

# WOTR responds to COVID-19

*Building capacities and providing relief across rural India*

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**April 23, 2020**

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## **CONTEXT**

India's first case of COVID-19 was reported on January 30, 2020 in Kerala. As of April 21, 2020 India has over 17,000 confirmed cases with over 400 deaths. The COVID-19 has thrown up unprecedented challenges for all of us, at a personal, collective and national level. Both urban and rural areas are severely affected. Some of the challenges for rural areas are disruption of food supply chains, the closure of local vegetable markets, the stoppage of non-farm livelihood activities and food security of villagers is affected. The most vulnerable sections of society like migrant workers, children, women, the elderly and the very poor are the worst affected. Our field staff's mobility has also been severely impacted. However, despite all the challenges, WOTR is doing all that it can, within the constraints imposed by the lockdown, to support the rural communities in our project areas. A description of our strategy is given below.

## **WOTR's STRATEGY:**

At present, WOTR is working across 7 states: Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Telangana. It is our ground-level staff, Wasundhara Sevaks and Sevikas, who are implementing these efforts and have risen to the occasion. At present, there are four main challenges faced by rural communities. These are: firstly, the lack of reliable and correct information, secondly, food security and food supply, thirdly, supply of and access to protective masks, fourthly, effective coordination between government authorities and NGOs. WOTR's efforts are therefore aimed at tackling the above challenges, with the support of our donors.

WOTR's geographical spread of work is given below. The figures of households in the table below refer to the total households in those villages.

States	Districts	Blocks	Total Villages	Total households (HHs)	Total marginalized HHs	No of pregnant women	No of returnee migrants
7	22	44	619	1,36,713	27,042	4,442	23,465

## **Highlights of WOTR's work**

### **COMMUNICATION & AWARENESS CREATION**

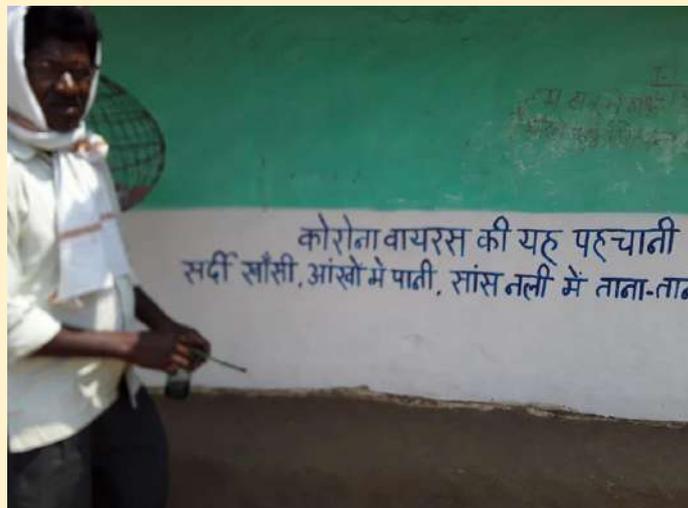
The first step in any effort to tackle the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is to provide timely and correct information and dispel myths and miscommunication. At WOTR, we have provided this information in a wide variety of ways: from our Wasundhara Sevikas conducting awareness campaigns on social distancing and correct hand washing techniques, to writing messages on walls, to producing communication outputs in the local language for our field staff and the communities. In Madhya Pradesh alone, over 3,000 people have been reached through our inputs. Across India, we have reached number of people.

In terms of the extent of our outreach, we have conducted 1,668 awareness and communication sessions, reaching 1,20,413 people across the 7 states we work in.

Photos of our efforts given below:



*An awareness session on hand washing and social distancing being conducted in Rayagada district, Odisha.*



*Painting of messages on walls in Seoni district, Madhya Pradesh bring out the common symptoms of COVID-19: cold and cough, watery eyes, breathing difficulties.*

## **MASKS DISTRIBUTION AND PREPARATION**

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One of the key components of the fight against the COVID19 pandemic is the distribution of masks to the affected communities. This mask distribution is happening across all our states, and our Self-Help Groups as well as the local community are involved in the sewing and production of these masks as well. Our efforts have impacted people.

Till date, across the different states, we have prepared 61,390 masks, and distributed them to 60,420 people, as also trained 233 tailors in mask making.



*Examples of masks produced in Rayagada district, Odisha.*



*A free mask distribution camp in Mahbubnagar district, Telangana.*

## **FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

A major challenge in the current times is the lockdown's impact on food security and nutrition. The most vulnerable sections of the rural communities, in particular, struggle to get even essential food items like milk, fruits, salt and spices. WOTR and the WOTR group is currently working to ensure that the food security in our project areas is maintained to the extent we can. Our efforts include: first, distributing food packets through our Mahila Pravartaks or women Self-Help Groups (SHGs), second, distributing meals to migrant workers stranded without any recourse to food, third, kitchen gardens which supply vegetables to the needy families and fourth, our 'dal-bhat kendras'. In particular, we have focused on kitchen gardens, as they provide nutrition at the household level, thus making people more capable of fighting the disease. In terms of our outreach, we currently have 9,283 kitchen gardens which current benefit 21,788 people. We have distributed grocery kits to 979 households, i.e. approximately over 3,000 people and sanitisation kits to 9,156 households, covering over 40,000 people.



*Food packets being distributed in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra.*



*A kitchen garden in Osmanabad district, Maharashtra which is enabling farmers to provide vegetables to the needy sections.*



*Distribution of meals in Murhu, Jharkhand to the vulnerable sections through the Mukhyamantri Didi Kitchen.*

## **COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT**

We are delighted and humbled to inform that a tweet from Kasturi Samal, from Watershed Organisation Trust's Gunupur office, Rayagada district, Odisha had a major impact in Targising village, a remote tribal-dominated village in Rayagada district. For the last 3 months, the village had not got its rations under the PDS system, even prior to the lockdown being imposed. Kasturi tweeted the same on Monday, April 6, tagging the Odisha's Right to Food campaign, and the Rayagada Collector. Within a day, the villagers were given their rations and Rs. 1,000 per household. Besides this outstanding example, across our project areas, WOTR are closely collaborating with the government in other ways. We are supporting in the distribution of Public Distribution System (PDS) grains, identification of those who have not got ration cards, assisting anganwadi workers in distributing medicines and immunisation and helping quarantine returning migrant workers.



*Local residents of Targisingh village accepting the Rs. 1,000 contribution from the gram sarpanch, Tolana Gram Panchayat.*