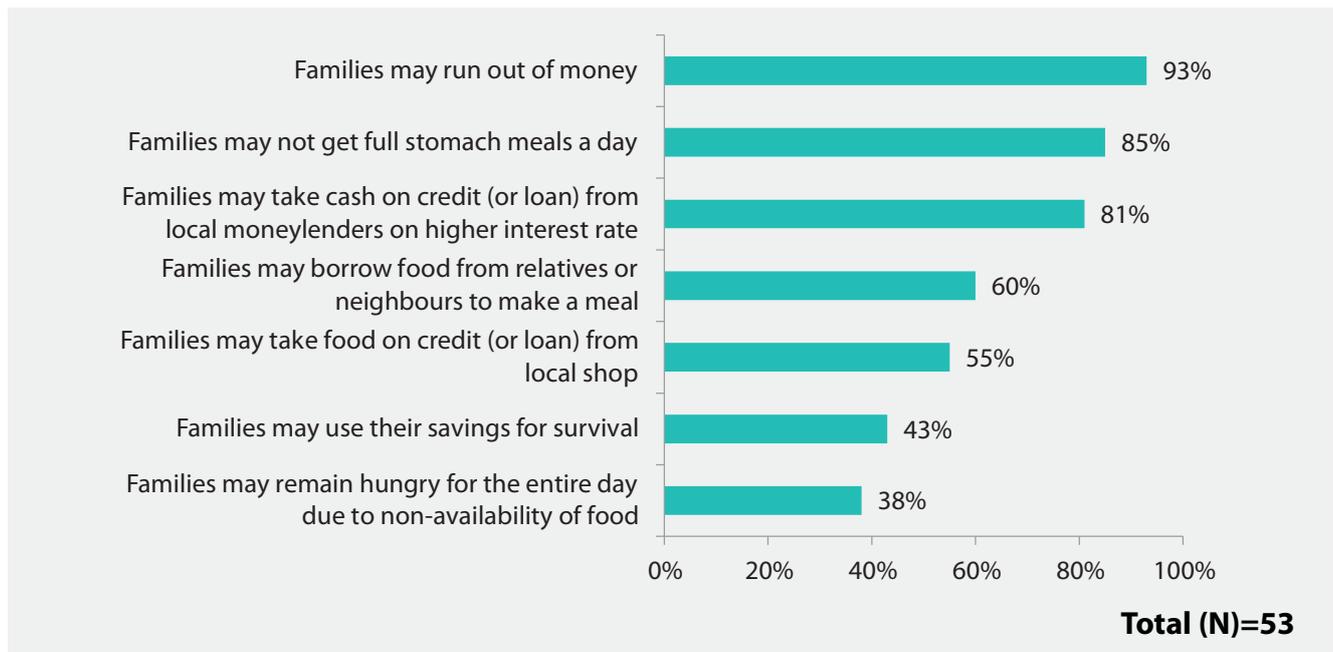
Analysis of data collected in this regard reveals that out of 53 NGOs, 52 were of the view that during lockdown economic condition of the households with whom they were working has been adversely affected. Those who reported this were further probed to understand the level of distress in detail. It was stated by most of the NGOs that the financial condition of the poor households is going to deteriorate further in the post lockdown period. Almost all NGOs highlighted that the families will soon run out of money (93%) and they may not even get enough food in a day to fill their stomach (85%). This was mostly reported by the NGOs working with very poor families (households having an average monthly income up to INR 3,000) and moderate income families (households having an average monthly income ranging from INR 3,001 to INR 10,000).

About two-fifths of the NGOs (38%) revealed that some of the families with whom they are working may even remain hungry for an entire day due to non-availability of food. More than four-fifths of the NGOs (81%) felt that in the post lockdown period families may take cash on credit from local money

lenders on high interest rates. As a result, a large number of these families may get into the trap of debt bondage.

While sharing opinion on the impact of lockdown on poor households almost all NGOs (98%) agreed with the statement that 'compared to the situation prevailing earlier i.e. three months prior to lockdown, the number of families under debt will increase during the post lockdown period'.

Figure 2.11. Economic Impact of Lockdown on Households



The way families are going to be affected further in future due to the lockdown has also been analysed zone-wise. Zone-wise findings have brought out that almost all NGOs barring those having operations in the North-Central zone of India felt that families with whom they are working will run out of money during and the post lockdown period. More than two fifths of the NGOs having operations in Eastern Zone (45%) reported that families may have to go without food for the whole day due to non-availability of food. The same view was expressed by 24% NGOs operating in the North-Central Zone and 14% operating in the South-West Zone.

Analysis of data also revealed that families may take cash on credit from local money lenders on higher interest rates. This was stated by 82% NGOs operating in North- Central zone and by 77% NGOs operating in the Eastern Zone. Slightly less than three fifths of the NGOs operating in East and South-West Zone felt that families in distress may borrow ration from their relatives or neighbours to prepare a meal which is indicative of a strong social bonding and social support among poor families.

Table 2.11. The Way Families are Going to be Affected further in Future by Zone

Ways the households going to be affected	Eastern Zone	North-Central Zone	South-West Zone	Combined
Families may run out of money	97% (30)	82% (14)	100% (7)	93% (49)
Families may use their savings for survival	48% (15)	29% (5)	43% (3)	43% (23)
Families may not get full stomach meal a day	87% (27)	82% (14)	86% (6)	85% (45)
Families may remain hungry for the entire day due to non-availability of food	45% (14)	24% (4)	14% (1)	38% (20)
Families may borrow food from relatives or neighbours to make a meal	58% (18)	59% (10)	71% (5)	60% (32)
Families may take cash on credit (or loan) from local moneylenders on higher interest rate	77% (24)	82% (14)	86% (6)	81% (43)
Families may take food on credit (or loan) from local shop	58% (18)	59% (10)	14% (1)	55% (29)
Total (n)	31	17	7	53

2.5 Other Impacts of Lockdown-Impact on Mental Health

It has often been seen that financial distress also affects the mental health of persons. In this survey an attempt was also made to assess the impact of lockdown on the mental health of people from the poorest households. The NGOs who participated in the survey were asked whether they agree or disagree with two statements which were developed to assess the mental health of members of poor households.

Findings suggest that of all NGOs who participated in the survey, 91% agreed with the statement that 'anxiety symptoms (such as mood swing, sleeplessness, lack of concentration) among people will increase in the post lockdown period'.

NGOs were probed further to find out the extent and level of mental stress among economically distressed families, 77% of NGOs agreed with the statement that 'poor people may also commit suicide due the financial distress'. Suicide or attempt there of is indicative of extreme level of mental trauma, thus a substantial proportion of NGOs felt that due to lockdown and loss of income poor people are likely to face extreme mental trauma.

CHAPTER 3

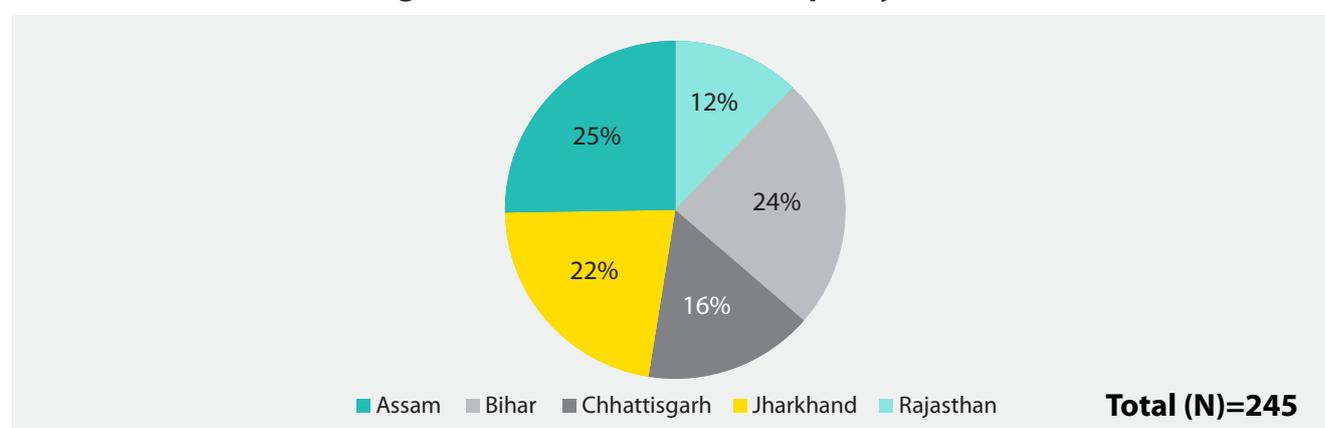
FINDINGS FROM HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

This chapter presents the findings of the household survey which was carried out in second phase of the study. The household survey was conducted in five States of the country, namely, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam. The objective of this survey was to have an in-depth understanding and assessment of the impact of lockdown on households from the lowest economic strata and its members especially children. The analysis of data and findings are presented in this chapter under five sections, (a) Profile of Respondents, (b) Economic Condition of Households surveyed, (c) Food Scarcity during the Lockdown, (d) Impact of Lockdown on Children, and (e) Impact of Lockdown on Household Economy and their future plans to cope up with the financial crisis.

3.1 Profile of Respondents

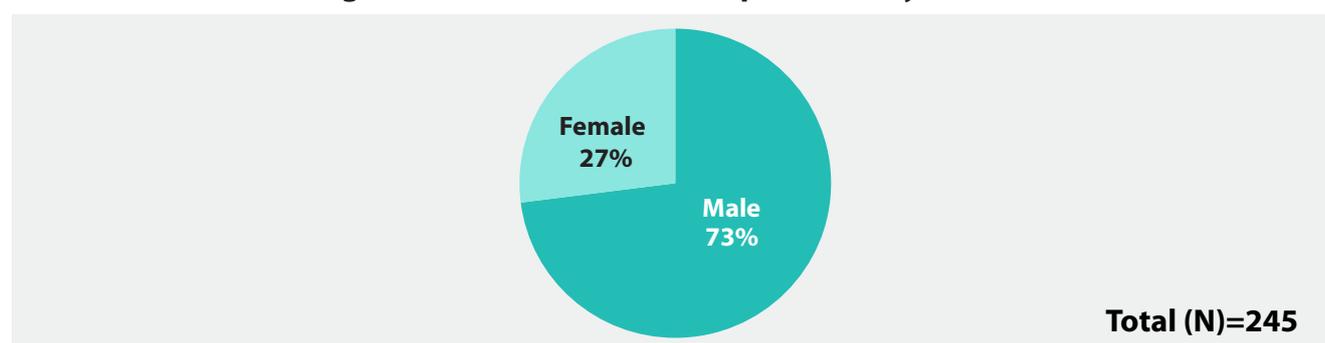
A total of 245 households from rural areas of the five selected states were surveyed (Figure 3.1). Almost three fourths of the sample households were from Rajasthan (25%), Bihar (24%) and Jharkhand (22%). Rest of the sample households were from Chhattisgarh (16%) and Assam (12%).

Figure 3.1. Distribution of Sample by State



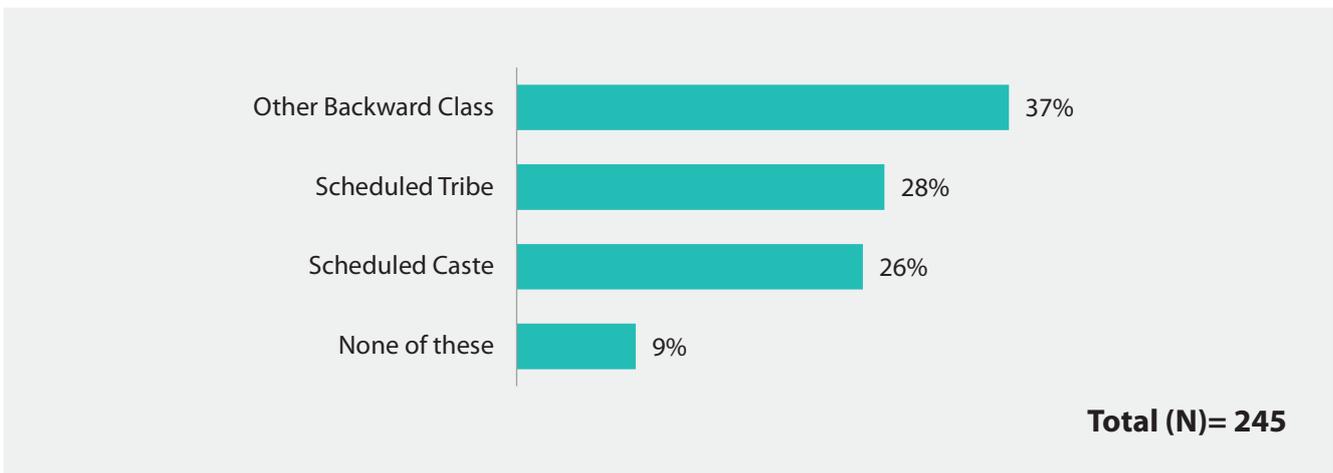
Distribution of respondents by gender, social categories, education & occupation and household size are presented in Figure 3.2 to 3.6.

Figure 3.2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender



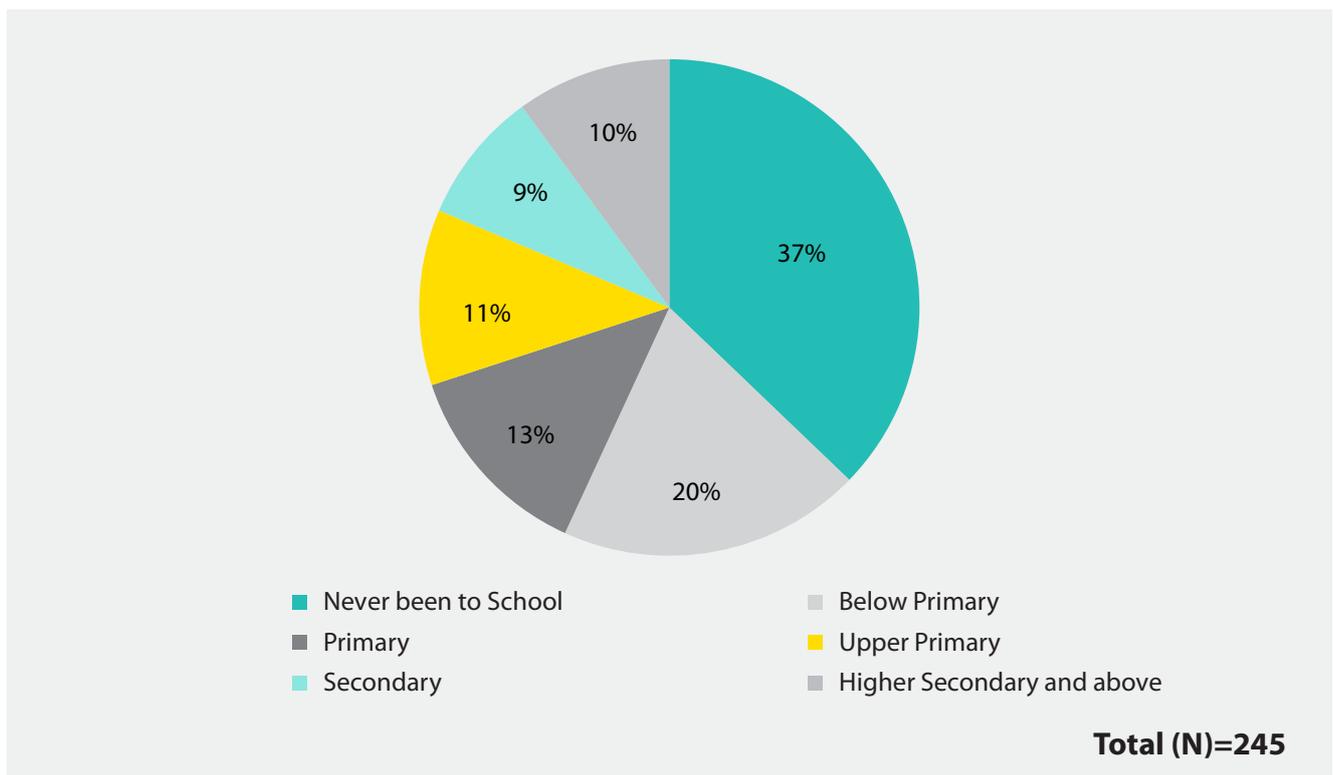
Little less than three fourths (73%) of the respondents were males (73%) and the remaining 27%, females (Figure 3.2). Ninety-one percent of the respondents reported to be from the socially marginalized groups (Figure 3.3). More than one third of the households surveyed belonged to Other Backward Classes (37%). More than one fourth (28%) of the households surveyed were from Scheduled Tribes, while 26% were from Scheduled Castes households.

Figure 3.3. Distribution of Respondents by Social Category



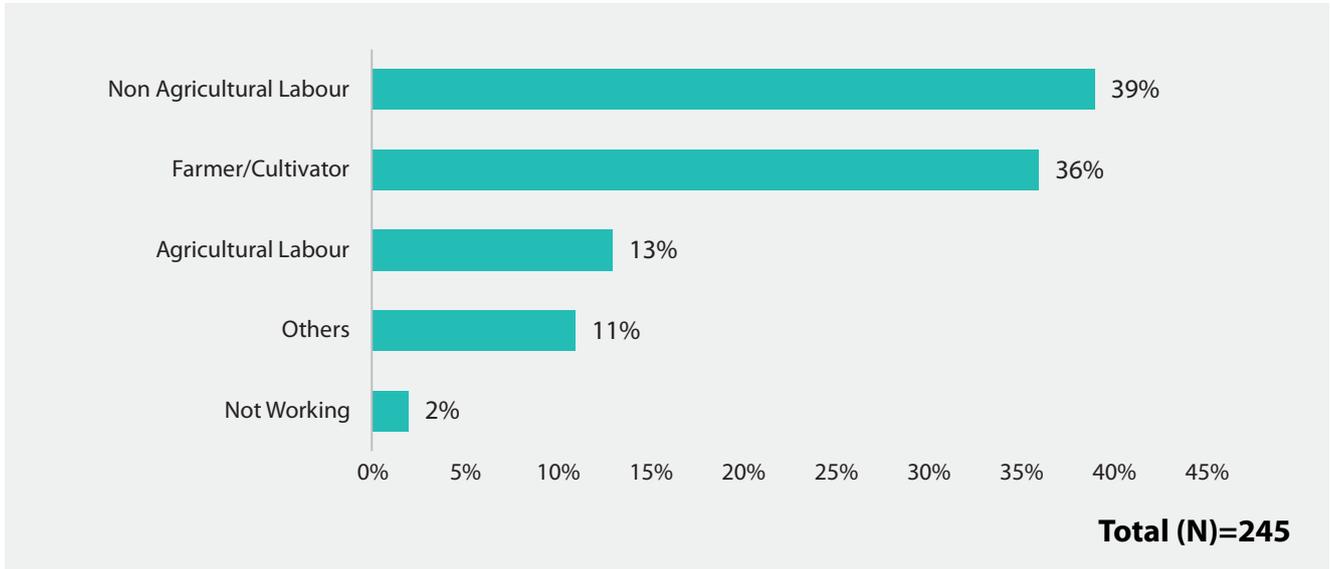
Near about two fifths (37%) respondents had never been to school, while 20% had below primary level education. Among the rest were those who had completed education up to primary-level were (13%), upper primary-level education (11%), secondary-level education (9%), and higher secondary & above level (10%) education (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. Distribution of Respondents by Highest Completed Level of Education



Distribution of respondents by broad occupational categories shows that most of them were non-agricultural labour (39%), followed by farmers/cultivators (36%) and agricultural labour (13%) (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Distribution of Respondents by Occupation



Distribution of households by its size reveals that about half of the households surveyed (45%) had '1 to 4' members, while 36% households comprised of '5 to 7' members and another 19% had '8 and above' members (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Distribution of Households by Size



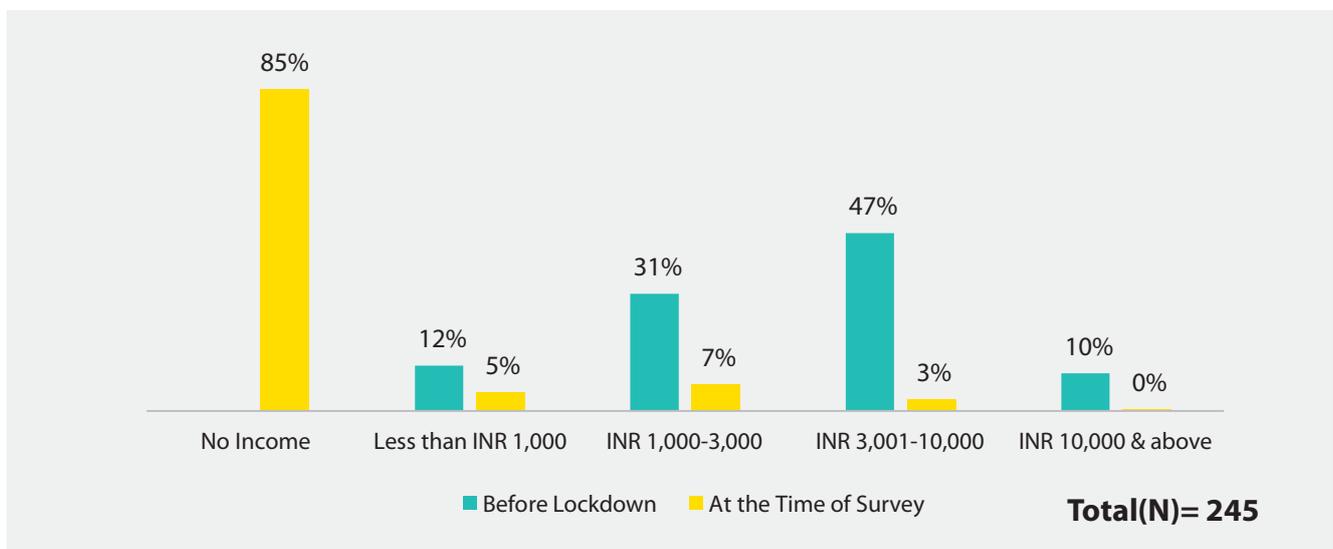
3.2. Economic Condition of Households

Economic condition of households depends on many factors such as average monthly or daily income, nature of occupation, household savings, etc. Since the NGOs during the first stage of survey had reported that lockdown had a negative impact on economic condition of the households, especially those from lowest economic strata, in household survey respondents were asked specific questions to assess the level of impact of lockdown on household economy.

3.2.1. Average Monthly Household Income

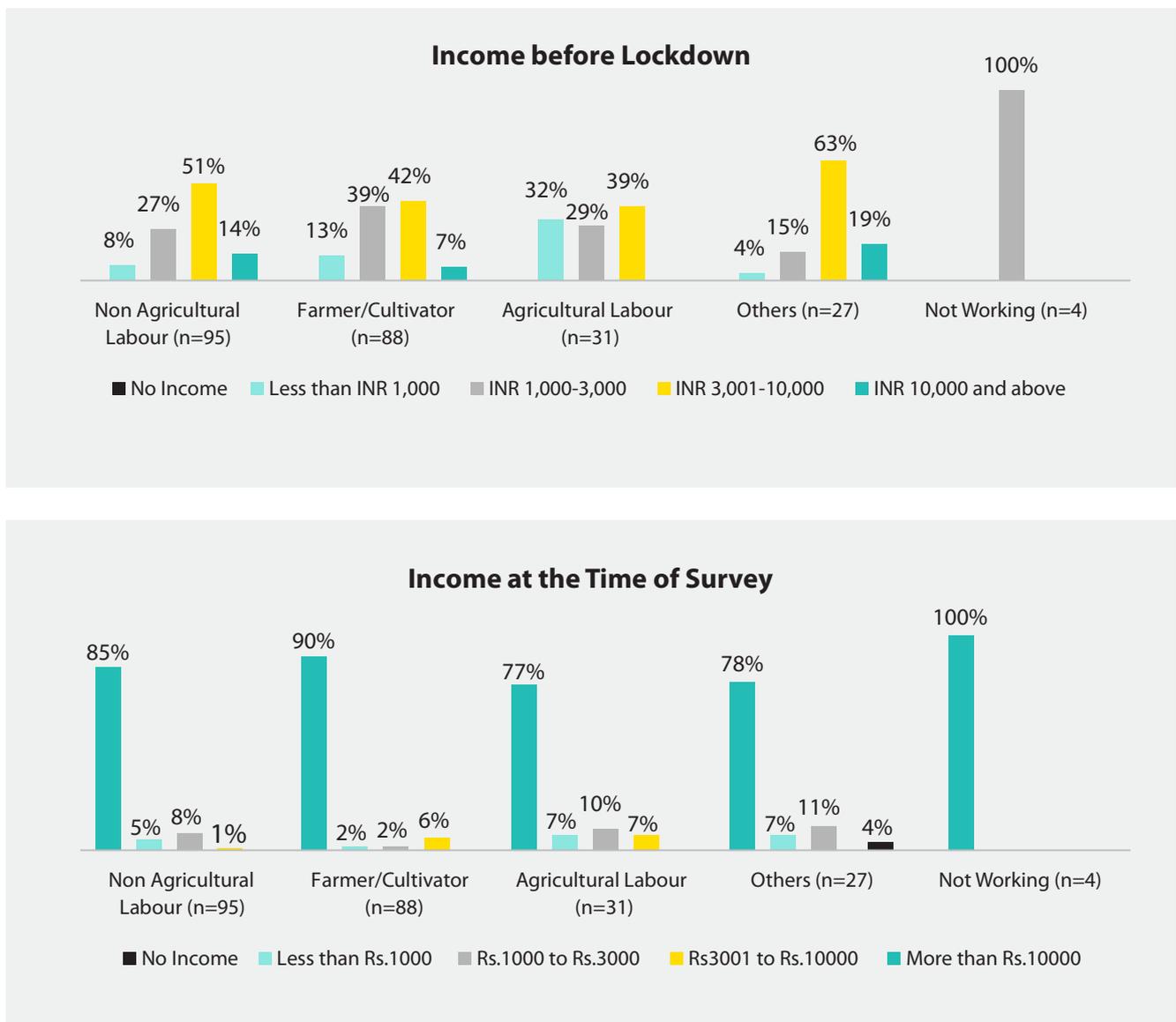
During the survey, respondents were asked about their average monthly household income before the imposition of the lockdown and at the time of the survey. Results reveal that there had been a drastic reduction in the average household income as 85% reported having absolutely no income at the time of the survey. In the pre-lockdown period every household had reported some income irrespective of the amount. Before the lockdown, 47% were in the income range of INR 3,001-10,000 which was reduced to a meagre three percent during the lockdown. The proportion of those getting less than INR 1,000, which was 12% before the lockdown, dropped to five percent (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. Average Monthly Household Income before Lockdown and at the Time of Survey



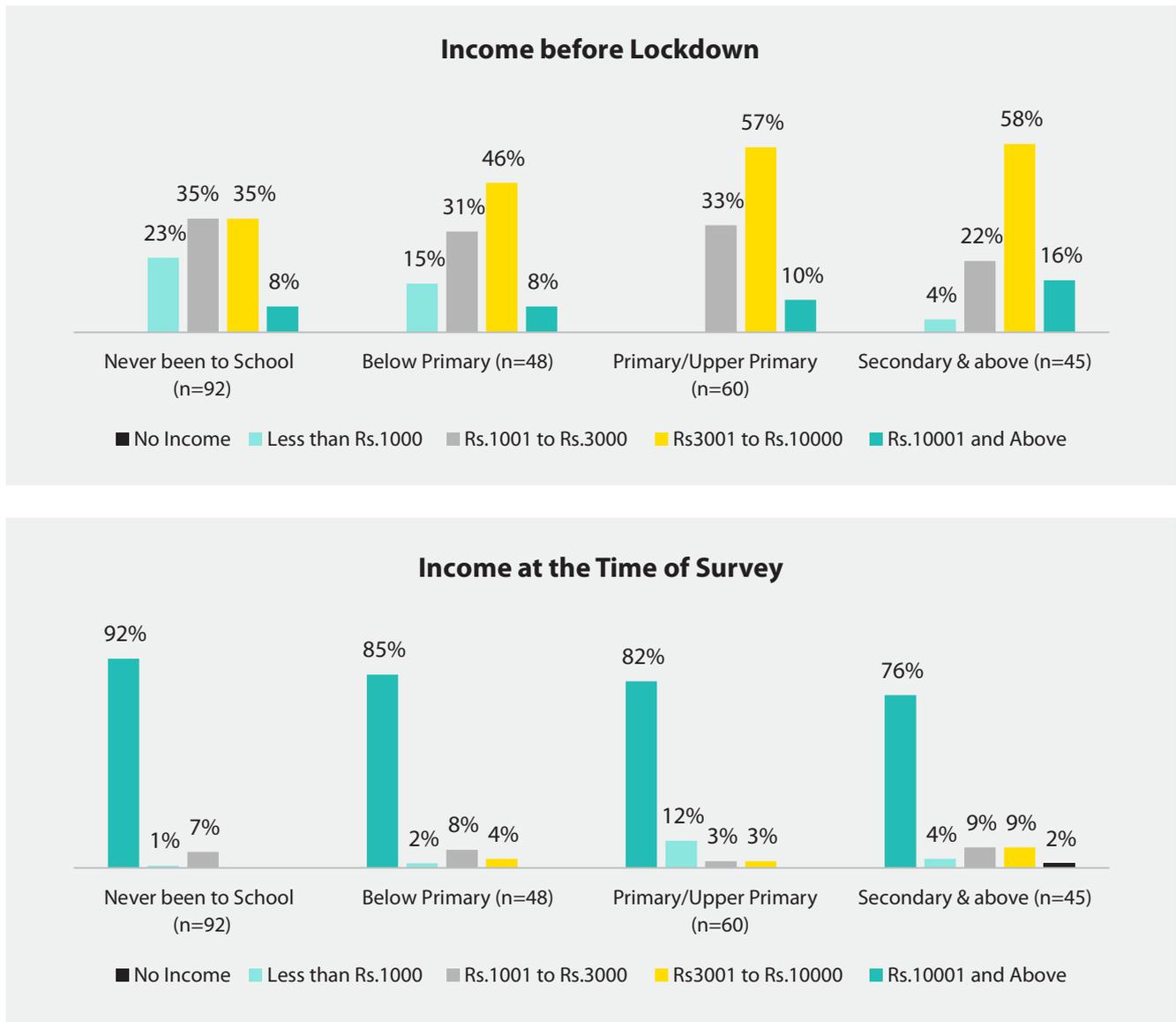
Survey has brought out that the average monthly household income has reduced due to the lockdown irrespective of the occupation of the respondent, the reduction has been the least for agricultural labour who ironically were earning little before the lockdown, and most for the farmers and non-agricultural labour. Before the lockdown, 32% of agricultural labour were earning less than INR 1,000 a month. Due to the lockdown percentage of the households earnings less than INR 1,000 reduced to seven percent at the time of survey. Income of the households where the respondent was a non-agricultural labour has also been severely impacted by the lockdown. Survey brought out that prior to the lockdown 51% of these households had an income between INR 3,000-10,000. Due to the lockdown the percentage of households in this income category has reduced to one percent only. Percentage of households in the income category INR 1,000-3,000 has reduced from 27% before the lockdown to 8% at the time of survey. Percentage of non-agricultural labour households earning up to INR 1,000 only has reduced from eight percent to six percent and the non-agricultural households who reported to be having no income went up from 14% prior to the lockdown to 85% at the time of survey (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8. Average Monthly Household Income by Respondents' Occupation



Analysis of the data to assess the impact of lockdown on average monthly household income by education of the respondents (Figure 3.9) reveals that reduction in average monthly household income is relatively less for those having education up to secondary level and above and most for those who are illiterate and had never gone to school. Figure 3.9 shows that respondents who reported no income at the time of survey, their percentage was highest at 91% among the those who had never attended school and lowest at 76% among respondents having education up to secondary standard and above. About three fifths (58%) of the respondents having education up to secondary standard and above reported an average household income between INR 3,001-10,000 in the pre-lockdown period, their percentage had gone down to a mere 9% at the time of survey.

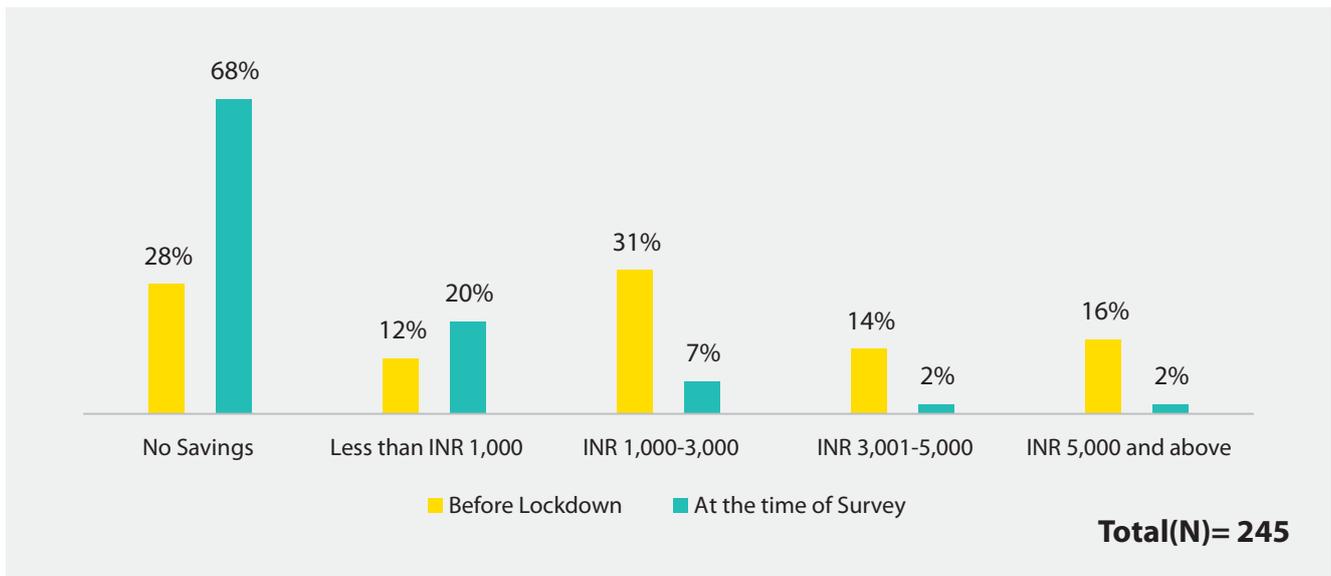
Figure 3.9. Average Monthly Household Income by Respondents' Education



3.2.3. Average Household Savings

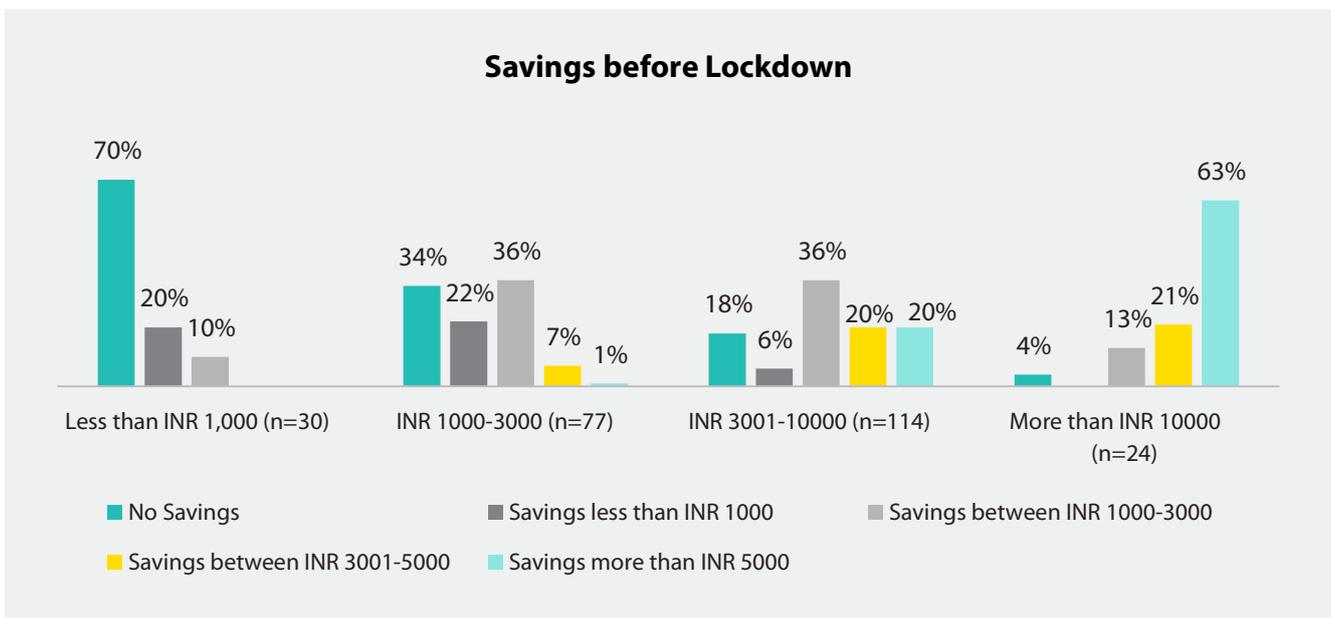
As discussed in preceding paragraphs, the lockdown has significantly reduced the monthly average household income. As a result of this, the household savings have also been severely impacted. Household savings are a very important indicator to assess the vulnerability of households to economic shocks. It is the financial safety net that we all need for ourselves and for our families to withstand financial shocks. Before the lockdown, 28% of the respondents reported having no savings which increased sharply to 68% at the time of survey. In the pre-lockdown period 31% respondents reported having savings between INR 1,000-3,000, percentage households in this category was reduced to only seven percent at the time of survey. The corresponding figures for the respondents having savings of more than INR 5,000 was 16% and two percent, respectively (Figure 3.10).

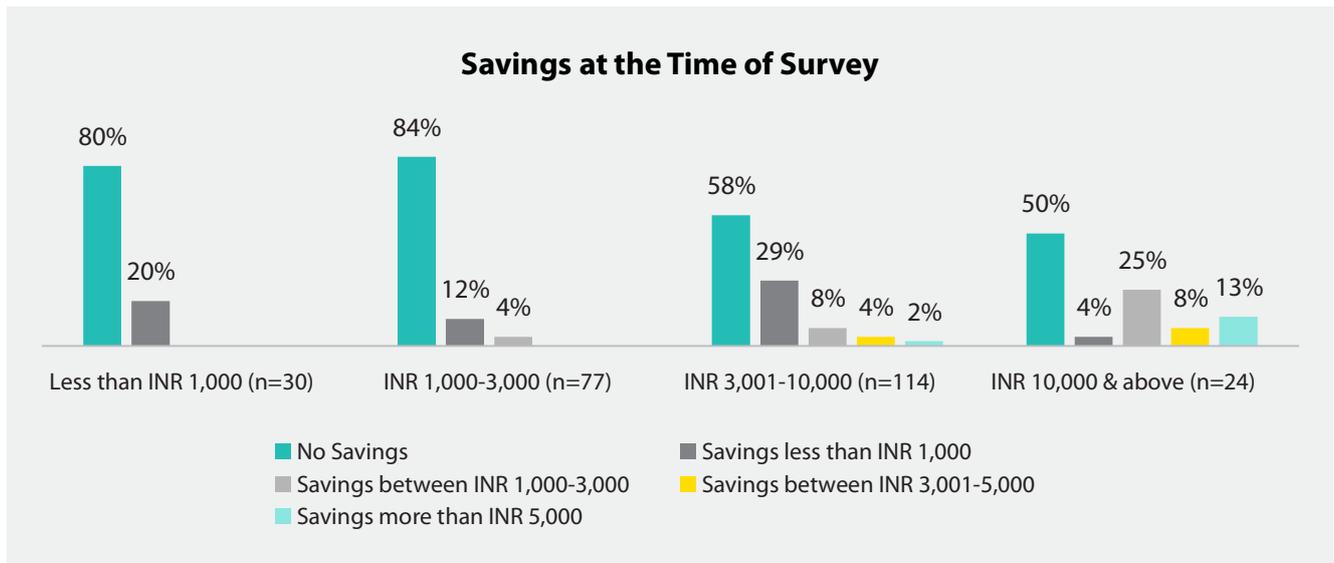
Figure 3.10. Household Savings before Lockdown and at the Time of Survey



The reduction in household savings was least for the households in lower income groups and highest for those in higher income groups. Figure 3.11 shows that among the households surveyed, 70% with an average monthly income of less than INR 1,000 did not have any savings before lockdown. The percentage of households with no savings in this income category increased by 10 percentage points at the time of survey and became 80%. In comparison, households which had an income of INR 10,000 & above, of them only four percent reported not to have any savings before implementation of the lockdown. This percentage increased significantly (50%) at the time of survey. Households with a monthly average income between INR 1,000- 3,000 were also affected severely as they lost their savings due to lockdown. Percentage households in this category reporting no savings increased from 34% in the pre-lockdown period to 84% at the time of survey (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11. Household Savings by Average Monthly Income

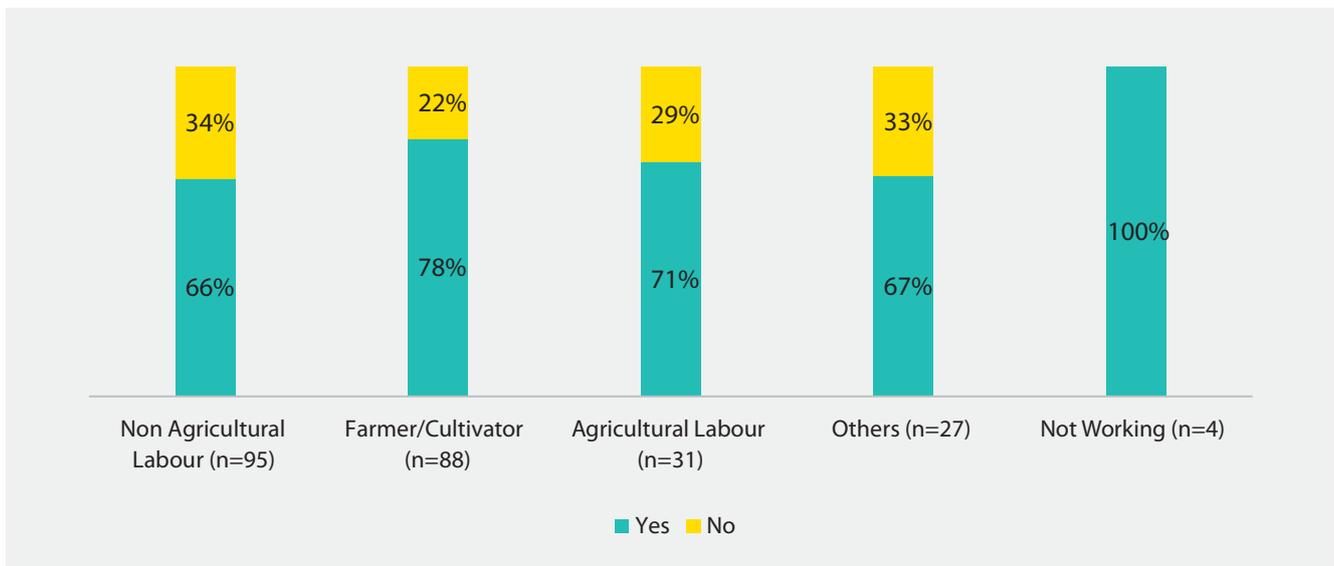




3.3. Shortage of Food during Lockdown

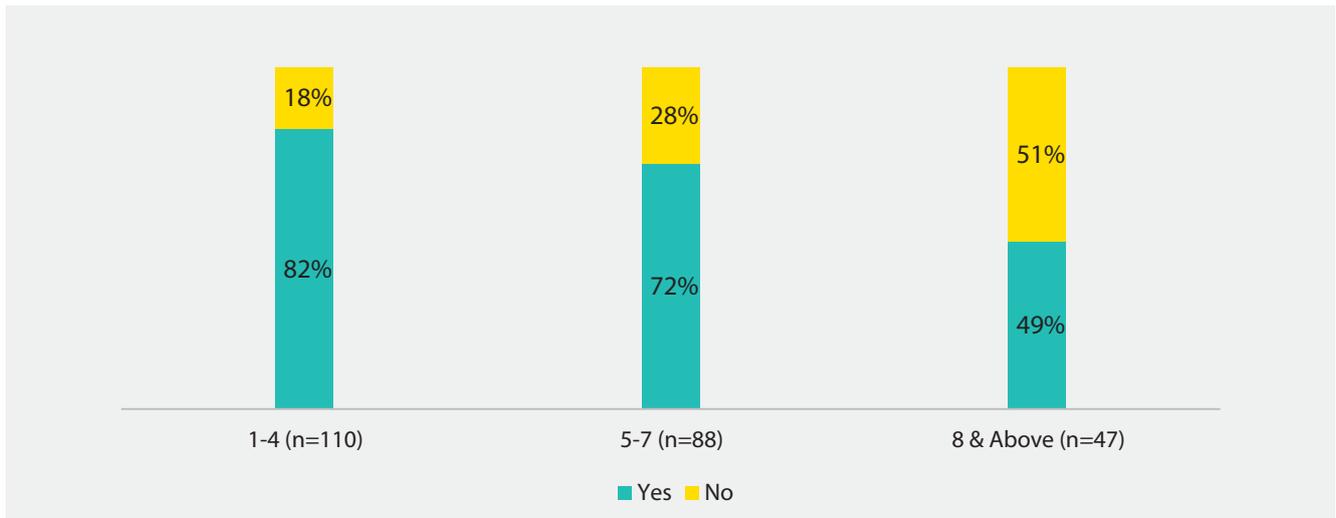
Shortage or non-availability of food is one of the worst vulnerabilities for all the living species including the humankind. With almost negligible average household savings, most of the respondents (72%) reported shortage of food during the lockdown. Analysis of data by respondent's occupation reveals that food shortage was reported by all the households in varying degrees. Least food shortage was reported (66%) by non-agricultural labourer and most by farmers/cultivators (78%), followed by agricultural labour (71%) (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12. Extent of Food Shortage by Respondents' Occupation



Least food shortage was also reported by respondents with households of size '8' & above members' (49%) and most by those with small household size of '1 to 4 members' (82%), perhaps emphasizing the value of 'more hands, more safety; at grassroots level (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13. Extent of Food Shortage by Household Size



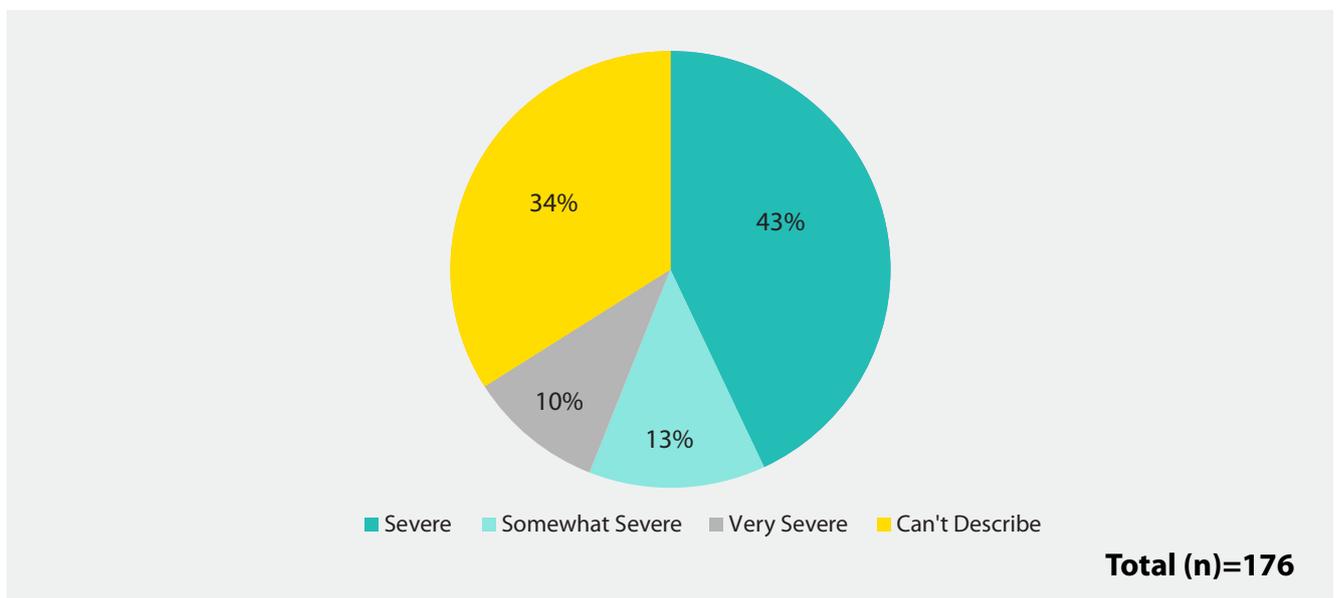
3.3.1. Severity of Food Shortage

Shortage of food during the lockdown among the households from the lowest economic strata was widely reported in media, a phenomenon which has been corroborated by the present survey also. The next concern, therefore, was to understand the severity of the problem. The survey defined food severity under three broad categories –

- 1) Very Severe (Exhausted all food reserves/do not have anything to eat)
- 2) Severe (Exhausted all food reserves but managing to get daily meals)
- 3) Somewhat Severe (Exhausted all food reserves at any point of time but managed to refill).

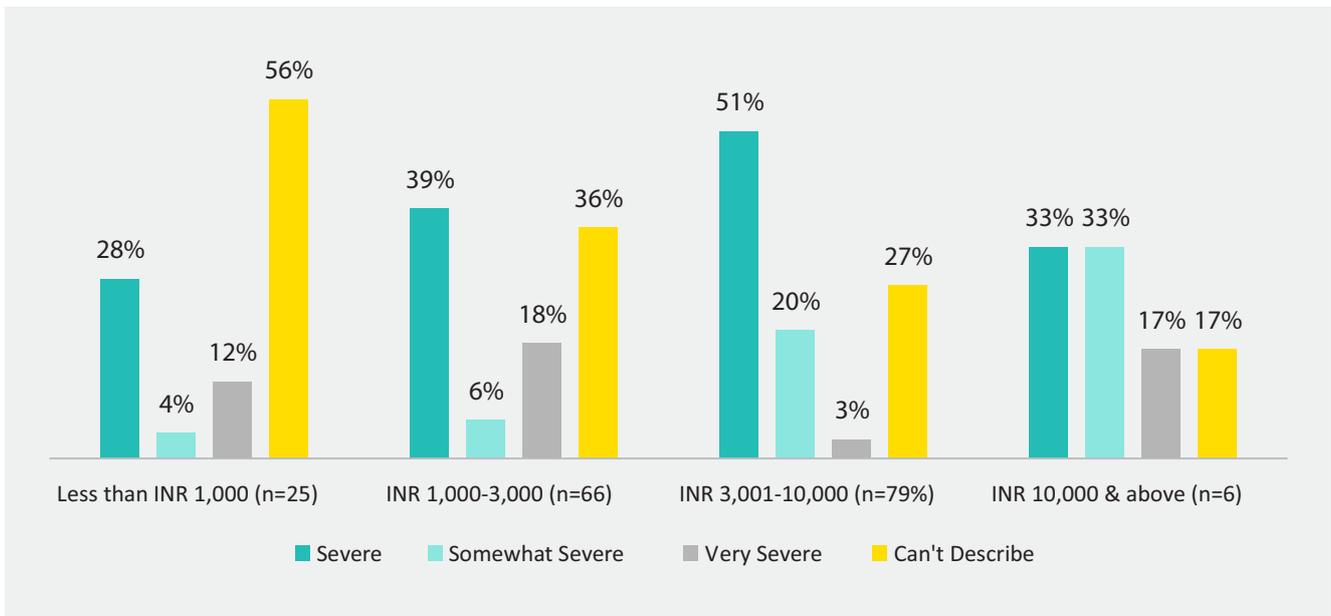
Out of all those who reported having food shortage during the lockdown (i.e., 176 out of 245), 43% said it was 'severe', while 10% said it was 'very severe' and for another 13%, it was 'somewhat severe'. The other 34% respondents in this group "couldn't describe" severity of the food scarcity during the lockdown though all of them stated to have experienced the same (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.14. Severity of Food Shortage



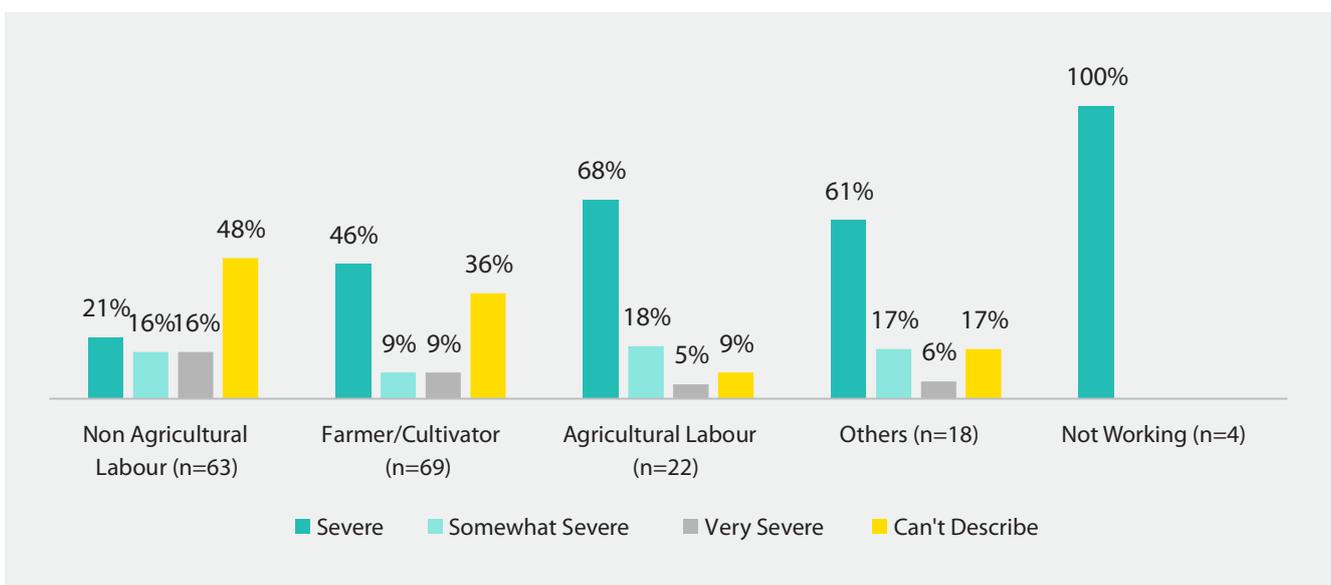
As expected, food shortage was reported severest by those in lowest income groups and 'somewhat severe' by those in comparatively higher income groups. Against 12% and 18% of respondents with average monthly income of 'less than INR 1,000' and 'INR 1001-3,000', respectively who reported food shortage as 'very severe', the corresponding figure for those with average monthly income of 'INR 3,001-10,000' was three percent (Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15. Severity of Food Shortage by Average Monthly Household Income



Analysis of data by occupation of the respondent (Figure 3.16) indicates that food shortage was reported 'very severe' by maximum number of non-agricultural labour (16%) households, followed by farmers/cultivators (9%) and agricultural labour (5%).

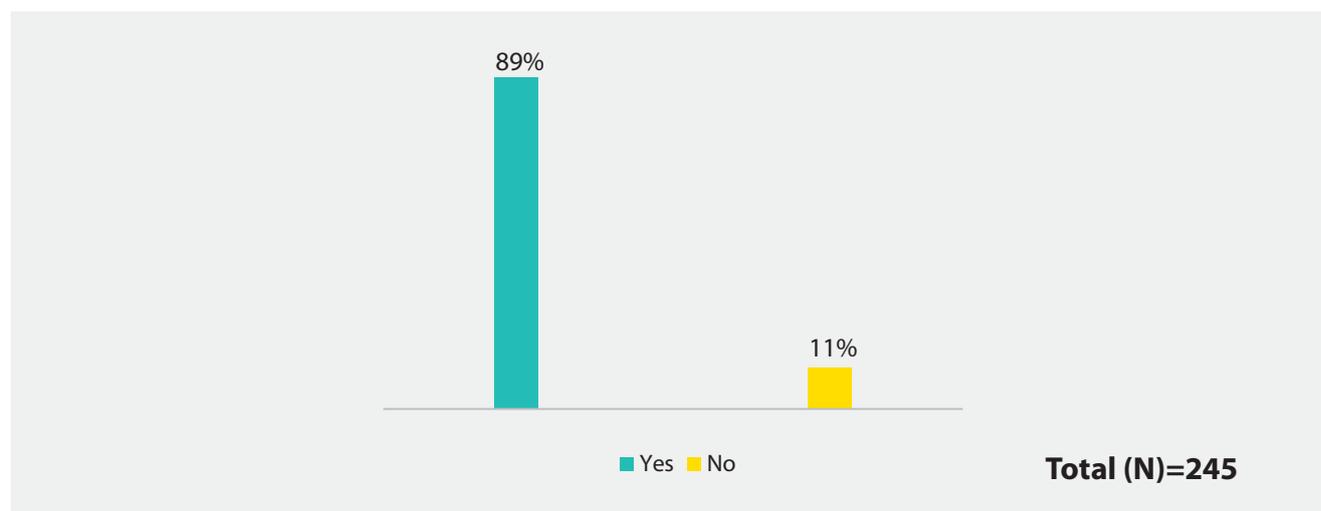
Figure 3.16. Severity of Food Shortage by Respondents' Occupation



3.3.2. Possession of Ration Card

A ration card is an official document issued by State Governments in India to households that make them eligible to receive subsidised food grain from the Public Distribution System. The survey asked respondents about their ration card holding status. A vast majority of respondents (89%) reported possessing ration cards, and were thus eligible for getting ration/ additional ration from respective State Governments during the lockdown period (Figure 3.17).

Figure 3.17. Households with Ration Card



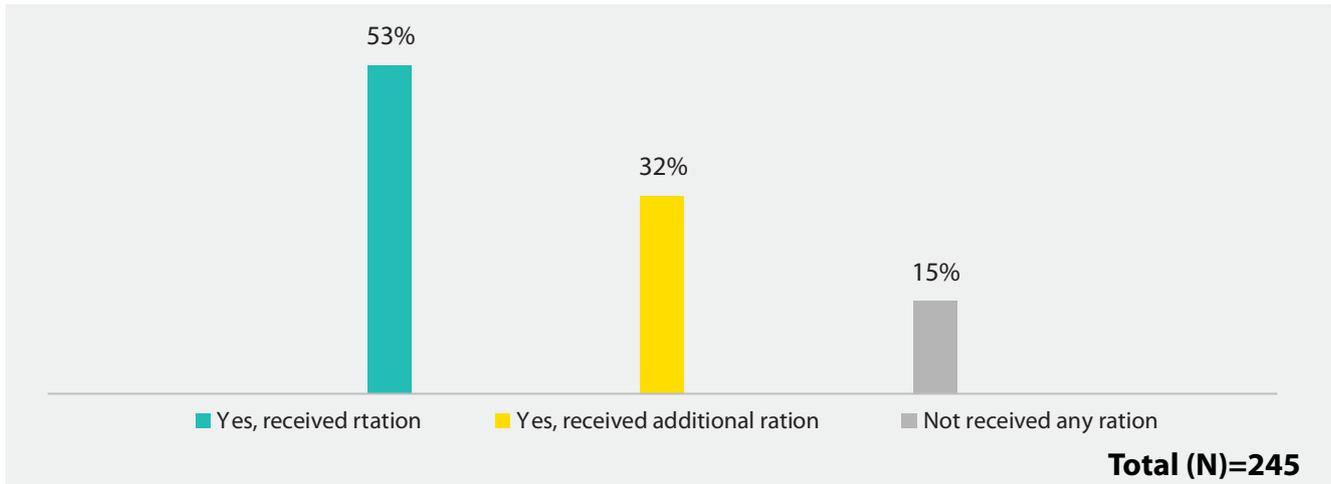
Among the broad occupational groups, the proportion of respondents having ration cards was highest for agricultural labour (97%), followed by farmer's/cultivator's (93%), petty business (87%) and non-agricultural labour (85%).

3.3.4. Procurement of Ration during Lockdown

During the lockdown, painful stories of hunger and despair have emerged from across the country, especially from households belonging to the lowest economic strata. Various State Governments, with support from the Central Government, have tried to reach out to the needy and poor households and provided them with additional ration so that no one goes hungry. Various Non-Governmental Organisations have also distributed food packets/ ration among the poor households. It was therefore considered appropriate to make an assessment of receipt of ration and additional ration by the respondent households during the lockdown period.

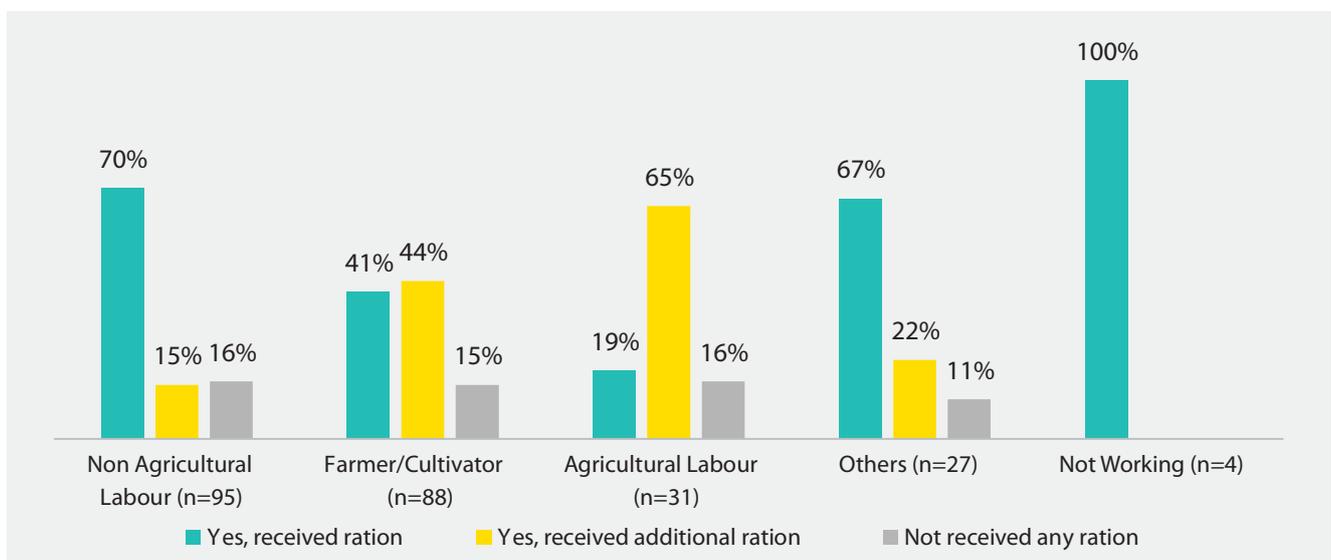
More than four fifths (85%) of the respondents said they had received ration during the lockdown, while 33% respondents reported to have received additional ration as well (Figure 3.18). Receipt of ration by a household in possession of a ration card is a legal entitlement of the concerned household as per the provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013. Therefore, the fact that 15% of the households did not receive any ration is indicative of a failure of PDS. That only 32% of the households had received the additional ration which the Government had promised to provide in these times of crisis is even a bigger failure of the system.

Figure 3.18. Receipt of Ration by Households during Lockdown



Receipt of ration was found to be comparatively higher among non-agricultural labourers (70%) as compared to farmers (41%) and agricultural labourers (19%) (Figure 3.19). On the other hand, receipt of additional ration was highest by agricultural labourers (65%) followed by farmer's cultivators (44%). Each of these percentages are a testimony of the failure of the system to provide food support to the most needy in these times of financial crisis.

Figure 3.19. Receipt of Ration/Additional Ration by Respondents' Occupation



3.4. Lockdown and Children

Children face specific risks and heightened vulnerabilities during a pandemic and COVID-19 induced lockdown has been no exception. It has exposed them to various forms of exploitation in both the short and long term. They are being affected, by the socio-economic impact of the lockdown and, in some cases, by mitigation measures that have inadvertently done more harm than good to them.

The survey asked three questions from respondents on impact of lockdown induced financial crisis faced by households and its impact on children belonging to those households. They were regarding vulnerabilities of children to get pushed into labour, get trafficked, getting married below the prescribed age, and dropping out of school, once the lockdown was lifted.

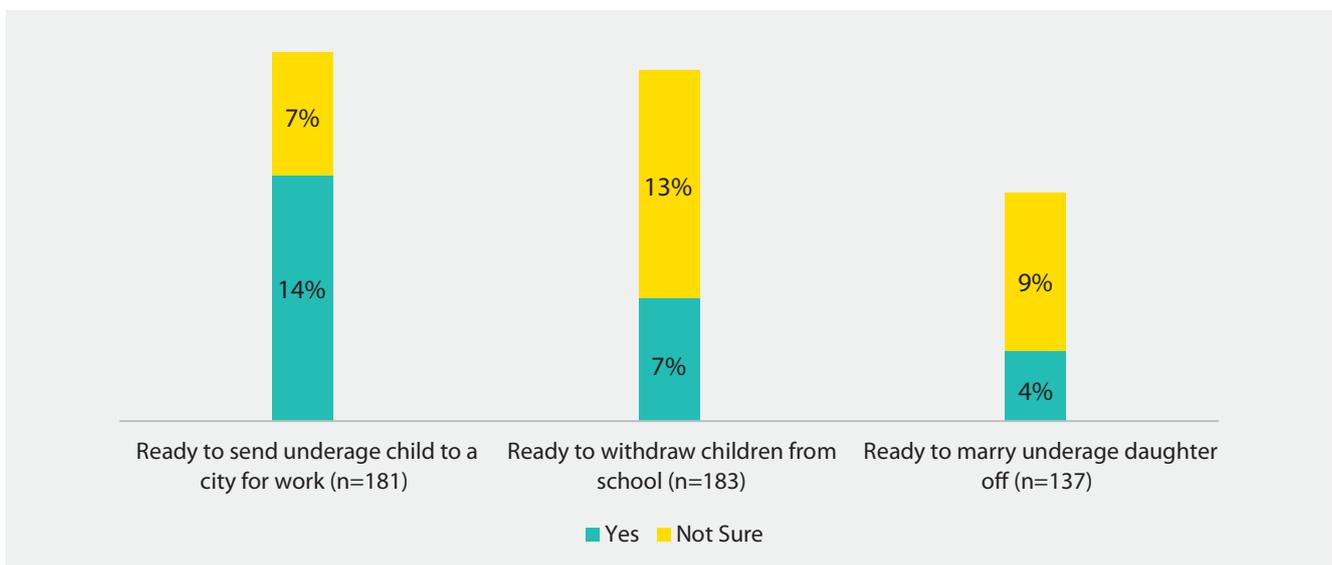
3.4.1. Child Labour, Child Marriage & School Dropout

Poverty is one of the major reasons behind child labour and from the analysis presented above it is evident that the economic condition of households has been badly affected due to the lockdown. For poor households lockdown has come as a seismic shock from which they are going to take a lot of time to recover. In this survey the respondents who reported to have children in their households were asked whether they are ready to send their underage son or daughter to a city for work due to the financial crisis they are facing, more than 14% of the respondents said they would be ready to send their underage son or daughter to urban areas for work (Figure 3.20). The proportion of those who were “not sure” was seven percent. Together, these two groups make 21% of the households who could potentially be a source of child labour due to their increased economic vulnerability.

The respondent households who reported that due to their poor financial condition they will not hesitate to withdraw their children from school was a low 6% but another 14% respondent households stated that they were 'not sure' as to what they will do. If it is assumed that households in 'not sure' category are also susceptible of withdrawing their children from school and their percentage is clubbed together with the proportion of 'not sure' respondents, the total 20% is a substantial fraction. Thus, the findings suggest that 20% households may withdraw their children from school in future and deny them their right to get educated if the financial crisis they are faced with continues.

The respondents were also probed to find out whether the financial crisis which they are faced with is likely to force them to marry off their underage daughters. 4% of the respondents reported they would marry their underage daughter off if the present situation prevails. The proportion of respondents who replied that they are 'not sure' constitutes almost one tenth of the eligible respondents (9%). It means, potentially 13% households may marry their underage daughter off, if they continue to face financial crisis.

Figure 3.20. Impact of Economic Crises on Child Labour, Child Marriage and Education of Children



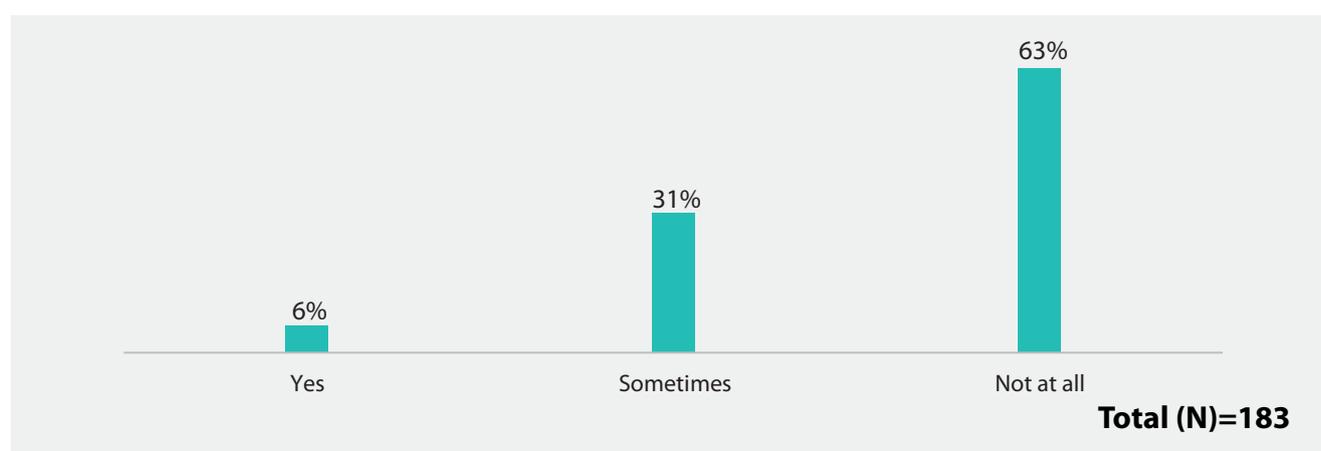
It is important to mention here that child labour, child marriage and withdrawing children from schools are delicate issues, which ordinary households in India do not prefer to discuss or share with outsiders. Therefore, there is a definite possibility of the actual figures being on the higher side than what the survey data reveals.

Social category-wise, largest number of respondents who reported either 'yes' or 'not sure' to send their underage son or daughter to urban areas for work are from the Scheduled Castes (44%). Similarly, largest number of respondents who are ready to withdraw their children from schools (30%) and ready to marry their underage daughter off (27%) if the financial crisis persists are also from the Scheduled Castes.

3.4.2. Children Studying at Home during Lockdown

About two thirds (63%) of the respondents (with at least one child in their households) reported children weren't studying at home during the lockdown (Figure 3.21). The lockdown has forced children to stay inside their houses, stay away from school, face food shortages. They have also been denied the opportunity to go out in the open to play with friends.

Figure 3.21. Whether Children are Able to Study at Home during Lockdown



3.5. Impact on Household Economy and Future Plans

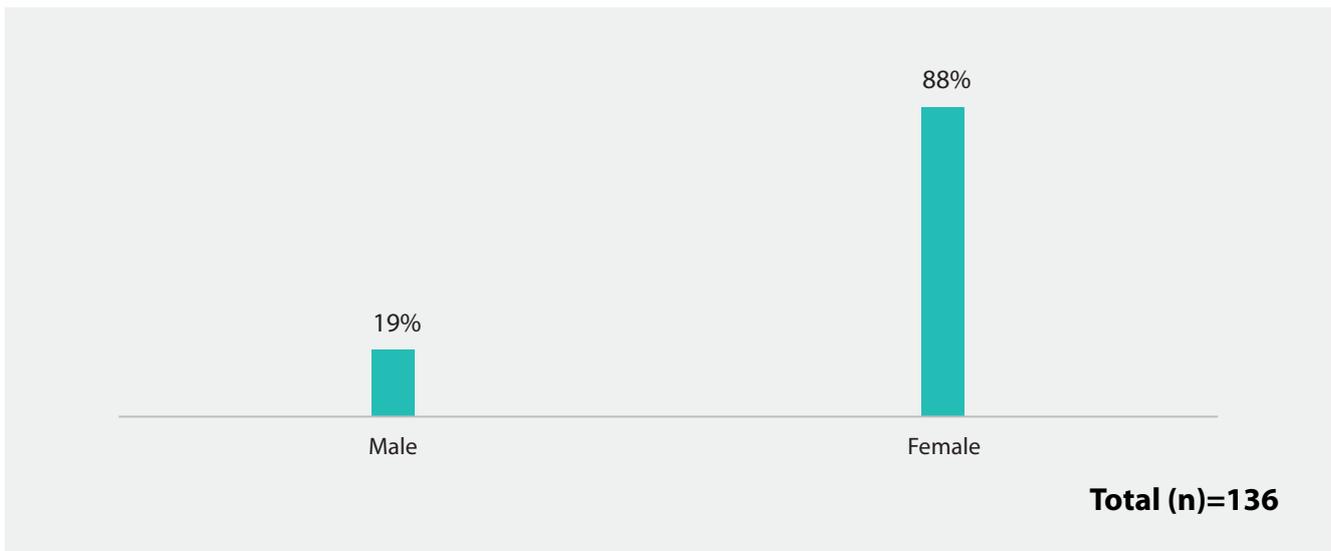
The lockdown has had immense impact on the economy of households, especially those belonging to the lowest economic strata. Some of the findings on this aspect have been discussed in previous sections. This section presents findings on cash transfers made to households during the lockdown and their plans to mitigate the impact of the lockdown.

3.5.1. Cash Transfer during Lockdown

Under the newly framed Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana, cash transfer to Jan Dhan account holders is one of the measures adopted by the Government to mitigate the impact of lockdown on the poor. Starting from April 2020, five hundred rupees were planned to be transferred to 200 million women Jan Dhan account holders for three consecutive months. The survey asked the respondents about the

cash transfer, if any, made to women Jan Dhan account holders of their households. Of the total sample of 245 households, 136 households (56%) reported having a Jan Dhan account. Since, as per the announcement made by the Government the amount of Rs 500 is to be transferred to women account holders only, an attempt was made to find out how many out of these Jan Dhan accounts were in the names of the lady of the household. It may be seen from Figure 3.22 that a majority (88%) of the households surveyed had a Jan Dhan account in the name of the female member. Little less than one fifth (19%) households had the account in name of a male member.

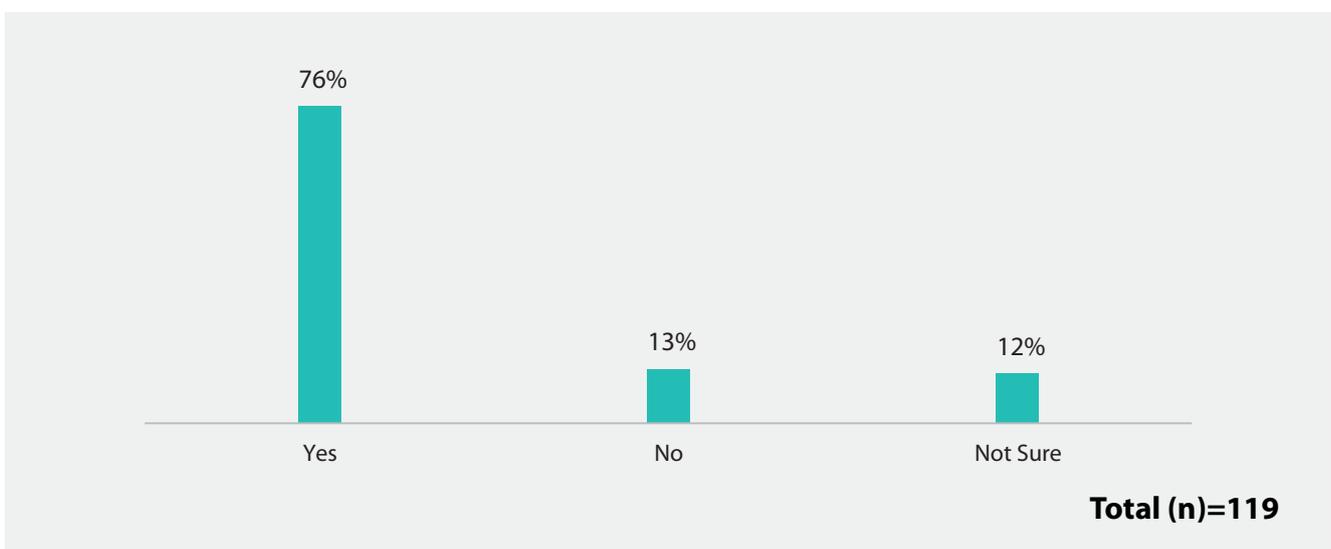
Figure 3.22. Jan Dhan Account Holders by Gender



Note: Percentage may not add up to 100% due to multiple choice responses

Further, the data was analysed to see as to how many households with female account holders had received money in their respective Jan Dhan accounts. More than three fourths (76%) of households confirmed receipt of cash benefits in their accounts during the lockdown (Figure 3.23).

Figure 3.23. Cash Transfers in Jan Dhan Accounts

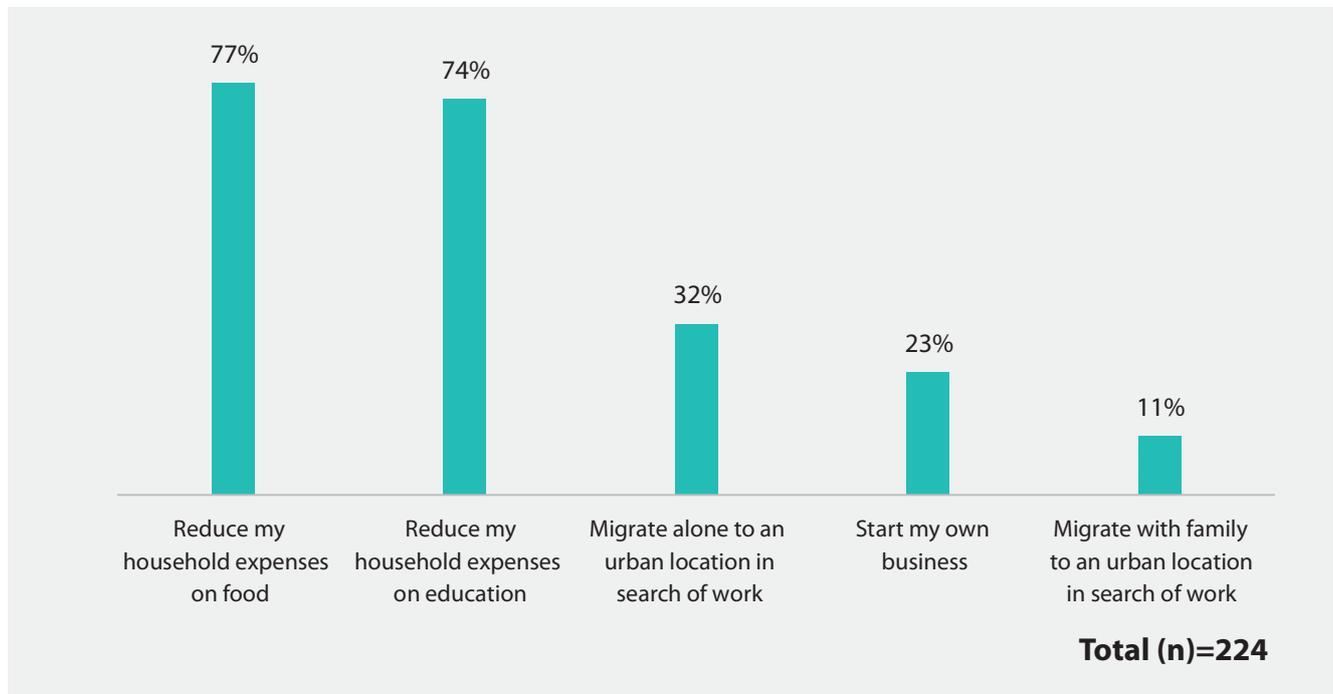


During the survey the respondents were also asked about their plans to mitigate their current financial crises. Findings reveal that 21 respondents, which constitutes almost one tenth (9%) of the total sample, reported that they did not know how to deal with the crises situation. Such response it is felt is indicative of the extreme level of mental stress due to which the person is not in a position to think rationally and make plans for immediate future.

Response of remaining 224 respondents is presented in Figure 3.24. It will be seen that more than three fourths (77%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that they may reduce household expenses on food to deal with the current economic crises. Seventy four percent of the respondents also indicated reduction in expenses related to education of their children. It may be recalled that in the previous section while responding to a direct question about withdrawal of children from education only 20% households had responded about withdrawal of their children from school to deal with the situation. Consideration of response to question regarding reduction in expenses relating to education by such a substantial proportion of respondents indicates that dropout of children from schools is most likely to happen and may be on a fairly large scale.

About one third (32%) respondents agreed with the statement that to deal with the current economic crises they may migrate alone to some city in search of work. However, only 11% were found considering migrating with their families to a city in search of work.

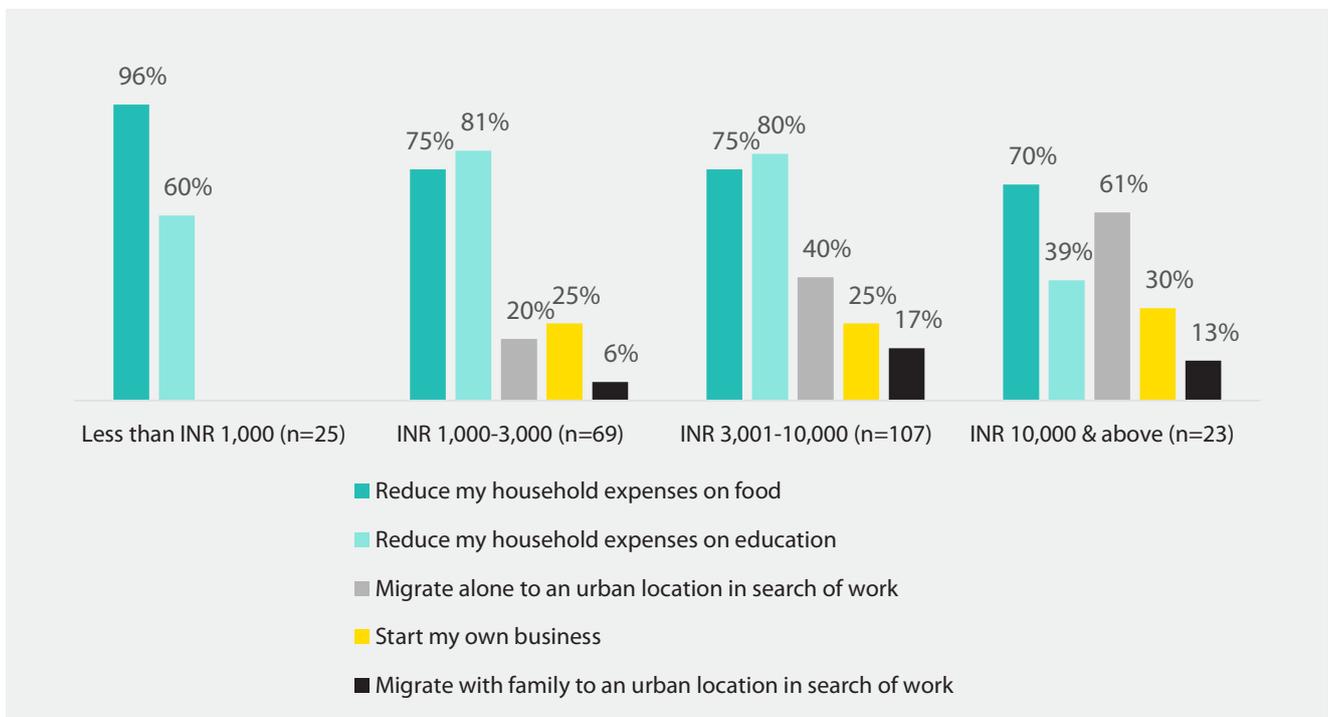
Figure 3.24. Plans to Mitigate Current Economic Condition



Note: Percentage may not add up to 100% due to multiple choice responses

Analysis of the responses also showed that respondents with lowest average monthly household income (less than INR 1,000) did not have any option other than reduction in household expenditure on food to deal with the financial crisis. A higher proportion of respondents from households with average monthly income of less than INR 1,000 (96%) were found to be planning to reduce household expenditure on food than those in the income brackets 'INR 1,000-3,000' & 'INR 3,001-10,000' (75%) and 'more than INR 10,000' (70%). The proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement relating to reduction of household expenditure on education was found to be very high among those who had an average monthly household income of 'INR 1,000-3,000' (81%) and 'INR 3,001-10,000' (80%). Similarly, the households whose heads are considering to migrate alone to city in search of work has been found to be highest among the respondents with an average monthly household income of INR 10,000 and more (61%), followed by 40% among the respondents with an average monthly household income of INR 3,001-10,000 (Figure 3.25).

Figure 3.25. Plans to Mitigate Current Economic Condition by Household Income



Note: Percentage within categories may not add up to 100% due to multiple choice responses

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents summary of findings, conclusions and certain actionable recommendations to protect women and children from various forms of exploitations which are likely to increase due to the enforcement of nation-wide lockdown to curb COVID-19 infections and the economic crisis that has been triggered by it. The recommendations made in this chapter are based on the survey findings discussed in preceding chapters.

4.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Impact of Lockdown on Incidence of Trafficking

- 1) The survey has brought out that there is a very high likelihood of increase in trafficking of both adults and children in the post lockdown period for the purpose of labour as 89% of all NGOs covered by the survey have expressed this concern.
- 2) 76% of all NGOs also expressed the view that 'human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation' and 'child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation' are likely to increase post the lockdown.
- 3) 77% of the NGOs working in the areas of Child Abuse, Human Trafficking and Human Rights reported that sexual abuse of children in general (with/without trafficking) may also go up in the post lockdown period.

Since 'Trafficking' is a technical term as well as a sensitive issue and most household members do not understand meaning of the term 'Trafficking, hence in the household survey no direct question was asked to the respondent households relating to 'Trafficking' of members of households. However, questions relating to child labour and plans to deal with the current financial crises were asked.

Impact of Lockdown on Incidence of Child Labour and Bondage

- 4) 93% of all the NGOs who participated in the survey and 94% of the NGOs working in the area of Child Labour, Bonded Labour/Child Bonded Labour, Poverty, Livelihood and Human Rights, were of the view that the extent of child labour will increase in the post lockdown period.
- 5) 64% NGOs irrespective of their primary area of work also stated that the number of child bonded labourers is also likely to increase in the post lockdown period.
- 6) Due to increased awareness among people, members of the household many a times hide information relating to child labour. Despite this reality, the survey found that children from 21% of all households could potentially be forced into labour due to the increased economic vulnerability of those families. Thus there is distinct possibility that many households may send their children to work and earn livelihood in the post lockdown period.

Indebtedness and Risk of Bondage

- 7) 98% of the NGOs surveyed also expressed the view that compared to the situation prevailing earlier i.e. three months prior to lockdown, the number of families under debt will increase during the post lockdown period.
- 8) 81% of the NGOs opined that in the post lockdown period, families may take cash on credit from local money lenders on high interest rates. As a result, a large number many of these families may get into the trap of debt bondage.

Impact of Lockdown on Incidence of Child Marriage

- 9) 64% of all respondent NGOs and 70% of NGOs working in the area of Child Marriage expressed the opinion that incidence of child marriages would increase post the lockdown period. That child marriages post lockdown will increase was stated more strongly by NGOs operating in North-Central Zone (71%) than those operating in Eastern (61%) and South West Zones (57%).
- 10) Child marriage is a social evil which never gets reported by the family members. In the household survey when the respondents were asked whether they would marry their underage daughters off, if the present situation of economic crises prevails, only four percent of the households gave an affirmative response. The proportion of household respondents who were 'not sure' was nine percent. Thus, potentially 13% households may marry their underage daughters off, if they continue to face a financial crisis.

Impact of Lockdown on Schooling of Children

- 11) 85% of all respondent NGOs and 89% of NGOs working on the relevant themes (Education, Poverty & Livelihood) felt that school dropouts are likely to increase in the post lockdown period. All NGOs operating in North Central Zone (100%) and 84% of those active in Eastern zone shared this concern.
- 12) During the household survey, six percent of the respondents reported that due to their poor financial condition they would not hesitate to withdraw their children from school. Another 14% household respondents stated that they were 'not sure' as to what will they do. Hence, potentially school going children of 20% households are at the risk of dropping out from schools.

Impact of Lockdown on Household Economy

- 13) Almost all NGOs which participated in this study (52 out of 53), were of the opinion that during the lockdown financial condition of households with whom they were working has been adversely affected. It was also stated by most of the NGOs that the financial condition of the poor households is going to deteriorate further in the post lockdown period. 93% of the NGOs felt that families will run out of money post the lockdown.
- 14) Compared to the pre-lockdown period, when all the surveyed households had some income irrespective of the amount, there had been a drastic reduction in average monthly household income at the time of the survey. A vast majority of respondent households (85%) reported having absolutely no income at the time of survey. Survey brought out that the percentage of households in income range of INR 3,001-10,000 which was 47 during the pre-lockdown period and of households having income less than INR 1,000 which was 12 during the pre-lockdown period had reduced to meagre 3% and 5% respectively during the lockdown.

- 15) The household survey also confirmed that the lockdown has seriously dented the average household savings of most respondent households. Before the lockdown, 28% of the respondent households reported having 'no savings' this increased sharply to 68% at the time of the survey.

Food Shortage and Its Severity

- 16) 93% NGOs stated that the families will soon run out of money. 85% NGOs expressed the opinion that families may not even get enough food in a day to fill their bellies.
- 17) 38% NGOs revealed that some of the families with whom they are working may even remain hungry for an entire day due to non-availability of food.
- 18) With almost negligible household savings, most of the household survey respondents (72%) also reported shortage of food during the lockdown.
- 19) Out of all those households who reported having food shortage during the lockdown (i.e., 176 out of 245), 43% said it was 'severe' (exhausted all food reserves but managing to get daily meals), while 10% said it was 'very severe' (exhausted all food reserves/do not have anything to eat) and for another 13%, it was 'somewhat severe' (exhausted all food reserves at some point of time but managed to refill).
- 20) 34% respondent households could not describe the severity of the food scarcity during the lockdown though all of them stated to have experienced the same. It can thus be safely inferred that all the poor households experienced varying degrees of food shortage and/or hunger during the lockdown.

Receipt of Ration during Lockdown

- 21) 0% NGOs expressed the view that families in distress may be forced to borrow food grains from their relatives or neighbours to cook a meal. Another 55% NGO felt that families may take food on credit from a local shopkeeper.
- 22) Receipt of food grains by a household in possession of a ration card is a legal entitlement of the concerned household as per the provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013. However, among the surveyed households 15% did not receive any ration during the lockdown period. In a crisis situation when people are becoming jobless and are losing income, it is the moral responsibility of the State to ensure availability of sufficient food grain to the poor households.
- 23) The Government of India soon after clamping the lockdown had announced distribution of additional food grains to households to save them from hunger. Survey has brought out that among the respondent households only 32% had received the additional ration. Thus, a vast majority of households had been deprived of the food safety measure announced by the government and to that extent the objective of the scheme of distribution of additional ration to poor and needy families had been defeated.

Plans to Mitigate Current Economic Condition

During the household survey the respondents were asked about their plans to deal with the financial crisis they are facing crisis. This aspect was not covered in the NGO survey.

- 24) Survey revealed that most of the households were ready to cut their household expenditure on food (77%) followed by reduction in expenditure on education of their children (74%).
- 25) The proportion of respondents ready to reduce household expenditure on food was higher among households with an average monthly income of 'less than INR 1,000' (96%) than those in the income brackets 'INR 1,000-3,000' & 'INR 3,001-10,000' (75%) and 'more than INR 10,000' (70%). This is indicative of the fact households in these income brackets are most vulnerable to hunger and starvation in times to come.

26) Further, heads of 32% respondent households were ready to migrate alone to a city in search of work and to earn livelihood.

The aforementioned survey has brought out that apart from adversely impacting the economy of households belonging to the lowest income strata, the nationwide lockdown has also exposed the children belonging to these households to various forms of exploitation as follows:

- Adult and child trafficking for the purpose of labour and sexual exploitation are likely to increase during the post lockdown period.
- Incidence of sexual abuse of children, child labour and child marriage is also likely to increase post the lockdown period.
- The extreme financial distress which families belonging to the lowest income strata are like to face post lockdown has enhanced the risk of getting into the trap of debt bondage for a large number of them.
- Significant reduction in average monthly household income due to loss of jobs/ work has severely dented the average income of poor households.
- Food shortage is another major problem being experienced by the poor households.
- Some of these poor households did not receive their PDS entitlement of food grains during lockdown and a large number of them did not receive the additional free ration announced by the government. Thus, poor service delivery mechanism in the rural areas has partially defeated the objective of the scheme of providing free ration to families.

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the survey, following are the recommendations. The recommendations have been divided under the following heads/categories.

1. Restoration of Economic and Livelihood Stability among Rural Households
2. Child Labour
3. Child Trafficking
4. Child Marriage
5. Child Education
6. Child Health

1. Restoration of Economic and Livelihood Stability among Rural Households

a. Free universal ration

- (i) ***In order to ensure that no one goes hungry food grains are recommended be distributed free to all those who come forward to demand. Aadhar card number be used to keep a record of such free distribution of food grains and the pre-condition of possession of a ration card to be eligible for free ration be dispensed with.***
- (ii) ***The rollout of 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme by the central government is a welcome step. The government should ensure that the scheme of ration card portability becomes fully functional at the earliest and not later than the end of September 2020. The scope of application of the scheme should not be limited to rural areas alone and it should be extended to urban areas as well as the country today is witness to urban financial distress.***

Ration card portability enables poor households to access PDS benefits from any Fair Price Shop in the country. As of now, about 20 states have come on board to implement the inter-state ration card portability, but the number of transactions done through using this facility has been very low so far.

b. Livelihood Support

- (i) ***Livelihood support or income guarantee should be provided to all such households who have lost their livelihood opportunities. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Act (MGNREGA) guarantees 100 days' work to every individual on demand. Steps should be taken to ensure that employment guarantee of 100 days per person under the Act is fully realised and there is no gap between the date when the demand is raised and the date on which work is provided. The average per day wage rate for unskilled work under the MGNREGA which has been increased from ₹ 182 to ₹ 202 is inadequate in comparison to the prevailing wage rate. The wage rate under MGNREGA be increased to at least INR 250-300. The ceiling of total number of days should also be raised to 200 days of work /employment.***

The implementation of MGNREGA till now has been half-hearted with inadequate budgetary allocation which had been adversely impacting its efficacy as a poverty alleviation. Central Government now appears to have realised the effectiveness of the programme for income and employment generation and has as a result enhanced the budgetary allocation for MGNREGA.

MGNREGA is a demand driven programme. As per the scheme an adult member seeking employment to do unskilled manual work has to be allocated work within 15 days of application or from the date when work is sought in the case of an advance application, whichever is later. As per the scheme, it is the right of an applicant to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within 15 days of submitting the application. In this crisis situation in which a lot reverse migration has taken place, there has been an increase in demand for work under the MGNREGA. Hence, concerned authorities must broaden the scope of work under the scheme and freely register the demand and ensure immediate allocation of work to all applicants. In case of non-availability of work, the applicants must be paid the unemployment allowance as per the scheme.

Immediate steps need to be taken to reduce the gap, in terms of number of days, between the date on which the actual work is done and the date on which the payment is made.

As per the MGNREGA guidelines the disbursement of wages can be made on a weekly basis or in any case not later than a fortnight after completion of work. However, in present scenario when the poor people have not got any work in the last three months and have exhausted the little savings they had, they need money on a daily basis to survive. Hence, local authorities must ensure to clear all previous dues of the workers without any further delay and henceforth make payment for MNREGA work on a daily basis to the workers.

c. Income and liquidity support

- (i) ***Cash support should be provided to all the poor households in rural and urban areas. Under***

the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi and Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana, cash transfer to farmers and women Jan Dhan account holders is being done to mitigate the impact of lockdown on the poor. However, the assistance provided is extremely meagre and insufficient. Cash support to poor families need to be increased to an amount between INR 5,000-7,000 per month per household depending on the cost of living indices in different regions.

As already suggested by eminent economists and policy makers there is an urgent need to create a data base of poor households who are badly affected economically due to the lockdown, and provide cash assistance to all such families for subsistence. The data base of PDS, MGNREGA and Jan-Dhan accounts may be combined and filtered thereafter using a process of de-duplication to create a data base with unique household identity. This unique household identity database may then be used for cash transfer to families. Cash transfers are not only dignity-savers for the poor and deprived, but are also demand generators badly needed today for the economy to recover, grow and generate employment.

d. Interest waiver

- (i) ***For the coming six months, till economy recovers to some extent, loans availed by vulnerable groups such as small farmers, Kisan Credit Card holders, petty businessmen, small shop owners, etc., be exempted from repayment and interest due may be waived off on request. Crop loans, Mudra 'shishu' and 'kishor' loans be also exempted from repayment of interest on principal as also the principal for six months on a request from the borrower.***
- (ii) ***Steps be taken to protect tribal population in scheduled areas from charging of exploitative interest rates by moneylenders during this period.***

e. Regeneration of Rural Economy

- (i) ***As the reverse migration of labour has led to a surge of demand for work in the rural areas, income generation activities such as livestock breeding, fisheries, dairying, vegetables and fruit cultivation and food processing and preservation deserve to be given a big push in the rural areas. Investments need to be made immediately in food processing and preservation in rural areas. Commodity-based cooperatives (CBCs) need to be established to market the agricultural produce, as cooperatives have better bargaining power than an individual.***

The present pandemic deserves to be treated as an opportunity, by the Government to regenerate the rural sector, which houses more people and more wage earners. Fruits and vegetables in large quantities perish as there are no facilities for food processing and preservation. Formation of Cooperatives leads to cost cutting by lowering transport costs and the farmers get better prices. It also makes it possible for them to change the crop-cultivation pattern as per demand.

- (ii) ***Cold storages be established in villages or in nearby urban/ peri-urban areas. The government must make provision for farmers to store their commodities in these cold storages at a nominal cost. Mobile refrigerated vans be also provided at Panchayat levels for easy transportation of perishable goods to the nearest market.***
- (iii) ***Skill development programs should be launched in the rural areas in a big way. Vocational***

training institutions such as Industrial Training Institutes, Polytechnic Institutes, Nursing Colleges, College of Pharmacy, Food Preservation Institutes be set up.

- (iv) **Agro-based industries as also other micro and small-scale industries in rural areas be set up to provide employment in rural areas leading to regeneration of the rural economy.**

The people in rural areas are hitherto completely dependent on agriculture and are living a life of subsistence. Launch of skills development programmes in rural areas by establishment of vocational training institutions on a large scale shall go a long way in reducing the dependence of the rural folk on agriculture. These skills development programmes will make the village people employable in the industries which are recommended to be set up in rural areas. They will also be helpful as some of them may find employment in cities, reducing the pressure on land, leading to poverty reduction.

- (v) **Micro-finance institutions should be set up in rural areas to help the poor people tide over minor financial crises in their lives post the lockdown period. Self-help groups of women in the rural areas be created. These SHGs will help families in generating some additional income, leading to poverty alleviation and relieving them from pressures to send their children to work.**

2. Child Labour

- (i) **Micro-level Surveillance: Experience shows that members of a household usually work together as a family in the construction sector, brick kilns and agriculture sector, etc. As a result, children belonging to such households work as child labourers. To prevent children of families impoverished by the lockdown from working as child labour, systems be created for micro-level surveillance in and around villages on a continuous basis. Panchayats, labour inspectors as well as Block officials should play a major role in ensuring that children do not work and are retained in schools.**

Once the business operations and manufacturing resume the concerned enforcement officials must carry out regular inspections by surprise of these establishments to ensure that no child labor or trafficked children are employed in these units.

- (ii) **Policy-level interventions: The recent relaxations in labour laws done by some states, must be reviewed and rescinded immediately, especially the dilution of monitoring mechanisms as these are likely to lead to increased incidence of exploitation and abuse of workers and more children joining the workforce. Extended working hours could also impact child-care as parents will not be able to devote sufficient time on care, education and wellbeing of their children.**
- (iii) **Release of pending payments: All pending compensation amounts due to child labourers, bonded labourers and victims of trafficking rescued in the past which have been pending for a long time must be released by the state governments immediately. Payment of pending financial relief to the families to which the rescued children belong shall prevent re-trafficking of all such children.**

3. Child Trafficking

The financial crisis, increased economic insecurity, poverty and marginalisation triggered by Covid-19 have driven families to desperation making them susceptible to pushing their children into trafficking. The business of commercial sex work which took a downturn due to the lockdown restrictions, would look for innovative ways to be back in business and overcome the losses by engaging younger girls, as they fetch higher returns. Thus girls from families impoverished due to lockdown and driven to the wall shall be extremely prone to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. To prevent such exploitation of children following is recommended

- (i) **Increased role of PRIs in Child Protection: The Panchayats should be mandated to maintain a migration register to monitor movements of children in and out of villages. The migration register should be checked and verified by the Block Development Officer regularly. Panchayats in association with the village community members should ensure that children are not allowed to leave the village unaccompanied by their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The introduction of the migration register shall go a long way to prevent trafficking.**
- (ii) **Awareness and Community Outreach: A wide safety net be spread in source areas of trafficking to protect children from being trafficked; schools, communities, religious authorities and the local administration must work together to control trafficking and bonded labour in villages. Intensive campaign be launched to educate communities about the threat and modus operandi of trafficking agents, especially in the source areas such as Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Assam.**
- (iii) **Awareness should be created in communities to be more vigilant and take the responsibility to a) identify any suspicious movement in the village relating to trafficking of persons, especially women and children, b) identify traffickers, and c) report the movement of traffickers to the police or other law enforcement agencies. The Village level Child Protection Committee (VCPC) which are non-functional in several villages, must be activated immediately in all the villages, strengthened and made accountable for execution of this task.**
- (iv) **Better enforcement of Laws: High level of alert among law enforcement agencies and other first line responders be inculcated through training and capacity building to recognize and detect human trafficking in hotspots. Special attention should be paid to border areas of every state.**
- (v) **Railways are the most popular mode of transportation used by traffickers and middlemen to transport children from one place to another. Trafficking of children from rural areas, through Railways should be prevented with the help of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) and the Government Railway Police (GRP).**
- (vi) **Policy: The lapsed anti-trafficking bill be amended and updated and passed in the Parliament urgently as the existing laws to deal with trafficking do not meet the demands of the present situation in the country.**

4. Child Marriage

- (i) **Activation and proper functioning of the Village-level Child Protection Committees (VCPC) be ensured in each village in order to stop marriages of underage children and make the community aware about ill impacts of the child marriage. A helpline to enable citizens to report child marriage should be established.**

The primary responsibility of the VCPC is to formulate and monitor the implementation of child protection services at the village level, their role is most significant in ensuring protection of each child living in their area. The civil society organisations need to be involved in prevention of child marriage. There is an increasing need of building convergence among village level child protection committees, child marriage prohibition officers, district child protection units and child welfare committees. This collaboration and convergence will ensure the best interests of the child.

- (ii) ***Registration of marriages be made a statutory obligation and compulsory to prevent child marriages and to ensure adherence to minimum age of marriage.***

At present, in our country registration of marriages is not mandatory. In the absence of it women and children become mere victims of the family and community in all instances of child marriage. Non registration of marriages also deprives women of legal entitlements and security. Compulsory registration will address this issue and ensure that conditions of a legal/valid marriage are fulfilled in all marriages. Registration of marriages can be a powerful tool to prevent child marriage and eliminate this age old evil tradition.

5. Child Education

- (i) ***The States should prioritise efforts to continue education for all children, using the most appropriate technology. Children be imparted education on line/ through satellite and TV, so that children especially those in rural areas remain in touch with studies. Measures be taken to ensure distribution of text books for all children at their homes by end of July, 2020, so that they are able to continue their studies. States must also implement measures to ensure access to education to children with disabilities. For this states should reach out to local NGOs working with children with disabilities and seek their support in this task.***

The lockdown had a critical impact on children's education, particularly of those belonging to the poorest sections of society. Besides the risk of disruption in the school year, there is a risk that prolonged out-of-school learning may lead to alienation of children from the school system and exacerbation of existing inequalities.

Recently, the 'PM eVidya' programme has been launched by the Union finance minister to promote digital education in the country and make e-learning feasible for students and teachers. It is a technology driven education programme which consists of DIKSHA for school education in States and Union Territories and one earmarked TV channel for each class from standard 1 to 12. The concept is very good and Government must start these channels at the earliest to enable the children continue education till the schools reopen.

- (ii) ***Mid-day meals may be provided to children even during the period of school closure. These meals are an important food safety measure for children from poor households.***

The mid-day meal scheme in its present formulation does not have provision for the same on holidays. There is a need to modify the scheme so as to create entitlement of mid-day meals for school children even during vacations. Further, since the schools are closed therefore either the children be served hot

cooked meals at their residences or should be provided equivalent amount of dry ration at their homes.

- (iii) ***Anganwadis which take care of pre-school education and nutritional requirements of children upto the age of 6 years, being closed due to pandemic, the supplementary nutrition to which the children are entitled as per the National Food Security Act 2013, should be provided at their residences, further either these children should be served hot cooked meal at their respective residences or their families be provided with equivalent dry ration in lieu of the same.***

6 Child Health

Lockdown has had an impact on the psychological well-being of many children and their happiness has hit a low. It has also resulted in an emotional crisis for many. Depression, anxiety, insecurity and frustration define the state of mind of many children. Therefore, reaching out and counselling all such children, even if it is through digital medium is a must. Following actions are suggested to alleviate the mental trauma of children

- (i) ***Children may be counselled online and through telephone helplines to help them cope up/ come out of the mental trauma.***
- (ii) ***Other technology-based solutions such as SMS, may also be used to provide help to traumatised children. Self-help groups and networks be created to expand social support, and to reach out to children with no access to phone or internet.***
- (iii) ***Steps be taken to make the police force and other government agencies dealing with children more responsive and sensitive to their problems and issues.***
- (iv) ***The electronic media be utilised effectively to create awareness on issues like child labour and trafficking in regional language infomercials. Since child labour and child trafficking are crimes under the Indian Penal Code, system of SOS messaging to police already exists in several cities. This facility to lodge the report on phone by sending a SMS needs to be expanded and facility for geolocation also needs to be added to it.***

The COVID-19 crisis has turned the spotlight on the extremely poor condition of public health care infrastructure in our country including in the mega metropolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai. The condition of public health care infrastructure in the rural areas has been found to be abominable. Due to the pandemic all the public health care providers have got busy with COVID relief work. Resultantly, child health services especially the immunisation of children has reportedly been affected adversely more so in rural areas.

- (v) ***Measures should be taken by the State to ensure that preoccupation of health care providers with COVID relief work does not lead to neglect of newborn child care and immunisation of children under the Universal Immunisation Programme is done on schedule especially for the newborn children.***

4.3. CONCLUSION

The spread of COVID-19 infection in India and the long period of lockdown clamped by the government to prevent its spread have severely impacted the lives of everyone in the country. The shutting down of the economy has impacted the lives of the poor citizens and households the most. Savings of the families have been wiped out, daily incomes of poor households have gone down and many families are on the verge of starvation. Impoverishment, joblessness, hunger and starvation have substantially increased the risk of trafficking of women and children for the purpose of labour and all kinds of exploitation including sexual exploitation. Families having no income, no savings facing hunger and starvation are likely to borrow money to survive. They may end up borrowing from the local money lenders at exorbitant rates and end up into the trap of debt bondage. There is evidence to suggest that children of families in debt bondage become the worst victims of it. Thus incidence child labour and bondage are likely to increase in near future. Child marriages are likely to go up and more children may drop out of schools.

The problems and challenges which our country and children are likely to face in the near future are humongous. If our country and children are to be saved from the various adverse consequences of the present crisis, the time to act is now, tomorrow may be too late.

POST SCRIPT

Due to the imminent threat of a drastic increase in child labour and child trafficking, post the lockdown, Bachpan Bachao Anadolan (BBA) a sister organization of the KSCF had filed two writ petitions in the Hon'ble Supreme Court seeking issue of directions to the Government of India to take immediate steps to prevent the likely increase in child labour and trafficking post the lockdown period. On the basis of interim directions issued in the aforementioned matters by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has issued an advisory dated 6th of July, 2020 titled "Advisory on preventing and combating human trafficking especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic". The advisory is placed at Annexure 2.

ANNEXURE 1

A Study on Impact of Lockdown and Economic Disruption on Poor Rural Households with Special Reference to Children (Phase 1: NGO Survey)

The Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation is carrying out a survey to assess the extent of vulnerabilities among women and children arisen due to nationwide lockdown badly impacting the economy of people from poor economic strata. The survey will take about 5 to 7 minutes to complete. Requesting you to participate in this important survey and provide your valuable opinion.

Q. No.	Question	Response Category
1	Name of your organisations	
2	What are the primary thematic areas on which your organisation is working?	Human Trafficking <input type="checkbox"/> Child Trafficking <input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse (including sexual abuse) <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Child Labour <input type="checkbox"/> Bonded Labour <input type="checkbox"/> Child Marriage <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights..... <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty/livelihood <input type="checkbox"/> Child health and nutrition..... <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
3	In how many States your organisations is operating at present?	In No. <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
4	In which State/s your organisation is operating? (If operating in multiple States, please indicate top three States in terms of your operation/services)?	State 1: State 2: State 3:
5	How would you classify occupation of the households/beneficiaries with whom your organisation is working? (Multiple Response Possible)	
	Agricultural labour <input type="checkbox"/> Non-agricultural labour..... <input type="checkbox"/> Construction worker/mason..... <input type="checkbox"/> Rickshaw, thela, cart puller..... <input type="checkbox"/> Transport worker <input type="checkbox"/> Dairy worker..... <input type="checkbox"/> Petty business/small shop <input type="checkbox"/>	Small artisan/craftsman..... <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic servant <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry worker <input type="checkbox"/> Beggar <input type="checkbox"/> Street Hawker <input type="checkbox"/> Mining worker <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial sex worker <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
6	How would you define the economic condition of households/beneficiaries with whom your organisation is working? (Please refer to the below categories and definitions) (Multiple Response Possible)	
	Very Poor (No household income/ income less than INR 1,000 per month)..... <input type="checkbox"/> Poor (Household income between INR 1,000 to 3,000) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (Household income between INR 3,001 to 10,000) <input type="checkbox"/> Good (Household income between INR 10,001 to 20,000)..... <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good (Household income more than 20,000)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Please let us know whether during lockdown economic condition of the households/beneficiaries with whom your organisation is working has been affected?	Yes affected <input type="checkbox"/> Not affected <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
8	How the economic condition of these households/beneficiaries is going to be affected further in future due to the lockdown of almost one and a half month? (Multiple Response Possible)	

	Families may run out of money <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may use their savings for survival..... <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may not get full stomach meals a day <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may skip entire meals due to scarcity of food <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may borrow food from relatives or neighbours to make a meal <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may take cash on credit (or loan) from local moneylenders on higher interest <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Families may take food on credit (or loan) from a local shop <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Household economy may not be affected much..... <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Not sure/Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>	

9 In your opinion, what will be the impact of the potential economic crisis on the following social problems against women, children? ***(Please respond to each social problem/issue listed below)***

Sl. No.	Social Problem/Issue	No. of incidences will Increase	No. of incidences will Decrease	No. of incidences will remain unchanged	Can't Say
a	Human Trafficking for the purpose of Labour				
b	Human Trafficking for the purpose of Sexual Exploitation				
c	Child Trafficking for the purpose of Labour				
d	Child Trafficking for the purpose of Sexual Exploitation				
e	Sexual Abuse of children				
f	Dropout of children from schools				
g	Child Labour				
h	Child Begging				
i	Adult Bonded Labour				
j	Child Bonded Labour				
k	Child Marriage				

10 Following are few statements made keeping the impact of lockdown on households from poor economic condition in view. Please read each statement carefully and let us know whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Sl. No.	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
a	Violence against children has increased during the lockdown			
b	Violence against children will increase in post lockdown period			
c	Children will be forced into labour in post lockdown period			
d	Girl children and women will be trafficked and/or forced into prostitution in post lockdown period for survival			
e	Due to financial distress poor families will get their underage girls married off			
f	School closures has made children easy prey to predators/ traffickers			
g	As compared to the situation prevailing three months prior to lockdown number of families under debt will increase in post lockdown period			
h	Anxiety symptoms (such as mood swing, sleeplessness, lack of concentration) among people will increase			
i	Poor people may also commit suicide due the financial distress			

Thank you for your time

A Study on Impact of Lockdown and Economic Disruption on Poor Rural Households with Special Reference to Children (Phase 2: Household Survey)

(Main Wage Earner Interview Schedule)

The Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation is carrying out a survey to assess the extent of vulnerabilities among women and children arisen due to nationwide lockdown badly impacting the economy of people from poor economic strata. The survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Requesting you to participate in this important survey and provide your valuable opinion.

Note: Question No.1 to 5 are to be filled out by the enumerator himself/herself.

1. Name of the State	
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2. Name of the District	
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3. Name of Village/ Town	
--------------------------	--

4. Location of the Household:	Rural		Urban
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Mark (√) as appropriate

5. Sex of the Respondent: Male Female Transgender

6. How old are you (Age in completed years)

7. What is your highest level of education (completed level of schooling)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Below Primary (1 st to 4 th standard)	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary (5 th to 7 th standard)
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Primary (8 th to 9 th standard)	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary (10 th to 11 th standard)
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Secondary (12 th pass but below Graduation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduation & above
<input type="checkbox"/> Never been to school	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (specify).....

8. What is your main occupation?

<input type="checkbox"/> Farmer/cultivator	<input type="checkbox"/> Service (Government/ private)
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural labour	<input type="checkbox"/> Petty business/small shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-agricultural labour	<input type="checkbox"/> Small artisan/craftsman
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Transport worker
<input type="checkbox"/> Rickshaw, thela, curt puller	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic servant
<input type="checkbox"/> Transport worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Poultry worker
<input type="checkbox"/> Dairy worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Street Hawker
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify).....	

9. In total, how many adults including yourself and children, are there in your household?

<input type="text"/> Number of boys (less than 18 years)	<input type="text"/> Number of girls (less than 18 years)
<input type="text"/> Number of male adults (above 18 years)	<input type="text"/> Number of female adults (above 18 years)

10. What was your household’s average monthly income or wages before the lockdown?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than ₹ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ Rs.1001 to ₹ 3000
<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ 3001 to ₹ 10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ 10,001- ₹ 20000
<input type="checkbox"/> More than ₹.20,000	

11. What is your household’s average monthly income or wages now?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than ₹ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ Rs.1001 to ₹ 3000
<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ 3001 to ₹ 10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> ₹ 10,001- ₹ 20000
<input type="checkbox"/> More than ₹.20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> None

12. On an average how much were you earning per day before the lockdown?

₹	
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13. On an average how much did you earn per day during the lockdown?

₹	
---	--

14. Did you or any member of your household take up any kind of paid work during the lockdown period?

	Yes		No
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15. If yes, how much did you earn in total?

₹	
---	--

16. How much household savings (in terms of cash) did you have with you before the lockdown?

₹	
---	--

17. How much household savings (in terms of cash) do you have as on today?

₹	
---	--

18. Anytime in the last one and half months, did your household experience any shortage of food?

	Yes		No
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19. If yes, how severe was the food shortage?

Very Severe (<i>Exhausted all food reserves/do not have anything to eat</i>)	
Severe (<i>Exhausted all food reserves but managing to get daily meals</i>)	
Somewhat Severe (<i>Exhausted all food reserves at any point of time but managed to refill</i>)	
Can't describe	

20. Do you possess a Ration Card?

	Yes		No
--	-----	--	----

21. Do you have a BPL/ Antyodaya Card?

	Yes		No
--	-----	--	----

22. In the last one and half months, have you received free/additional ration for your household? (Multiple codes possible)

Yes, received ration	
Yes, received additional ration	
Not received any ration	

23. If received, who provided the ration? (Multiple codes possible)

Government	
Relative/ friend(s)	
Neighbours/ community members	
NGOs/ volunteers	
Any other (specify)	

24. Do you think your financial condition has been affected due to the lockdown?

	Yes		No
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25. Do you think, the lockdown will have long term impact on members of your household due to financial distress?

	Yes		No
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26. How are you planning to mitigate the current financial situation of your household once the lockdown is withdrawn? (Readout the responses)

I may migrate alone to an urban location in search of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I may migrate with family to an urban location in search of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I may have to reduce my household expenses on food	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I may have to reduce my household expenses on education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I may start my own business	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Others (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Don't know what to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

27. If your financial condition continues to be bad, would you be ready to send your underage son or daughter to a city for work?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not relevant

28. Would you be ready to marry your underage daughter off, if you continue to face a financial crisis even after the lockdown?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not relevant

29. Are children in your household able to study at home?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not relevant

30. If it becomes necessary due to poor financial condition, would you be ready to withdraw your children from school?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not relevant

31. Do you have a Jan-Dhan Bank Account?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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32. Is the bank account in your name, wife's name, or in the name of any other female member of your household?

<input type="checkbox"/>	In my name	<input type="checkbox"/>	In my wife's name	<input type="checkbox"/>	In the name of other female member
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33. Have you received any money in your Jan-Dhan account during the lockdown?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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34. How much amount have you/your wife/ any other household members received in total till now?

₹

35. What religion do you follow?

36. Do you belong to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Class?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduled Caste	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduled Tribe	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Backward caste	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	None of these			

Thank you for your participation

By Speed Post

No. 24013/4/2020-ATC
Government of India
Ministry of Home Affairs

Women Safety Division, 2nd Floor,
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
India Gate, New Delhi-110002
July 6, 2020

To

**The Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs
The Director General of Police of all States and UTs**

Sub: Advisory on preventing and combating human trafficking especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic.

Sir/Madam,

Trafficking in Persons is a serious crime affecting a large number of people across the globe. Human trafficking not only affects women and children but also men. Trafficking in persons can be both cross-border as well as within the country, from one State to another. Traffickers often exploit the vulnerabilities of people by making false promises of a new job, better income, better living conditions and support to their families etc. While such promises of perpetrators appear legitimate to people, unfortunately it makes many men, women, and children easy prey for exploitation.

2. Domestic violence, psychological or emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of trauma and violence makes a person vulnerable to human trafficking, who may be looking for a release from his present situation. Children and youth are more likely to be persuaded or tricked by criminals who take advantage of their emotional instability and missing support system. Once trafficked, the victims fall prey to many forms of unfair treatment such as forced prostitution, forced labour, forced begging, forced marriages etc.

3. The outbreak of COVID-19, starting about mid-March, has put the world under enormous strain and continues to affect the lives of a large number of people. The Government of India has taken various measures to flatten the infection curve. In close consultation and coordination with State/UT Governments, the Central Government has continuously endeavoured to provide guidance to States and UTs on a range of issues through various advisories issued from time to time.

4. For strengthening the law enforcement response against trafficking in persons, the Ministry of Home Affairs has released funds to State Governments from time to time for setting up Anti Human Trafficking Units

(AHTUs) in 50% Police Districts of States. An amount of Rs. 25.16 crore was released to States during the period 2010 to 2019 for setting up AHTUs in 332 Districts. **Recently, a decision was taken to establish AHTUs in all Districts of States and UTs** and also establish AHTUs under the border guarding forces such as BSF and SSB in border areas to check and curb transnational trafficking. Rs. 100 crore were allocated from Nirbhaya Fund for setting up new AHTUs and for strengthening existing AHTUs, covering all districts of States/UTs. Funds have been released to States and UTs in March, 2020. Guidelines for setting up new AHTUs and upgrading the existing AHTUs were also issued to all States and UTs. **It is expected that the States/UTs would have initiated necessary action to set up and upgrade AHTUs in all Districts of States/UTs.**

5. To recapitulate the scheme of AHTUs, it may be noted that AHTUs are integrated task forces to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and comprise of a group of trained sensitive officials of Police, Women and Child Welfare Department and other relevant Departments of the State. AHTUs function as coherent units to prevent and combat trafficking. The objectives and responsibilities of AHTUs include, taking up the crusade against all criminal aspects of the crime of human trafficking; ensuring focused attention in dealing with offences of human trafficking; conducting rescue operations whenever they receive information about trafficking activities either from police sources, NGOs or civil society; ensuring a victim-centric approach; functioning as the grass root unit for collection and development of an exhaustive database on all law enforcement aspects of the crime, including information on traffickers and trafficking gangs etc. While the Central Government has provided financial assistance for setting up physical infrastructure in these Units, it is the responsibility of States to depute suitable manpower to manage these Units.

6. **States/UTs are advised to immediately set up new AHTUs and upgrade the infrastructure of existing AHTUs** in all Districts of their State/UT with the financial assistance provided by the Central Government and **make these Units functional on most urgent basis.** Suitable officers of Police and other Departments of the State/UT, especially from Women and Child Welfare Department, Labour Department, Social Welfare Department, Health and any other Department or agency of the State, considered appropriate by the State/UT, may be nominated without delay. Immediate instructions are required to be issued to these AHTUs to take proactive action in preventing human trafficking. **Labour Department of States** need to play a significant role at the present juncture and needs to pool all its resources to address the situation of exploitation of vulnerable people.

7. The following measures may be followed in all States and UTs, in close coordination and cooperation with neighbouring State authorities as well, where considered necessary:

(i) **State Governments should immediately evolve a coordination mechanism** among various departments in the States and UTs (Home Department, Police, Labour Department Social Welfare Department, Women and Child Welfare Department, Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, Health Department, Railways and border guarding agencies like BSF, SSB, etc.) to handle issues of human trafficking. **This mechanism may be monitored at the highest level in the State/UT.** Periodic reviews should be held with all stakeholders and appropriate guidelines may be issued to them.

(ii) **Generation of Awareness at all levels** is considered a very potent and effective weapon to fight the crime of human trafficking and exploitation of women and children. Therefore, special awareness generation campaigns may be organised by the District Administration to spread awareness at all levels, Panchayat, Taluka, Districts, every nook and corner of the State to protect vulnerable sections of society. **Making the community aware** of the perils of falling in the hands of unscrupulous persons who try to dupe them with promises of better life is of vital importance. Media plays a critical role in the spread of information. States and UTs may strengthen their digital and online channels and **generate awareness by all means of communication** viz. radio, television, newspapers, mobile phones and other publicity mediums. Ensure translation and audio-visualization of messaging and communication materials and other information into languages and formats commonly spoken and easily understood by all children and youth on the move.

(iii) **Community awareness programmes** on the issue of missing children and its links with human trafficking should be undertaken by the District Administration. Periodic interface should be organised with Public and Safety Awareness Campaign should be conducted in vulnerable areas, jointly by the district administration.

(iv) The law enforcement agencies may **engage with representatives of local Panchayats, community leaders, Village Watch and Ward, Municipal Committees/Neighbourhood Committees/ Resident Welfare Associations** etc. This will enable the community to get involved with the administration/police in identification, tracing and recovery of missing and trafficked persons.

(v) Because children can be transported on a large scale for wage labour, prostitution and trafficking, **Panchayats may be asked to maintain a register** of complete information about the persons living in the village and keep track of their movement.

(vi) Specific 'intelligence' and 'surveillance' mechanism to identify gangs, gather information about its history, affiliations, modus operandi to deceive people, activities of gang members, links with others, etc should be worked out by the Police Department. They may be appropriately sensitised about

this. Local police should keep a close watch on known criminals and traffickers.

(vii) Police Officers should be advised to undertake preventive steps such as identification of children in distress, watching out for suspicious persons, keeping special vigil at transit points, viz. Railway Stations, Bus Depots, Airports, Seaports, Border areas etc., and identify vulnerable population and susceptible pockets in the State etc.

(viii) Police personnel in outposts on borders should be trained to look-out for trafficked children on the borders. They should be sensitized to question and detect unaccompanied minors/children or accompanying adults with suspicious behaviours during checking of vehicles/public transport. Railway and Transport Department personnel may be associated with the crime meetings conducted by AHTUs from time to time as **keeping a watch on suspicious movement of people from one place to another can play a crucial role in checking this crime.**

(ix) Child helpline numbers, emergency response number 112 etc. should be displayed in public places to keep a check on human trafficking. Use of 112 Emergency Response Support System may be widely publicised to provide quick response.

(x) Police force should **make full use of CCTNS and CriMAC application** launched by the National Crime Records Bureau in March this year, which facilitates dissemination of information about significant crimes including human trafficking cases across the country on real time basis. These portals can help in locating and identifying the trafficked victims as also in prevention, detection and investigation of crimes. **Police officers at all levels may be sensitised about this.**

(xi) Police officers, especially those handling cases of human trafficking, **should be trained and sensitized at regular intervals.** It should focus on imparting knowledge of the substantial and procedural laws, court rulings, administrative procedures, skills in child friendly investigation, including interviewing, interrogation, scientific data collection, presentation in the court of law, networking with the prosecutors, facilitating victims/witness protection programmes etc.

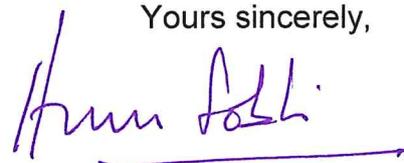
(xii) It may be ensured that **shelters for destitute women and children in need remain open and additional facilities are made available** for women and girls; virtual and/or telephone counselling services should be provided and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure privacy for women and girls.

8. The aforementioned measures are indicative and illustrative in nature. States and UTs may devise, develop and implement further strategies to counter and curb the crime of trafficking in their jurisdictions and provide relief to such victims on top priority basis. Officials at all levels may be suitably

briefed and provided guidelines in their regional/local language for better understanding and implementation of the instructions. This Ministry may be kept informed of the measures introduced in respective jurisdictions which can be emulated and adopted by other States as well.

9. **States and UTs are requested to issue suitable instructions** to all concerned in the State and sensitise officers at all levels to combat this serious and deplorable crime of human trafficking and prevent victimisation of vulnerable persons, especially women, children and youth.

Yours sincerely,



(Arun Sobti)
Deputy Secretary (PR & ATC)
Tele: 2307 5297
Email: dspr.atc@mha.gov.in

Copy, for information and action as necessary, to:

1. Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi.
3. Ministry of External Affairs, Protector of Emigrants, Akbar Bhavan, New Delhi.
4. Director General, Border Security Force, BSF HQr, Block No. 10, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi.
5. Director General, SSB, Force Head Quarters, East Block-V, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110066.
6. Chairman, Railway Board, Rail Bhawan, New Delhi.
7. Principal Secretary/Secretary (Home) of all State Governments and UTs.
8. Nodal Officers for Anti Human Trafficking Units in all States and UTs.


SATYARTHI

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f /KSCFIndia

To complain about child abuse,
please call 1098 or
Bachpan Bachao Andolan's
Helpline number

1800 102 7222