

PRESS RELEASE

Azim Premji University COVID19 Livelihoods Survey: Stories behind the numbers Voices from Karnataka

Thursday, May 28th, 2020

Azim Premji University, in collaboration with ten Civil Society Organisations, conducted a detailed phone survey of 5000 workers across 12 states of India, to gauge the impact of the COVID19 lockdown on employment, livelihoods, and access to government relief schemes. Survey data as well as details, including organisations involved, are available on [our website](#).

In this webinar, we will present the findings of our survey for the state of Karnataka. We will hear from our collaborators in Karnataka to understand what these findings mean in the context of the metros and villages that they work in.

Please join us on [You Tube Live](#)

COVID19 and its associated safety measures, such as the lockdown since March 24th have taken a heavy toll on the economy, and particularly on vulnerable informal and migrant workers and their families. **Immediate as well as medium to long term, comprehensive policy measures are needed to counter these effects and chart the path to economic recovery.** We hope that the survey findings will help in determining the extent and nature of policy interventions that are needed.

We measured levels of employment and earnings since the lockdown was imposed, and compared them to the situation prevailing in February. We covered self-employed, casual, and regular wage/salaried workers. We will soon be releasing a detailed report of these findings.

Key Findings of the survey

- **Seven in ten (72%) of workers reported having lost their employment. Urban Karnataka is more severely affected. 76 % of urban workers and 66% of rural workers lost their employment .**
- For non-agricultural self-employed workers and wage workers, who were still employed, average weekly earnings fell by 2/3rd.
- More than four in ten salaried workers (44%) saw either a reduction in their salary or received no salary during the lockdown.
- **6 out of 10 households reported that they did not have enough money to buy even a week's worth of essential items.**
- **8 out 10 households reported a reduction in food intake.**
- **Less than 3 in 10 vulnerable households (27%) in urban Karnataka received any form of cash transfer from the government.**

In summary, the disruption in the Karnataka's economy and labor markets is enormous. Livelihoods have been devastated at unprecedented levels during the lockdown. The recovery from this could be slow and very painful.

As a response to the findings of this survey, the team which has conducted the study, suggests the following measures to ameliorate the conditions of those most affected by the crisis:

- A universalisation of the PDS to expand its reach and implementation of expanded rations for at least the next six months.
- Cash transfers equal to at least Rs. [7000 per month for two months](#). From a macroeconomic perspective as well, larger transfers are needed to bring back demand in the economy.
- Opening up of MGNREGA sites in keeping with physical distancing norms is urgently needed.
- Proactive steps like [expansion of MGNREGA](#), introduction of [urban employment guarantee](#), and investment in [universal basic services](#) are needed.