

RESPONSE BY TORPA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY FOR WOMEN

APRIL 2020



Community Helps Community
COVID-19

Present Scenario

The Prime Minister extended India's nationwide lockdown, the biggest in the world, until 3 May 2020. The three-week lockdown of the nation of 1.3 billion people, which started at midnight on March 25, was scheduled to end at midnight of 14 April. We are in the last week of lockdown 2.0 in India. Hunger is one of the major issues besides COVID-19 infection that the migrant labourers and other vulnerable communities are faced with. The central and state governments have announced the food scheme which will be distributed to the poor and needy through the Public Distribution System (PDS). This is the system on which two-third of the Indian population rely on food grains like rice, wheat and sugar at a much cheaper price than the price in the local market. The Food Security Act mandates that no one should go hungry and adequate food grains should be made available for the poor and the needy people. During the past 4 weeks of April, TRDSW staff have been working with the local administration to identify needy families.



Public Distribution System (PDS) with social distancing

Major economists reflecting on the economic impact say that the primary concern for the government is preventing the spread of COVID-19. However, we need to address the concerns of poor migrant workers, agricultural, non-agricultural daily wagers and all others who depend on informal economic activities especially for their day to day survival. The migrant worker is invisible to India's policymakers and the state has failed to address their needs repeatedly. In the process of the lockdown, many jobs are lost and this will lead to long term loss of income for such families.

Collaborative Approach

TRDSW is working together with the district administration on one platform under the direction of the District Commissioner so that we avoid working in isolation and also avoid duplication of efforts. Accordingly in Torpa Block we worked with Pradan and in Rania Block with JSLPS to jointly work out a roll out strategy for providing relief to the vulnerable families. The first step was that the needy families, women run households, widows and elderly were identified and lists were drawn up. Businessmen, contractors, mukhiyas and block authorities provided 2 months ration and soap to the needy families. In Rania Block with the help of the mukhiyas the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) provided gas cylinders for cooking. Orientation and awareness drives for sanitation, hygiene and social distancing took place at the village level and panchayat level with the help of mukhiyas, anganwadi sahiyas and community volunteers. Initially sample masks were stitched at the centre and then 4 women shgs who had sewing machines in their homes stitched masks. SHG women together with staff and community volunteers from 11 panchayats distributed rations to 6221 persons with ration card and 871 persons with no ration card. The women shgs also cooked and provided meals to 1512 persons through didi kitchen and dal bhaat yojana. TRDSW was asked to send a list of volunteers from Torpa and Rania who could be part of a quick response team (QRT) in case of further need. This was in response to the government's Containment Plan for Large Out Breaks, COVID-19. A list of 1630 migrant workers who want to return has been submitted to the Rania Block authorities for further action.



Community Meeting with Rojgar Sevak

Block	Panchayat	PDS	Ration Card	No Ration Card	Awareness Drives	Distribution of Mask/ Soap
Rania	3	9	1458	200	17	200
Torpa	8	23	4763	671	12	150
Total	11	32	6221	871	29	350

Block	Panchayat	Didi Kitchen	Dal Bhat Yojana	No. of persons fed
Rania	7	5	4	550
Torpa	16	16	-	962
Total	23	21	4	1512

TRDSW works for the economic empowerment of the tribal community in 80 villages of Torpa and Rania Block. But the pandemic has meant networking with the “community to help community” through the local staff, shg women, cbos, anganwadi sahityas, mukhikas and block officials in a digital platform through phone and wherever connectivity is possible through whatsapp groups. Dissemination of information took place on the following:

- **Basics of the COVID-19 virus**
- **When and how to use the Mask**
- **Myths and Facts**
- **Orientation on sanitation and hygiene**
- **Helpline number**

The community volunteers would ensure that people get authentic information related to COVID-19 and time to time guidelines from government and administration.



Meals provided by Mukhyamantri Didi Kitchen

Challenges

As per the information that TRDSW would collect through the daily and weekly updates from the field, it shows that even though the government programs are implemented at the village level and people are also accessing those services; but still the challenge remains of immediate attention of local administration like the insufficient supply of food grains in the PDS shop. The problem of the PDS is huge. Price of essential commodities like pulses, onions, potatoes have increased. People are facing a cash crunch and hence are unable to afford their daily requirements due to a lack of money. People with health issues or

illnesses are unable to get timely treatment. Mask, sanitizer, hand gloves, etc. are in high demand after the outbreak of COVID-19 but not easily available in the local market. In most places local market remains closed following the lockdown. It is almost impossible to travel 10 to 30 KM to the market as there is no vehicle due to lockdown.



A family that was unable to reach the local market for essential provisions is provided with a ration kit

Another major challenge ahead is protecting the interest of the agri-community and the community rearing livestock. Unpredictable weather conditions with rainfall and hailstones has destroyed the crop in the field. The didi kitchen and the dal bhaat yojana need monitoring so that social distancing is strictly observed and the quality of the food is maintained. The nutritional aspect is also a great concern. The implementation and efficacy of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package and the Jan Dhan Yojana need to be reviewed.

Strategy for Ongoing Support

In the coming days TRDSW intervention will continue by enhancing the awareness of the community on the spread of coronavirus, social distancing and services provided by the government. The staff together with the community volunteers will authenticate lists of the needy families in coordination with the district and local administration. TRDSW is now mobilizing resources in order to provide SuPoshan Relief to the vulnerable needy families in Torpa and Rania Block, following the guidelines of the government.



Torpa (W) Gram Panchayat Meetings on Safety Measures & Govt. Regulations regarding COVID-19



Ration kit and soap were provided



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For cooking, gas cylinders provided to the needy through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana



Special provision to children by Rojgar Sevak



Mask and sanitizer provided by NABARD



Masks stitched at the TRDSW centre



Our SHG Women Warriors prepared & distributed meals

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