

Draft

Best Practice

Mask production initiated in wake of COVID-19 by self-help groups under HSRLM:

A Case Study of District Kaithal, Haryana

Mask production initiated in wake of COVID-19 by self-help groups under HSRLM – A Case Study of District Kaithal, Haryana

There is no education like adversity—Benjamin Disraeli

Introduction:

A novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) outbreak occurred in China in late December 2019. Facemask wearing with proper hand hygiene has been considered an effective measure to prevent the SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Face mask is considered as one of the first steps for self-protection and has also become a social concern which has put enormous demand on the face mask supply all over the world. WHO has also recommended that “people should wear face masks if they have respiratory symptoms. Evidence have proved that face masks can only provide effective protection against respiratory infections in the community. It has also been recommended by medical experts from the UK and Germany, who have encountered the worst hotbeds of the outbreak. The COVID-19 outbreak in China, which accounts for half of the world’s production of face masks, has generated the major challenge to their availability. There is a surging domestic demand and also a major disruption in the global supply behind the acute facemask shortage for healthcare workers. This unforeseen shortage of masks in the country prompted the districts and even the state governments to look for alternative sources of face mask production and delivery. Against this background, the self-help groups under the NRLM were involved in making the affordable masks.

In the recent years the nurturing of self-help group (SHG) initiative through Micro Credit has been rightly recognized as the best way of socio-economic empowerment of the rural poor which has brought the paradigm shift in the development process at the grassroots level by focusing on mobilization of rural poor into SHGs, through their capacity building and skill up-gradation by giving assistance for taking up different livelihood activities. The SHG movement for its outreach amongst the poorest of the poor, has now not only been categorized as a silent revolution in the empowerment of millions of poor women but has also been recognized as an effective tool for rural poverty alleviation besides playing an important role in changing the socio-economic fabric of rural India. This movement has emerged as a potent cure for the malaise of rural poverty by invoking self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-help among the womenfolk.

The whole world is witnessing an unprecedented health emergency in the outbreak of COVID-19. In India also a grim battle is going on against this disaster which has created an increased demand for medical facilities and equipment including masks, personal protective equipment (PPE) and face shields for medical, police personnel other frontline functionaries, etc. engaged in this battle. It is amidst such a grave adversity that country has discovered the strength of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). The impact of flagship rural employment programme of Ministry of Rural Development can be gauged with the presence of a mammoth 690 lakh women members of

around 63 lakh self-help groups (SHGs) across the country. Members of these self-help groups have actively been participating in major community programmes like Pulse-Polio Programme, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beto Padhao and immunization programme for children and pregnant women. Similarly, now these members have been roped as 'community warriors' by contributing in every possible way to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't. The newfound strength of these grassroots 'warriors' was put in combat mode by encouraging and acknowledging their talent and capacity. The members of self-help groups (SHGs) in villages across the country started making their sterling contribution by producing the face masks in a big way. Face masks are considered the first line of defence against COVID-19. Ministry of Health, Government of India, after the revised guidelines and manual of hand-made face mask, found these masks produced by SHGs to be of acceptable quality and standard and has given official stamp of approval. The members of self-help groups have now another feather in their cap by having risen to the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic. They are meeting the shortfall in the demand for masks and other protective equipment across the country. This production and supply chain is being covered by the Ministry of Rural Development's National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).

This case study focuses on an initiative by the District Administration of District Kaithal, Haryana which has brought these self-help groups and local administration together with the objective of ensuring regular production and supply of masks, the essential means of protection from COVID-19, reaches to everyone in their district through Gram Panchayats.

Implementation of the Practice:

With masks being made compulsory for those stepping outdoors, various self-help groups (SHG) in Kaithal are making mask. The NRLM was started in Haryana in the year 2013. The self-help groups were formed under the Mission. These self-help groups in state have risen to the extraordinary challenge of the COVID-19 (corona virus) pandemic. As per the report of SRLM the district wise details of SHG and their contribution is placed below.

Sr. No.	Name of District	Mask Preparation			
		Date when started	No of SHGs involved	No. of SHG members	Total Masks prepared
1	Ambala	4/2/2020	292	890	37256
2	Bhiwani	12.04.2020	45	135	22000
3	Charkhi Dadri	4/12/2020	12	37	11000
4	Faridabad	4/8/2020	3	9	15100
5	Fatehabad	18.03.2020	273	774	184288
6	Gurugram	4/4/2020	40	120	60736
7	Hisar	3/26/2020	91	394	55117
8	Jhajjar	3/7/2020	78	376	181000
9	Jind	23.03.2020	25	72	22000
10	Kaithal	3/25/2020	71	189	92629

11	Karnal	3/19/2020	65	386	136000
12	Kurukshetra	3/24/2020	24	109	38000
13	Mahendragarh	4/2/2020	10	95	19000
14	Nuh	3/19/2020	15	130	91500
15	Palwal	05.04.2020	11	40	45000
16	Panchkula	4/10/2020	127	309	43694
17	Panipat	4/10/2020	26	107	294100
18	Rewari	4/10/2020	92	346	14155
19	Rohtak	4/1/2020	14	27	60500
20	Sirsa	01.04.2020	99	310	80335
21	Sonipat	3/24/2020	69	119	16900
22	Yamunanagar	3/20/2020	50	162	91600
TOTAL			1532	5136	1611910

Besides these, they are involved in preparing sanitizer and PPE kits as well. A total of 2,50,000 masks have been supplied to Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board by all the twenty twodistricts of Haryana. Masks are being supplied to other government agencies also. (Source: SRLM, Panchkula as on 23rd April, 2020). The detailed report regarding contribution of the SHG during the COVID-19 is placed at annexure A

During the time of emergency, when whole world is fighting with Corona, these Self Help Groups in District Kaithal are playing a major role in preparing the masks while sustaining their livelihoods through socially responsive contributions in promoting safe hygiene practices within their respective communities. These members were trained on 25th February 2020 through video conferencing. Approximately 15 members of six Gram Panchayats were trained in developing their skill in mask making. The members who were already familiar with tailoring and having experience in this field were given this task of preparing the masks in view of the growing demand. Their skill of tailoring had already been developed under NRLM.

This technique of capacity building was used to train the other members also of self-help groups. Various images of mask samples were also posted on the WhatsApp group, which was created for these members. Self-help groups from across the district are working hard to meet the increasing demand of masks by using High quality cotton clothing. The following picture is illustrative of their dedication and devotion towards this mask making.



The women members engaged in preparation and production of masks also maintained social distancing. Most of them from the unorganized sectors have lost their jobs due to lockdown. The paper clippings in support of their contribution are annexed at flag B.

An appreciation to the SHG has also been placed on record by the Ministry of Rural development vide their letter no File No. J-11060 Rural Development, KrishiBhawan, New Delhi-110001. Dated: 4th April 2020 addressed to the State Mission Director/CEO State Rural Livelihoods Missions regarding Role of self-help groups in response to COVID-19 outbreak. It highlights that “The sensitivity and responsiveness demonstrated by Self-Help Group members in addressing various needs emerged due to the current situation at the community level is highly appreciable.” This move has not only empowered them in contributing to the social cause, but also has given livelihood opportunities to several women especially during the period, the letter is annexed at flag C

Results of the Practice: Outputs and Outcomes

As many as 178 self-help groups involving 381 rural women in the district Kaithal have supplied masks to the various Sarpanches of the villages through the administration. Self-help groups have fabricated more than 92629 masks (till 23rd April, 2020) for distribution among common people through Sarpanches. Out of that 63350 masks were bought by the village heads for the distribution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Approximately 12000 masks have been given to the members of H.S.A.M.B. These members are being paid meager Rs 2/- for each mask. One woman can stitch as many as 100 masks in a day. It is worth mentioning here that these masks have been used by the officers from district administration, members of Village Panchayats and members of H.S.A.M.B and Others functionaries of various department. The masks are being sold in various gram panchayats. These have also been distributed free of cost to the rural households by the Sarpanches.



Sarpanch of the village collecting the masks from office.

To record the firsthand response, an effort was also made to contact members of the SHGs and Sarpanches to know the actual output and outcomes of the practice. One of the group leaders Ms. Neeta from Firozpur village responded when contacted on the phone: *“We are being paid Rs 2/- for each mask, but in times like these apart from the income it also gives us satisfaction that we are also doing our bit towards the society”*

Another member of Self Help Group named Meenu was contacted from another village, she was of the view that *“to earn Rs 100-200 per day in these difficult times is a respite.”* The relief and gratitude could be felt from her voice.

Lesson Learnt:

A trust was built between administration and members of self-help groups through communication and commitment. It is also noticed that members are keen to learn various income generating activities. A basic skill of cutting & Tailoring has helped in fight against COVID-19 as also for supplementing household earnings. SHG members are producing facemasks, sensitizing people about their health and hygiene regarding COVID-19 despite being away from the limelight of the cities. This kind of initiative aims at creating efficient and effective platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to supplement the household income in this period of lockdown also. In fact, COVID-19 has reiterated the need of self-sufficiency at local levels. While we may globalize but need to "localize" always remains an important mainstay of resilient societies. The success stories from other states have also set examples as highlighted by the ministry.

“Women's groups are also disseminating Covid-19 related messages among hard-to-reach populations. In Kerala, Kudumbashree is spearheading the government's Break the Chain campaign by raising awareness about hand hygiene and social distancing through mobile phones, posters and weekly meetings. In Bihar, one of India's poorest states, Jeevika- the state's SHG platform – is spreading the word about hand washing,

quarantine and self-isolation through leaflets, songs, videos and phone messages. Across the country, women's SHGs have risen to this extraordinary challenge with immense courage and dedication," summed up by Additional Secretary in India's Ministry of Rural Development, which manages the NRLM."

Conclusion:

To sum up, this innovative practice shows that in the most challenging times lie the opportunities to discover the strength of community and individuals. During the pandemic, women's self-help groups have risen to the occasion and playing a critical role in fight against the Covid-19. These kind of initiatives may inspire other women all over the state to join such activities and become real agents of change in ushering values to the society that recognize their quest for empowerment. It is a unique example of exposure to digital learning for these rural women. This will make them confident in adopting digital ways of living and learning in future also. These women are the role model for womenfolk in the society for realizing their social worth and encouraging them for participation in local decision-making, to reassert their social relevance and value. This COVID-19 emergency has also empowered these members about their *meaningful involvement as important stakeholders*. This success story is replicable and may be considered as best practice.

ANNEXURE B

कोरोना को हराने में जुटी स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं

अर्थ प्रकाश संवाददाता

कैथल, 14 अप्रैल। देश के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी वैश्विक महामारी कोरोना वायरस को फैलने से रोकने के दृष्टिगत हर स्तर पर तत्पर होकर देशवासियों में मानवता की रक्षा के लिए कार्य कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने आह्वान किया था कि सभी को सुरक्षामय कवच के लिए अपने घर के कपड़े से बना मास्क डालना चाहिए। जिला कैथल प्रशासन ने अनूठी पहल करते हुए हरियाणा राज्य ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन के तहत स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाओं से कपड़े के मास्क बनाने का जिम्मा सौंपा।

देश सेवा और कोरोना वायरस को हराने के लिए स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाओं ने इसका जिम्मा उठाते हुए कपड़े के सैनेटाईज किए हुए मास्क बनाने का



सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन कर रही हैं मास्क बनाने वाली महिलाएं
महिलाओं द्वारा बनाए गए इन कपड़ों के मास्क की मांग बहुत ज्यादा बढ़ रही है। महिलाओं द्वारा तैयार किए गए 11 हजार मास्क जिला प्रशासन को उपलब्ध करवाए गए हैं तथा 27 हजार मास्क जिले के विभिन्न पंचायतों में सरपंचों को दिए गए हैं। आगामी गेहूं खरीद के सीजन के दृष्टिगत और कोरोना वायरस महामारी से बचने के लिए हरियाणा स्टेट कृषि विपणन मण्डल कैथल को मंडियों में कार्य करने वाले कर्मचारियों के लिए 12 हजार मास्क दिए गए हैं।

कार्य शुरू किया है। जिला कैथल में विभिन्न गांवों के समूह सदस्य की 234 महिलाएं कपड़े के मास्क तैयार कर रही हैं। जिला के खंड सीवन से फिरोजपुर, रसूलपुर, कवारतन, सीवन, मांझला, खेडी गुलाम, प्रभावत, सौथा, सैर, जनेदपुर,

ककहेड़ी तथा खंड गुहला से भूना, कल्लर माजरा, सिंह, बदसुई, खुशहाल माजरा, चाबा, शादीपुर, खंड कलायत से सिणंद, कुराड़, दुब्बल, हरिपूरा, बात्ता, खरक पांडवा, पिंजुपूरा, बालू बिद्वान के स्वयं सहायता समूहों के सदस्य मास्क बनाने में लगे हुए हैं।

and posed a threat to public safety," Dr Rai said. Kohli's mother-in-law tested positive for Covid on Friday. — TNS

joined service in 2019. Ravi, a constable, while talking to the chief minister, said his education, honesty and police training motivated him to do something for humanity, so he

salary. There are 2.75 lakh employees with the state government. Besides donations from government employees, the contributions in the Corona Relief Fund reached over Rs 72 crore on Friday. — TNS

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Faced with health crisis, women groups chip in to make masks

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KAITHAL, APRIL 12

Women members of self-help groups (SHGs) under the Haryana Rajya Aajivika Mission are playing an important role in breaking the Covid circle by preparing masks.

Deputy Commissioner Sujan Singh said here that 234 women from women groups in various villages in Siwan, Guhla and Kalayat blocks of this district were making masks from good quality cloth and making these available in the market at reasonable rates.

As many as 11,000 masks prepared by women members of SHGs had been handed over to the administration and 19,700 masks had been delivered to sarpanches of various panchayats for distribution.



Self-help groups prepare masks at a village in Kaithal.

Keeping in view the devotion of the women, the district administration and Haryana State Marketing Board, Kaithal, had placed orders for masks. These women were making masks at their homes keeping in mind the social distancing norms, the DC added.

Besides this, the women had been spreading awareness among the people, espe-

cially women, about Covid and telling them about the precautions to be taken.

District Executive Manager of SHGs Manoj Kumar said that Rs 500 had been credited to the Jan Dhan bank accounts of these women.

He advised all group members not to create a rush outside banks and observe social distancing norms as advised by the health authorities.

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■ गुहला खंड से स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं

हरिभूमि न्यूज ► गुहला-चीका

कोरोना महामारी से बचाव के लिए जहां सरकार हर संभव प्रयास कर रही है वहीं गुहला खंड की स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं भी मास्क बना इस कार्य में अपना सहयोग दे रही हैं। खंड समन्वयक राजेश चौहान ने बताया कि हरियाणा राज्य ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन के तहत गठित स्वयं सहायता समूहों द्वारा गांव भूना, कल्लर माजरा, सींह, बदसूई, खुशहाल माजरा, चाबा व शादीपुर में लगभग 70 महिलाएं मास्क बनाने का कार्य कर रही हैं। संकट की इस घड़ी में ये



गुहला-चीका। स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं मास्क बनाते हुए।

महिलाएं अच्छी किस्म के कपड़े का मास्क बनाकर बाजार से बहुत ही कम दामों पर उपलब्ध करवा रही हैं। यह कार्य खंड गुहला की सभी ग्राम पंचायतों के सहयोग से किया जा रहा है। प्राप्त आर्डरों के तहत अब तक ये महिलाएं दो हजार मास्क उपलब्ध करवा चुकी हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि खांसी, जुखाम होने पर अपने मुंह पर मास्क या रूमाल अवश्यक लगाएं। जिला कार्यक्रम

प्रबंधक रजत भास्कर ने बताया कि प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण योजना के तहत प्रत्येक महिला जिनके खाते जनधन योजना के तहत खुले हैं, उनको प्रत्येक माह 500 रुपये तीन महीनों के लिए दिये जाएंगे। पहली किस्त अप्रैल के पहले सप्ताह में खातों में डाली जायेगी। स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं, समूह सेविकाएं और सामुदायिक सेवा कर्मियों के द्वारा किया जा रहा है।

