

Draft

Best Practice

**Containment of Migrant Labour as Preventive Measures during Pandemic:
A Case of Yamunanagar District, Haryana**

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Introduction:

Physical and mental immune system of people plays a critical role during any adverse situation in human life, particularly in the context of fight against any pandemic. With the spread of COVID-19 disease in almost all countries of the world, World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared this disease as pandemic. The WHO has also issued technical guidelines, travel advisory, health related advice to public for COVID-19, which are updated from time to time during pandemic period for member countries. The technical guidelines include critical preparedness, readiness and response actions for COVID-19; Country-level coordination, planning, and monitoring; Infection prevention and control / WASH; Early Investigation Protocols, Points of entry and mass gatherings; Humanitarian operations, camps and other fragile settings, etc.[1].

The Ministry of Health and Family welfare, Government of India issues guidelines to be adopted by the different State Governments based on the guidelines issued by W.H.O during this period. Government of India issued the guideline of social distancing of one meter (3 feet) to prevent the human to human transmission of virus. In order to adhere to the guidelines of social distancing, lockdowns have been imposed in various countries of the world. The lockdown was announced in India from 25th March 2020 to April 14th 2020 which was extended to May 3rd and further to another fortnight up to 17th May 2020 to prevent human to human transmission of virus.

The lockdown, although an effective tool to achieve the objective of social distancing have created hardship for the people, particularly people from the lower strata of society, whose livelihood depends on daily wages. The lockdown is adversely impacting the migrant labour in the urban area. This has become more severe in case of labour engaged in construction and other unorganised sector with no income, food, place to live and fear psychosis in a place away from the security of their native place. The lack of correct information about contagious nature of pandemic and how to ward it off has further aggravated the problems of the migrant labour.

The survival has become a challenge for migrant poor labour in the urban area without any work. They need a helping hand, food, nutrition and shelter, security against contagion, regular supply of daily necessities, medical care, hygienic shelter with enough space for distancing and counselling. In the absence of basic needs for survival of human being, they wanted to go back to their native places (homes). Attempts have been made by the migrants to go back home without any transport facility. The movement of the people from one place to another has posed a challenge to prevention of pandemic spread. The unprotected movement with complete disregard to social distancing can prove to be hazardous.

In order to halt the reverse migration, especially for the migrant labour, who lost their jobs and have left their place of residence, they were stopped in midway from going to their homes. Similar situation has been faced in the state of Haryana where the migrant labour from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh were going to their homes. The Government of Haryana with the help of district administration has setup relief camps to accommodate stranded migrant labour.

This case study is focused on an initiative by district administration of Yamunanagar, Haryana. The migrant labour from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh including children, lactating mothers, pregnant ladies, male members who were moving empty stomach day and night to reach their home are being provided shelter in Yamunanagar district.

The stress level among the migrant labour was very high, which can lead to enhancement in the degree of infection. The challenge of service provider stakeholders at shelter homes was to improve the physical and mental immunity of the migrants at the relief camps by providing nutritious food keeping in view of their daily calories requirements and make them feel healthy and homely in shelter home till the period of lockdown.

The provision of food and shelter to the large number of migrants is aimed at restricting movement to arrest possible community spread in rural area as well as among the travelling migrants. This pro-active initiative by the district administration involved large state machinery and enormous logistic management.

Implementation of the practice:

Administration has gone beyond the call of duty to rope in civil society and public spirited citizens to help hordes of people who could have been a potential source of spread of disease to the tertiary level.

The administration made arrangements to provide inmates at the shelter homes three meals per day with sufficient variety, milk was provided to children and lactating mothers. Training by demonstration is being given on hand washing methods, cleanliness in community kitchens, adequate and clean water for the physical immunity against the virus besides Yoga and physical exercise sessions by counsellors for mental immunity against the virus. Routine medical check up and hospital facilities to the needy people are being given. TVs have been installed in the shelter homes for watching news and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharat. The shelter homes are setup in Nirankari Bhawan and Radha Swami Satsang Bhawan. The residents of these shelter homes are busy in maintenance of parks of these bhawans during the day time.

The key implementers were the nodal officers of various departments, WCD team and NGOs with minimum resource burden on the state.

Results of the practice: Outputs and outcomes

More than 2000 migrant labourer are maintaining good health in the shelter homes. Their health assessment was carried out by senior officers to check and verify the well-being of

workers. No labourer living in relief camp has been found to be Corona positive till 16th April 2020.

In order to get firsthand response, an effort was made to connect telephonically with threepersons staying in relief camp to know about the facilities in the relief camps. They are satisfied with the arrangement made by the authority. The efforts regarding food, hygiene, medical check-up, entertainment made by the authority are commendable. The efforts of the administration are supplemented with the photographs.



The only demand by the labourers is that they may be allowed to go to their villages because their families are living in hardship.

Lesson Result:

A trust was built between administration and migrant labourers through communication, commitment and positive attitude of all the stakeholders, i.e. migrant labourers, district administration, nodal officers, WCD functionaries and NGOs, which has resulted in minimal complains by the labourers.

Conclusion:

Well defined objectives and well-structured planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment are the keys of successful initiatives. Restricting of movement of migrated labour by fulfilling basic needs of food, hygiene shelter and medicine along with yoga and entertainment facility has positive impact on the efforts to check the spread of COVID-19 disease. The definition of practice to be best varies based on domain, culture, etc. The best practice approach is supported by evidence based on facts and effectiveness [2]. The services or activit(y)ies can be considered as best practice when it meets the criteria of defining “best”, i.e. effectiveness, efficient, sustainable, collaborative and rationale. This practice can be considered as best practice.

References:

[1] <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

[2] <https://www.astdd.org/best-practices-definitions-and-criteria/#def>