# FACT- FINDING REPORT ON THE VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD OF SEX WORKERS IN THE WATGUNJ RED LIGHT AREA AT MUNSHIGUNGE ROAD (KHIDDERPORE RED LIGHT AREA)

FACT- FINDING CONDUCTED ON 15.08.2021





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##

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

| BPL | Below Poverty Level |
| --- | --- |
| AAY | Antyodaya Anna Yojana |
| NFSA | National Food Security Act, 2013 |
| PHH | Priority Household |
| RKSY | Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana |
| ICDS | Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme |

##

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Fact- Finding Investigation has been conducted by a team led by Advocate Joveria Sabbah on 15.08.2021 at the Watgunge Red-light Area. The economic impact of pandemic on the sex workers has been immense. Not only have they suffered the loss of livelihood, their basic requirements of food have gone unmet during this period. The debilitating impact of the pandemic taking root in the distress areas that are the red-light areas in the State, the Fact-Finding team proposes that a policy change in terms of entitlements under the National Food Security Act, 2013 and the State Government is urgently needed, to ensure that the communities of sex workers are granted protection of their basic Right to Food under the Right to Life.

## **AIMS**:

The aims of the Fact-Finding Investigation were:

1. To determine if the sex workers in the area receive adequate government support to lead a life of dignity.
2. To investigate the quantity and nutritional quality of food grains being provided, if any, to the sex workers in the area.
3. To confirm if the children below the age of 6 years, pregnant, lactating women of the area are being covered under the ICDS scheme through anganwadis.
4. To determine whether the various schemes of the Government have been circulated/explained among the sex workers in order for them to avail the same.
5. To understand the requirements of the sex workers in terms of food and nutrition, financial aid and other basic necessities.

## FACT-FINDING REPORT

The Fact Finding Team interacted with more than fifty sex workers and their family members in the Watgunge Red- light Area to gain insight into the prevalent distress conditions that they are undergoing. Some of the relevant testimonials are as recorded below:

**CASE STUDY 1:**

Name: SAKINA BIBI ; AGE: 49 years

She has a BPL card. She’s receiving rations of 2 KGs of Rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month. She’s an elderly woman. She is afflicted with high levels of diabetes, hypertension, etc. She has one school going son and is in desperate need of financial aid to pay for school tuition. Furthermore, the rations of rice and wheat being nutritionally inadequate, she has to buy additional quantities of foodgrains at inflated prices along with the necessary pulses, vegetables, oil, spices, etc. for providing a balanced meal to her family.

**CASE STUDY 2:**

NAME: Rebeka Begum , AGE: 33

She does not have any BPL Card or Ration Card. She’s receiving 2 KGs of Rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month. She has one school going child and is in desperate need of financial aid to pay for school tuition.

She says that she is forced to buy kerosene at Rs. 45/- per litre from the persons distributing the oil from the ration shop at extortionate prices in the black market, which raises her household expenses further making it hard to afford a basic quality of life.

**CASE STUDY 3: Red Alert**

NAME: Rinki Das AAGE: 32

She does not have a BPL Card or a Ration Card. She’s receiving 2 KGs of Rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month, which is severely inadequate quantitatively and nutritionally. She has a 5- year old child and she does not receive any benefits from the ICDS Scheme through the Anganwadi Centres.

**CASE STUDY 4: Red Alert**

NAME: Bhavbati Kosriya AGE:30yrs

The address in her Aadhar Card is of Chhattisgarh because of which she is denied any ration. She has one child and finds it very hard to feed her family.

**CASE STUDY 5: Red Alert**

NAME: Chintamani Das AGE: 44yrs

She does not have either a BPL or a Ration Card. She does not receive any ration under TDPS of NFSA 2013.

**CASE STUDY 6: Red Alert**

NAME: Sagina Bibi AGE: 56

She does not have either a BPL or a Ration Card. She does not receive any ration under TDPS of NFSA 2013.

**CASE STUDY 7: Red Alert**

NAME: Sangita DasAGE: 40

She does not have a BPL Card since she lost it 7-8 months ago. Owing to this, she had not received any ration since. She has one child who does not have any documents related to his birth and receives no ration either.

**CASE STUDY 8:**

NAME: Meena Khatoon AGE: 45yrs

She receives 2 Kgs of rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month. The quantity is insufficient for an average adult. The same needs to be supplemented from her meagre earnings.

**CASE STUDY 9:**

NAME: Aarti Roy AGE: 37yrs

She has a BPL Card. She receives 2 Kgs of rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month.

**CASE STUDY 10:**

NAME: Shanti Begum AGE: 57yrs

She has a ration card and receives the inadequate, insufficient and laughable amount of 2 Kgs of rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month.

**CASE STUDY 11:**

NAME: Abeda Khatoon AGE: 31yrs

She has 3 children, no husband. She receives 2 Kgs of rice and 2 KGs of whole wheat grains every month. The meagre amount is ridiculously insufficient for the sustenance of the nutritionally deprived family.

**CASE STUDY 12:**

NAME: Jharna Begum AGE: 40yrs

This sex worker has a ration card and a bank account. The ration card in her possession helps her in availing the insufficient amount of 2KGs of Rice and 2KGs of Wheat Grains. An amount not in tandem with either the PHH ration card or the RKSY-I ration card.

**CASE STUDY 13: Red Alert**

NAME: Champa Devi AGE: 52yrs

The sex work is in dire need of food and ration. The lady has 2 children and ration card or BPL card. She does not have a bank account and has no means, understanding or assistance to avail these immediately.

**CASE STUDY 14: Red Alert**

NAME: Narshima Khatun AGE: 37yrs

The lady works hard to eat one square meal a day. She does not possess a ration card nor does she possess a BPL card to be categorised under the Below Poverty Line. Because of not being able to avail any ration, sustaining herself is extremely difficult. She has a child.

**CASE STUDY 15:**

NAME: Pushpa DeviAGE: 41yrs

She receives 2KG’s of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat as ration from her local FPS (Fair Price Shop). She aggrieves that the ration is inadequate and fails to meet even her basic requirements. The rest of the food is brought from the local bazaar at extortionate prices. The lady has 4 children.

**CASE STUDY 16:**

NAME: Latika Deb Burman AGE: 57yrs

She receives 2KGs of Rice and 2KGs of Wheat aad ration by showing her Adhaar Card. The amount is insufficient to meet her monthly intake of basic food.

**CASE STUDY 17:**

NAME: Pushpa Das AGE: 56yrs

She receives 2KGs of Rice and 2KGs of Wheat as ration. The amount is grossly inadequate and the general complaint of her and her colleagues is that the allowance is insufficient wherein they are compelled to buy pulses, oil, vegetables and other basic food items from the bazaar. With low income, further dwindling in the pandemic, meeting even basic needs as become a task. The lady has 4 children.

**CASE STUDY 18:**

NAME: Munni Begum AGE: 54yrs

The lady has a ration card and avails 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains. The grievances range from receiving insufficient food to not receiving any financial aid from the Government, especially so in these times of crisis.

**CASE STUDY 19:**

NAME: Durga Bala Das AGE: 58yrs

She has a ration card and receives the insufficient amount of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains. She was pleading for some other food articles to be given at a subsidised rate. She has a bank account but because she was unable to maintain it, the same is closed.

**CASE STUDY 20:**

NAME: Rekha Tamang, AGE: 53yrs

The lady has no one to fall back on and survives solely on her meager earnings. The earnings have drastically reduced and the 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains received as ration are insufficient for not meeting her basic needs.

**CASE STUDY 21: Red Alert (Senior Citizen)**

NAME: Bhagwanteen Devi, AGE: 61yrs

The lady does not have a ration card, or BPL card categorising her under the BPL. Because of not availing any documents, she has not been receiving any ration and is in desperate need of the same. She is having to scout for food for survival. She does not have a bank account.

**CASE STUDY 22:**

NAME: Bidya Bhushan Pramanik AGE:

She has a BPL card and receives the insufficient amount of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains. She was pleading for some other food articles to be given at a subsidised rate. She has 3 children.

CASE STUDY 23:

NAME: Reboti Das Mishra AGE: 32yrs

She has 2 kids and ration card. She receives 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only.

**CASE STUDY 24:**

NAME: Kiran Tamang AGE: 41yrs

The lady has one child and a ration card. She receives the insufficient quantity of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. She doesn't have a bank account and expresses the wish to have one in the hope that she may receive some monetary aid from the State Government.

**CASE STUDY 25:**

NAME: Ajida Khatun, AGE: 35yrs

The lady has one child and a ration card. She receives the insufficient quantity of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. Sustenance is a task for her considering the reduced earning as a direct result of the pandemic.

**CASE STUDY 26:**

NAME: Mamoni Das Roy, AGE: 36yrs

Receives her ration being 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. The amount is grossly insufficient and does not meet the basic requirement.

**CASE STUDY 27:**

NAME: Basanti Das, AGE:

She received rations of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. The amount is insufficient and the aggrieved worker, owing to her unorganized work and insufficient income, struggles for survival.

**CASE STUDY 28:**

NAME: Pinki Tamang, AGE:

She received rations of 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. Because the grains are in insufficient quantity and devoid of other basic supplements, she has to buy them from local shops at prices she cannot afford. Owing to which, she has to cut short on her meals.

**CASE STUDY 29:**

NAME: Parijan Bewa, AGE:

She lives with her two kids. She is currently receiving 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. The same is grossly inadequate and fails to meet the daily nutritional standards.

**CASE STUDY 30:**

NAME: Neetu Tamang AGE: 34 yrs

The worker has 1 child and receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. She has a bank account but receives no aid from the government.

**CASE STUDY 31:**

NAME: Aarti Devi, AGE: 56yrs

She receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. The lady pleads for food and financial assistance as work is slow and the money earned is not sufficient to have proper food.

**CASE STUDY 32:**

NAME: Hushnara Begum, AGE: 55yrs

She receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. She has a bank account and is in desperate need of some financial aid from the state government.

**CASE STUDY 33:**

NAME: Jasmine Khatun, AGE: 31yrs

She has a ration card and receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains only. The same is insufficient and she pleads for additional quantities of rice and wheat and other basic supplies. She has a bank account.

**CASE STUDY 34:**

NAME: Maile Tamang AGE: 49yrs

She receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. She does not have a bank account.

CASE STUDY 35:

NAME: Saraswati Mahilang, AGE: 42yrs

Ration received by her is 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. She has one child. She does not have a bank account.

**CASE STUDY 36: Red Alert**

NAME: Puja Devi, AGE:

The lady has not received any ration since 2-3 months. She has one child and has a bank account. She seeks immediate food security and financial aid.

**CASE STUDY 37:**

NAME: Bedana Begum AGE:

The lady does not have a Ration card but a Durbar Mahila Committee card showing which she receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. The same is grossly inadequate.

**CASE STUDY 38:**

NAME: Rahima Khatun AGE: 41yrs

The worker has one child and has a ration card. She receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. The same is grossly inadequate for fulfilling her daily food requirement, nutritional support and needs.

**CASE STUDY 39:**

NAME: Lata Tamang AGE: 46yrs

She receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. The same is grossly inadequate in these times of financial strain and hardship faced because of the pandemic. She begs to receive adequate amount of food supplies.

**CASE STUDY 40:**

NAME:Reshma Khatun/Begum AGE: 37yrs

The worker has an APL card, thus receives 1KG of Rice and 1 KG of wheat grains. She has one child. The food grains received are inadequate to meet her nutritional needs.

**CASE STUDY 41:**

NAME: Mamta Bibi, AGE: 32yrs

The lady showed a set of papers which were given to her by the state authorities to avail benefit under the khadyasathi scheme. She has been receiving 2KGs of Rice and 2KGs of whole wheat grains only. The same is insufficient to sustain her and she has to spend extra to buy vegetables, extra rice, dal etc.

**CASE STUDY 42:**

NAME: Angura Bibi AGE:

The lady has a Durbar Mahila Committee Card showing which she receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only. The same is grossly inadequate to meet her nutritional standards.

**CASE STUDY 43:**

NAME: Namita Das AGE: 35yrs

She has a ration card and receives 1 KG of Rice and 1KG of Wheat grains as ration only. The same is grossly inadequate and she pleads further assistance from the authorities.

**CASE STUDY 44:**

NAME: Hasina Akhtar AGE: 37yrs

The worker has a BPL card and receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only at a subsidised rate. She has to bu her groceries from the local bazaar and shops and does not have enough money to do so.

**CASE STUDY 45:**

NAME: Rojina Begum AGE: 33yrs

The worker has a BPL card and receives 2 KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration only at a subsidised rate. She has to bu her groceries from the local bazaar and shops and does not have enough money to do so.

**CASE STUDY 46:**

NAME: Nazma Begum AGE: 51yrs

The worker has a BPL card and receives 2KGs of Rice and 2KG’s of Wheat grains as ration on subsidised rates only. She finds it difficult to sustain on the meagre and inadequate food supplies received.

##

## OBSERVATIONS

1. The grievances of the sex workers was writ large on their desperate pleas for ration and financial aid for their children’s education.
2. The sex workers at Watgunge area are being deprived of the financial assistance schemes of the State Government due to being left out of the schemes and have no resources to fall back on in times of severe distress.
3. The sex workers with Ration Cards at their home- towns are being deprived of the said facilities in their place of residence in violation of the orders of the Supreme Court on the subject.
4. Not everyone has a bank account in the area and are left out of the organised economy. The aggrieved workers collectively hoped of receiving financial aid from the State Government in their accounts that have either zero balance, or, are dysfunctional because of having insufficient balance to keep the accounts alive.
5. Pregnant and lactating women aren’t receiving dry rations separately as per the nutritional standards under the ICDS Scheme.
6. The prices of kerosene oil etc. are extortionate and sold at black markets predatorily.
7. Some people have Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana - I Scheme cards of the West Bengal Department of Food and Supply Department which promises 2 Kgs of Rice nad 3 KGs of wheat. However, there is disparity between the amount promised and the amount received.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To immediately include the sex workers in the State under the AAY Scheme under NFSA 2013 so that they can avail the benefits thereof considering they fall under the informal sector which can be considered in the AAY Scheme.
2. To provide rice, wheat, pulses, vegetables, oil and spices to the sex workers at Watgunge Redlight Area at subsidized rates.
3. The quantity of food supplies should be augmented in accordance with NFSA 2013 read with the State Schemes and Guidelines.
4. Financial Aid to the tune of Rs. 1500/- per month for theeducation of children of the sex workers to be provided.
5. Financial Assistance to be provided to the sex workers rendered out of work owing to the current situation for purposes of rent payment, etc. and to be directly transferred to their bank accounts.
6. The Government should assist those of the sex workers who do not have a bank account to open their own bank accounts.
7. The women should be registered with the Anganwadis and be able to avail the benefits under the ICDS Scheme.
8. The pregnant, lactating mothers and children below should be provided extra dry rations as per the Dipika Jagatram Sahani judgment by the Hon’ble Supreme Court.