



VOICES FROM SLUM-CLUSTERS OF INDIA



CASE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted all the spheres of life globally; either it is business, livelihood, personal-well-being, or education. None of the sectors are spared from its humongous impacts. The precautionary measures like social distancing, wearing masks, maintaining proper sanitation and hygiene practices remains the only solutions to fight this disease, until we achieve a medical breakthrough in terms of a vaccine. Despite following these measures, it is a challenging task in slum-clusters where they experience high population density and have poor sanitation facilities to support them. The demand and supply rule is much evident from the stories collected from the field, which further institutionalize our beliefs.



Dharavi, Mumbai



Slums in Chennai



Slums in Delhi

A report by the Ministry for Urban Affairs in 2019 informs that about 29.4% of urban Indians live in a slum and about 41.3% of the urban dwellers in Mumbai, 28.5% in Chennai, and 14.6% in Delhi live in the slums (Census 2011).

Dharavi, Asia's largest slum located in Mumbai is reeling under the devastating impacts of the pandemic. About 2,359 confirmed cases have been recorded out of which 1,952 have recovered as on July 10, 2020, signalling a recovering rate of 82.7%. The slums of Chennai and Delhi are also facing this increasing trend of rising COVID-19 cases.

Under the evidence collection from the slum areas of Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi, interviews were conducted with the volunteers to capture the ground-level situation concerning COVID-19.



Awareness among the communities

One of the key aspects of reducing the spread of COVID-19 is through spreading awareness and taking all the precautionary measures propagated by the Health Ministry. During interaction with volunteers, it was evident that awareness about COVID-19 is being pictured as 'context-specific' i.e., the communities are divided in their perceptions regarding the COVID-19 disease, as some sections of the community are taking all the necessary precautionary measures and treating it as a serious life-threatening disease;

while for the other section, it is just a mild fever. This can be substantiated by the evidence provided below.

“We regularly suggest people who show mild symptoms of COVID-19 to get them tested at SION hospital. People are taking all the necessary precautions and anyone from outside our cluster is strictly prohibited. Currently, I am working on COVID-19. It has become a subject of major concern that the infected patients who go to the private doctors are not being tested properly, many a time they are deprived of medicines and proper details”.

- Sanjana, Field Officer at Project JEET, Vishwakarma Chawl, Dharavi, Mumbai



“About 4000 cases have been recorded in Royapuram. What concerns me more is that the people are not aware of its consequences. Most of them still say that it is nothing, just a mild fever. People who are undergoing this treatment are only given vitamin tablets”.

- A. Sathiyaroyapuram, Model Lane, Chennai



“About 16 confirmed cases have been visible within 500 metres range in my locality according to Arogya Setu app. The people are quarantined at home only. People are not at following social distancing norms. People are using masks only because of the fear of police”.

- Nitu, World Vision Teacher, Sonia Vihar, New Delhi



“The cases are increasing but people are not strictly following the precautionary measures. Even the police have given relaxation regarding the social distancing norms. The government has given the curfew time but no one follows it. The infected patients are mostly home-quarantined, only those with a critical condition are hospitalized in a government hospital”. - Arjun, World Vision Volunteer, Sonia Vihar, New Delhi



“Risk Perception among slum population is quite varied relating to COVID-19”

Treatment of COVID-19 infected patients

Dearth in Health care Infrastructure and an increasing number of COVID-19 cases has posed a major challenge in this crisis. Hospitals are running out of beds to meet the current needs. Interaction with the volunteers in the wake of collecting evidence brings to surface the condition of the slum-clusters in this crisis. Some sections of the society are satisfied with the treatment provided by the public health system while other sections believe that more could have been done in this regard. It is seen that the infected patients are mostly asked to home-quarantine themselves unless it is a critical case. This can be substantiated by the evidence provided below.

“All the COVID-19 infected patients have been quarantined in schools. Beds have also been arranged in the open grounds. Now, the situation is a bit under control. People are following social distancing norms but many are casually taking it. Following it often becomes a major challenge due to limited space”. - Kaheksha, World Vision Volunteer, Rajeev Gandhi Nagar Chawl, Dharavi, Mumbai



“About 400 families stay in my locality and 6 confirmed COVID-19 cases have been recorded as on July 1, 2020. It is at least a relief that not many cases have been recorded. The infected patients are not happy with the treatment. They often complain that they are not given proper food”. – B. Ranjini, Volunteer at Chennai Greater Corporation, Kumaran Nagar, Korukkupet, Chennai



“There are about 5000 families in this closed locality. In Ennore, about 800 confirmed cases have been recorded as on July 9, 2020. In every block, there are COVID-19 infected patients. According to them, good care and food are provided but we are still not clear whether we are healed properly. I feel that there is nothing to fear about. We have to take all the precautions and treatment”. - A. Archana, Volunteer at Chennai Greater Corporation, Ennore, Chennai



“About 40-50 cases have been recorded so far as on July 9, 2020. The infected patients are home quarantined. They are getting satisfactory treatment from the hospitals”. – Manisha, World Vision Volunteer, Madan Pur Khader, South Delhi.



“Delivery of treatment services by the Public Health System is not being seen as full-proof”

Impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods

COVID-19 has severely disrupted the livelihoods of many. According to NSSO Survey (2011-12), about 82.7% of the workforce in India is engaged in the unorganized sector. The slum dwellers are mostly employed in the unorganized sector as daily wage labourers, domestic workers, taxi drivers etc. Further, the transportation challenges due to COVID-19 lockdown at regular intervals in different geographical locations have exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities, thus depriving the people of their basic survival needs. This can be substantiated by the evidence provided below.

“COVID-19 has affected all the spheres of life; increase in the food crisis, disruption of livelihoods, and an increase in the frequency of domestic violence. There are about 8 members in my family and it has become quite difficult to manage the expenses. I strongly feel the need to volunteer for the cause because if we stop distributing food packets to the people, they would die of hunger and poverty”. - Mr. Asif Ali, World Vision Volunteer, Rajeev Gandhi Nagar, Dharavi, Mumbai



“We are facing hard times. My father makes the furniture, but due to COVID-19, he is not working. About 3000 rupees are usually spent per month on medicines, but now we are not able to afford it. All those people who have to compulsorily go to work are facing the transportation challenges. Many of them have to go to their workplaces on foot, since they have to show a pass on the bus”.- Anchala, World Vision Volunteer, Rajeev Gandhi Nagar, Dharavi, Mumbai



“The COVID-19 cases in my locality have been increasing at a fast rate. In each street at least 3 people have been infected. I am extremely afraid of this disease. It has severely disrupted the livelihoods. I am now longing for the normal days because what I am constantly hearing is the NEWS of death”.- Ms. J. Loganayagi, volunteer at Arunodhaya, Nehru Nagar, Korukkupet, Chennai



“COVID-19 cases have been continuously increasing in my locality. Every day, I see an ambulance coming in my area. I do not have any idea how they are being treated. But, I am worried about the impacts of COVID-19. It has affected all the people in my colony. Disruption of livelihoods is the most devastating impact of this pandemic”. – R. Divya, Ennore, Chennai



“In my locality, 2 cases have been recorded. The infected patients have been home quarantined. People usually stay in their homes. We are facing problems since there is no source of income now a day. I have 7 members in my family and only one working member. Everyone is facing hard times”. – Anju, World Vision Volunteer, Sonia Vihar, Delhi



“COVID-19 has a major impact on education apart from livelihoods. No classes are conducted in my college online, it seems the whole year would pass like this, and then we would have to face the job crunch. Many people in our locality have lost their jobs due to which many are facing psychological stress”. – Ritu, World Vision Volunteer, Lalbagh, North West Delhi.



“Impact of COVID-19 has decreased the livelihood security in the urban slums of the city”

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