

# A REPORT OF HOW DHARAVI COPE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

This is the third weekly report on how Dharavi is coping with Covid-19. We concentrate on the food distribution effort initiated at community level. This is a qualitative study collated from 13 in-depth phone interviews of community leaders.

THE COMMUNITY LEADERS FEAR A FOOD SHORTAGE IF THE CONFINEMENT CONTINUES

“The people of Dharavi have stood strong against all odds. They have helped each other in the most vulnerable situations. They have collectively tried to fight the social stigma against Dharavi that prevails in Mumbai”  
- Bhau Korde

## How?

COVID - 19 and the lockdown had a greater impact on vulnerable and marginalised sections of society. In Dharavi, the lockdown sent the community into shock and disrupted daily lives. People instantly felt the lack of food and resources, as their work activities stopped. Troubled by the state of affairs, some people of Dharavi immediately rose to the occasion to take up leadership roles and help their community. They anticipated greater suffering if there was no access to food and monetary support. These community leaders started the task of food distribution.



The community leaders organised themselves and crowdsourced monetary donations. This funding is used to buy food in bulk. With the help of volunteers, they make and distributed food packets. These last each family for approximately two weeks. Their efforts were recognised by agencies like Asia Initiative, Bombay Rotary club, Mumbai Roti Bank, local elected representatives and other institutes, who showed their support for these leaders through making funds available or by supplying pre-cooked food.

The community leaders from the Mohalla Committee Movement Trust locally designed a distribution method with the contribution of over 60 to 70 volunteers from Dharavi. Their team is divided into 16 smaller groups that cover all the neighbourhoods of Dharavi. For easy communication, one team leader is assigned to each team. Ayub, Paul, Khurshid, Harshada, Tarun and Gulzar are the key people involved. They have ensured a well organised and hassle-free food distribution process. Each member works tirelessly to reach out to as many families as possible. Since the start of the lockdown, they have distributed over 5000 food packets and pre-cooked meals, so far.

## STORIES

### An egg a day

Harshada, a young woman, distributes food in various neighbourhoods. She recently started distributing boiled eggs to quarantined patients. She understood that the regular food served to these patients lacked nutrition. She utilised all her personal resources towards this. With her team of volunteers, she takes these boiled eggs to the quarantine centre and makes sure they are distributed to the patients.

### I am because I phone

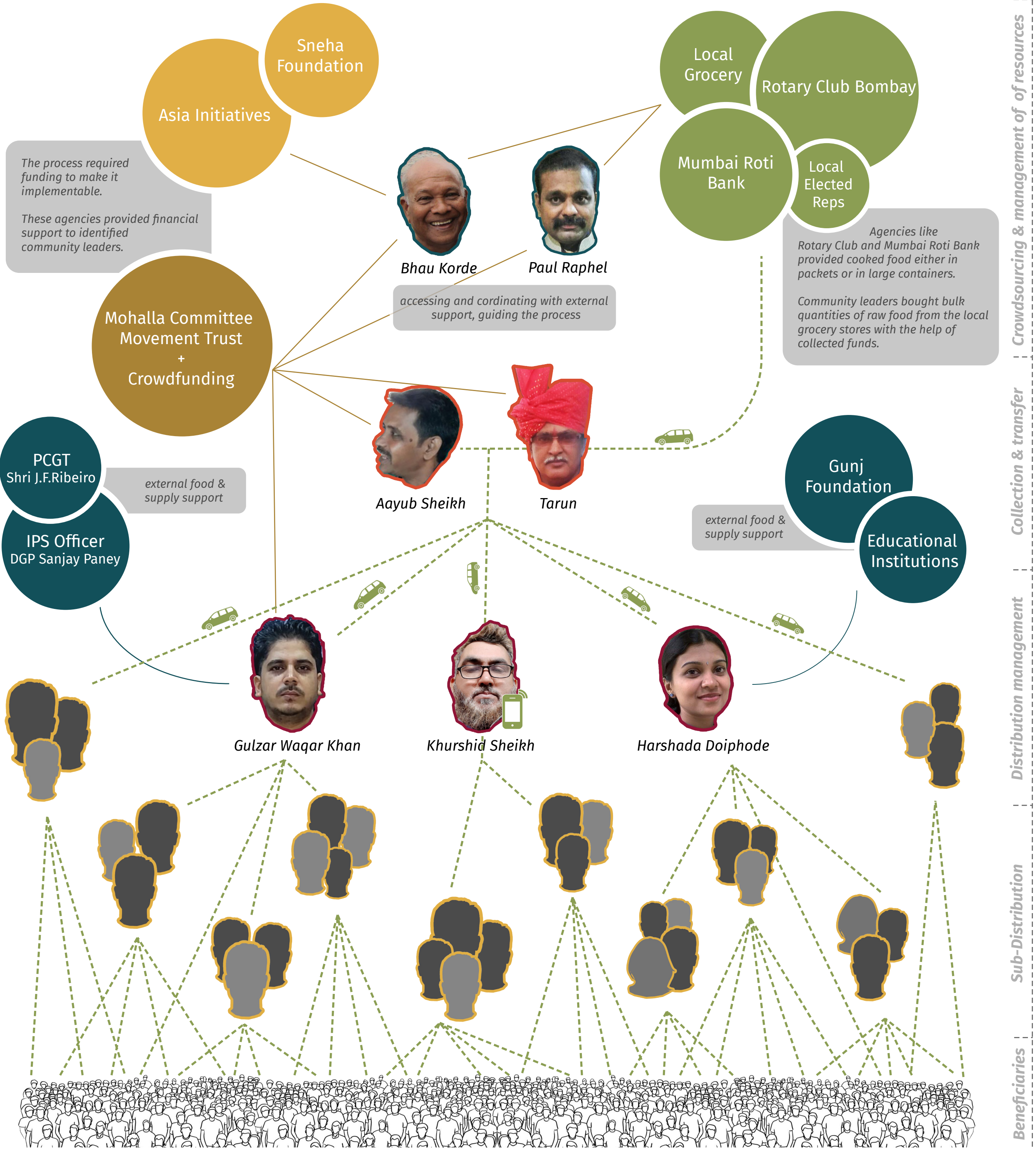
Khurshid managed the food distribution in Dharavi despite being quarantined. He fell ill (not COVID - 19), during the initial phase of the food distribution process. He immediately isolated himself, to ensure a quicker recovery. He continued to manage the distribution process by phone, being constantly in touch with his volunteers and other team members.

## UPDATES

We conducted follow-up interviews with previous interviewees. Most of them had gone back to their villages. The ones who didn't are dependent on donations, loans, and community distribution services. From the 10 people we interviewed in Dharavi, 5 do not have ration cards and cannot access government subsidised food available under the Public Distribution System.

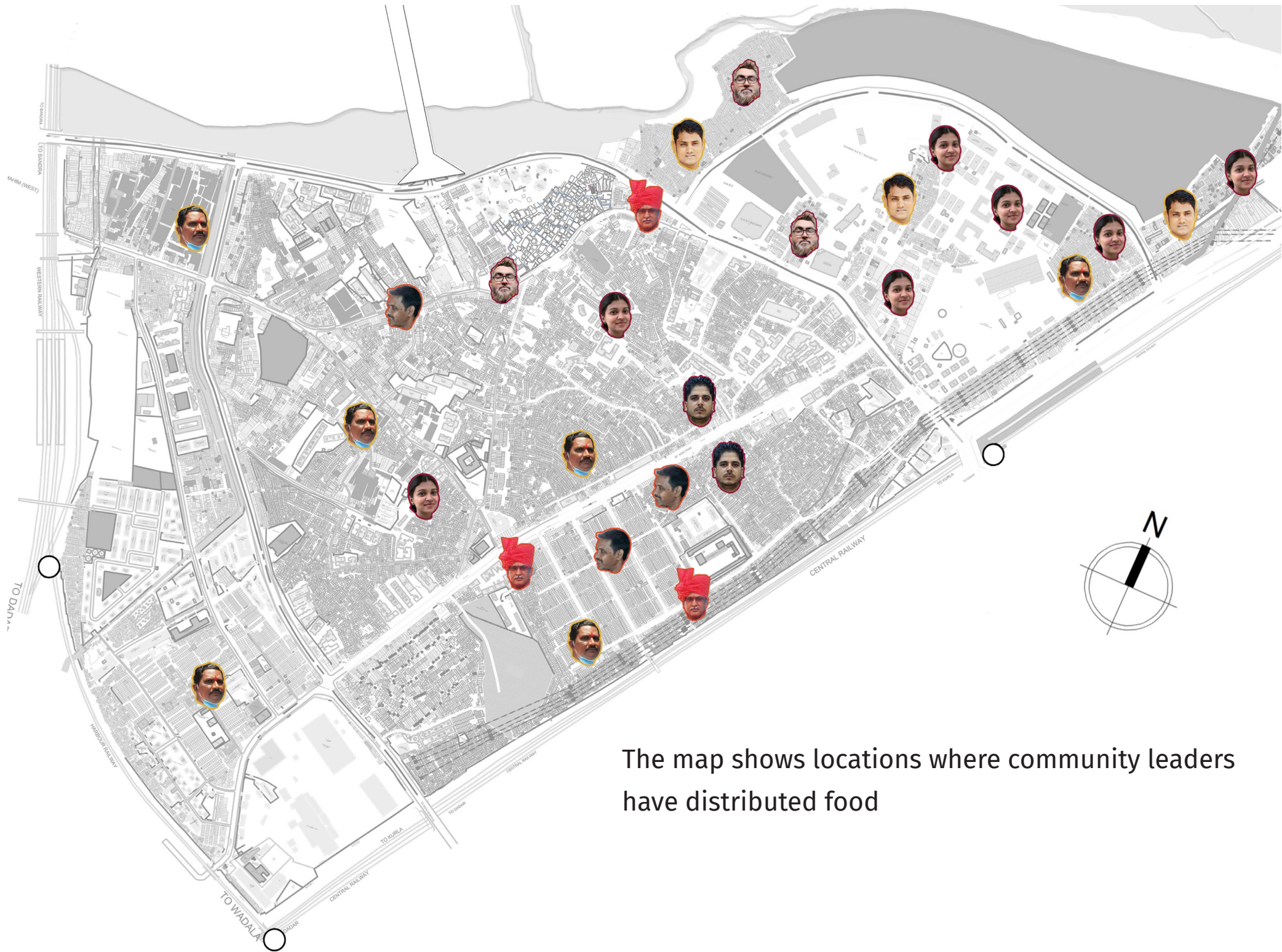


THE PROCESS



Beneficiaries

The community leaders followed certain criteria to identify the beneficiaries. They prioritised for migrant workers, daily wagers, families without ration cards, families with ration cards but unable to buy food, women who worked as domestic help, etc. The leaders, with the help of local volunteers, surveyed several neighbourhoods to reach out to these beneficiaries. A few members of the Mohalla Committee Movement Trust also helped in the distributions of food packets and pre-cooked meals.



The map shows locations where community leaders have distributed food