

EDITION

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INTERVIEWS

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How daily wage  
labourers suffering in  
this lockdown are being  
assisted by Kolkata  
Gives Foundation



# For all those of you who sleep well at night...

Not far away are hundreds who do not know where their next meal is coming from. This is a collection of interviews of those at the bottom of India's economic and social pyramid

*PS. These individuals were provided food rations by Kolkata Gives with contributions from dozens of donors*

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## Ujala Shaikh, 30

Sardarpara Road, Madhyamgram

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“If there is one drawback of the lockdown for gareeb people like us it is half a dozen or more people living inside 150 sq ft... all day. In a maahaul like this one cannot leave the child and venture out. What if the child stepped out and picked up the virus? My husband’s employer closed down so we get no money ... jab kaam hi nahi kiya to paisa kaun dega? Raat ko neend nahi aati. In most difficult times one would have expected help from the mohalla. But at such a time everyone in the mohalla is out of a job. How can we ask anyone for anything? We received rations over a week ago from NGO GRIR but that will soon finish. You know what we are really worried about? Not being able to pay our rent. If we can’t pay, the landlord can throw us out. Ek to bhooke aur uske upar ghar se beghar ho jaayenge. Yahi chinta khaaye jaa rahi hain.

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*Interview by Pranav Bhandari and Yash Vardhan Pansari*

## Razia Khatoon, 30

Fatehpur Village Road

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“My husband is a tailor and as a household, we earn Rs 4000-5000 a month. Our biggest expense is rent and the maintenance of our two children. When my husband went to his employer to ask for help, he folded his hands. Yahaan sabki haalat aisi hi hai. Koi rickshaw taan-ta hai toh koi thela. Khud ka khayaal rakkha nahi jaata ek doosre ki madad kaise hogi? My worry is the health of my children. One child is bedridden; we cannot take him to a doctor. Managing children in a tiny house has become a job. Tension wala ghar ho gaya hain. Dekhe Allah kya karta hai...

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*Interviewed by Nakul Malik*

# Ruqaiya Khatoon

## Metiabruz

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I live with my handicapped son and husband inside a 12x12 feet room. Badi ghutan mehsoos ho rahi hain. During the normal days, we would be away for work and would only return in the evening to cook and sleep; the next morning we would be out again. But is baar mat poochiye... aisa lagta hai ke deewar dhass jaayega hum par. My son received food rations from GRIR NGO. We are down to a week of food. I am too embarrassed to ask anyone for anything. I went out to buy grains in Metiabruz yesterday but the sannaata was difficult to take in. I pray the government gives us something - anything - to eat. I am scared for my son who is a handicapped child. Bete ke liye dua keejiyega... hum toh ummeed par jee lenge.

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*Interviewed by Anoushka Agarwalla*

## Md Firoz Ansari, 25

Metiabruz

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I am an auto driver. For the last few weeks, dhandha ek dum bandh hain and I have had to eat out of my reserves. Ghar me kuch paisa nahi aur aisa bhi nahi hai ki savings bol sake kyun ki hum log daily kaam karne wale hai aur auto chalaake jo paisa milta hai, woh paisa auto maalik ko dete hain. Jo bachta hai woh ghar ki bijli / bhaada me chala jata hai aur thoda bhai-bahen ki padhai me lag jata hai. Whatever help we have received till now has been thanks to Nazimbhai of GRIR. I am scared about what will happen when all help stops. Even the MLA is not helping any more. Baahar bhi nahi nikal sakte kyun ki baahar nikalna matlab police ke haath padna hai. Is condition me police pakad le, toh Rs 1000/2000 ka fine lag jayega.

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*Interviewed by Manav Agarwal*



Md Firoz Ansari

## Geeta Naskar

Damian village, Narendrapur GP, Raidighi

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You people sitting in cities will not know the trouble we poor are going through.

We got 1 kg of rice from MUKTI NGO yesterday with which we satiated our immediate hunger. We all felt good with that meal. But by evening it was the same story...and today we are back to an empty stomach with nothing to cook or eat.

I thought my children who are daily wage labourers in Kolkata would come with some money. Kintu they came with nothing. They went to buy from the ration market not once but twice. They could not buy not because rice was not available but because of the ration price of Rs.13/kg of rice. Tero taka kilo! Jaah baba, this might sound less for some people but my dear when you have only one Rs 1 coin, Rs. 13 seems a long way off.

You might wonder: how is it that we have absolutely no taka left? This then is my real story: I am suffering from cancer and that ate away all my savings in medicines and doctors. Now there is no money to visit a doctor and as it turns out, no money to eat either. Which is why when MUKTI NGO came and gave one kg rice and some food rations, I felt that perhaps I have a connection to bhogobaan who heard me.

Ekta kotha bolbo... I don't think I am going to survive this lockdown. Mone hochchey I will die before this lockdown is lifted.

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*Interviewed by Gopal Sardar (Mukti volunteer). Transcribed and edited by Manashi Mallik*



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