

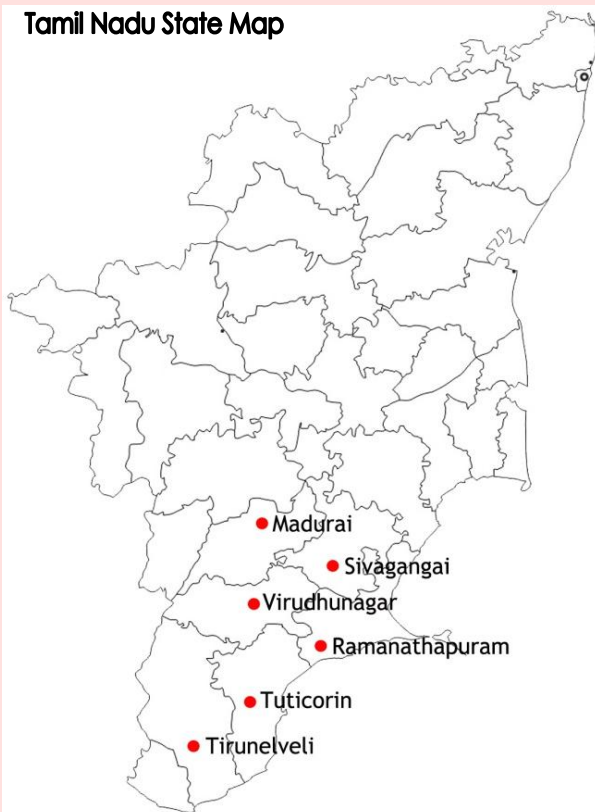
DACA'S RESPONSE TO COVID - 19

DR. AMBEDKAR CULTURAL ACADEMY (DACA) has been rallying for the holistic development of the marginalized communities particularly of Dalits and Tribals in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu through its educational, health care and empowerment programs. Today in the present scenario of COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, people all over the world are facing hardships. COVID-19 has not just evoked fear but has also caused depression, anxiety and hunger affecting the social fabric of the Community.

According to the report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), 'India along with Nigeria and Brazil are among the countries that were relatively least prepared to deal with the dreadful situations arising from this epidemic. This will affect the workers working in the unorganized sector in these countries and they will be trapped in a deep vicious circle of unemployment and poverty'. In other words, as the whole world fights against COVID-19, the lower-rung of the society fights against hunger and poverty. The worst affected groups by the continued lockdowns in India are the Dalits, daily wagers and other marginalized communities since they have no means of income to feed their families.

Tamil Nadu is one of the badly infected states in India (confirmed 23,495, deceased 184 as on 2nd June, 2020). DACA promptly responded to the situation by constituting **COVID-19 RELIEF TEAM** which comprised of Jesuits and lay Animators. The team decided to reach out nearly 1000 deserving families with food materials. The Coordinators and Animators of DACA's Evening Study Centers and Self Help Groups did a careful field-study and identified 1000 deserving families in six districts - Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Virudhunagar.

Tamil Nadu State Map



Relief work in the 2nd Phase



The families were identified based on the following four criteria:

1. Those who don't own ration card – they could not avail free food grains and pulses given by the state government.
2. Widows with many unmarried children depend on daily wages.
3. Physically challenged and elderly couples who live one day at a time.
4. Economically very poor families.

We carried out the relief work in 2 phases. In the first phase, we reached out to 400 families working in fire factories and distributed 20 kgs of rice to each. In the second phase, we supplied 600 deserving Dalit families with 10 kgs of rice to each. Apart from giving dry rations, we also shared the vegetables harvested from our Five Layer Farm with 75 deserving families in the neighboring village. Until now, we have extended our support to 1075 families in 48 villages of 6 different districts.



S.No.	Districts	No. of villages	No. of Beneficiaries
1	Madurai	12	248
2	Ramanathapuram	8	136
3	Sivagangai	9	211
4	Tirunelveli	1	128
5	Tuticorin	7	190
6	Virudhunagar	11	162
Total		48	1075

REPRESENTATIVES SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE BENEFICIARIES:

1-MR. DEIVARAJ, Zonal Coordinator of Sattur – Evening Study Centers

COVID – 19 ceased our daily employment and in turn, it tremendously affected our livelihood especially the basic necessities. DACA's relief work to Virudhunagar district (nearly 150 families) is highly commendable. All of us are daily wagers and depending upon the fire-factories only. For past two months, all the factories remain shut so as our earnings too and we look forward to the ration food materials only. DACA generously provided a 20 kg bag of rice to 150 families in 10 deserving villages. The beneficiaries expressed their heart-felt gratitude to DACA and its supporters.

2-MR. STEPHEN, Secretary, Working People's Rights Movement

Dr Ambedkar Cultural Academy open-handedly helped us by providing dry rations to 125 families. People those who do not have a cultivating land and ration cards and depend upon the daily wagers were provided a 10 kg sack of rice in four deserving villages. As thrown into the critical situation, they started to face food scarcity. DACA's provision lightened many of the houses. The beneficiaries are very happy and thankful to DACA institute and its supporters.

On behalf of DACA family, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to our benefactor Friends, Well wishers, caring supporters and all their loving families for their timely and generous support to carry out the relief work. It would not be possible to reach out to these many needy people without their generosity. I would also like to appreciate all our lay Coordinators and Animators who were on frontline to supply the food materials to the needy. I am also very much grateful to Mr. Justin Prabakaran, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Madurai city for issuing Emergency Vehicle Pass to carry the food materials to different places. Let us, in hope and faith, see a better tomorrow.

Report by

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A Few Clicks from the Field

Time of India brought out a news on DACA's Relief Work

Outfits give food, ration to needy

K Antony Xavier

Madurai: Many organisations have been working tirelessly to reach out to the needy in the wake of the lockdown. Dr Ambedkar Cultural Academy (DACA) has provided dry rations to 1,000 families in Madurai, Virudhunagar, Tenkasi and Ramanathapuram districts.

M Vargheesh Antony, director of DACA, said that the organization has been conducting evening study centres and women self-help groups in 200 remote villages in southern districts. The organization has stepped into welfare measures as it came across people suffering owing to the lockdown, Vargheesh Antony said.

Madurai chapter of the Seva Bharati has distributed more than one lakh food packets during the lockdown. Apart from food, dry rations, masks and kabasura kudineer were also distributed. RSS Madurai city president N Srinivasan said that they have been distributing food to people at the Go-



FEEDING THE HUNGRY

vernment Rajaji Hospital and other hospitals, transgenders, disabled people, abandoned persons in the city for the past 40 days. "We distribute 2,700 food packets every day," he said.

Dry ration kits consisting rice and groceries have been distributed to 5,388 people, mostly labourers. They have also reached out to 55 families of blind people and 118 families of people with disabilities. The organization has also handed over 1.15 lakh masks and distributed kabasura kudineer. So far, it has served the decoction to 54,000 people, Srinivasan said. **TNN**



A Big Thanks to All the Friends of DACA