



NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic is sweeping across the country and continuing to consume human lives, the civil society is confronting new challenges to rise to the occasion. As a responsible civil society organization, Madhyanchal Forum, we sought to reach out to the marginalized sections of the society through multiple interventions. This newsletter showcases MF Covid response during March-December 2020. I express my sincere gratitude to all those who were part of these interventions, especially the MF board members and the team.



Joseph James
CEO MF

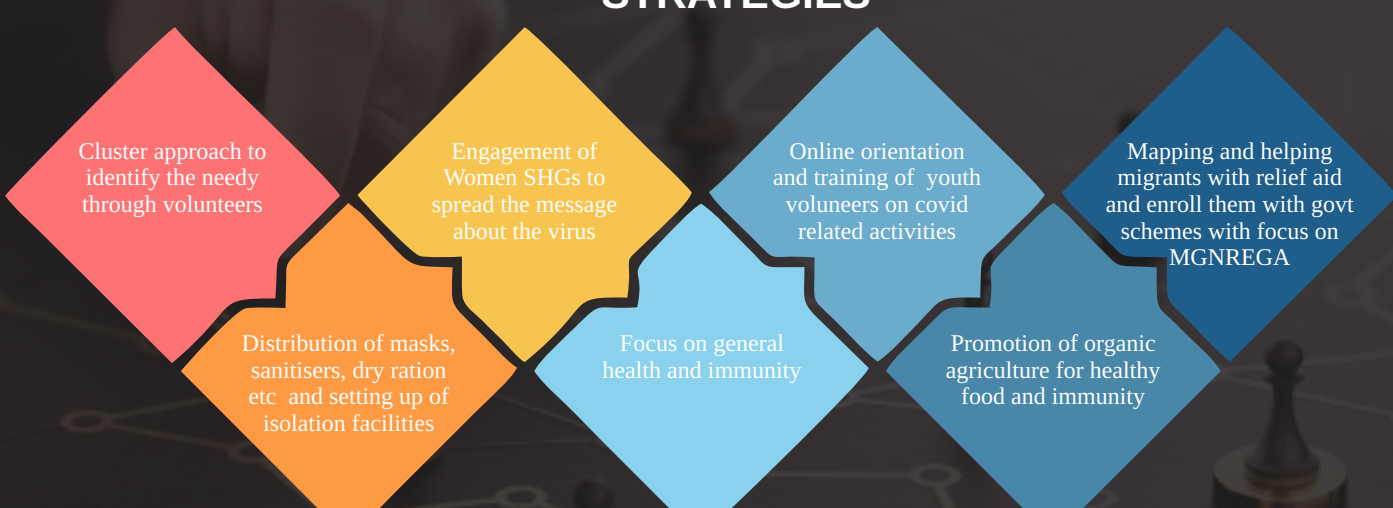
HOW MF HELPED THE MARGINALISED FIGHT COVID-19

Madhyanchal Forum responded effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic during March-December 2020 in the intervention regions of Madhya Pradesh. In all 518 villages of Nine districts in Madhya Pradesh and 33 villages of three districts of Bihar were covered under various relief and awareness activities. A whopping 43807 beneficiaries from 8820 families benefits from multiple interventions which included awareness programmes like hand wash and use of sanitizers, setting up of temporary hospitals for general masses and health camps and isolation facilities for the migrant labourers, distribution of masks and dry ration and raw food items like grain, pulses, and vegetables. As most of the people we reached out to, belonged to the marginalised communities, each with distinct socio-economic background and geographical conditions from the other, different set of strategies were adopted for different communities.

The unusual situation called for interventions for helping these communities who are struggling to enroll with state and central government schemes for poor and the marginalized, such as BPL card, ration cards under PDS, and job cards under MGNREGA. The sudden and unexpected reverse migration of workers to their native places following the outbreak of the pandemic added more pressure to local resources. MF helped them enroll with MGNREGA and other government schemes. All these activities preceded quick assessment of the situation in the project areas, strategies and process to execute the activities. Community leaders, especially youth and women leaders played a pivotal role in MF Covid response.

Further, from time to time Madhyanchal Forum kept changing its trajectory bringing more focus on community resilience, so that the people can deal with such crisis more effectively in future. This has been done keeping in view of the changing socio-economic dynamics in the interventions regions post the pandemic. So, apart from helping the community with immediate relief material, the forum through its network partners sought to capacitate the communities in adopting strategies which are sustainable in the backdrop of the pandemic's long term impact. Various modules evolved from the Covid relief related activities. Women self-help groups and MF volunteers played a major role in rushing aid and conducting awareness programme during Covid and post Covid situations. They formed critical link between the community and multiple agencies involved in the relief and health related activities. As Covid induced poverty and loss of farm incomes came as a double whammy for these communities, MF laid special focus on promotion of the backyard kitchen gardens to reduce their dependence on market and provide nutritious foods, especially vegetables, so that the communities boost their immunity in case of any possibility of reoccurrence of such emergency.

STRATEGIES



MADHYA PRADESH

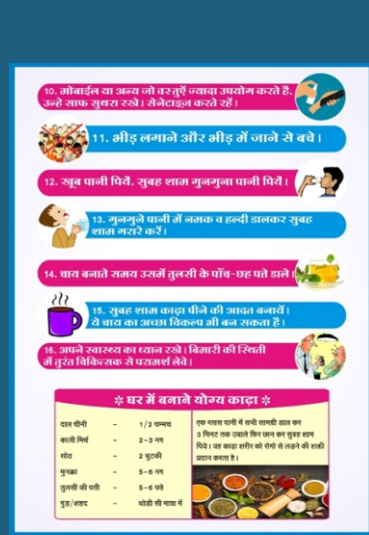


WOMEN SHGs, VOLUNTEERS SPREAD AWARENESS

For the first time since the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Madhyanchal Forum set off the process of formation and strengthening of women self-help groups in the intervention areas to speed up the process of Covid relief work. The process went on side by side with Covid-19 awareness programmes through volunteers. A part of capacity building process, this helped create a front line leadership to reach out to more and more households to not only prevent the spread of the virus but also open new channels for livelihoods and other health issues. This was done with support from community and other stakeholders. Masks and soaps were also distributed during the period. Thousands of people with fair representation of women participated in the awareness programmes.

HELPING MIGRANT LABOURERS AND CONCEPT OF SELF-RELIANT VILLAGE

Reverse migration of laborers to their native places has posed a huge challenge not only to the states but also to the civil society organizations. The first and foremost task was to map these labourers and make a need assessment. Madhyanchal reached out to hundreds of migrant families in intervention villages and provided relief material to them. Apart from linking them with the government schemes such as PM Awas Yojna, PDS and MGNREGA, it was decided that they would be roped in to make the village self-reliant by setting up cottage industries in these villages. The villagers were also oriented on safety measures like hand wash and social distancing. Masks were also distributed on the occasion.



COVID-19: PUBLICATION OF FOLDER TO BOOST IMMUNITY

It has been established that strong immunity is core to fighting Covid-19 pandemic. Keeping this in mind Madhyanchal Forum brought out a four-page folder which contains recipes of herbal ingredients with step by step way to prepare them. All this was demonstrated with pictures. Four thousands folders were distributed in thousands of villages in MP. The language of the published material is very simple, so that common people could comprehend it easily. Apart from this, the campaign "Corona Harao (defeat corona)" which aimed at observing maximum precautions, was able to evoke massive response from the people. Ever since the campaign started people are following basic measures such as regular hand wash, use of masks and social distancing.



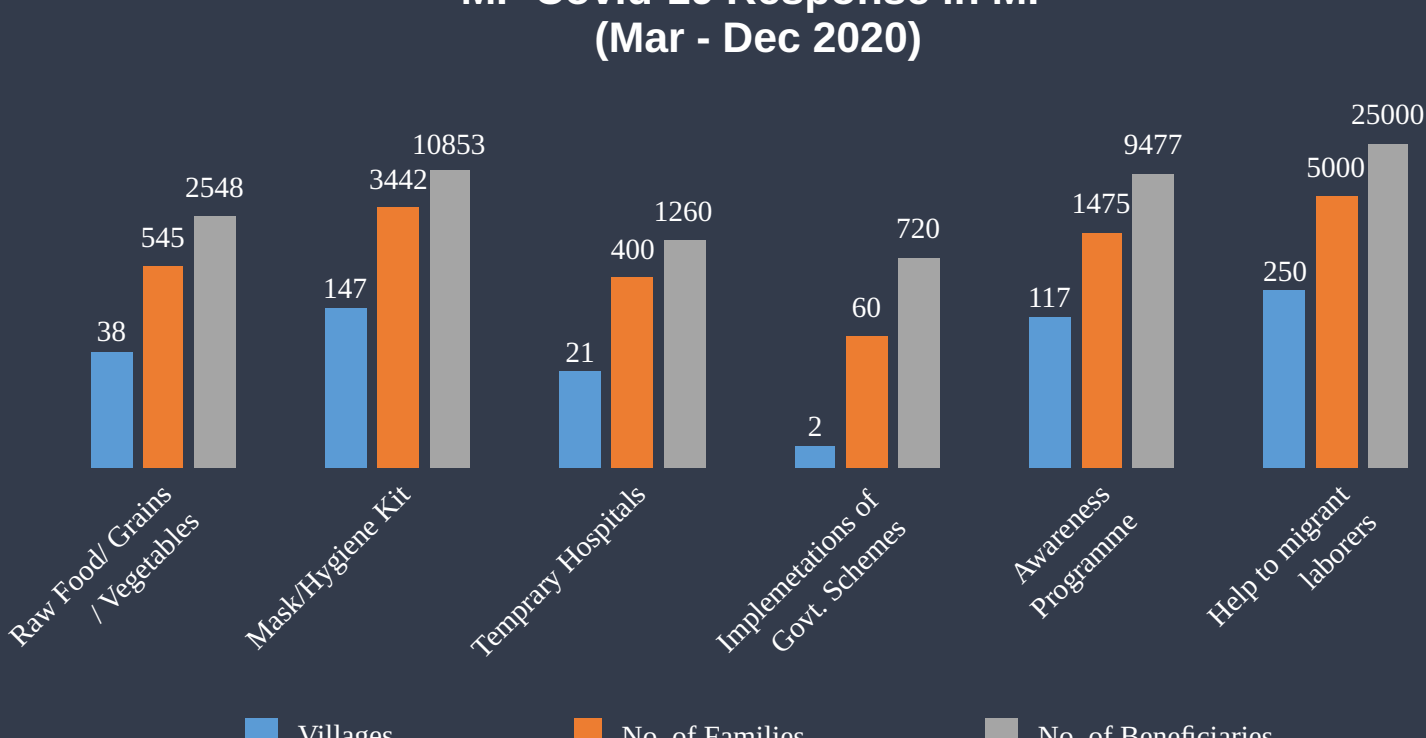
COVID-19 AWARENESS PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TO TACKLE FOOD SECURITY

The Covid-19 pandemic requires continued and concerted efforts to curb its further spread, open new window of livelihoods opportunities and promote healthy and nutritious food. The objective of such interventions was to encourage people to grow their own food to meet their basic nutrition requirement so that they don't have to depend on the market during this long battle against the current pandemic.

The major feature of the programme was the orientation of communities on organic farming and benefits of organic produce on health, soil and the livelihoods and promotion of kitchen gardens. Madhyanchal Forum, its community owned collectives joined hands to orient small and marginal farmers on food security so that they can handle such crisis in future too.

SHGs and small and marginal farmers participated in the orientation programmes together. In all these campaigns they were also told as to how this virus spreaded and what precautions needed to be taken. These interventions ran side by side with Forum's attempts to engage communities in distributing masks, dry ration and hygiene kits in all the intervention districts in MP. Children and women also participated in the awareness programmes aimed at orienting people on safety and immunity.

MF Covid-19 Response in MP (Mar - Dec 2020)



Districts: Dhar, Indore, Khargone, Ratlam, Jhabua, Alirajpur, Vidisha, Bhopal and Mandsour

BIHAR

In Bihar, MF mainly focused on most marginalised communities (Musahar and other) and conducted Covid-19 related awareness and relief activities in 33 villages of three districts- Navada, Nalanda and Shikhpura. Volunteers played a vital link between the community and the government agencies from the time. They took people to nearby testing facilities and infected ones to the hospitals for treatment and kept constant vigil on those recovering in homes. Contacts were established with gram panchayats to deal with the migrant laborers and set up quarantine centers with their help. Communities were oriented on importance of sanitization, masks and social distancing. While the strategies and approaches adopted in these regions are the same as were adopted in MP, attempts were made to reach out to the elderly and the widow headed households. In all 10 such families were supported.



MF engaged communities to conduct awareness programmes and rush relief material to the needy through them. So, this made the entire process community owned. This also involved Community Self Help groups which already existed and the village youth who were trained as volunteers to execute the relief work. Since the target community (Musahar) is landless, overall strategy was drafted to reach out to them keeping in view the pandemic induced hunger, safety measures and the future engagements focused on rights, entitlements or government schemes for them. The upcoming Covid vaccination plan is also being discussed among the community people.

VIDEOS

