



SANGRAM

Sampada Grameen
Mahila Sanstha

Flood Relief

SANGRAM FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS

August – October 2019

Sangli, on the banks of river Krishna in Western Maharashtra faced a historic flood in Aug 2019. Nearly One Lakh people were displaced and over 30 lost their lives in this district alone. Sangli city has a population of more than 22 lakh and 75% of Sangli city was submerged in the floods. Suburban Sangli that was on higher ground was not submerged but the whole of Sangli city was marooned by the flood waters for several days.

The Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation is on the banks of the rivers Krishna and Warna in Western Maharashtra. Both rivers reached historic High Flood Levels in August 2019. Warna, in Samdoli Village, Sangli District recorded an HFL of 546.9 Meters on 09 Aug 2019, breaking all previous records. The Irwin Bridge, a historic bridge built in 1929 by the British in Sangli city, was partially submerged recording a never before HFL since it was built 90 years ago. Sangli and the nearby regions are not new to floods and have witnessed devastating floods in 1853, 1856, 1914, 2005, 2006 and latest 2019. Since 2005 the regularity of floods in this region is of huge concern. The 2019 floods broke all previous records, including the 1914 HFL.

Flood relief

As the waters started rising in Sangli, workers from VAMP [Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad] the collective of female sex workers, Mitra [children of sex workers] and Muskan [collective of male and trans* sex workers] with SANGRAM contacted the Municipal corporation to offer their support to the authorities. The Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal corporation declared municipal schools as safe spaces and hordes of affected families started streaming into the camps. The corporation then formed a team of local NGO's and volunteers to help in the flood relief work. The Sangli Municipality allocated the relief camp at Damani High school to SANGRAM. Initially the sex workers from VAMP and Muskan who live in Sangli were the first to reach out and they volunteered in the camp till their own houses were affected!

The waters rose steadily for more than 6 days but later the waters rose so rapidly that both Rajmane Chawl and Gokulnagar were affected. All the sex workers were then shifted to camps in the municipal schools that were on higher ground. Many chose to go to their relatives in adjoining areas before Sangli was completely marooned.

The SANGRAM team did a quick **area wise survey** of flooded parts in Sangli, Miraj and Kupwad municipal corporation and also in the adjoining city of Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji.

The **Damani high school camp** was the initial relief work where the SANGRAM team ably assisted by Mitra, Muskan and VAMP cooked for **500** persons. The team provided breakfast, lunch and dinner to 500 persons flood affected persons for seven days from 7-8-2019 to 12-8-2019 in this camp.

As the waters started rising SANGRAM started providing **hot meals** to the other camps that were allocated to SANGRAM increasing the number to **1730** persons.

The flood relief cell of the municipality was unable to cope and SANGRAM joined a civil society group that was a **citizen's response** to help wherever it was needed. As the voluntary response of civil society increased SANGRAM members played the role of connecting affected persons to services set up by civil society. Clothes, groceries, blankets, mats were sorted and distributed as needed. Despite the devastation of floods, SANGRAM saw instances of civil society refusing to provide support to Muslim relief camps. In such instances, SANGRAM refused to accept the relief provided and ensured that all communities regardless of religion and caste got whatever relief in a non – discriminatory manner. In fact, SANGRAM adopted two relief camps that were housing Muslim families that were affected by the floods to ensure that they were also provided for without any discrimination.

Relief Camp	Food Assistance provided during flood duration
Damani High School	500
Gokulnagar	70
Al Amin School	150
Maratha Seva Sangh	250
Noor High School	200
Bhide Karyalay	160
Herwaad	250
Sangliwadi	150
TOTAL	1730

SANGRAM has been engaged in providing flood relief assistance to those who were rescued from floods in Sangli, Satara in Maharashtra. This includes providing food for over 1730 people in relief camps on a daily basis from 7th August 2019 to 14th August 2019. Sex workers who were affected were provided extra food assistance until 20th August 2019. In addition to food relief, SANGRAM teams have been distributing emergency ration packets, clothes, blankets, mattresses to affected sex workers and their families. SANGRAM worked tirelessly for 13 days.



Sex work is work!

If nothing else convinces one that this is true, this narrative from VAMP will! While planning for post flood relief Sangram Sanstha asked VAMP members from Rajmane Chawl and Gokulnagar areas who were in the relief camps to make a list of groceries and other items of immediate need. Much deliberation later the delegation sent a voice message on WhatsApp, “Mam give us Mattresses. We can create our own money and buy whatever we need. Without mattresses we cannot do sex work!!” For the Rajmane chawl women, the mattresses were covered in plastic since the houses are not dried out yet. Around 500 mattresses were procured and distributed to the houses where the women were doing sex work in Sangli. Some of the trans – women and male sex workers from Ichalkaranji and Miraj whose houses were destroyed also sought assistance of the mattresses.

Post flood

SANGRAM and its collectives also initiated cleanliness campaign in VAMP's working areas. Physically cleaned up houses in Rajmane chawl area and in Gokulnagar. SANGRAM teamed up with the Municipality and helped clean the roads with bleach to prevent waterborne diseases and infections. Continued advocacy and messages were shared on hygiene products and their use. Organised a health camp with SANGRAM's doctor and provided medical assistance to sex workers and their families. Fungal infections have flared and required very expensive medicines. SANGRAM also helped sex workers who lost their materials including grocery, clothing, beds and utensils.

