Resilience of SEWA Rajasthan in times of COVID-19

March 2020 to September 2020
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Information sharing and spreading awareness

Due to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 in India and the Govt deciding to impose a Lockdown on such a short notice, there was lack of access to proper information on the same to the people of rural areas and towns. Teams of our Navniti yuva mandal along with SEWA members and Aagewans deciphered the situation around them and disseminated more and more information in their communities by creating posters, pamphlets on the prevention on DO’s and DON’T’s on Covid-19 and upcoming instructions on Lockdown by the Govt.

Members in Jaipur created Do it yourself (DIY) videos on how to make cotton masks at home from scratch to cope up with the demand and shared it through common WhatsApp groups. A total of 550 masks which were distributed free of cost to ASHA workers, vegetable vendors, shopkeepers, homeless people and households around our working areas in Jaipur and Bikaner

Relief efforts to mitigate effects of sudden lockdown

SEWA members went far beyond, they themselves sourced contact details of key government officials, found details pertaining to due process and documentation etc., and using digital platforms leveraged their network and advocated for further support based on specific needs assessment.

They also partnered with the local NGO’s like – AKSHAYPATRA to daily supply cooked food to the households in need the most. The food distribution was done with the help of Rajasthan police and the local ward Parishad members.
Alternative Livelihood Generation - Mask Making and Cotton Sanitary Napkin

In the war against COVID-19, informal sector workers are particularly being affected by the disruptions at the global level, across all trades and so are our women members. With a digital revolution underway, SEWA Rajasthan focused on designing programs and services which help the women with alternative source of livelihood while making them aware of the changing trends, with an aim to enhance the work life of our local entrepreneurs, addressing specific needs at their workplace.

**Mask Making:** Given lockdown’s severe impact on women’s traditional livelihood sources, avenues for mask making as an alternate mode of livelihood was explored as one of the quick responses of aagyewans and SEWA staff members observing the capacity to make masks during the crisis. The team worked towards expansion of the skill set of its members. The face masks that were made which were 100% pure cotton and breathable masks. They were sent out to family members of civil society organizations, migrant workers and home based workers of Jaipur’s textile and apparel sector. The members earned Rs 3/- per mask and the highest was earned by Salma Ben amounting to Rs 5939/-. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Masks Made</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaipur</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>Rs 1,35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikaner</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>Rs 18,051</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cotton Cloth Sanitary Napkin Making:** During the months of lockdown, as a source of another livelihood, SEWA Rajasthan initiated another project to make cotton cloth sanitary napkins under the guidance of a trainer, training nearly 150 women to stitch the napkins out of the simple cloth and cotton in a one week long training session.
Ration Distribution- through Freedom Fund's Emergency Relief Fund for COVID-19 and support from SEWA Bharat

COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown has brought to the forefront the vulnerabilities faced by supply chains across trades and region and it become practically impossible for many households employed in the informal sector to sustain their daily lives in absence of newly generated incomes. Therefore, SEWA Rajasthan along with the support of Freedom Fund helped procure and supply food packets to such households during Lockdown. SEWA Rajasthan received three rounds of Emergency Relief Fund:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rounds</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Food Kits</th>
<th>Beneficent Individuals</th>
<th>Funds received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Rs 53,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 2</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Rs 2,94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 3</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Rs 3,27,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the above SEWA Rajasthan also received fund of **Rs 1, 50,000 for Bikaner and Jaipur** from SEWA Bharat through which **58 food kits were distributed in Jaipur and 108 food kits** were distributed in Bikaner
Health Training and Awareness through APPI project

Training on Health Module: 50 Agewans received training on WHO Based modules on healthcare such as menstrual hygiene and precautions to be taken during COVID-19 and also elaborated gender rights as well as domestic violence which they disseminated the information through phones. They became certified master trainers and eventually, they performed the role of health workers in urban clusters and also earned a living. Majority of the women received training via video calls and subsequently they shared their learning’s through WhatsApp and Facebook to reaching a wider audience up to 360 women in a three month course.

Subsequently, the Agewans also trained 10,800 young and old women on the management of household during lockdown and in near Covid-19 infested future.

SSKs supporting access to entitlements during COVID-19 crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government schemes</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank Account Opening</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Account KYC Link</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update of personal mobile number in Bank Accounts</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension Card</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BhamashaYojna</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan AadharYojna</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Information about Govt Schemes</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Aadhar Card Registration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sanitary pad distribution drive in Bikaner and Jaipur

To support equitable access to menstrual hygiene products, which was under threat with COVID lockdown, SEWA Rajasthan with the support of the brand- NIINE distributed free sanitary napkins to youths and SEWA members in Jaipur and Bikaner. In total, 150 packets of napkins were distributed in Bikaner and 164 packets in Jaipur.

SEWA members and youth learning and engaging through digital platforms

Disruption in the usual supply chain route has made the market linkages, exhibitions and other such platforms lucrative for women. The team identified the women and young girls assisted them to get onboard on online marketplaces and provided them with training on modules of digital medium such as accessing Zoom calls, arranging meetings on them, photography of the products they make, online marketing of those products, receiving orders on WhatsApp, engaging in online banking such as digital payments.

Learning English in online classes through different apps such as DUO LINGO – An app to better their communication skills and increase their reach in the market of opportunities.
A helping hand to the Migrant Labours

Since Jaipur serves as a major destination, it witnesses significant inflow of migrants. During the lockdown, several migrants were unable to return back to their origin states. SEWA Rajasthan made efforts to facilitate the same. SEWA MELS (Micro enterprise Leaders) and Agewans immediately identified 30 such individuals and with the help of the District Collector, they were able to arrange busses to facilitate their return journey. Observing this, over 64 individuals thereafter approached SEWA Rajasthan for the same and with the team’s effort we could help 120 migrant workers from Jaipur to reach Bihar.

Solidarity with other workers and Vocalisation of their demands

The govt of Rajasthan, along with many other states have passed the ordinance to dilute a number of labour laws "in wake of the COVID 19 emergency". They have decided to extend the number of working hours from 8 to 12 and ensure a minimal number of workforces in factories and distribution agencies.

Against these unfair labour laws, our members in Jaipur and Bikaner stood in solidarity with one another, against the recent dilution and changes in the law and joined the nationwide protest along with other Central Trade Unions on 3rd July 2020.

As part of the Child Rights Initiative, another rally on child labour was organized on 19th August through which 10 youth child rights champions, aagewans and SEWA Rajasthan staff created an awareness movement on Right to Education (RTE) and its highlights of free and compulsory education to all children within the age group of 6 to 14. The 10 youth child rights champions have helped counsel school dropouts and connect them with NGO’s like Pratham- currently 9 of these students are undergoing class 10th online classes.
Online campaigns on social media

SEWA Rajasthan launched several online-campaigns around Mothers day, ‘Vocal for Local,’ ‘Celebrating Menstrual Hygiene Day,’ highlighting the problem of menstrual hygiene and the difficulty women of lower income and backward groups face in accessing the sanitary napkins by launching an online fundraiser to help these women have a better reach at it. Mother’s Day aimed at increasing the sensitivity of creating a woman’s identity apart from all the roles she plays in a household and their need for self reliance and financial standing to provide for a better future for herself and people around her. Vocal for Local‘ was well received and resulted in a number of women receiving orders on their initiative ‘Anubandh’ through Instagram for tote bags and cotton diary covers.

Also, a campaign to prevent domestic violence against women were started and well received within the community. Importantly, with the help of the campaign on Violence against Women, SEWA was able to provide appropriate help to 24 women in Jaipur area.

Leveraging Social media platforms and WhatsApp

SEWA members particularly the youth members leveraged social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram and their existing network to disseminate information on relief work and CoVID-19 related broadcasts. Apart from the above, Whatsapp became the most important medium of communication and thereafter aggregating information on distressed individuals as well.
Connecting with children through PRATHAM- Learn and Fun!

Starting this, SEWA Rajasthan in collaboration with PRATHAM, has started an initiative to keep kids of age 0-6 years preoccupied with small tasks and various other such activities of singing songs, poems, storytelling and fun crafted related activities.

It involves local ‘Dost’ disseminating these tasks daily through videos and WhatsApp messages with the help of their mothers and helping them to cope up with the daily stress of handling children as well.

SEWA Rajasthan has successfully engaged 150 children with the support of 65 families in total.

Jaipur Floods

The outbreak of the pandemic has affected our members in a very deep manner. Along with the economic and livelihood problems, our members also have to face problems with respect to housing and accessing other daily resources.

Jaipur witnessed very heavy rainfall this year and most of the areas that we work in, have been gravely affected. During the domestic worker trade committee meeting, our aagewans highlighted that it has been a particularly difficult time for them since after the rainfall and many of them have also had to face loss of life and property.

There have been houses which are completely destroyed and the families are now living in places where animals were being kept. One of our members also lost her young boy as a result of drowning in Kishanbagh area.

The team in Jaipur is on a survey phase and the team estimates to be 100 households who would need immediate help and support in terms of local repairs, damage compensation. The team has already visited 2 areas and we have a list prepared of 28 households who require immediate help and relief in areas such as J P Colony, BapuBasti, Ramganj, Kishanbagh with some financial support of Rs 50,000 from SEWA Bharat.
Outreach Campaigns

During the Lockdown, our aagewans along with SEWA staff also started outreach campaigns such as Kadha Drive and Mask Wearing Drive for the poor and the ones in need to help in public spaces and market areas. It was carried out by the team of 6-7 aagewans, staff members and youth groups in different areas of Jaipur and Bikaner asserting the importance of mask wearing and immunity building by drinking Kadha (immunity booster drink) in times of pandemic to the public.

Employment opportunities amidst pandemic

Indu Rathore came from a very menial background of daily wagers and got married at very young age of 18 about seven years ago. Post marriage, she realized that her husband wasn't mentally sound and so she was asked to pay for her husband's medical expenses. Upon denial, she was subject to physical abuse and mental torture from her in-laws constantly for about one year. On getting pregnant, her in-laws even threatened to kill her child. After two years of torture, an unsuccessful marriage with still mentally unstable husband despite repeated treatments by her father and income to support her and her family, she fell under depression. That is when during a survey conducted by SEWA Bharat she got herself registered for a computer class training under NAVNITI Programme. Within months of training, she got to take part in the UNICEF project in Ahmedabad for vaccination and medical awareness with a salary of Rs 5000.

Meena Rawal, hailing from Chandigarh, got married in Bikaner at the age of twenty around eight years ago. Post marriage, she also bared a lot of mental abuse from her in laws and physical torture from both her husband and in-laws. She bore a baby after five years of abusive marriage and subjected to so much torture that she would be out of milk to giver to her baby. Desperate to feed the baby and improve circumstance around her for the baby, she started looking for work and upon a few distance from her house discovered SEWA Bharat Office. She joined stitching classes organized by SEWA under NAVNITI programme and slowly was guided towards personality development classes by the encouragement from the fellow workers and SEWA Staff. In one of her personality development classes, she narrated her ordeal and re-analysing her dire situation at home, she was offered a role in the UNICEF project in vaccine immunization and medical awareness in Ahmedabad. She enthusiastically joined in with a salary of Rs 5000 per month.
Involvement of Aagyewans

During the current lockdown period, our local team and aagewan have not only demonstrated promptness in assessing specific needs of their communities but have also taken up leadership initiatives to design interventions. The aagewans have helped spread awareness about the symptoms and precautionary measures by putting up posters across ration shops, preparing meals individually and in groups, helping people make queues while collecting ration from the depot ensuring a 1 metre distance between people by marking their spots.

SEWA aagewans displayed steadfastness as they took charge of the situation. They identified pockets of hunger, vulnerability and need - prepared a list of such individuals and families in each of their locations, circulated and shared the same with local government agencies to link them with welfare schemes and the public distribution system. SEWA members went far beyond, they themselves sourced contact details of key government officials, found details pertaining to due process and documentation etc., and using digital platforms leveraged their network and advocated for further support based on specific needs assessment.

Media Coverage

Various local media agencies like Danik Khabar, Abhay India, and Rajasthan Patrika covered the relief work done by SEWA Rajasthan during COVID through their online-offline newspapers and channels.
Awards and Recognition

This year, due to the continuous efforts in times of lockdown, Welfare Society bestowed the Corona KaramveerSamman to: Sabrin ben (Agewaan), Indu ben (Youth member), and five SEWA Bikaner staff members - Asha ben, Dipshikha ben, Sudha ben, Renu ben and Ravi bhai for their exceptional service to the community during the lockdown. Sudha and Indu ben were recognised for making and distributing over 3000 masks to Asha workers, local Police officials, street children, homeless, local shop owners among others. The staff members particularly focused on activating dormant Jan Dhan Accounts of women through which each beneficiary received INR 5000. Besides this, they also linked families to the Public Distribution System (PDS), supplied cooked meals distributed ration to over 500 families.

While Afsanaben and Afreen Ben from SEWA Jaipur also was awarded Veer Samman recognition from the National Muslim Welfare Society Jaipur for her exceptional efforts in helping people in the pandemic in the month of july.
Stories of Hope-I

Batul ben and her contribution through cooking meals

Batulben is 36 years old and stays with her husband, four kids and in-laws in New Sanjay Nagar Basti, Jaipur, Rajasthan. Batulben completed her education till 8th standard and found it difficult to get a job. Her husband is uneducated and does packing work in a small shop, unable to provide sustenance for a family of 8 people. To support her family’s financial condition, Batulben joined SEWA for training in Lac craft and stitching and soon became a trainer for these skills. She was also determined to complete her education and with the support of her family, is currently pursuing her 10th grade studies from an open school.

Due to Covid19 lockdown, Batulben’s school shut down. She continues her studies at home. She observed the challenges farmers were facing and also realized that some families were unable to access ration for food, she, along with her husband, collected ration from the local authorities, prepared and distributed food to 75 people in need. These included families with 6 kids and those that hadn’t eaten for 3 days straight. She is happy to have contributed to her neighborhood and has demonstrated empathy and leadership skills!

Paving way through making masks

Parveen, belongs to a poor family in Jaipur, Rajasthan. She takes care of a family of 6 and assists her parents in their lacquer craft business. She has been associated with SEWA for the past one year, she started with learning stitching and is now a Micro-Enterprise Leader (MEL) for the Digital Beti Project.

When Parveen learnt about wearing masks as a precautionary measure against Covid19, she took to stitching masks herself from the fabric lying at her house. She stitched 200 masks learning the technique from a YouTube video and distributed it in her community for free. Not only this, she also learnt about symptoms, precautionary measures and government relief programmes associated with Covid19 through the internet and spread awareness about the same in her neighborhood. She helped people understand where and how to avail ration under various state/central schemes.
Stories of Hope-II

**Reaching the unreached**

Sudhaben, tailoring trainer from Bikaner, her father while on a trip to the local market places in Jaipur area came across instances of black-marketing and severe shortage of masks. Observing this and the children of her community without any safety gear, she and other members of SEWA Rajasthan decided to teach women and youth members how to make reusable cotton masks. By the 28th of March, she and three youth members: Zahira, Nazmeen, and Sunita were able to produce more than 1000 masks which were distributed in the local areas, given to on duty police officials and also shared with the District Magistrates office.

Besides this, Sudha supplied cooked meals in a Jhuggi-Jhopri cluster, about 13 families with dry ration residing in Quadri Colony and another 250 poor families of Sarvoday Basti and Khaja Colony areas of Jaipur were well received to tune that she started getting requests for assistance over phone calls.

**Connecting the dots**

Afreenben, our staff member from Ramgan, Jaipur took it upon herself to teach mask making techniques to a few households while also disseminating information on precautionary measures. She mobilized resources and reached out to migrant families in her locality. She's also been relaying information about households who could not receive ration through the PDS.

She along with Agywaan’s: Amina, Namrin and Memuna had prepared a list of households of single women without earning members, people with no documents viz., Ration, Aadhar Cards, etc., those who are migrants and have been living in the Jaipur area for less than a year, those individuals who do wood work, those who are engaged in Aari-tari, among others who are in need. This list has reached a total of 88 households and is sent to Rafiq Khan, the local MLA. Help in the form of Ration has reached to about 30 families so far.

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