

Asha Rajatalab COVID-Relief Camp 2020-2021 Report

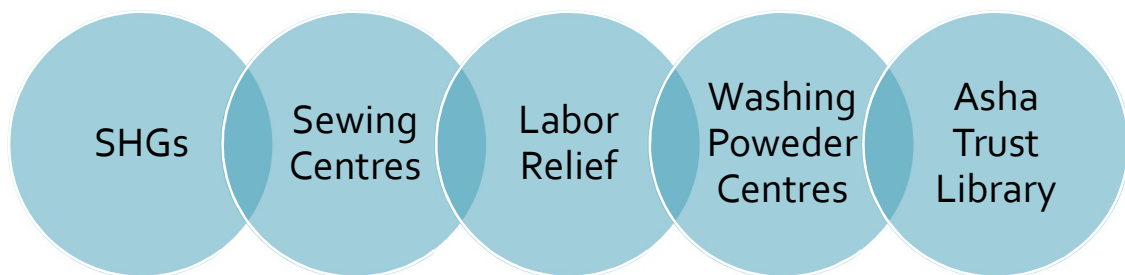
(Visited March 7 -12, 2021, Visit Report by Kshitij Srivastava, Asha Purdue, kshitijssrivastava15@gmail.com)

"Never underestimate the power of one woman and her sewing machine"



Varanasi COVID-19 relief camp is an initiative by Nandlal Master and his peers to help the women and adolescent girls to self-sustain during the COVID-19 crisis as there were surge in cases and deaths due to the pandemic with huge impact on economy and therefore on joblessness state. The lower-class families were not able to sustain due to job losses and so for the women across the Banaras states, since their husbands were mostly migrant workers, labors, hotel staff while others were doing some low wage jobs. Other than pandemic crisis, some of these women were the victims of the domestic violence and abuse from their husbands and in-laws. Additionally, young girls are still discriminated due to the gender issue since their families believe that only men are able to fulfill the needs of the families and are right for doing jobs. Thus, this initiative was taken to make women and girls to be aware of their inner potential to self-sustain not only on the basis of the economy of their families, but also to develop their own self-respect. Additionally, supports were also given to the labors who were worst affected by lockdown. There were some supports from the state government through initiative such as Mission Shakti for the women empowerment and schemes that are beneficial for the labors and their immediate families.

The mission focused primarily on five aspects:

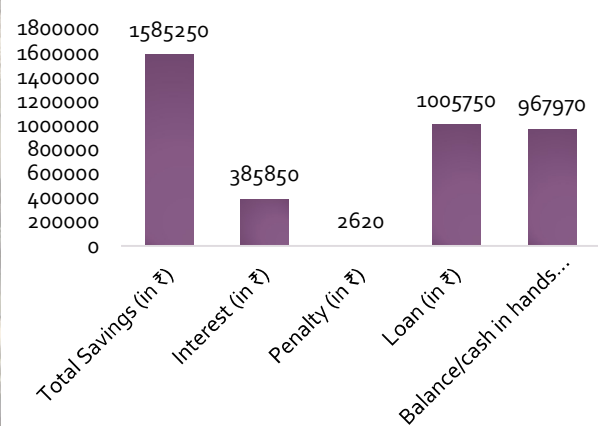


Boosting family economy through strength and self-reliability

As soon as lockdown was imposed, there were sudden economic crisis among householders. About 3585 members including over 1000 women across the 70 villages of Sevapuri and Arazi Line started forming women's SHG with the aid of Asha Trust India and Lok Samiti. Ration card was distributed to over 4000 families. These women also came up with awareness drive of the importance of hand washing, use of sanitizer and wearing mask along with their distribution. Since last year lockdown, the total groups were estimated to be 115 and total cash in hands were about ₹ 967970.



Women's self-help group



Graph distribution of the SHG total savings

Embroidering Happiness

The women started with an idea of self-employment by opening sewing center where every woman in the village could get employment as well provide training to the adolescent girls in order to elevate not in terms of economy, but at a same time, to develop self-confidence. They made masks and were distributed at free of cost among 12,000 people. About 12 centers have been opened and total of 300 adolescent girls are being trained to do embroidery. Other than mask, they are doing great job in sewing beautiful design sarees. Not only they focused on sewing clothes, but also these women came up with idea of spreading awareness about gynecological issues such as menstruation along with the remedies, such as using sanitary pads. Furthermore, they have started planning to develop pads in the sewing centers. Additionally, these women are also aware of their rights and they have also emphasized the importance of raising voice against the domestic violence. They believe that they definitely have rights to self-sustain as their husbands do and at a same time any form of physical abuse should not be ignored, instead, that should be put for a complaint to the police, due to the courtesy of the state government that has launched 'Mission Shakti' to empower every woman of the state.



Sewing masks



Opening a new sewing center on March 9th



Opening a new sewing center on March 20th



Police commissioner filing complaint against domestic violence



Masks ready for dispatch

Upliftment during COVID-19 crisis

The Labor Relief Camp was initiated to aid the migrant labors and their families and were later extended to the pregnant women, teenager and '*Dibyang*' people. Additionally, during the Ramdan month, special ration kit was given to the thousands of Muslim families. Over ten thousand migrant workers were given food on the National Highway while returning to their home. A survey of 1500 returned migrant labors in the 50 villages of Araj Line and Sevapuri Block was done and put a proposal to the state government to provide employment opportunities during the harsh period of the lockdown. About 5000 families of the labors were provided the benefits of the government schemes, for the migrant workers and their immediate families. They were provided with proper ration card in order to have labor scheme benefits. About 150 daily wage workers were registered with the labor department.



Ram Bachchan working on creating IDs of labors with important government officials



Relief kit being dispatched to poor families



Preparing food items



Relief camp in the main city of Varanasi

Washing Stains of Poverty

As we are moving in modern era, women are advancing continuously in every area. In Nagepur district, women started an exemplary group to empower themselves by synthesizing their own washing powder and soap. This has even reached in media where they highlighted the achievements of self-reliance and economic empowerment these days. The women are making their SHGs to manufacture washing powder at cheap prices. The chairman of the group, Kalavati, said that during the epidemic period, the head of each household was not getting work. The economic conditions in every household were becoming worse day by day. With the help of Asha Trust and Lok Samiti, a group of 15 women underwent training to make washing powder. Currently, they have started marketing by making their own washing powder and selling them in the local market shops. As a result, washing powder were sold to about 3000 families belonging to 115 SHGs in 70 villages of Sevapuri blocks and Araji Lines. With the initial breakthrough of selling such products, there is a plan for doing mass manufacturing as well as making and selling other items such as pickles, marmalade, papad, pulses and spices.



Washing powder preparation

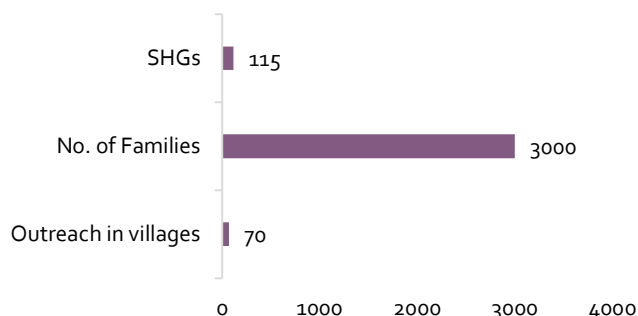
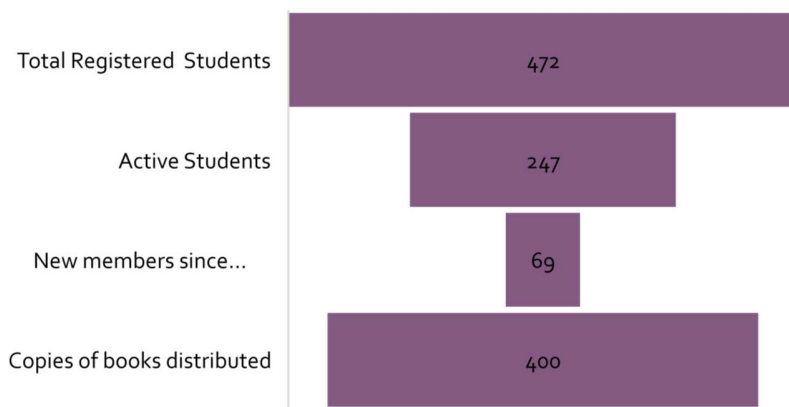


Chart for the washing powder distribution

Empowering Young Minds with Knowledge

During the pandemic crisis, many of the students were not able to attend online classes either due to network issues or lack of accessories such as computers, smart TV and laptops. The students of classes X-XII were also facing challenges as they were in the middle of preparing board exams and entrance exams. Other than students of these classes, there were other young minds who were preparing for other entrance exams, for instance, SSC and civil services along with other exams as well. Asha Gyan Library (Asha Knowledge Center) is run by the Lok Samiti at Nagepur district to help the young minds to prepare for such competitive exams. About 472 students are the registered and since last year during COVID-19, there was a total addition of 69 new members. Additionally, 400 copies of the books were distributed among the underprivileged children at no cost.



Graph for the students registered in the library



Asha Trust Library