Rapid District Response Survey – Effect of COVID-19 and ongoing Lockdown

Commissioned by: Swayam Shikshan Prayog
Undertaken by: Impactree Data Technologies Private Limited
A: Background:

For the purpose of submitting a concept note to the European Union for the grant under Enhancing Civil Society Organizations capacities in response to COVID-19 in India, Swayam Shikshan Prayog partnered with Impactree Data Technologies to conduct a rapid assessment in 3 States among 500 respondents across all districts as mentioned to understand the impact of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown on communities and chart the way forward keeping in mind community aspirations and need.

District and Taluka surveyed is as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Districts (and Blocks)</th>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Number of Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Latur</td>
<td>Deoni</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ausa</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nanded</td>
<td>Loha</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kandhar</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solapur</td>
<td>Barshi</td>
<td>139</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohol</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Supaul</td>
<td>Saraigadh Bhaptiyahi</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kishanpur</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Wayanad</td>
<td>Mananthavady</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalpetta</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

B: Methodology

Impactree team undertook secondary data analysis to understand the scenario from the perspective of established reports by multiple organizations like Dalberg, Azim Premji institute etc to ascertain the broad impact of COVID both at a state level and the district levels.

Post that a Rapid assessment questionnaire was designed for select respondents in SSP existing networks to collect primary response. This document summarizes the learnings from the survey.
C. Limitation:

Being a rapid survey with pre-defined participants the limitation of this assessment is only meant to give pointers for the development of the district and block level strategy.

D. State Wise learnings:

Maharashtra

District-wise data: This data pertains to persons from the districts of Solapur, Nanded and Latur.

A. Solapur:

Solapur is a district located in the south western part of Maharashtra sharing a close border with Karnataka. Most of the residents in Solapur are engaged in agriculture on a primary basis and textiles and cigarette rolling on a secondary basis. Because of its close proximity to both Pune and Mumbai - large urban clusters in Maharashtra, Solapur has seen a large footfall of migrants returning back from the cities during the lockdown as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

i) Economic Impact of the Lockdown

a) Migrants Status: Almost 60% of all households reported having 1 or more member who have returned back due to unemployment or fear of COVID-19 during the lockdown.

b) Landless: Among those who have returned over 77% reported being landless.

c) Agriculture: Among those who had land over 54% of them reported having suffered agricultural losses due to lack of being able to sell produce in markets at MSP and other logistic challenges in the current ongoing lockdown.

ii) Social impact of the lockdown: Over 37% of those residing in Solapur are from OBC, SC and ST communities. Given that migration to cities during off season and agriculture is the main occupation of those who reside in the district. 86% of households reported having faced some financial difficulty during the lockdown leading bouts of depression and anxiety.

iii) Community insights:

Solapur is largely agriculture and beedi making in terms of occupation. Its also a large district where SSP has a established WELI network and SVEP. A survey among those who have enterprises has brought forth that 60% of those who have enterprise have incurred costs in terms of locked up inventory etc which has led to cash flow crunches, hampering the process of restarting. Hence a
focus of this district has to be toward enterprise revival and some part agriculture retraining and support to get at least MSP prices for farmers. This strength especially in solapur has to be used and leveraged.

Mental health among youth and women is crucial and to be addressed in the proposal as when we talk about women there is enough data that states that women are disempowered due to the lockdown. Hence empowerment training is crucial in building their resilience and creating a case for migrants to stay if they see a viable option in terms of business and employment at the village level. Hence a household approach to enterprise building is critical

**B. Nanded:**

Nanded district is on the border of Telengana and Maharashtra. Geographically Nanded district is located far away from most large urban cities in Maharashtra like Mumbai, Pune, Amravati or Nagpur and hence most of the population in this district are largely engaged in Agriculture. Further to a survey in the district only 23% of beneficiaries in the district are engaged in non agricultural based livelihoods. Socio economically this district is currently backward having a high prevalence of early childhood marriages, high level of poverty and poor awareness on health and sanitation best practices. The ongoing COVID pandemic has only pushed more people into the brink of poverty.

**i) Economic Impact of the Lockdown**

**a) Migrants Status:** Given the lack of geographical access to cities only 44% of those households residing in the district reported having having 1 or more member who have returned back due to unemployment or fear of COVID-19 during the lockdown.

**b) Landless:** 47% of those in the districts owned land holding of 0-3 acres and mostly land holdings were dispersed and spread out among small households. 28% of those in the districts were landless.

**c) Agriculture:** 47% of the families in this district were involved in milk collection and redistribution which was their main line of business. While 27% were involved in vegetables, grains and essential commodities production. Families reported 50-70% loss during the last cultivation season in selling their grains and vegetables at below MSP rates in their own villages due to the strict lockdown and lack of alternate sources of transportation. Further those involved in the milk business have been severely affected by the drop in prices of milk and milk based products like cottage cheese, butter etc. again due to the lockdown.
ii) Social Impact of the Lockdown

Financial stress and mental health: 76% of the households in the district reported facing financial distress during the pandemic, while 72% of women experienced facing health issues such as depression, anxiety etc due to the same.

iii) Community Insights:

The focus of the district has to be an all round approach to:

a) Building community resilience: The focus has to be health in terms of awareness on cultural misconceptions, safe drinking water, sanitation, early marriage and youths at risk and COVID

b) Focusing a lot on sustainable agriculture and moving towards agriculture and allied products to reduce dependency on one source of occupation either dairy or either vegetables etc. It must be an all round approach

c) Focus on entrepreneurship for both women and youth as a means of self sustenance is important to break this cycle

d) Awareness on legal and acceptable marriageable age, especially for girls whom currently due to poverty in the district an early incidence of child marriage has been observed.

C. Latur:

Latur district geographically located next to Osmanabad district and Nanded district in Maharashtra. Latur is a large sugar producing and processing industrial belt and most of the agriculture undertaken in the district is focused towards cash crop production. Due to lack of logistic support to send transport sugar cane to factories for processing, during the lockdown in March a lot of farmers in this district have had to make distress sales of their crops and have exhausted their savings over the last few months. Sugar cane is highly both cash and water intensive during its entire life cycle.

However, Ausa block is also the block in which SSP has one of the most successful dairy projects where women have been earning over Rs. 50,000 + per month even during the lockdown through Laxmi milk centers.
i) Economic Impact of the Lockdown:

a) Migrants Status: From Mumbai and Pune a large number of migrants have returned back to the district as 47% of them lost jobs and had little or no employment opportunities in the cities. Further 28% of them felt increase in the prices of essentials in the cities dint allow them to continue there. 75% of households reported having migrants who have returned.

b) Business losses: Among those who had business over 25% of those had to temporarily suspend their business or shut it down to poor availability of raw material, Lack of market and poor sales channels. With easing of restrictions over 27% entrepreneurs and business still feel it is hard for them to restart their business due to lack of re start capital and poor supply chains.

ii) Social impact of the lockdown:

a) Access to government schemes: 54% of the households had received direct funding support under the Jandhan and farmer support schemes during the period of the lockdown. 23% had access to subsidized gas under the Ujjawal scheme.

iii) Community Insights:

a) Focus on entrepreneurship - Specifically around dairy and agriculture to encourage people to move beyond cash crops. At the same time having a clear refined successful model of diary business in Ausa block and expanding it to 100 villages in collaboration with Promethean and Godrej etc could be used an example for the same for focusing on such livelihood opportunities at the time of revival. Further focus on restart capital for business which are viable could be an additional area of focus.

b) As the access to government schemes is poor that could be one area of focus and the Digital India partnership could be showcased as one way the same is already being promoted.
Wayanad district is one of the most backward districts in Kerala (India) and situated in the crunches of Western Ghats the lone district to figure in 115 backward districts of the country. Agriculture is the back born of the economy. Wayanad has a population of 817420 out of 17% are indigenous communities. Agriculture and Tourism are the main source of income.

**I) Economic Impact of the Lockdown:** About 10% of the population in Wayanad depends on remittances from the middle-east countries. Due to the covid pandemic around 60% of the migrants (50000 workers) lost their jobs and returned home. Most of these workers are try to find another job. They are not skilled in agriculture and have very specific skill set tailored to and international market making it difficult for them to find jobs back home.

**Tourism:** Wayanad is one the major tourism attraction in Kerala and brings around 2000 crore earning every year. Due to recurrent floods in 2018 and 2019, tourism sector suffered a big loss and the covid pandemic stopped all the activities and the future is bleak. Almost 90% of the tourism sector is closed down and affected home stays, tourist taxis, small hotels, resorts, shops, roadside business, etc which is a large employer industry in Wayanad.

**Indigenous communities:** 17% of Wayanad population is belonging to Tribal communities with a total of 139877 population. 50% of the tribal youths work as labourers in Ginger farms in Kodagu, Karnataka. All of them have returned to Wayanad and are presently living without any income but mostly depending on PDS distribution.
ii) Social Impact of the lockdown: The Covid-19 pandemic situation affected them very badly. Drug abuse is a big issue with youths in tribal and general communities and regular violence occur in families. Declining of health of women and girls are other major worries of indigenous communities. A sample survey with 2000 Households in Two Gram Panchayats conducted by SSP in 2019 found that 11% of indigenous communities are having low haemoglobin level.

Plantation workers: Tea plantation workers are left without jobs and their salaries being stopped since January before the pandemic due to the decline of market price. Around 12% (21339 people) are affected badly and the COVID situation is a double blow for them. Finding another job outside the plantation, esp in construction sector is also limited due to lockdown as the movement of people, vehicle and goods is restricted.

iii) Community Insights: A large need of the hour in the district is to undertaken entrepreneurship and employment generation. Kerela has in the past been famous for implementing the model of Kudumbashree for women entrepreneurs. Currently the focus should be to retrain and reorient youth and women especially in vulnerable groups to become self employed and independent and later moved towards enterprise. Further retraining in terms of agriculture skills would go a long way in helping people find meaningful employment in the short term.
BIHAR

Supaul is one of the most backward districts of Bihar, it is located in North Bihar, part of Koshi Sub Division. Koshi is the main river here and it floods every year. Paddy and wheat are the main crops here, but due to floods and lower surface, rice crop is wasted, there is no business or factories in the district, hence no source of employment and people migrate to cities.

Almost 75-80% of the population in Supaul have more than one family member who have migrated to other parts of India.

Kishanpur and Saraigad-Bapatiahi are the worst affected blocks in Supaul by returning migrants due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown.

i) Economic Impact of the lockdown: There are 43 villages in which 75 percent of the population and fields are flooded three to four months every year. Due to no other options of employment other than farming, 75 to 85% of the people go to big cities in search of employment, of which 25 to 35% people go to big cities for a few months.

Supaul has seen a large group of migrants returning from cities during the lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, with almost all migrants returning to their villages.

All households are reported to have one or more members who have become unemployed during the lockout, and have returned.

- **Landless:** 30 to 40% of the total workers returned are reported to be landless.
- **Agriculture:** Farmers have suffered agricultural losses due to not being able to sell produce in the markets due to MSP and other logistic challenges in the ongoing lockdown. The upcoming crop of paddy is submerged 75 to 80% in floods, so they will incur heavy losses in the upcoming crop.
- **Flood** - Due to floods, people also have house problems and people living on roads, dams and other high places, they face this problem every year, but due to employment they easily overcome. This year they has been unemployed for a long time, in such a situation, it is difficult to overcome the problem of coming back to his village and building a house.

ii) Social impact of the lockdown: More than 70% of the people living in both these blocks are from OBC, SC and ST communities. Given that migration to the cities during the off season and agriculture is the main occupation of the residents of the district. About 90% of the families faced some financial difficulties during major bouts of depression and anxiety. Earlier they used to help each other in the flood, but this time people are not able to help due to fear of corona, it has fragmented the community significantly.
iii) **Community insights**: More than 80 to 85% of men are migrated, in which case a permanent solution needs to be found to reskills and reorient the men through leadership development, mapping of rights and formation of community organization. Awareness among the community is also required on the government schemes being currently provided to increase the social net and security among people in the district ensuring that more number of people are able to obtain relief under farmer loans, PDS systems etc.

The proposal submitted currently uses some of the insights and realities garnered during the Rapid Community assessment. A detailed report can be provided on a later stage on request if required.
About Impactree

Impactree Consulting Private Limited is dedicated to providing partnership, strategic support and monitoring and evaluation support to organizations engaged in rural livelihoods and education-based programmes, with the view of sustainably scaling such interventions.

IMPACTREE aims at accelerating social development through data. IMPACTREE team assists organizations in better understanding their last mile interventions through stakeholder mapping and data mining, supporting them in building relevant and scalable social impact programs.

IMPACTREE team cumulatively has over 20 + years of market expertise and is partnered with Lumiere Business Solutions (https://lumieresolutions.com/) one of India’s most reputed business process transformation organizations.

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