

Message of VANI and their member organisations in response to COVID-19

Indian Civil Society and Covid 19

28.03.2020

The first case of the [Covid-19](#) was reported in India in late January 2020. Efforts to fight the pandemic (which engulfs 199 countries presently) in India were stepped up by early March, when the government announced closure of schools and educational institutions. There was a persistent rise in number of cases ever since. Prime Minister of India announced a 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday, 22 March, followed by a 21-day complete lockdown to fight the Covid-19 outbreak on 24th March. Despite nationwide lockdown, India witnessed mass exodus of panicked migrant and daily wage workers and their families to their villages. On 26th March, Finance Minister announced a comprehensive economic package (comprising cash transfer and food security related measures) with special focus on women, migrant workers, and the disadvantaged section of the society, to deal with the impact. As of today, i.e. 28 March 2020, the [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#) has confirmed a total of 873 cases, 78 recoveries and 19 deaths in the country.

VANI (network of voluntary organisations in India) and our member organisations and Indian Civil Society at large are engaged in interventions at two levels - advocacy and delivery of services (where possible in individual and/or collaboration with the state governments). Our collective initiatives currently include:

A. Advocacy and Dissemination of Information : with Central and State Governments, Donor & Philanthropic Institutions and civil Society Organisations.

i) Appeal to Central and State Governments to:

- a. Enhance public health provision in advance of the spread.
- b. Make provision for adequate protective gears for those working in communities including those dealing with waste management, street vendors through authorised centres.
- c. Make provision for soap, sanitizers in public spaces including bus stands, public lavatories, markets etc.

- d. Set up of subsidized food canteens for workers
- e. Increase free testing and set appropriate mechanisms in place for sample collection.
- f. Orient the police force on ground to allow easy movement for providers of essential services and treat people who have stepped out due to unavoidable circumstances with due respect
- g. Protect informal workers, poor and vulnerable people
- h. Include Civil Society Organisations in Humanitarian Response, awareness campaigns by facilitating them with an enabling environment
- i. Ensure inclusion of high risk and marginalised groups including transgenders, elderly, women, children and people with disabilities etc.

ii) Donors and Philanthropic Institutions

- a. Urge Donors and Philanthropic Institutions to extend support to non-profit partners as well as the people and communities hit hardest by the impacts of COVID-19.
- b. Loosen or eliminate the restrictions on current grants, including converting project-based grants to unrestricted support
- c. Acceleration of payment schedules
- d. Take a lenient view of timelines for 'non-essential' projects in dealing with the immediate survival challenges of the communities.

iii) Civil Society Organisations:

- a. Information dissemination about Advisories, Guidelines and Schemes issued by the Government and WHO from time to time.
- b. Collation of information about the challenges faced during service delivery including issues around obstacles in delivery of service, staff safety etc.
- c. Collation of information about the status of scheme delivery at the ground level as well as gaps identified, if any.

Service Delivery at local level for meeting immediate needs

- a. Provisioning of food (cooked food and/or dry ration), hygiene kits and cash ties to daily wage labourers, migrant workers, refugees.
- b. Setting up of Citizen Support Centres (Virtual) to disseminate last mile useful information.

