



# FRIENDS OF METTUPALAYAM TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1054673

[www.irdt.co.uk](http://www.irdt.co.uk)

Facebook- Friends of Mettupalayam Community

**April 2020**

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Dear Friends,

We hope you are keeping safe during these difficult times for us in the UK and across the world. Many of you have been asking how things are in the project, so we thought we should give you a special update on the actions we are taking.

As you will know, India was put under a strict lockdown two weeks ago. This is scheduled to remain in place in Tamil Nadu until 30 April, at the earliest. The effect on the local people near our project has already been dramatic, as the vast majority live on a day to day basis, without savings or freezers or well-stocked store cupboards. All schools are closed, all travel has been stopped unless for emergency, so there is virtually no work and of course working from home is not an option like it is here. The Indian government has said that it is making money and food available to those who need it, but the reality on the ground is, as you might suspect, quite different and Venkat advises that any support is minimal and many of the local tribal communities are not covered.



So, we have been having urgent discussions about what he can do to help the most in need and we have agreed the following support actions to be put in place with immediate effect:

- Venkat has identified 7 local settlements with a total of 250 of the most vulnerable families. We will source and provide vegetables packs for these families each week
- Venkat has bought an initial 200 face masks and a bulk purchase of soaps to provide to the most in need
- We have agreed to continue to pay our teaching staff, although we are told that other private schools are laying off their staff with no pay
- We will expand the provision of mid-day meals for the local elderly folk

We have calculated that this will involve an extra £375 per week and have transferred a bank draft to cover the expected extra running costs until the end of May. We will of course be keeping a very close watch on developments as it is a fast-moving situation. At present, there are very few reported cases of the virus in the local area and we all hope and pray that the restrictions are effective.

Venkat has asked that we send his deep thanks and appreciation to you all for allowing him to carry out his work with the poorest groups during this crisis. Please keep safe. Thank you.