

## Pandemic Effect in Jagannath Prasad Block, Odisha

Mr. Purnajyoti Khanra\*

### Introduction

In less than two months, the Wuhan originated coronavirus has turned from epidemic to pandemic, threatening and scaring the human movement, restricting them to their houses. Nations across the world announced lockdowns since it was the only available solution to contain the communal spread. Surprisingly, the number of confirmed cases are high in the developed nations. Still more unexpectedly, the so-called developed nations which ranked top in their health and medical facilities recorded the maximum number of deaths due to covid-19. India reported the first case during the period when the number of deaths in Italy and Spain are creating panic across the nations. The result, India became the first country to announce a nation-wide 21-day lockdown. So far (when the report is being drafted), there are 2113 cases in India; Maharashtra and Kerala being the top infected states.

### Jagannath Prasad block

Odisha has four confirmed cases so far, one of the lowest among the states, and also the rate of spread is relatively very low. Factors contributing to it could be state government's quick response, effective administration, socio-economic and demographic factors. Till date, there are no confirmed cases in Ganjam district. Nevertheless, the administration is strictly implementing the lockdown.

Jagannath Prasad block is one of most tribal populous blocks in Ganjam district. The block is densely covered with forests, wherein most of the panchayats and villages are located in the remote forests.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Odisha government has announced lockdown in Ganjam district along with four other districts. Shops, markets, transportations and various businesses disrupted amidst lockdown.

Police department is ensuring no vehicle on roads unless unavoidable or emergencies. Daily wage labourers without any work, locked down in their houses, and running their lives with their minimal savings. From last few days, farmers commenced working in field maintain social distancing in the farm fields. All kinds of social gatherings have been put off in the villages and villagers are made to remain in their houses as much as possible.

### Local Governance

Village administrations are taking efforts by blocking entry into their villages, not allowing any outsider. At block level and district level, local administration has taken various preventive and awareness programmes among their villages. Amidst lockdown, village level administrations in the block conducted meetings in their respective Anganwadi centres (with less number of gathering and maintaining social distancing and wearing personal protective equipment (PPEs)) discussing the virus containment during the lockdown. All the village panchayats have been cooking and providing food to all the vulnerable sections in the panchayat, who are not in a position to afford food. The CDPO, BDO, Tahsildar, Anganwadi, ASHA workers, Sarpanch and Rojgar Sevak of all the respective blocks are connecting themselves in a single WhatsApp group, wherein they are sharing the daily updates, discussing the necessary actions to be taken. All these awareness

programmes and preventive measures and good local governance resulted in zero confirmed cases in the region.

### **Fear of Migrants**

Due to return of migrant workers, concerns have been raised among all the local governance across all the villages and blocks. 260 migrants have returned to their native villages; returned from Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka and Delhi. A few of the migrants have been tested before returning to their villages. The Anganwadi workers are collecting the information regarding the migrants who weren't tested and reporting it to BDO for necessary actions. Twice in a day, Anganwadi workers and ASHA workers are checking all the family members of the migrants for symptoms related to the virus. Person exhibiting symptoms were immediately admitted to the testing facilities.

### **Conclusion**

Gram Vikas, the philanthropic organisation, has been working in the region from the last 40 years. They have been in touch with village supervisors over phone and facilitating the police and block administration with the migrants' information and their health status. The Tahsildar regularized his visits for understanding the situation and preventing further damages. The prices of commodities increased due to lockdown. The village level supervisors predicting it would be hard for the local labourers to find jobs for many days after the post-lockdown. Post-pandemic, government must take necessary steps in enhancing the village economy, to support farmers and daily wage labourers.

### **Reference**

- Village supervisors of Gram Vikas, Rudhapadar Project Location