

Draft

Best Practice

Role of Sanitation Workers in Combating COVID-19 in Karnal

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Introduction

Most of the initiative and measures taken in the present one-off crisis are based on social concerns and resolve. Setting of targets and success level is also linked to the virtue of purpose. These initiatives are often not time-tested yet pushed on the strength of humane impulse which believes that goodness will prevail. These may not strictly match the accepted criterion for a good or best administrative practice in their conceptualization. Their success, efficacy and effectiveness will be measured against the delivery of desired objective even in the face of hastily conjured up rollout strategies, popular support and voluntary mobilization almost at no additional cost to the system.

The Government of Haryana under the exemplary guidance of Chief Minister Shri Manohar Lal Khattar has shown excellence administrative resilience in fighting the unprecedented disaster that has struck the humanity all over the world. At the first sign of an impending outbreak the whole executive machinery swung into action to combat this malaise. It is an exceptional mobilization of resources across the state that has checked the spread of virus to a remarkable extent. Innovative techniques, systems and procedures have been put in place and ably supported and handled by the experienced civil services, medical and civic staff. At the city and municipal level citizens have also cooperated in compliance of emergency guidelines and displayed a great humane approach in these extraordinary times.

The Karnal Initiative

The Municipal Corporation of Karnal has taken some innovative steps which were very effective in combating and containing Covid-19 pandemic. The deployment and use of municipal workers in Karnal is one such initiative which has emerged as a model of best practice for containing Covid-19.

Karnal city is also known as the CM city of the state on account of being the Assembly Constituency of Chief Minister Shri Manohar Lal Khattar. The total 69 sq. km area of the Municipal Corporation is divided into 20 wards. As per the 2011 Census, approximately three lakh people live in Municipal Corporation (MC) area.

Initiatives by MC for combating Covid-19

- **Spraying of sodium hydrochloride disinfectant-** This program was launched on March 22, 2020 by the Municipal Corporation. It covered the entire Municipal Corporation area, with the help of 1410 sanitation workers. Of these 1410 sanitation workers, except a few

Chief sanitary Inspectors, Sanitary Inspectors and regular sweepers on MC roll, approximately 95 percent of are outsourced sanitation workers.

- **Cooked food packaging and distribution along with dry ration (kits):** This program was also launched on March 22, 2020. A toll free no 1950 is launched to redress the grievances of needy people. On receiving a call for food, MC workers of that area (daroga supervisors) reach that place immediately and provide food to needy people.
- **Disposing of unidentified dead bodies:** This program was launched by Municipal Corporation on March 25, 2020. Under this program, for disposal of each dead bodies, Haryana government has decided to give Rs 10,000 to the team of sanitation workers disposing the dead body. Fortunately, no such case has been reported in the MC area.
- Cleaning the city roads, public places and waste disposal remains the major duty as it used to be before Covid 19 pandemic.

The MC has been successful in sanitizing the entry points as well as the area falling in its jurisdiction by taking the following steps:

- Maintaining hygienic conditions by regular cleanliness drives and disposal of the solid and liquid garbage in a scientific manner with the help of its sanitary staff and active cooperation of the citizens.
- Regular spray of sanitizers in the urban area with help of machines purchased by the Mayor and the Municipal Corporation through their personal contributions and by making maximum use of the machines supplied by the Government of Haryana. On special request village like Sekhopura near city, where a case Covid 19 case was reported, was also disinfected by the MC sanitation workers.
- Ensuring the regular supply of the essential commodities and keeping the ration and other shops identified by the Municipal Corporation open.
- Distribution of as many as three masks to every household in the area with the help of newspaper suppliers and distribution of pamphlets for awareness.
- Distributing more than 1.5 lac cooked food packets at about 100 locations in the city and approximately 12000 dry ration kits initially with nine items including potato and onion and later with five items (Flour, Dal, Rice, Sugar and Cooking oil) among the large number of needy people. The religious organizations like Nirmal Kutia and Gurudwara Kar Sewa, etc have been of great help and support in managing cooked food packets in particular.
- The MC has formed 20 committees, comprising of local councilor, staff members of Municipal Corporation, members of social and religious organizations for ensuring the proper distribution of ration as well as giving feedback to the authorities.

- By organizing community Policing (Pehra) with the help of the members of Municipal Corporation and by utilizing the support from other NGOs.

Pro-active Role of Municipal Corporation Karnal

The Corporation has made a very practical and effective use of its Sanitation workers for this purpose. The Drogas (their supervisors) were assigned the role of supervision and coordination. The educated persons among Sanitation workers were identified for the task of the distribution of Kacha and Pucca Ration Packets. The Corporation coordinated with the Kalpna Chawla Medical College, office of the Civil Surgeon, Estate Office of Haryana Shahri Vikas Pradhikaran (Urban Development Authority), District Food Supplies Controller and other Government offices and agencies for achieving its objective. The Municipal Corporation with the help of its workers extended whole hearted support to the efforts of the Mayor and district administration by mobilizing proper support in accomplishing their targets.

Municipal Corporation & District Administration Led from the Front

The fact that Mr. Nishant Yadav, IAS, Deputy Commissioner was holding the Additional charge of the Commissioner of Municipal Corporation, Karnal helped in the complete coordination between the district administration and the Municipal Corporation, Karnal. He was assisted by the Mayor of Corporation, Smt. Renu Bala and the Joint Commissioner, Municipal Corporation Mr. Gagandeep Singh, HCS and the Deputy Commissioner of the Corporation Mr. Dheeraj Kumar. The Municipal Engineers and the Junior Engineers have also played an important role in its success.

Outcome

The combined and coordinated efforts of district administration and Corporation have been helpful in keeping the area under Karnal Corporation Corona free. This initiative of MC with help of its workers have led to the following outcomes:

1. The sanitation workers have also been able to provide the much needed relief to the migrant laborers, rural/urban poor and people in need for food since these workers know the city very well.
2. This coordination has also proved to be a big morale booster for the people and it created a confidence among them to defeat Corona by social distancing and by maintaining hygiene and sanitation through sanitizing the whole city including public spaces and main hotspots.
3. this workforce has also been successful in preventing unorganized and migrant workers from violating the lockdown.
4. The sanitation workers accepted the challenge of cremating unidentified dead bodies, thus putting an end to uncertainty on this issue.
5. The cleanliness of city, proper collection and disposal of common and household solid waste helped in effectively combatting Covid-19 in Karnal.

6. These workers also helped MC in verifying the bogus demand for ration for the purpose of hoarding. The helpline number launched to redress the grievances of needy people, received as many as 15,250 calls from March 30, 2020 to April 22, 2020 of which around 7,500 were found to be bogus.

Replicability

Yes, once the life returns to normal the society will remember the sterling services provided by the sanitation workers against all odds and many a time beyond the call of duty. This practice has left a very succinct social message. With a small support from government, civil society, business and trade bodies as well as entities like RWA it can remain part of our general social behaviour and gesture of gratitude for those who make our life safe. Same is true for large workforce. Having seen the encouraging and appreciative response from the citizens they may also learn to live and work with dedication and devotion to duty, cope up with the temporary shortage of tools and implements and always render service with a smile. All noble acts, irrespective of the reason and time of their origin, have a potential to be sustainable.

Limitation of the study

The analytical study is based on press releases, personal telephonic communication with local officials and elected representatives, newspaper reports and some online sharing of experiences.

Conclusion

Karnal Model of combating the Covid-19 Pandemic may be emulated by other corporations by adopting it to suit their needs. It is indeed a success story. It shows that coordinated can emerge victorious in any situation.

Sources

- Information collected by officer trainees in the district from District Administration and Municipal Corporation.
- Newspapers