

## COVID 19 Action Alert

### Promoting Social Solidarity With Physical Distancing: What You Can Do

#### At The Community level

*Over the past one month, the COVID19 Pandemic has slowly but surely found its way into our everyday lives and existence. It is a time of great uncertainty and insecurity, not just for our own health, but also our social and economic lives. In a country as diverse and unequal as India, the impact of the virus and also measures such as the on-going lockdown which are meant to combat the pandemic will be differential, with the most marginalized also being the most vulnerable. We have been thinking about ways in which we can continue to provide physical, mental and social support to each other, and especially to those in our communities who need this the most, in this unprecedented situation. This note outlines actions that can be taken at the community level, using devices such as a smart phone, given the strict mobility restrictions that we are being subjected to. However, we recognize that each context is different and so also the challenges unique. Therefore, these should not be seen as prescriptive, but rather a starting point for generating ideas and action to support each other.*

#### 1. Creating a local support and coordination group

- Take leadership to contact others in your community who may be interested in developing a community response to allay fears and anxieties and to provide essential social support to your neighbours. This can be done by making phone calls.
- The key messages you can provide to bring the group together are given below
  - a) We need physical distancing but **we also need social solidarity**.
  - b) We need to find ways to help each other and also help those who are vulnerable in our community.
  - c) COVID19 is very infectious disease but it is not a life-threatening disease for all age groups. We need to **prevent the spread of the infection** but also need stay healthy and safe. We can do so by coordinating with each other and with the authorities.
- Create an agreement of responsibilities and communication plan. Create WhatsApp group, regular telecon schedule etc. Assign responsibilities depending upon tasks outlined below.

#### 2. Mapping Vulnerable Population and Families –

- House-listing of the local habitation – village/ward/locality/neighbourhood-wise of the entire habitation.
- Who are the vulnerable people in each household.
- People over 60 years of age, those with chronic diseases – hypertension/diabetes/cancer/terminally ill/ bed ridden etc. persons with disabilities, any vulnerable person living alone or with children etc.

- Pregnant and lactating women should be identified who will need on-going routine antenatal care and are likely to face obstetric emergencies.

### **3. Mapping Infected or Exposed Population**

- Anyone with recent travel history to a city/country with higher level of infection.
- Anyone who may have come back in the last few days from their place of work since the COVID 19 infections were reported ie. From 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Anyone who has high fever, cough and/or difficulty in breathing.

**(Note-** Mapping can be supported by calling up each household and informing them that you are planning to form a coordination committee to ensure everyone has support that they need during the lockdown. Please assure each household that you are going to try and prevent difficulty and harassment because there may be some anxieties around that issue. Please keep in mind that there may be some families who may be reluctant to be enumerated so assure them that this effort is to support them. You can also ask for volunteers to join this Support and Coordination Group)

### **4. Ensuring containment of Exposed persons –**

- Update yourself with the current protocol about present testing protocol and who are to be tested. Inform the families accordingly.
- Inform each of the families of with exposed or infected persons the need to be vigilant about spread of infection and about the detection of COVID19 infected status.
- Allay fears that infection does not mean certain death and a vast majority will recover.
- Limiting movement and contact with others is essential to prevent spread of infection to others. This is particularly important if older/vulnerable persons live in the same household.
- If the residence is small and any individual isolation/containment is not possible please ask the entire household to remain indoors and monitor each member for possible symptoms.
- Assure supply of food, water, medicines and other essential supplies.
- Please review guidelines on screening and testing on the ministry of health and family welfare website which is regularly updated and information is available in Hindi and English: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/index.html>
- In case testing is required, please contact local authorities. Public and private facilities where testing is currently available are listed here: <https://covid.icmr.org.in/index.php/testing-facilities>

### **5. Coordination with Grocers, Medicine Shops and care providers ensuring Supply of Essential Commodities, Medicines and Care**

- List all the suppliers of essential supplies in the neighbourhood including their phone numbers.
- Call them and get informed about their stock situation and timings.
- Convey this information to all residents through Social Media channels and sub-locality coordinators.
- Contact all vulnerable families to enquire about their need of essential commodities.
- Availability of ready cash at the household level for should be considered part of essential commodity.
- Prepare a list of those families who may need support for delivery of supplies. Contact them and ask whether they need support in home delivery of supplies.
- Essential supplies may also be exchanged among members of the community.

#### **6. Coordination with local authorities**

- Connect with local authorities and government functionaries like Councillor, Pradhan, Ward member, ANM, AWW, ASHA etc, and inform them that you have formed a committee and would like to support government efforts to manage the lockdown effectively.
- Inform them about what you have been doing and what support you may require eg. Regular supplies, permit for delivery person, health care especially emergency support etc.
- Ask them how they would want you to help in maintaining the lockdown.
- Ask them to share their plans of maintaining supplies related to mid-day meal and any other nutritional supplementation programme that may be operational in the community.
- Prepare a list of phone numbers of public services including helplines for children and women
- Prepare a plan on how to manage cremations or burials in case of any death in the community in this period.
- Use official helpline numbers for any clarifications or support:
  - i) Helpline Number Toll free: 1075, +91-11-23978046
  - ii) Helpline Email ID: ncov2019@gov.in OR ncov2019@gmail.com

#### **7. Maintain communication channels with all residents and emotional well-being of general population**

- Maintain regular channels of communication with all residents.
- Provide updates on what efforts are being done by the Support and Coordination Group.
- Share information that you may receive from the health or civic authorities.

- The Government of India as well as different State governments are announcing various schemes and packages to provide support in the form of food security, direct transfers, pensions and so on. Keep abreast of these developments in your area and inform those around you.
- For those who are eligible for government support, create a list and help facilitate their access to such support.
- Dispel myth and address local panic.
- Encourage formation of special interest social media groups.

#### 8. **Be vigilant about violence in homes**

- Many women, children and others face domestic violence.
- Provide information about support for women and children and violence to all families and vulnerable persons
- Inform families that domestic violence is unacceptable and a criminal offence

#### 9. **Monitoring effective lockdown**

- Maintain regular communication with families and ask them whether they are facing any problem in maintaining isolation and containment.
- Ensure that they are able to receive all essential services and health care when need it
- There have been reports of harassment, violence and stigmatizing of those who are infected or are seen to be violating the lockdown rules. While it is important that everyone adheres to the lockdown, subjecting citizens to such behaviour is unwarranted and constitutes abuse of power. Further, no one should be refused health care at a time like this. If you see such actions being carried out by health officials, law enforcement or other authorities, or citizens at large, please inform higher authorities and attempt to establish a dialogue to mitigate the situation.

10. **Helpline** - Designate a few telephone numbers of members of the Support and Coordination Group as helpline numbers. Encourage residents to call these number in case of any problems or need for support.

**Wishing us all Safety and Health in these difficult times.**

**Prepared by:**

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