

THE HINDU

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Women's Collective says 25% of the families were facing acute hunger

A survey conducted by the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective in 62 villages in the State indicated that at least 81% of families reported some form of domestic violence during the lockdown due to COVID-19.

The survey was carried out by the field workers of the Collective to understand the effect of COVID-19 in rural areas and had 620 respondents from 62 villages spread across 18 districts in Tamil Nadu.

Only 8% of the respondents felt that the government had given adequate support and 25% of the families were found to be facing acute hunger. “Among our main recommendations based on the study was that the food grains supplied free of cost through the Public Distribution System (PDS) should be of good quality as well as quantity. While financial assistance is being given to people, this should be increased to ₹5,000 per month,” said Sheelu Francis, founder of the Collective.

Ms. Francis further pointed out that with reverse migration happening on a large scale, the needs of these migrants had to be met. “Many of them have had their savings dwindle through this period which is why financial assistance is important. For all the non PDS card holders who have been affected, the government should make arrangements to include them and ensure that they are supported as well.”

In the last few weeks, she said that there had been several instances of microfinance companies threatening women to pay back loans. “Based on the feedback we have received, we want microfinance institutions to be banned with immediate effect,” she said.

The findings also shed light on a few positive areas. While 71% of the families recorded an increase in male involvement in the household chores, all the respondents were unanimously happy about the closure of liquor shops through April and till mid-May in most parts of the State. About 75% of the respondents who had chronic ailments also said that they had been getting essential medicines supplied regularly from the government.