

## Minutes of the meeting

### National Strategic Communication with Communities Working Group - COVID-19

#### 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020

A national level strategic Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group (WG) for COVID-19 response was created by Sphere India on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The initial members of this group include senior retired bureaucrats, former NDMA members, Sphere India executive committee members, sector leads of sector committees and lead for advocacy committee. This group is constantly evolving with addition of more members and subject experts.

The group conducted its first virtual meeting on **30<sup>th</sup> March 2020** at 1700hrs over the online platform Zoom.us and was attended by **13 participants** (details at the end of the note)

Introduction and welcome to the group was carried out by Vikrant Mahajan, CEO Sphere India. Here is a brief about the discussions that took place during the meeting:

#### Agenda item 1: Update on collective plan and organisation

##### Key discussions

1.1 Sphere India informed that they started COVID-19 response towards the end of February 2020 with the following activities done till now:

- Activation of the URS Matrix for mapping actors responding to COVID-19
- Constitution of health cluster committee led by Doctors for You
- Setting up of group of IAG conveners for all states and UTs chaired by Mr Bhanu and Mr Pankaj from Oxfam.
- Setting up COVID-19 academy in partnership with UNICEF, NDMA and WHO. to train a task force of volunteers from across India
- Nodal level communication with NDMA
- Production and release of regular sitreps

1.2 EFICOR, on request of govt., has carried out food distribution to daily wage labourers stranded in Delhi. Guidelines on setting up community kitchens for COVID-19 were requested.

##### Actions

1.3 Draft guidelines on setting up camp for migrants, homeless, etc.

#### Agenda item 2: Strategic Engagement with Empowered Groups

##### Key discussions:

2.1 Official letter has been sent by SI to Niti Ayog stating initiatives that have been taken by SI towards COVID-19 response. Some other members have also shared similar information

2.2 Request for contacts from group members on whom to engage with from the empowered groups

2.3 NCDHR has an existing partnership with Niti Ayog and has also been trying to approach the focal points from empowered groups. If any contact is established, it will be shared.

**Actions:**

2.4 Identify groups to engage with and who should be the point of communication within these groups

### Agenda item 3: Other Strategic Engagements and areas of concerns

**Key discussions:**

#### 3.1 Community Kitchens

- Discussion on actions taken by Kerala government
  - o Setting up community kitchens at gram panchayat, block panchayat and municipal levels, setting up 4036 relief camps catering to more than 1 lakh people.
  - o Kudumbshree has also been asked to help and other women organisation are also setting up community kitchens

#### 3.2 Migrant workers

- NDMA suggested to prepare a guideline on setting up camps for migrant workers. However that has not happened yet. SI can attempt to share a broad checklist for this.
- Interventions to be planned for controlling the largescale movement of migrant workers from cities to their hometowns posing a serious threat of transmission.
- Instances like spraying of disinfectants on migrants (including children) which has happened in a few places is not dignified and other methods should be adopted. These instances should be brought to the notice of NDMA and a letter from higher authorities (Joint Secretary level) should be issued to advise the state administration to prevent such acts in the future.

#### 3.3 Volunteers

- Movement in suburban areas is still ongoing and efforts need to be made to curb this by making people realise the gravity of the situation. Local level resources (beside panchayat) like NSS and NYK (which have a presence of approx. 75 lakh people across country) can be used.
- For community awareness, there is no representation from the Ministry of Youth Affair. This potential should be tapped and a more institutionalised role for these volunteers should be planned.
- Indian Red Cross volunteers could also be involved at the state and district and state level
- Volunteers from cross sections like senior citizens, ex-servicemen, SHG volunteers, etc should be involved after 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- It is not advisable that a large number of volunteers are deployed on field without control and regulation during the national lockdown period.
- Team 2,36,000 volunteers at different levels has been mobilised by Kerala govt. However, the effort of national lockdown is being defeated due to surge large number of volunteers on field. This should be considered as a lesson learnt while setting up camps and community kitchens in the future.
- Kerala govt. has been requested to test and certify volunteers for COVID-19 before they start operations on field to reduce the danger of transmission. However, this hasn't been implemented yet

3.4 In the long term, livelihood will be a big concern. In the 11 committees formed by the government, this has not been adequately addressed.

**Actions points:**

- 3.5 Sphere to identify 2-3 specific areas of interventions and approach govt. with their plan while keeping this group updated
- 3.6 Volunteers could be trained on COVID-19 aspects through COVID-19 Academy platform
- 3.7 Through the help of IAGs across all states, the database of volunteers to be strengthened
- 3.8 Capacity building through distance education of volunteers should be the focus area until the end of national lockdown period

**Agenda Item 4: Modalities of working of the group**

**Key discussions:**

- 4.1 Terms of Reference for group
  - Should include public awareness and education
  - SI should approach the government / Niti Ayog with their strength areas (e.g., capacity building, awareness and education, etc), inform them about SI's network and propose activities. This should correspond to the TOR of this group so that the strategic thinking of the national CWC WG revolves around those points.

**Actions:**

- 4.2 Development of TOR based on global good practices. Vallari to share a draft TOR with group
- 4.3 Existing members to suggest further members who could be added to the current group

**Agenda Item 5: Any other business**

- 1.1 Further suggestions from group
  - Capacity building of various stakeholder groups and assistance to DDMA and SDMA
  - Improved public awareness on COVID-19 through IEC material in different Indian languages
  - Specific knowledge management by curating the information on COVID-19 from MOHFW, mygov.in and other official sources. Provide inputs from this curated information to different stakeholder groups like NGOs, CSOs, IAGs

**Participants**

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Sh. Anil Sinha - IAS (Retd)  | Former Vice-Chairperson BSDMA |
| 2. Vinod Menon                  | Founding Member NDMA          |
| 3. Suneeta Mukherjee IAS (Retd) | Former UNFPA Rep              |
| 4. Sh. K.M Singh – IPS (Retd)   | Founding Member NDMA          |
| 5. Ramesh Babu                  | EFICOR                        |
| 6. Lee Macqueen                 | NCDHR                         |
| 7. VR Raman                     | Water Aid                     |
| 8. Ranganathan Ravi             | CBM                           |
| 9. Mohammed Asif                | Plan India                    |



**Sphere India**

*National Coalition of Humanitarian Agencies in India*

10. Vikrant Mahajan
11. Vallari Agarwal
12. Eilia Jafar
13. Milan Madanna

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