COVID-19
Rapid Response

Based on data gathered till June 30

As the whole world stares at an uncertain future, read how WOTR reached out to 124,238 households, in 657 villages of 26 districts in seven states, in just three months.
As per latest data, at least 24,000 lives have been lost to the COVID-19 pandemic in India, with over 900,000 cases and counting. Globally, there are over 13 million cases and 573,000-odd deaths.

WOTR is building a safety net in seven states, so that the farmers’ lifelines remain insulated in the crucial kharif months. The fragile socioeconomic fabric of rural India should be salvaged before it leads to a collapse of disastrous proportions.

As the monsoon advances, every farmer is anxious. He/she needs to ensure the kharif cycle isn’t broken — making sure that the fields are sown and planned activities go ahead. WOTR’s regional resource centres are working 24/7 along with community-based organisations, gram panchayats, self-help groups and local civic bodies, providing support.

Watershed Organisation Trust has been at the forefront, helping vulnerable communities in rural India cope with the aftermath of COVID-19.
In Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, WOTR staff is working hard to help the rural communities pull through the fallout of the pandemic. With the inflow of migrants to their native villages, the future, however uncertain with mounting challenges, with the help of our friends and donor partners, we are filling in the gaps wherever required, so that rural communities that constitute the lifeline of this nation, weather this catastrophe of unprecedented scale through and through.

WOTR is supporting communities in its project areas to adapt to the post-COVID-19 scenario. We have reached out to **124,238** households in **657** villages of **26** districts in seven states as per data available on June 30.
Recent advances in communication technology are no doubt pathbreaking. However, if used with malicious intent, it can harm vulnerable communities, especially in the time of a deadly disease we know little about. Increasingly, rumours and quackery gain popularity on online communication platforms that can adversely affect the social fabric of vulnerable communities.

WOTR’s awareness drives are aimed at making the rural populace understand the dangers posed by such unverified information circulated online regarding COVID-19. It is of utmost importance that through these sessions, the rural folk are provided a better sense of community, resilience and confidence to stay sharp and focused in these tumultuous times.

2,565 awareness sessions, organised by WOTR, impacted 157,827 individuals, according to data gathered until June 30.

28 training sessions were attended by 1,344 participants of which 681 were women. 216 gram panchayat members, 364 Village Development/Health Committee members, 402 SHG members, 110 community members, 192 Wasundhara Sevikas/Sevaks and 28 government officers attended the training sessions.
By now, millions of migrant families from the cities have arrived in their native villages. Lack of data or not, at the moment, there is no significant rise in the coronavirus cases in rural India. However, it would only be wise to brace for a peak as the majority of those returned to the villages were not screened for infections and probably have not spent time in quarantine after their arrival. Moreover, there is a larger responsibility for the administration, civil society organizations and NGOs to provide adequate support for the returned individuals in terms of livelihood — providing employment opportunities and such. WOTR is creating job opportunities in villages where our projects are underway. We hope, in the near future, we can restore rural life back to normal in our project areas, as it was pre-COVID-19.

WOTR in its capacity, and through MNREGA, generated 338,938 labour days for 20,008 labourers in the last three months. 12,160 families have benefitted from labour since April 1. WOTR-MNREGA spent Rs 7.64 cr, post April 1, in wages.
Kinteda is a small tribal hamlet in the Kulusing gram panchayat of Gunupur block in Rayagada district, Odisha. The last seven kilometres to reach the village is a ghat road meandering to a hilltop which is inaccessible during the monsoon. The village is at a height of 396 m above sea level. There are 56 vulnerable tribal households here. The average agricultural land holding of each household is just 0.4 hectare. The main source of income is labour.

Due to COVID-19, the villagers were deprived of labour for two months. During Unlock 1.0, they were unable to find work.
WOTR surveyed the site for potential watershed development and drafted a net plan for two patches where the surface water runoff velocity was high. Further on, it was decided to construct nine Continuous Contour Trenches (CCT) along the hillock. During flash floods, eroding soil from the hill gets deposited in the agricultural land, resulting in crop loss. Stone bunds and Loose Boulder Structures (LBS) in the gullies were constructed involving Kinteda villagers, as outlets for the runoff water without affecting the soil. This will conserve 1,345 cubic metre runoff water and obstruct flash floods and erosion of topsoil from the ridge area to the valley where there are paddy fields. The runoff will be caught by the CCT. The paddy fields downstream will have sufficient irrigation through percolation. This is a long term benefit subject to maintenance of the CCT. The work was completed on June 6.

WOTR provided employment to 56 villagers, with Rs 74,052 distributed among 56 vulnerable households in daily wages.
From June 30, 18,264 returning migrants have arrived in WOTR's project villages of which 3,964 are in quarantine. We have provided support for 962 migrant returnees as of June 30.

At the moment, the vast majority of the migrants in our cities have arrived in their native villages. So far, reports do not suggest there is a marked rise in coronavirus cases in rural India. Given the poor health infrastructure in these parts, there may, in fact, be a rise in cases going forward. Besides, providing livelihood means to the migrant returnees - assimilating them to work related to kharif agricultural activities, or to work in our own project areas - has been a top priority for WOTR.
WOTR has been working to make communities resilient to the climate crisis in its project areas. Ecosystems-based adaptation is a key component of our work with projects already underway. We have been helping farmers adopt sustainable practices, so that, in time, they become resilient to extreme weather events triggered by the climate crisis — a regular occurrence in recent times.

Here is a list of our pre-kharif activities:
- System of Crop Intensification (SCI) in 2,748 acres of 4,312 farmers
- System of Rice Intensification (SRI) for paddy in 193 acres of 341 farmers
- 9,918 farmers have adopted organic formulations.
- 1,689 farmers benefitted from composting.
- 1,354 farmers adopted green manuring.
- 2,649 farmers received seeds.
- 1,109 acres under micro irrigation.

As per data gathered up to June 30, we have helped 5775 farmers plant 42,712 trees and issued advisories to 13,457 farmers. 4,469 farmers are registered in the FarmPrecise app — our mobile application dedicated to farmers across rural India.
WOTR provided Zenplex capsules, Walcium D3 500 (Calcium 500), Ferrous Sulfate and Ivermectin 12 mg — exclusively for those placed in quarantine in Maharashtra. The medicines were prescribed with proper guidance and in consultation with medical practitioners.

Up to June 30, WOTR distributed medicines to 16,000 individuals across the state of Maharashtra.
Gradually, the broken supply chains across the country are being brought back to normal wherever possible sans in the hotspots and containment zones. In rural India, the lives of small traders, smallholder farmers, migrant returnees, daily wagers, their families – children, women and the elderly, depend on the revival of economic activity, for which the supply chains are crucial. In this context, help in interim relief is a primary necessity.

WOTR is distributing grocery kits, sanitary kits and protective face masks in project villages. 341 tailors made 86,896 face masks. 97,243 individuals received face masks. Till date, WOTR has distributed 8,613 grocery kits, 41,175 sanitary kits and 86,896 face masks across its seven project states apart from facilitating PDS to 6,513 households.
Multilayer farms and kitchen gardens are two major initiatives of WOTR. This is part of our programme to build resilience among rural communities to the unfolding climate crisis. Though both the activities kickstarted much before the onset of the pandemic, now, multilayer farms and kitchen gardens are proving to be a blessing in disguise in the time of penury.

As of June 30, 2020, 24,671 households have benefitted from 14,244 kitchen gardens and 562 multilayer farms. 12,884 quintals of agricultural produce was sold, 1,913 families received Rs 2.28 cr from the sale facilitated by WOTR.
Wasundhara Sevaks/Sevikas, Panlot Sevaks, Jal Sevaks and Mahila Pravartaks, who are our village-level staff, along with Village Development Committees and Self Help Groups (SHGs) are together helping communities to adapt to the post-COVID-19 situation. For many, it is as though life as they knew it has ended. They have to scrape together what they have and start anew. Our ground staff are providing whatever help the communities require to tide over the massive losses suffered by the villagers. They are provided with lifesaving hygiene essentials, critical awareness campaigns, protective face masks and sanitisation kits, besides essential supplies.

By June 30, 2020, WOTR mobilised 3,265 active personnel on the ground of which 2,003 were women.
WOTR's initiatives often appear in the regional media. 30 news articles have appeared in local newspapers and 11 news stories in local television networks as of June 30.
WOTR is grateful for the generous support of our donors, friends and colleagues who have made possible all of the above interventions. We would like to thank Becker-Cordes Stiftung, Bread for the World, EATON India Foundation, Education for Employability Foundation (E2F) through Rapid Community Response to COVID-19 Group (RCRC), Hindustan Unilever Foundation, IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative, IndusInd Bank Ltd, AXIS Bank Foundation, Khandke Wind Energy Pvt. Ltd, Rotary Club of Pune, Supraja Foundation, Tata Steel Foundation and American Friends of WOTR, and WOTRians who have spontaneously contributed a part of their salaries.