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

UNICEF
Population Council Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments_sbsr-pgy

Part of the Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons, International Public Health Commons, and the Public Health Education and Promotion Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

This Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.
SELECTIVE GROUPS: A POTENTIAL PIVOT OF BIHAR’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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 telephonic 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

<p>| Risk perception among SHG leaders about Coronavirus infection in the community |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No risk at all</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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 (%)

- Shared information on hand washing: 44%
- Shared information on physical distancing: 34%
- Shared information on use of masks: 31%
- Distributed masks: 13%
- Prepared masks: 9%
- Identified individuals who returned during COVID-19: 2%
- Food from community kitchen/distributed/cooked: 2%
- Connected families to PRIs for receiving govt. benefits: 1%
- Shared information on symptoms of COVID-19: 1%

- 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 (%)

- Supported GP in raising awareness on COVID-19: 13%
- Supported GP in sanitation of villages: 9%
- Supported GP in distribution of ration: 6%
- Supported ASH/IMW in listing of migrant workers: 6%
- Supported GP in identifying poor families: 4%
- Listing families in VO who don’t have ration card: 3%

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY OF SHG MEMBERS

- 50% of the SHG families have lost income/jobs and hence needed wage support or ration
- 30% of the SHG families were in desperate need for cash
- 22% of the SHG families did not have ration card but needed ration
- 7% of the SHG families had ration card but unable to access the PDS services

- Lost income/jobs need wage support or ration
- In desperate need for cash
- Don’t have ration card, but need ration
- Have ration card, not able to access PDS services

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

This work was jointly undertaken by Population Council Institute and UNICEF/Bihar. For more information, contact akastor@popcouncil.org; nsaggurti@popcouncil.org; pash@unicef.org