

# COVID-19



## RAPID RESPONSE

Based on data gathered up to May 10, 2020

In these times of mounting crises across multiple fronts, here is a glimpse at how Watershed Organisation Trust is helping the rural populace get on with their lives



Helping the poor and migrants rebuild their lives



**A**s we complete eight weeks (56 days) of back-to-back nationwide lockdowns, the discussion around the COVID-19 outbreak has shifted from medical emergency response to economic impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions. Migrant workers, senior citizens, women, children and the urban poor are the most affected.

At the time we publish this report, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of at least 3,000 people in India and infected over 100,000. Globally, over 300,000 people have succumbed with 4.8 million people contracting the virus, as per data provided by Johns Hopkins University.

However, this has not stopped WOTR's commitment to the tens of thousands of returning migrant families in rural India who are struggling to come to terms with the severe losses they have faced. WOTR is working to ensure they are not deprived of the critical support they need at this crucial hour.

## HOW WOTR's VAST EXPERIENCE AND ROBUST NETWORK ARE HELPING RURAL POOR

WOTR is on the ground, mobilising informed and measured rapid responses to the pandemic through various modes such as distribution of essentials, creating awareness, social messaging, generating employment and other livelihood support in seven states -- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Telangana.

We are reaching out through our village-level workers -- the Panlotsevaks (Watershed Technical Experts), Jalsevaks (Water Caretakers) and Mahila Pravartaks (Women Promoters) and members of village collectives such as the Village Development Committees (VDCs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Gram Panchayats, etc.-- raising awareness in the project villages on prevention and safety measures to fight the coronavirus. Field teams are at the ready and constantly in touch with the local communities through phone calls and on-site visits (wherever permitted) to guide and motivate them in these challenging times.



As of May 10, 2020, WOTR has reached out to 122,531 households in 25 districts, spread across 646 villages in seven states

	Odisha	Rajasthan	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Telangana	Jharkhand	Maharashtra	TOTAL
No. of districts Covered	2	2	6	1	1	1	12	25
No. of blocks covered	3	3	6	1	2	2	23	40
No of villages covered	31	4	82	8	26	72	423	646
Total no. of households covered	1,924	116	8,610	2,161	6,032	7,234	96,454	122,531



MOBILISING RAPID RESPONSE IN VILLAGES

# 1. EMPLOYMENT GENERATION / LIVELIHOOD FOR RETURNING MIGRANTS

COVID-19 - which has now been characterized as an endemic - and the subsequent lockdown - has resulted in a sudden spike in unemployment, especially among the migrant labourers. WOTR has been working to generate employment for the returning migrants from urban centres through its project activities in the rural pockets while ensuring that social distancing is maintained.

## Labourers undertaking watershed development activities

Across the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, WOTR has started its Soil and Water Conservation projects. WOTR's Social Project Officer Romit Banerjee in Jabalpur says: "We received a request from some labourers through one of our field staff on their willingness to work as currently they are unemployed and require an income to survive. So we started our work on soil and water conservation and employed them without compromising their safety."



Farm Bund work in progress, maintaining social distancing, in Ganaloya in Khunti district, Jharkhand

	Odisha	Rajasthan	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Telangana	Maharashtra	TOTAL
No. of labour days generated	1,606	1,244	11,126	875	72,814	18,440	106,105
No. of labourers employed	251	119	1,956	130	6,946	651	10,053

So far, WOTR has generated 106,105 labour days  
employing 10,053 labourers benefitting 4,339 families

## 2. DISTRIBUTION OF ESSENTIALS / PROTECTING RURAL INDIA AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

Even though the sudden imposition of the lockdown was intended to contain the spread of the coronavirus, local food supply systems were disrupted. The vulnerable groups and their families have been hit the hardest.

WOTR is assisting in the distribution of essentials and helping needy families who are struggling to get rations while distributing sanitisation kits.



Distribution of grocery kits

	Odisha	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Jharkhand	Maharashtra	TOTAL
Distribution of grocery kits: No. of households covered	214	1,841	226	438	2,660	5,379
Distribution of sanitization kits: No. of households covered	1,756	0	0	438	24,820	27,014

WOTR has distributed grocery kits to over 5,379 households and sanitisation kits to at least 27,014 households across five states.

## SEWING MASKS FOR SELF SUSTENANCE

Melan Soymurum is a marginal farmer from Binda village of Jharkhand. Differently abled, he started tailoring work about a year ago in order to earn an extra income. He availed rations through the PDS system, but that was not enough for him to sustain during the lockdown. He was then approached by WOTR for sourcing protective face masks. He produced approximately 370 masks and generated an extra income of Rs 2,400 for himself.



Melan Soymurum at home in Binda Village, Jharkhand

## Why SHGs matter / Women lead the way to self reliance



Members of an SHG group sewing protective face masks

Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the country are playing an important role, earning a living through sewing and distributing protective face masks while earning a living. They have risen to overcome this extraordinary challenge.

Ashwini Suryavanshi Valwad from Osmanabad, Maharashtra, says she was already engaged in sewing blouses, but due to the lockdown this came to an abrupt halt. "There was no means of a livelihood for me. However, when WOTR approached me with an order of preparing 2,500

masks, I met the requirement in three days and received Rs 37,500," she adds.

	Odisha	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Jharkhand	Maharashtra	TOTAL
No. of masks prepared	10,255	3,055	0	2,622	5,6370	72,302
No. of tailors involved	16	35	0	6	214	271
No. of persons to whom masks were distributed	8,895	3,270	720	2,419	53,870	69,174

271 tailors stitched 72,302 masks which were distributed to 69,174 individuals

### 3. SUSTENANCE SUPPORT / ENSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY / ENHANCING INCOMES

In a country where more than half of the workforce is dependent on agriculture, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the sector. The lockdown coincided with the country's peak harvesting time for a variety of crops. Fruits were ripe and ready to pick; crops such as wheat, paddy and barley were also ready for harvest. But the farmers' hard work did not bear fruit as the country abruptly entered lockdown.

#### Promoting Kitchen Gardens and Multilayer Farming

WOTR's kitchen gardens and multilayer farming initiatives have proved to be beneficial for the small and marginalised farmers. These activities make people resilient during crises, such as a drought or a pandemic.

"Because of the lockdown, the market is closed and there are no vegetables. But thanks to WOTR's initiative of multilayer farming, I can produce my own vegetables organically. I even distribute the excess to the villagers," says Vishnu Tepale from Bhokardan.



A farmer at her kitchen garden

	Odisha	Rajasthan	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Telangana	Jharkhand	Maharashtra	TOTAL
No. of kitchen gardens (KG)	221	4	1,089	2	232	40	7,407	8,995
No. of multilayer farms (MLF)			2				394	396
No. of households benefitting from KG & MLF	280	25	2,894	2	232	40	20,246	23,719

At the moment, 8,995 kitchen gardens and 396 multilayer farms are helping 23,719 households

## Facilitating access to Public Distribution System (PDS)



Villagers in Odisha receiving their PDS entitlement along with cash benefit

Access to adequate and nutritious food has been a big challenge to the rural poor and vulnerable, especially due to the lock-down resulting from the pandemic. Besides distributing food kits to the vulnerable, WOTR has also helped the poor secure their food entitlements.

In the states of Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, we have helped at least **6,139** families secure food grains through the Public Distributed System (PDS). In Telangana alone, **6,032** families secured PDS through WOTR.

## Marketing Farm Produce



Farm produce being sold directly at doorstep in Aurangabad, Maharashtra

On the other hand, as supply chains are hit and farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to sell their produce, that too, at the peak of the harvest, WOTR is adopting various measures to help the farmers in distress.

WOTR has facilitated the marketing of fresh agricultural produce, thus benefiting **255** families, a large majority of them in Telangana.

## 4. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS DRIVES / TACKLING FAKE NEWS AND RUMOURS

Precaution and access to right information is key to halt the rapid transmission of the coronavirus. Use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials in local languages, including visual aids, to explain COVID-19, how it spreads and preventive measures to be undertaken, is one of the key interventions WOTR is undertaking to combat the pandemic in rural India.

Awareness generation is also being facilitated by Wasundhara Sevaks/Sevikas, Anganwadi Karyakartas and Mahila Pravartaks on sanitation including proper hand washing, covering faces using handkerchiefs, importance of social distancing in public places like grocery shops, door-to-door IEC material distribution for awareness, messages through wall paintings, and the like.



A wall painting about coronavirus prevention in local language (Odiya)

	Odisha	Rajasthan	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Telangana	Jharkhand	Maharashtra	TOTAL
No. of awareness events	136	7	351	69	257	30	1,240	2,090
No. of people impacted through the awareness events	4,704	625	41,235	1,710	6,032	7,234	90,725	152,265

Until now, WOTR has conducted 2,090 awareness sessions and impacted 152,265 people

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