



## Background

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)<sup>1</sup> outbreak in the beginning of year 2020 has thrown most countries, including ours, into an unprecedented and massive health and humanitarian crisis.

The poorest and the most marginalized is and will be affected badly as this crisis continues alongwith the lockdown and restriction on movements. There is a need for on the ground support in the areas of humanitarian aid and healthcare.

Cohesion works in Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, UP and Maharashtra and based on inputs from the ground, the key challenge for both humanitarian and healthcare services in the current context is last-mile connect and delivery on the ground that is both empathetic and efficient. Numerous relief measures have been announced by the central and state governments and the administrative set-up is working round the clock to respond to the situation, but because of the scale, speed of spread and the serious impact of this crisis, many of the district administrations are likely to benefit from additional support. The work of reaching out to communities, assessing their critical needs and delivering the needed materials and services has often been supported by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the past and these are areas in

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<sup>1</sup> An infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

which they can contribute significantly in this crisis.

Responding to the current scenario Cohesion has adapted itself to the much in need workstyle of using virtual platform and ensuring that learning of the team and their service delivery to the affected communities continues amidst lockdown.

Towards the end of the year 2020 situation started improving and the grassroots level teams started their work on regular basis but following COVID safety protocols.

Cohesion reached out to the most vulnerable directly and indirectly both through mixed approaches. On one side we had communities which were part of our ongoing programmes and we supported them through ongoing work and reallocations in agreement with the donors. On the other hand we communities which were not covered under our programmes but we carried our awareness activities, facilitated government benefits and schemes for them by supporting the application processes.

As the second wave of COVID has struck the whole country, situation at rural level has been appalling. Cohesion team stands in solidarity with all the affected communities and has been trying to ensure maximum support to them.

## Who is affected?

- Villages: Farmers especially women farmers, Daily wagers
- Migrants- Daily wage workers
- Returning Migrants, Migrants enroute, Migrants in Cities
- Urban Poor: Domestic workers, construction labourers, transgenders, hawkers
- Frontline workers in villages

## Response to community needs

- Cohesion's team based in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh primarily began COVID response by gathering information regarding existing

situation and making them aware of the pandemic and how it spreads.

- The lockdown imposed to contain the spread was very challenging for the communities. Cohesion tried to bring awareness by supporting them through various measures which ensured their food security, access to health and social services.
- We have been mobilising resources wherever possible to meet the immediate requirement of food.
- Engaging women groups in activities in support for the relief work.
- Cohesion is active in various networks like RCRC2, WGWLO3 and Makaam which is helping in cross learning and understanding the Government Resolutions to ensure that they can reach the community.

## Response in Uttar Pradesh

Last year we supported the frontline workers of 20 Anganwadis jointly with HCL after discussion with DPO, ICDS<sup>4</sup> Noida. **Safety kits for 1100 Anganwadi workers and 1100 helpers of Noida were provided.** Kit included Gloves, Sanitizers (200 ml) and N95 Masks. A total of 4600 Gloves, 2500 Sanitizers and 1500 Masks were distributed. Total **Budget reallocation of Rs 8,11,210** was also done for meeting the food requirements of communities.

As the COVID situation got worsened again in 2021 we established strong communication with the communities through calls. Our team is in regular touch with respective ICDS and Health workers of ICDS and Health Department respectively at village level and the village heads. We have been contacting more than 800 families through telephone calls for:

- Tracking of ICDS services in current scenario
- COVID awareness in the community
- Mapping of community needs (food, ration, livelihood etc ),

<sup>2</sup> Rapid Rural Community Response

<sup>3</sup> Working Group of Women and Land Ownership

<sup>4</sup> Integrated Child Development Services

- Involvement of AWWs in resolving community concerns.
- AWW role in COVID survey

IEC material has been distributed to all 1108 Anganwadi Centres at District level which includes five COVID safety posters. Hygiene kits which include 60 reusable masks for children, sanitizers, hand wash and a water dispenser has been distributed in 1108 AWWs.

As part of response to second wave, Cohesion, in consultation with district authorities, is providing 100 Oxygen Concentrators to different hospitals and COVID Centers in Gautam Buddha Nagar district. To ensure home based learning of young children activity-based learning material is also being provided to the families of children who attend Anganwadis.

## Response in Gujarat

In Gujarat Cohesion is responding to COVID relief by sharing information and keeping the communities aware of the government's updates and relief packages for the poor and marginalised. It is also an active member of Inter Agency Group, which has members from civil society and international agencies. The Group facilitates not only information sharing but also identifies best practices to be adapted by different stakeholders.

In Gujarat Cohesion is working with 383 schools and we have been building awareness through messages and online teaching where we connect with students and parents. Cohesion is mapping the situation of existing COVID Care Centres and their needs. The mapping will help in channelizing the resources that are being leveraged from CSR, individual donors and reallocations from existing budgets.

### Navsari

Follow up and information sharing with community (especially with Sangathan leaders, Youth leaders, Baal Panchayat leaders, SMC, school teachers, ration distributors etc. ) regarding COVID – 19, GR related to ration, MDM, food supply by Anganwadi, Health facilities in villages, MGNREGA, pension,

Ujjwala etc. through phone and direct intervention at village level in 42 villages till date.

Monitoring on regular basis about ration distribution especially quality and quantity of **ration - 5204+ BPL families, 445+ APL-1 families for ration, 6000+ children for MDM in 32 schools and 1300+ widow women for pension** scheme and implementation of other policies related to MGNREGA and Jandhan account and Ujjwala scheme in 52 villages.

Networking with centre for social justice for facilitating schemes for affected families is being done. We have shared list of PVTG<sup>5</sup> families with the relevant departments and trying to get sufficient ration for them as most of them are landless and dependent on daily wages.

**Online training** of team and community leaders on government rules and regulations in detail is being done on regular basis.

**SMS service** – to provide information regarding government rules and regulations through SMS service we shared contact details of around 300 Sangathan members, SMC members, FRC committee members.

As the situation worsened in the rural areas we have started distribution of ration, sanitizer and masks in 92 villages of Navsari. Health kits are also being distributed consisting of Oximeter, Thermometer, Gloves, Masks and Sanitiser. We are supporting frontline Health Workers like Asha and Anganwadi workers by providing them Safety kits. Cohesion team is working jointly with Navsari Health Department for COVID awareness.

Cohesion has a one year programme supported by Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives through which we are already reaching more than 35000 households in Navsari for benefits of government entitlements and schemes

## Mehsana

In Mehsana we work with 22 SHGs from 3 villages. Ration kits were distributed to 550

members of SHGs women's who do not have ration cards and to those women who are very poor.

Medical checkups were facilitated for families who have returned from other areas due to lockdown.

SHG women also made 4000 masks which were distributed to the McCain staff and Police Department and women got income from the same. All three village SHGS leaders, sub leaders and treasurers are regularly informed about the COVID 19 through WhatsApp group.

Regular updates on government benefits and schemes is given to the members which is helping them access benefits and relief packages.

Cohesion promoted kitchen gardens have been a source of fresh vegetables and food security in many cases in the present scenario of lockdown.

Single women Sangathans are monitored and it is ensured that Rs. 2000 are deposited from government in their account. At the same time Cohesion works with 3000 children, it is ensured that the libraries in the resource centres are functional to engage children as the schools are not operating at present.

We recently distributed grocery, sanitizer and masks to 600 women from the most needy families.

## Surendranagar

We carried out Covid rapid survey two times in Lakhtar block to support survey carried out by the RCRC network. 240 forms were filled up. The survey findings are being used to channelize resources for the vulnerable communities.

## Banaskantha

Last year we distributed masks to 2600 school children in Banaskantha. This year with support from Vibha US, 72 villages of the district are getting support through distribution of 74, Oximeters, 7000 soaps and 7000 masks. Further N95 Masks have been provided to Health workers. Awareness programme

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<sup>5</sup> Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

through message broadcasting on loudspeaker is also being done. 700 households have been supported with ration kits, masks and sanitizers with the support of Reliance Foundation.

Awareness activities are also being carried out in all VIBHA supported villages of Maliya block in Morbi district and Singhvad block of Dohad district. We have also compiled information related to need by the PHCs and CHCs in these districts for Oxygen Concentrators, Oximeters, medicines and safety kits. We are identifying donors to help meet the demand for such supplies.

## Response in Chhattisgarh

Last year Cohesion worked with the Gharelu Kaamgar Mahila Sangh – registered Collectives of Domestic Workers - in Raipur to continuously assess the situation of women who are domestic workers. This helped to channelize relief work and guide relief agencies to use the resources for the most vulnerable. We reached 1007 families of Women Domestic Workers, Men/Women Construction Workers and Transgenders of slum areas of urban Raipur.

We distributed 100 ration kits with the help of CART supported by Azim Premji Foundation.

We also distributed relief kits to 46 Transgenders in Durg as they are also one of the worst affected in present scenario.

Learning from work in Mehsana, the Women members of Gharelu Kamgaar Sangh made 15000 masks for the Raipur Municipal Corporation which provided them short term income also.

## Response in Maharashtra

### Pune

In Pune Cohesion covered 11 villages for COVID relief with support from John Deere India Private Limited and Mashal. We distributed 880 ration kits to the poor households along with kits for basic hygiene.

## Osmanabad

We have been raising awareness regarding COVID amongst the communities in ten villages of Tuljapur block.

Cohesion Foundation Trust with the support of TISS and district administration, is in the process of starting a helpline for families of Covid patients in all the eight blocks of Osmanabad district. Eight persons (four each from TISS and Cohesion) are undergoing training right now and we will start the service soon.

Working in Tuljapur with support from HDFC Bank (CSR), we have also started providing mental health and counselling services and other support to District Administration.

## Measures for team safety

- The teams have been working from their offices and homes as per the situation
- Virtual meetings and reporting systems have been streamlined for effective outreach.
- Regional thematic groups have been formed for cross learning
- Field teams directed to follow government protocols of safety and social distancing while undertaking essential and unavoidable responsibilities in their work.
- Teams were directed to use safety measures such as masks, hand gloves and sanitisers to ensure personal protection.
- Support is being leveraged from donors to include medical insurances for the team working in challenging and disease prone situation.

### Contact us.

Mobile: +91 9825329739

Twitter: @CohesionF

e-mail: cohesionfoundation@gmail.com

Facebook: @CohesionFoundationTrust