

## ***Pandemic worsening the situation of unorganized sector***

Presently, developed and underdeveloped nations are struggling to combat the newly discovered coronavirus. The critical situation is prevailing all across the world, in all sectors and putting down the debilitating effects in the lives of the rich, middle class and poor community. This infectious coronavirus is rapidly increasing and has been declared as a pandemic disease by the World Health Organization.

The lockdown is imposed in most of the countries. This lockdown has accelerated the stress level and jeopardising the health of millions of the community at large. The demand for depression and increasing unemployment will have a great impediment in the economy. In India, informal sector workers are struggling with the consequences of this pandemic. This sector wherein the day and night workers are in stress of earning their daily living are now at sudden trauma of thinking and questioning their survival. The rate with which the virus is spreading is giving the health sector the moment of disappointment.

The most appreciable gesture of the current time is observed when the community showed genuine empathy in this tough time towards underprivileged communities and so individuals, charitable organizations and religious trusts all are working collectively to provide food and other essentials to a poor community, but the question that has awakened us again is the social security rights of such informal workers. Why they always have to be raised by the privileged groups? Why doesn't it becomes their right to get all the necessary services without begging and starving? It has again become the main drive of IASEW in recent time, to bridge this gap between the government and the marginalised community especially women. We thrive to generate awareness not only for the beneficiaries but for the government first to think vigorously about this sector. We are not criticising the efforts of the government, in fact, in recent time, the Indian government has taken very important decisions favouring the citizen at large. But the implementing channel is somehow diluting the entire process. It becomes a lengthy and tiring channel. We have to make this channel more transparent and valuable that services should reach to its real beneficiaries.

This pandemic is bringing economic depression along with the psychological turmoil and retarding the energy of women and we collectively have to construct the foundation which will help them to come out from this disastrous situation in an optimistic way.

IASEW team and facilitators have left no stone unturned for providing handholding support to the community. The extension centre of IASEW became the destination for the community to seek the solutions of their problems and issues. When leelaben, our facilitator saw that kaushalya ben, a senior citizen is in a distressing situation and has no one who can look after her, so leaben admitted her in the night care centre where she is getting all essentials of life and the staff is taking care of kaushlya ben with utmost care and affection. Recently, the government has announced that R500 will be deposited to the citizen who has opened a bank account under "Jan Dhan Yojana", a scheme where the objective was to connect citizen with the bank transaction. Our facilitator sisters informed community nearby about the scheme. Many religious and charitable trusts are visiting the area to provide food and our sisters are helping them in

identifying the community who are in serious need of help. They are linking people with the available support and also generating awareness on the precautionary measurements need to be taken. The WhatsApp group is used to communicate with our members and to resolve their quest. Also, telephonic conversations are playing an important role to relieve them by providing authentic information such information heals them with positive energy.



Our facilitator leelaben distributing grocery kit.

This picture is the perfect example of humanity, as leelaben herself comes from the same community, she also belongs to the informal sector but today she is playing the true role of a leader where she is not the only concern for others but also trying everything for generating provision for other women workers. We are proud of our leaders like leelaben. While leelaben is distributing the food, our sisters from major gaam area is cooking food for others and standing like a pillar in the time of crisis.



### ***Plight of our women workers living in this disastrous situation***

Savitaben is a 46 years old woman. She lives in a one-room house with other 5 members of her family which include her four children and her husband. She works as a domestic help. Jignaben from research unit interviewed her over the phone to



know more about her present situation and the challenges that they are facing. Savitaben said that her husband is a construction worker and he is a very lazy man, he only works whenever he feels like working. Savitaben and her daughters bear the financial expenses of all members. Her elder daughter accompanies her to her work of domestic help while her younger daughter also does the same work but in a different area. Savitaben had recently renovated her house which was given to them by her mother in law. She has taken a loan for renovation and major part of her salary is utilised in paying off the loan. Her elder son is working as an office boy in a Pvt company and half of his salary is used in paying off the interest of his new bike. She said it was on Sunday, she got the news from the television that the curfew has been imposed by the government, due to corona and since then we all six are at home. It has become very hard for six of us to live in one room especially at the same time. Even if I have to clean my room it becomes a very tedious task because where should I tell them to go. My youngest son is very aggressive. Yesterday only he fought with his father and elder brother. They got into a huge fight and even our neighbours came to know about it. For me, it becomes very frustrating to face the anger of father and son. When we all are at work, no one has time for such nuisance. We got to know from the television that the government will be distributing essentials but nothing has been provided yet, but for us, that help is of no use as our ration card only includes my husband name and my brother-in-law family takes the essentials from the one card. Everything is available in the market but the rates are skyrocketing. All vegetables are available at Rs25 to 30 for 250 grams only. We are buying everything in very less quantity. The first few days have passed as we have utilised our already stored grains and pulses but the coming week will be very crucial. Ours is the area with the capacity of 10,000 people and they all are daily wagers, auto drivers, construction workers, plumbers and others. Most of them have shifted to the city from their village for employment. I wish that this corona virus should go away as the money and food is exhausted, it has all been spent or eaten



I am kokilaben and I live in vejalpur area. I work as a cook in a satellite area in three different households. My daughter got married in February, and so I took a month-long leave as I have to do all preparation. Then I met with a small accident and I fractured my hand, thus my leave got extended. I had just started my work in the second week of March and then we got to know about the lockdown order from the government. I did not received my February month salary because of the leave that I took and since then, I have not earned anything. Although Prime Minister has insisted to pay the salary of workers but I don't know whether I will get it or not because I have not received any confirmation. I tried to go out for the work but the management of residential society did not allow me to enter the premises and I totally agree with it as it is the need of the time. Presently, the situation is not stable at my place as we are struggling to meet our ends. My husband cannot work because he is not keeping good health and he has been operated thrice and we all prefer him to stay at home. He helps me in my household chores. I am eagerly waiting to go back to work



I am Shamshad ben. My husband and I work together to run our small stall on the street in raikhad area. Due to this coronavirus outbreak, we are following the lockdown instructions and have shut our stall. We received grocery kit in donation, but it also got finished. I am a diabetic patient, I skipped my medicines for four days but then I borrowed medicines from the medical shop. The shopkeeper knew us, as we run our stall just opposite to his shop and so he gave us on credit. My son is an auto-rickshaw driver, we have to pay rent of Rs200/per day for the auto. After lockdown, we cannot tolerate the rent as there is no income. I also have a fear that even after this lockdown get released, our business will take time to recover the lost momentum as people will be reluctant of eating out and afraid of standing on the streets. I pray my God that this crisis should go away now.



I am Hasumatiben, from Unali village of Sanand Taluka. Because of the coronavirus crisis, there is no work and no livelihood options left for us. Though government is lending support it does not reach to us. My mother-in-law received Rs 500 to her senior citizen account. We have been struggling to link our aadhar card with the ration card, since years. We have visited multiple times but we are unable to link the same. Due to which we are not getting any kind of support. Many charitable organizations comes to our village to give free food but they only give to those who live in huts. They don't give us any utilities because we have cemented roof. Having well-constructed roof does not mean that we have everything stored and we are rich. We are also a daily wagers and we also struggle to fulfil our own needs.



Madhuben Patni is a vegetable vendor, she said we wander here and there restlessly as all big market are closed. We travel long distance to buy vegetables. I have a family of six members, my husband is a daily wager and his income at present is zero because of this lockdown in the city. I stay in the civil area and travel around 10 km to sell my vegetables. The travel cost is 200 Rs. We are working hard to meet our ends and this is our hard earned money. We take a proper shower before leaving from home to sell vegetables. The condition is very worse, I hope we don't have to beg to survive. We tell our customers to maintain distance and wear a mask. The entire globe is facing this problem and poor people like us are suffering a lot.

- ✓ Amravadi is an area located in the eastern part of the city. This is an area where 50% of the community are migrant workers. They have migrated from other parts of the country to the city in search of employment. Most of them are construction workers, auto drivers, vendors and waste pickers. The state government is providing free food to those who possess Ration Card, Ration Card is an official document through which the households are eligible to get subsidised food grains under the public distribution system. These workers generally don't have Ration card as they are migrated from their native place. Thus, the condition of such workers is getting worse. Vakhathben Palghi, is a construction worker, she also resides in Amravadi area, and she said that she is working as a labourer at the construction site. Initially, she used to get the work for 10 to 12 days in a month but recently she got a contract of working at a bigger site in sarangpur area. Thus, she was happy but all her hopes were shattered because of the corona virus crisis. Unfortunately, the construction site is closed now and so there is no work and no earnings. Their income collectively is 1100 Rupees a day, but now there is no income and they are helpless.
- ✓ I am Parulben from Nidhradh village. I am 23 years old. We have to walk daily around 3 to 4 kms to buy milk and vegetables. We don't have any vehicle to commute and after walking long distance we have to stand in a long queue to buy our essentials. I used to work as domestic help, we do have ration card(document through which the subsidised food grains is provided by the government) but no benefits are received from the same.
- ✓ Lataben, a vegetable vendor, says, "We are facing humiliation, policemen are very strict and sometimes they harassed us. Vegetable market like Jamalpur and Kalupur are closed and so we have to travel a long distance to villages to purchase vegetables, we are doing extra efforts, we have to reach the market by 1.00 AM in the wee hours otherwise all vegetables get sold out because of huge demand. We stand outside of the residential societies and sell vegetables following all precautions. But this should end now.
- ✓ Meenaben Makwana, a garment worker working from home. We are a family of five members. My husband is a daily wager. We both collectively earn 10,000 to 12,000 rupees a month. We have borrowed money on interest to meet our ends as children are also at home. Children are receiving food from the child care centre run by SEWA. We have APL(Above poverty line) card and we have not received any kind of help but the authorities have promised that we will also get food grains in future, we are waiting for that day.
- ✓ I am Geetaben Parmar, a construction worker. I am a widow and lives with my son. My job did not guarantee me a thirty days of payment but I somehow managed to earn money. My son is an auto driver, he is also sitting at home because of lockdown. I have APL(Above poverty line card) and so I am not getting any subsidised grains from the government.

- ✓ I am Champaben from Bherampura area. I am a garment worker. I used to earn 150 Rs a day. At present, we are jobless and we have been sitting idle at home for the past 20 days. We are daily wagers and cannot afford to store food. Coronavirus took away our job. We are suffering a lot. Rich people have enough stored grains but we don't have the same. We live in a rented house.

*Time is crucial and the condition of workers is awful, but we are hopeful with the power of organized strength. We will overcome this time with the essence of solidarity, hard work, truth and equality.*

THANK YOU

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