

Report on Panel discussion

COVID 19 – 2020 what we learnt about and how much we are prepared.

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Venue Online Ciscowebex

By



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Introduction

As an important measure to minimize the impact of COVID-19 pandemic Government of India initiated nationwide lockdown from 21st March 2020. Various advisories and guidelines were issued during that period to effectively support the affected population with all resource and services. However, continued lockdown of all the economic activities critically dislocated the migrant population of India. Lacking jobs and money, and with public transportation shut down, hundreds of thousands of migrants were forced to walk hundreds of miles back to their home villages or stranded at major transit points of inter– state borders.

Issues faced by migrants.

During outbreak of COVID-19, and the restrictions imposed on routine activities as part of social distancing norms to prevent the spread of the disease, scores of migrant workers tend to move back to their native places. During the prevailing COVID pandemic also, many migrant workers used all possible means to reach their destinations. Many of them are however stuck at borders, including state, district and at national border areas. These are the most marginalized sections of the society who are dependent on daily wages for their living, and in times of such distress need sympathy and understanding of the society. Immediate concerns faced by such migrant workers relate to food, shelter, healthcare, fear of getting infected or spreading the infection, loss of wages, concerns about the family, anxiety, fear/depression leading to lack of confidence. Sometimes, they also face harassment and negative reactions of the local community. All this calls for strong social protection (MoHFW).

Issues of children

Similarly, the second sector which is worse affected are children and learning loss In India, more than 32 crores of students have been affected by the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown for COVI-19. As per the UNESCO report, about 14 crores of primary and 13 crores of secondary students are affected which are two mostly affected levels in India. Though it is an exceptional situation in the history of education, COVID provided an opportunity to come out of the rigorous classroom teaching model to a new era of digital model. But latter on all realized that

the lockdown has taught so many lessons to manage with the emergence of such pandemics. Thus, COVID created many challenges and opportunities for the educational institutes to strengthen their infrastructure (Pravat, 2020a). The lockdown has given them a ray of hope for teachers and students to continue their educational activities through online. But it is also observed that COVID 19 pushed children out of schools – many got dropped out, pushed in child labor or trafficking. Thus, based on these ground level issues and challenges Zone4solutions proposes to organize panel discussion on above two sectors and how to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 in 2021 on them.

Objectives of the programme was :

- Discussion of recurring challenges faced by migrants due to pandemic.
- Impact of pandemic on learning loss of children.
- Psychosocial impact of COVID due to loss of livelihood and learning loss of children.
- Way forward, if any.

In welcome and context setting remark Shri Nakul K Tarun, Director Zone4solution said that Just



a few weeks ago it was commonly observed by all that Government of India successfully manage and controlled impact of global Catastrophe COVID 19. Later the health minister declared that the country had entered “the endgame” of its own battle against the pandemic which also

emphasized on the fact that COVID or any other pandemic is now a recurring hazard for humanity and countries must prepare themselves well in advance to minimize the impact of these hazards on community at large. It is also pertinent to mention here that India has not learnt and prepare itself from the learning of COVID 19(2020) as even after one year scenario are same viz; Migrants started going back to countryside, Schools got closed till further notice, number of cases increased to 2.5 lakh per day.

India is now completely exposed to this new mutant virus and risk are very high as we can see in the second Covid-19 wave with multiple new mutations and the threat of repeated, livelihood-destroying lockdowns, learning loss to huge number of children.He further discussed about the design of discussion and put following points for all the panelist for further discussion:

1. By now we must accept the fact that COVID 19 pandemic is a recurring hazard we can't make whole society completely immune to these kind of pandemics as it may happen in some other form with changing scenario.
2. Closure of system and society is not at all sustainable solution as it is leading to high economic burden and pushing people in more economic vulnerable situations.
3. We need to identify issues related to various sectors like education, health, employment etc and try to manage the impacts of COVID.
4. We did get enough time to prepare ourselves for this wave of pandemic. But largely we find ourselves in the same position where we were in 2020.
5. What are those learning in terms of social behavior of people and society, preparedness on behalf of administration and government?

6. What can be done- skill training of migrant laborers, reopening of schools with adaptation, reopening of markets with adaptation in social behavior as basic norms.
7. Strengthening and testing of Disaster Management plan at all levels in view of current pandemic.

In first feedback from ground Shri Awdhesh Kumar, Assistant Professor, Invertis University told that COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, As per United Nation's Education during COVID19 & Beyond, August 2020



policy brief pandemic affected nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries.

Also as per UNESCO report, it had affected more than 90% of total world's student population during mid-April 2020 which is now reduced to nearly 67% during June 2020. Outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted more than 120 crores of students and youths across the planet. In India, more than 32 crores of students have been affected by the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown for COVID-19. As per the UNESCO report, about 14 crores of primary and 13 crores of secondary students are affected which are two mostly affected levels in India.

Annual Status of Education Report released by the non-profit Pratham in October indicate that there was a sharp increase in the number of children in the 6-10 age group who were not enrolled in a school—from 1.8% in 2018 to 5.3% in 2020—found the. The survey recorded a spike in smartphone ownership among rural households, from 37% in 2018 to 62% in 2020. But in poorer

states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar, where digital access is anyway poor, it found that less than a quarter of the enrolled children received any learning material.

Another survey of over 1,500 public school teachers spread across five states by the Azim Premji Foundation indicate that almost 60% of children were unable to access online learning methods, and 70% of the parents found online classes to be ineffective for learning. The teachers' survey also revealed that in at least 80% of the cases, only an hour or less per day was spent by teachers per grade on online classes. However, all students have Right To Education (RTE) act 2009 in India but, three fourth of students not getting education. And everyone knows that RTE act not disabled during this pandemic. We must save our children education specialty we should focus on students from economically weaker sections.

At the end Mr.Awdhesh stressed on avoiding mistakes by learning lessons from previous global pandemic management & quoted the example of 1918 influenza pandemic on this line, he also expressed concern on uncontrolled outbreak of misinformation floating on internet & advocated about taking measure for abatement of pandemic induced infodemic situation.

In second feedback from ground Shri Hinanshu Shekhar, Senior editor, NDTV told that when last year lockdown was imposed the world exodus was seen on the road. No one was sure that what



to do. However, number of COVID cases were less than 600. He further told that even enforcement department of India was in grip of fear. The reason was unawareness and no resources was available with us. Even no data was available about how many migrants are , How many are

travelling , etc. Hence we were not sure about the problem. Hence finding a solution was difficult. After three months of lockdown first time a date came officially by Rural Development Secretary on Migrant Worker Data (17.06.2020). They said in total 67 lakh reverse migration took place to 116 districts of Indian states including Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Odish and Jharkhand. He further elaborated that First Data Tabled in Parliament on 08th Feb 2021 by Minister of Labour and Employment tabled State-wise details of the number of migrants who returned to their home State (As per the Data collected from the States till 08th Feb, 2021) all India 1,14,30,968 migrants major contributor UP with 32,49,638 and Bihar with 15,00,612 migrants. Lakhs of Migrant Workers in Post-Lockdown Phase were walking on foot symbolized the economic crisis which followed the nation-wide Lockdown – in both National and International Media. It continued over several phases starting in the last week of March, 2020. He mentioned that a large number of migrant workers in the Faridabad Industrial Area told New Delhi Television they had lost their jobs during the lockdown. Some did not have ration cards to access free food grains made available by the government of India, some who had ration cards were struggling to lift the free food grains they were entitled to as the fair price shop in their locality was not functional and were running out of their meagre savings. Food Ministry Release dated 16th May 2021 say that Late Food Minister Paswan issued a statement stating that to mitigate plight of migrants during this precarious COVID-19 situation and also ensure availability of food grains to them and their families, 8 LMT of food grains has been allocated to States / UTs and the Government of India will bear the entire cost on account of such distribution including transportation within the State, dealers' margin etc. The unemployment was all time high in first week of April 2020 it was 23.8%. Again, as Maharashtra Govt and Delhi Govt called curfew migrants pressed panic button. Large number of migrants found at railway station and bus station however, Delhi govt has appealed to stay wherever you are.

Dr. OP Singh while commenting on both problems said that its true that last year, we were not aware about the problem but today as nation we certainly have.

Now have our own PPE Kit, sanitizer, and of course vaccine. we have little data of migrants, but this is not going to solve our problem. We need more structured data to understand the problem and to find solution. He said all including political and



religious leaders were supportive to the migrants. Hence no point of non-welfare policy for them. He said we have resources we can arrange safety gears for migrants' travelers so no further infections. We can arrange safe transports with help of govt and public sector. Which was missed last time. This time I am sure available resources will be used properly. Disaster management is all about use of resources wisely. He said govt has initiated Garib Kalyan Yojana, increase the number of MNREGA workday to stop migration. But this is not the dignified way to stop migration. You have to upskill migrants worker of these identified 116 districts so they can earn and stay at their home or near home.

While commenting on school closer problem he said I am agreeing with Nakul that school is in center of villages life. You can't educate village students without his school. In comparison of numbers, CBSE schools are very less however, most of villages in India has a government school. We must find the way to keep open our schools. Online education is creating a divide between well to students and economically weaker section students. Though digital platform is future of education but at this point of time rural India is not ready for it. Even a family might have a smart phone but two- three learning kid. Some families have only no smart phone but learning kid. Every year for a growing kid is learning milestone so we can't afford to loss of education. We should make our school safe. In fact, safest place so in case of any disaster education does not

disrupt. We have School safety guidelines by NDMA. We should implement it through a qualified disaster manager and move towards safe school. We should have a recovery plan to restart our school as quickest as possible in case of any closer. After Bhuj earthquake India did a massive transform in disaster management and hence NDMA, NIDM and lot of SDMA and DDMA's constituted. I am sure government will use this pandemic to further transformation of disaster management in India. We will see lot of safe hospital and safe school in future.

The discussions were attended by 26 Disaster management professionals by personal invitation.

List of Panelist:

1. Dr. OP Singh, Ex DGP, NDRF and UP Police
2. Shri Himanshu Shekhar, Senior Editor, NDTV
3. Shri Avdhesh Kumar, Assistant Professor, Invertis university
4. Shri Nakul Kr Tarun, Director Zone4solution

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