

SOCIETY

Chennai NGOs pitch in to make cloth masks for people in essential services



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Not recommended for those affected by COVID-19 and their care-givers, these masks can be worn by anyone stepping out of home

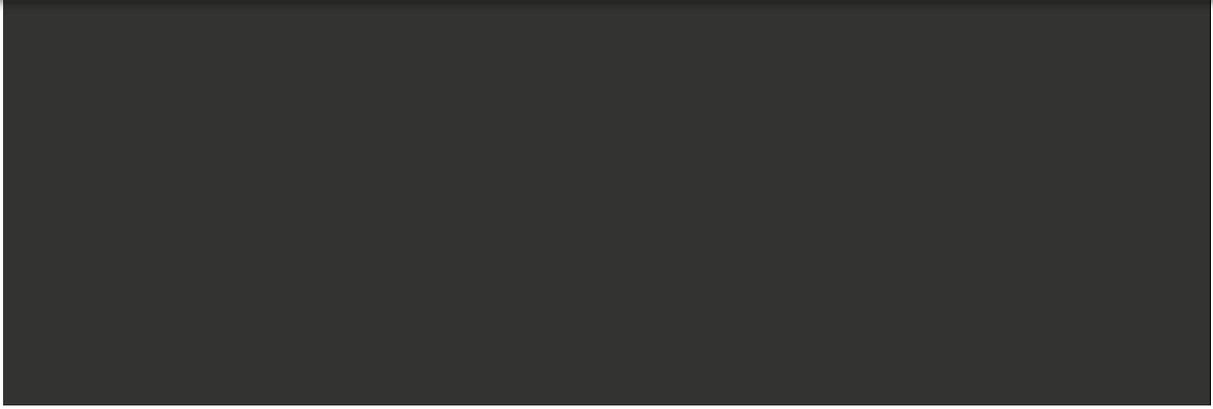
The tailoring room at the Shelter For Women With Disabilities at Nungambakkam is bustling with activity. The 40 women there go about cutting, sewing, and packing the most essential product of the times: masks. The shelter belongs to the Greater Chennai

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quarantine status. The group has been making cloth masks for people in essential services and Aiswarya has roped in women at the Shelter to make them.

“We follow guidelines by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,” says Dr Aiswarya, adding that they have been making masks ever since the nation-wide COVID-19 lockdown was announced. “These masks have three pleats that are washable and reusable. They are not meant for people who have COVID-19 or for those who are in direct contact with them, and their care-givers,” she explains. “These are meant for people such as health (non-medical) and conservancy workers who are on the field during the current Coronavirus crisis.”





Aiswarya says that women at the centre volunteered to make masks themselves. “They never spoke about money,” she says. The masks are priced depending on the person placing an order. “If they are for Government conservancy workers, or other shelters, for instance, we offer them for free,” she explains, adding that they do sell the masks to corporates and similar agencies for a price.

Right now at the Shelter, there are six sewing machines. “But everyone is involved in the process,” says Aiswarya. “Some do the cutting of the strings, some snip away extra threads... and one person is in charge of taking orders on the phone.” Fabrics have been sponsored by her friends, including The Square Inch team.

Meanwhile, students and teachers who are from schools for children with disabilities, run by the V-Excel Educational Trust, are also at their sewing machines, making masks by the minute. They too have been trained by The Square Inch team. “Right now, there are 16 older students who have undergone vocational training, and teachers who are making the masks,” says Vasudha Prakash, the founder-trustee.

The masks have an attachable filter, made of *mul* fabric. “It is soft and breathable,” says Vasudha, adding that even tissues can be used as a filter and be disposed after usage. It doesn’t even require a sewing machine for one to make a mask. “Some of our team are doing so by hand, using a backstich. It holds very well,” sums up Vasudha.

For details, call the Shelter at 9677225069, and V-Excel at 24956373

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