

# Women join hands with NGOs to stitch masks for relief staff

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**MUMBAI:** Sewing machines are coming to the aid of relief workers during the Covid-19 outbreak, with more than 100 women in the city using their tailoring skills to making reusable, protective masks. The women volunteers are working with non-governmental organisations like Apnalaya (which works with urban poor), Coro India (which works with marginalised communities) and Sneha (which works in the field of public health). The masks are intended for relief workers.

With a little help from Coro India, which pays ₹5 per mask and supplies the material, 75 women from 10 Mumbai-based women's self-help groups have made 350 washable, reusable masks. These women worked as domestic help or were employed in local industries until the lockdown was enforced, said Rahul Garware of Coro India, adding that they currently have no source of income.

"I stitch 30 masks a day. My

family helps me cut, wash and iron the cloth," said Kiran Shaha, a Chembur resident.

In the slum area of Shivaji Nagar, 15 women, who are part of Apnalaya's project Svavalamban, have stitched 900 masks till date. "They [the women] used to stitch bags and accessories before. However, they have no business since the lockdown so they came up with this idea," said Malathy M of Apnalaya.

Both Coro and Apnalaya shared a manual issued by the Centre on making re-usable

## KALYAN SCHOOL MAKES 20.5K MASKS

- Central Railway School, Kalyan has distributed 20,500 cloth masks and 600 litre sanitiser to BMC workers, railway employees and the needy.
- Principal Jacob Thomas, 58, took up the initiative to stitch masks in the school's activity area following the lockdown.
- "When there was a direction to shut the school, some of the contract labourers working in

the school agreed to stay and help me make masks. I also hired seven professional tailors to stitch the two-layered cloth masks," said Thomas.

- Thomas along with his wife, two kids and two other teachers make the masks alongside the tailors and workers.
- The school canteen is also cooking food for 200 needy people. **SAJANA NAMBIAR**

masks with the volunteers.

Garware said, "Close to 30 women working with us have made 6,500 masks. It was one of the rural self-help groups that came up with the idea since many of the women own machines. In Mumbai too, we are aiming to make 5,000 masks."

Sushma Shende of Sneha said volunteers have made and distributed close to 250 masks. Dhaaga, a micro-enterprise initiative supported by Tata Power, has made over 1,20,000 masks in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.