



Right to Food Campaign
(Secretariat)

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RTFc Statement on ‘No More Lockdown’

On 25th March, the Government of India imposed a national lockdown initially for three weeks which was later extended till 3 May. The experience over the last one month shows that the lockdown has caused tremendous economic distress, especially for the poor. Crores of migrant workers are stranded in different parts of the country, unable to earn a livelihood and desperate to reach home. With more than 90% of the workforce being in the informal sector, people are getting into a situation where they do not have enough resources to even be able to afford basic food items.

The relief measures announced by the state and central governments have come late and many, including the most vulnerable, are excluded from them. These relief measures are still largely inadequate to duly address the food crisis in the country. We, at the RTFc, believe that the importance of the continuation of food support provisions cannot be emphasized enough in these times. Along with our longstanding demand for universal PDS, we reiterate that the Government must support both NFSA and non-NFSA beneficiaries with 10kgs of grain, dal 1.5 kg and 800 gm edible oil per person per month, for the next six months (i.e. until September) at the very least.

It has been reported that, at least, [270 people](#) have died due to hunger, exhaustion, state violence, suicides and inability to access healthcare due to the lockdown. Many sick people are unable to reach healthcare facilities because many hospitals and clinics have been closed down or are not functioning to their full capacity and further people are not able to reach facilities due to the restrictions on movement. Additionally, with the hot summer season ahead, it is excruciatingly difficult for people to fetch water during a lockdown. We are already hearing stories of people in *kachi bastis* suffering from water shortage and dehydration.

Further, it has been observed that the lockdown has strengthened the policing of regular lives of the people. In several places, people in search of food have had to face extreme police brutalities. Migrant workers wanting to secure their right to food and return to their native places have been treated with acute inhumanity, so much so that many have been slammed with charges of Section 144 violations. We demand that the Government must take due cognisance of this immense humanitarian crisis affecting the vulnerable sections by putting an immediate end to police brutalities. The Government must also arrange safe and sanitised modes of public transport for the migrant workers to return to their native places.

The current lockdown of 40 days has hopefully been used to prepare the health system to deal with a spread of the coronavirus in times to come. We believe that the government must now focus on putting in place systems for vigorous identify, trace, test, isolate, treat strategies to be followed. However, it appears that many State governments are looking at the occurrence of even a single case to declare ‘hotspots’ and extend ‘sealings’ whereas the increase in cases is only to be expected with easing movement restrictions. Even people who were able to manage during the initial phase of the lockdown are now falling into distress.

We insist that the social and economic consequences of continuing such blanket measures are too high and cannot be justified. The right to a dignified of the people cannot be threatened at any point of time, more so during this global pandemic.

(Aysha, Gangaram Paikra, Kavita Srivastava and Dipa Sinha)
On behalf of Steering Committee, Right to Food Campaign