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Self-help groups: A potential pivot of Bihar's response to COVID-19

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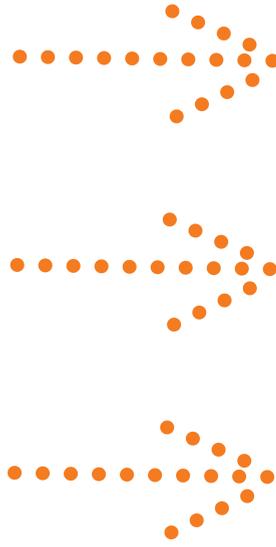
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SELF-HELP GROUPS: A POTENTIAL PIVOT OF BIHAR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19



About half of the SHG leaders were engaged in COVID-19 related community awareness and prevention activities in their community.

Half of the SHG families lost income/jobs and hence needed wage support or ration; one-third of the SHG families were in desperate need for cash.

Given the low level of fund/loan utilization by the members during the pandemic, the need of the hour is to surge up the support for their livelihoods and employment.

BACKGROUND

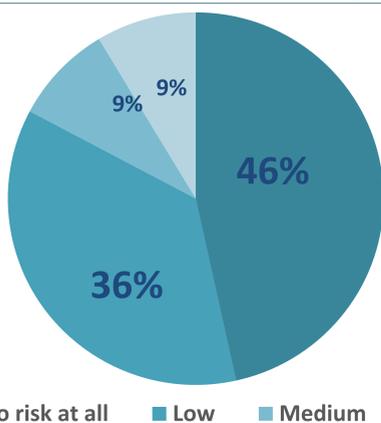
- More than 10 million women in Bihar are members of women self-help groups (SHGs), JEEViKA, run by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society, Government of Bihar. The SHGs play a crucial role in the community by providing livelihood support and income-generating activities to their members.
- This study's key objectives are to document SHG leaders' engagement in the community awareness and infection prevention activities and the extent of support they give to their members through different funds and loans for their livelihoods and income generation during this pandemic.

METHODS

- Data was collected between May 17–20, 2020 through telephone interviews with 179 SHG leaders from three selected districts in Bihar. All results presented in this brief are based on full sample (N=179), unless otherwise specified.

RISK PERCEPTION

Risk perception among SHG leaders about Coronavirus infection in the community



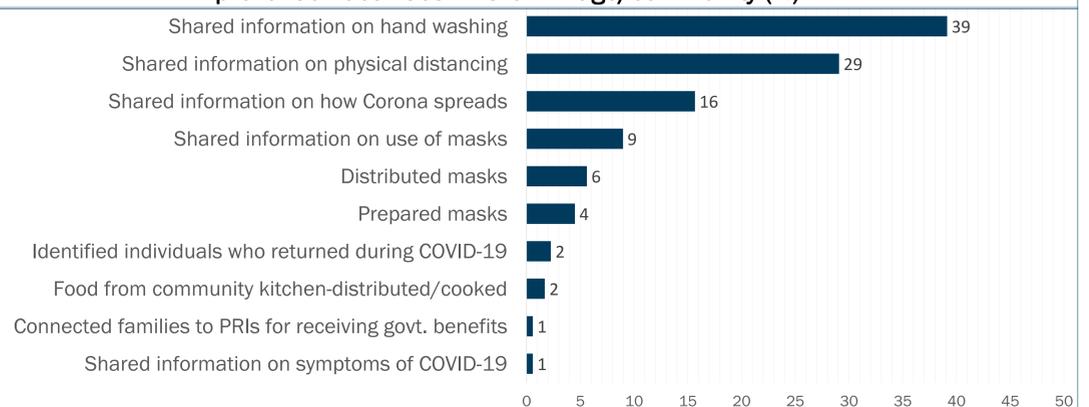
Note: N=174

- 82% of SHG leaders had no/low-risk perception of COVID-19 in their village/community.
- Major reasons for no/low-risk perception: no positive case in the area (47%), people wash hands/use sanitisers more frequently (47%), use mask (37%), stay at home (33%), keep distance of at least 2 meters (29%), avoid going to public places (25%), nobody returned from outside the village (22%), people follow government guidelines (17%).
- Those with medium- or high-risk perception believe so because people returned from urban area/other states.

SHG ENGAGEMENT

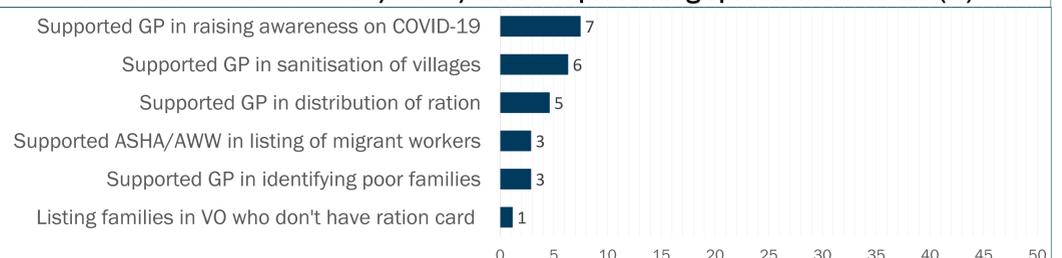
- **49%** SHG leaders reported that they were engaged in COVID-19 related community awareness and infection prevention activities in their community.

Ways through which SHG leaders were engaged with community awareness and infection prevention activities in their village/community (%)



- **17%** SHG leaders coordinated with gram panchayat (GP)/frontline health workers (FLWs)/block development office (BDO) in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

SHG leader's coordination with GP/ FLWs/ BDOs in preventing spread of COVID-19 (%)



ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY OF SHG MEMBERS

<p>Lost income/jobs & need wage support or ration</p> <p>50% of the SHG families have lost income/jobs and hence needed wage support or ration</p>	<p>In desperate need for cash</p> <p>30% of the SHG families were in desperate need for cash</p>	<p>Don't have ration card, but need ration</p> <p>22% of the SHG families did not have ration card but needed ration</p>	<p>Have ration card, not able to access PDS</p> <p>7% of the SHG families had ration card but unable to access the PDS services</p>
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SUPPORT TO MEMBERS THROUGH FUNDS AND LOANS

- **6%** SHG leaders reported that food security fund was given to their members and almost all members from those groups availed the benefit.
- **5%** SHG leaders informed that at least one member from their group took a loan during lockdown to buy food items, to manage 'no income' or for survival.

LIMITATIONS

Given the limited sample size, the results should be interpreted with caution, and the estimates may not be generalised. The constraints on the number of questions and time for a telephone survey restricted collecting additional information on economic vulnerability, which could help us gain more insights into the coping mechanisms.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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