

KHPT'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN KARNATAKA

The COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to contain the outbreak have affected millions of people, particularly populations that are vulnerable due to existing health conditions, as well as socio-economic vulnerabilities. KHPT's interventions and activities have always centred on improving the quality of health and well-being of vulnerable communities, and the organization focused its capabilities and efforts to identify the needs of those affected by the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

KHPT's strong grassroots connect and technical expertise facilitated a response that brought together its frontline staff, their extensive networks in the community and support from donors and partners to mobilize resources and support including humanitarian aid, outreach and counselling services, awareness through communication material development, and support to the Government of Karnataka.

The key principles that guided KHPT's response to COVID-19 in Karnataka

- Focus on the most needy vulnerable groups
- Continue project services without disruptions for persons with health conditions through alternative methods
- Support KHPT's frontline health workers and taking accountability for their safety
- Collaborate with local communities for rolling out COVID-19 response at the grassroots
- Support the state in implementing pandemic response efforts
- Promote ownership of multiple stakeholders in preventing the spread



HUMANITARIAN AID FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

The COVID-19 lockdown caused disruptions to peoples' livelihoods, affecting their economic security and their access to basic needs like fresh food and dry staples. Although the government had made arrangements for the supply of food and essential commodities, the most vulnerable and marginalized communities were either not aware of government services, or how to access them, or could not handle the delays in receiving these supplies. For Female Sex Workers and migrant labourers living in urban slums, the immediate loss of income made feeding themselves and their

families a difficult endeavour. For persons with conditions such as HIV and TB, the lack of access to nutritious food jeopardized their recovery. KHPT frontline staff work with community-based organizations, established community structures such as self-help groups and youth associations, and a strong network of adolescent girls. They communicated to them the needs of people in their areas, helping them to mobilize and distribute groceries, ration kits and basic necessities such as sanitary pads and masks.

4606 cooked meals provided



36451 masks distributed



34195 grocery kits distributed



2225 sanitary pads mobilised and distributed



Stories from the field

KHPT involves community structures in providing essentials to the vulnerable in their areas

KHPT staff members reached out to established community structures, a strong and trusted network of existing self-help groups, youth associations, labour associations and other community-based organizations, which had been engaged to sustain a

strong public response at the grass-root level. The community structures began mobilizing resources from among their ranks and the community, and distributing cooked meals and grocery kits in their area, helping the most vulnerable, including persons with conditions such as tuberculosis and HIV, the elderly, people living alone, and those who had lost their earning capabilities.

KHPT supported the advocacy efforts of some tribal organisations in Ballari district that had been advocating for their communities' needs, especially as they live in close-knit groups with little access to healthcare and other services. Some of these tribes are nomadic in nature, and their constant movement affects their health seeking behaviour as well. Five organizations that KHPT worked with, the Alemari Welfare Sangha, Sindholi Sangha, Sudugadu Sidhara

Sangha, Gondholi Sangha and Helavara Sangha, advocated with the Department of Social Welfare and the local MLA, Mr. Ganesh, through which they were provided grocery kits containing staples such as rice, dal, rava, milk, jaggery and vegetables during the lockdown. These kits were delivered by the organizations and KHPT staff to the tribal communities at their doorsteps. Eight TB patients in these areas also benefitted from these advocacy efforts.

Adolescent girls address sanitary pad shortage and make masks for the community

KHPT is working with adolescent girls in Koppal district to build their sense of self-agency and confidence and develop their self-esteem and leadership abilities through the creation of a cadre of role model adolescent girls. Suma from Hosakanakapur village took on the responsibility to raise the issue of the non-availability of sanitary

napkins during lockdown. Her letters and subsequent videos on the challenge faced by young girls at this time drew the attention of the media, Koppal's 'pad woman' Ms Bharathi Gudlanur and government officials including the District Commissioner of Koppal. Suma's advocacy efforts, and those of the other adolescent girls in her village, resulted in the supply and distribution of about 2900 sanitary packets in Koppal.



An adolescent girl in Koppal stitches masks for distribution in her area.

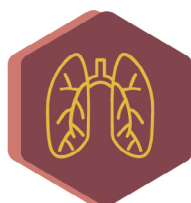
A group of adolescent girls in Koppal also made the most productive use of their time away from school and between studying at home by making cloth masks to be distributed in the community. KHPT developed a set of three videos with simple instructions on how to make a mask with and without a sewing machine, and how to store and sanitize them.



COUNSELLING AND OUTREACH

KHPT's frontline staff members have years of experience in community outreach, and are equipped with community-centred perspectives, a strong rapport with people at the grassroots, and the ability to generate local solutions to the real problems of communities. The COVID-19 scenario necessitated the leveraging of these skills to reassure community members, particularly those already suffering

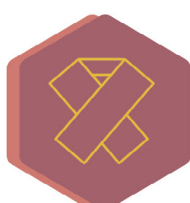
from other illnesses, and emphasize the importance of accessing and continuing to take their treatment despite their uncertainties. The teams also offered need-based support in the form of counselling and linkages to services for those impacted by gender-based violence and acute financial struggles.



958 TB and 51523 People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) provided in-person and telecounselling on treatment adherence and COVID-19



58676 individuals and **17622** families provided counselling on COVID-19 by frontline workers



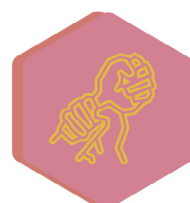
14853 PLHIVs provided Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART) through home visits



10785 diabetic and hypertensive patients provided information on COVID-19 and helpline numbers for medical care and free food delivery



958 girls and their parents provided academic support and counselling on COVID-19



178 girls counselled on gender-based violence and on tackling it within their households

Helping TB and HIV patients access and adhere to treatment

KHPT Community Coordinators (CCs) found that four TB patients in Bengaluru needed an immediate refill of their medication. One of the CCs, Chethan, followed up with those patients on the status of their refills. They were not willing to go collect their medication from the health facilities due to the fear of COVID-19 and their inability to travel to the facilities. Chethan convinced one of the patients collect his tablets after coordinating and fixing a time with the pharmacist. He also communicated the situation of the other three patients to the Senior Treatment Supervisor (STS) at the Designated Microscopy

Centre overseeing their treatment and requested him to make the medication available to them through ASHA workers and TB Health Visitors (TBHVs). Frontline workers helped a total of 409 TB patients continue with their treatment during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In Jamkhandi taluk of Bagalkot, 14 TB-HIV co-infected patients had trouble acquiring the required medication and seeking follow-up tests. They also faced challenges in accessing nutrition supplements. Padmavati Radder, the CC, interacted with the relevant authorities to get permission for the patients to visit the Jamkhandi hospital and get their tests and TB and HIV medications.

Facilitating access to medical care

Sunitha (name changed to protect privacy), is a 21-year-old pregnant PLHIV, who was due to deliver at the Jamkhandi government in hospital on April 24. However, the doctors did not want to conduct a caesarean there as the only operation theatre would have to be fumigated and sanitized post her delivery.

With a strict lockdown on public transport, Sunitha worried about undertaking the 110-kilometer journey to a government hospital in Bagalkot, where she had been referred. Another reason for concern was that the district hospital had been turned into a COVID treatment facility and a PLHIV C-section delivery had been conducted the previous day at the other potential hospital, making both unviable options for delivery. KHPT Link Workers coordinated with district health officials at Bagalkot and officials at

the District AIDS Prevention Control Unit, and Sunitha was admitted to a private medical college, where she delivered a healthy baby boy. KHPT's frontline staff continued to follow up with Sunitha after she was discharged a few days later. "I have never received such high-level care, treatment and priority in my life," Sunitha said. "Even in the medical college, I was given the utmost attention and care, and that made me feel privileged."



Sunitha with her healthy newborn at the private medical college hospital where she received care

Adolescent girls and health staff team up for door-to-door awareness

To counter the deluge of misinformation and myths associated with COVID-19, adolescent girls in Koppal, supported by government health staff and the KHPT project team, went from house to house in their localities as a part of an information campaign to give the correct information on the disease through trusted sources. The team of girls and frontline health workers covered 810 households in Koppal.



Adolescent girls spreading awareness on COVID-19 in their villages

SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA (GOK)



KHPT has been working with the Government of Karnataka since April, leveraging its strengths in communication material development, documentation and data entry and analysis to support the state's efforts to contain COVID-19 on an ongoing basis.

At a meeting led by Shri Pankaj Kumar Pandey, IAS, Commissioner, Department of Health and Family Welfare, and Dr PC Jaffer, IAS, Secretary Finance (Expenditure) and nodal officer for the Capacity Building, KHPT staff led by Mr. H S Ashokanand IAS (rtd.) Technical Advisor, Advocacy, provided inputs and support

Data analysis

KHPT's research, monitoring and evaluation team had several meetings with the Commissioner, Department of Health and Family Welfare, to understand how they could analyse data generated by the government surveillance team to help health officials make quick decisions and formulate actions and strategies in response to projected scenarios. The KHPT research team carried out the analysis of the data on a daily basis and it was comprised a comparative analysis of COVID numbers and trends at state, national and global levels.

Development of IEC Materials

The spread of COVID-19, has resulted in an overload of information, and the proliferation of false information circulated online and forwarded indiscriminately. In an atmosphere of uncertainty, the communication of not just accurate information, but also reassurance to the general population is important.

KHPT collaborated with the Government of Karnataka beginning early April to develop a set of audio jingles, images and GIFs to be disseminated on radio and social media. These messages were designed over a period of weeks, starting with the simplest and most essential topics of hand washing and safe distancing, and as government measures were put into place, on quarantine and preventing stigma. These were broadcast on All

Documentation

The communication team has been supporting the Department of Health and Family Welfare in documenting best practices and processes relating to disease surveillance, health systems strengthening, capacity building, mental health initiatives and communications and outreach. This document is intended to be part of a compendium of various health and non-health interventions carried out by the state to contain COVID-19, and will be designed to assist preparedness in the case of future outbreaks.

India Radio and Vividh Bharati radio stations, reaching a population ranging from 2.5 million to 25 million per play, based on the average audience listening in during various broadcast timings. Some of these messages were adapted into GIFs, as well as short videos with still images, which were more suitable for dissemination on Facebook and WhatsApp [examples [here](#) (social distancing in markets), [here](#) (safety measures) and [here](#) (myths on COVID-19)].

The materials were disseminated through the government executive committee working on IEC, Over 6,000 Village-Level Task Forces were reached across the state, covering over a lakh health functionaries.

9 audio jingles on hand-washing, safe distancing in different settings, infection prevention, stigma and myths on COVID-19



2 GIFS on social distancing, safety measures and myths on COVID-19 made and shared widely on WhatsApp



3 instructional videos on mask making at home with and without a sewing machine and on sanitizing and storing masks, disseminated on social media



3 capacity building videos on safety protocols to train over a lakh health functionaries across the state



LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO ASSIST COMMUNITIES IN NEED

KHPT reached out to its networks of beneficiaries, resource persons, community-level organizations, donors and employees to mobilize a collective response that would build upon the strengths of each partner to most effectively reach out to vulnerable populations. KHPT mobilized over INR 1 crore to provide humanitarian aid, which included essential commodities and grocery kits for the most needy communities, and enabled efficient distribution through its teams of dedicated frontline staff and community partners. It is through the commitment and assistance of all KHPT's partners that the organization was able to respond to the changing situation in a timely and definitive manner.

FELICITATING KHPT'S COVID WARRIORS

KHPT's frontline staff put themselves and their families at risk every day as they provide support to vulnerable communities. They embody the finest qualities any organization could ask for, bravery, commitment, dedication, steadfastness, and importantly, good humour! In appreciation of their dedication, KHPT CEO Mohan HL conducted a series of video conferences in June with project teams across the state to appreciate their work in the communities since April. Each staff member will be given a letter of appreciation and a badge proclaiming their status as a COVID Warrior!



750 KHPT COVID warriors have been identified and felicitated across all KHPT project geographies in Karnataka



KHPT CEO Mohan HL addresses the field team in Bagalkot via videoconference

KHPT staff's efforts did not go unnoticed by health officials at district level. In Bengaluru, Community Coordinator Mamatha was felicitated at a programme organized by local leaders to honour 'Corona Warriors', including taluk hospital staff and Medical Officers, ASHAs, Anganawadi Workers and local NGOs. Mamatha was awarded for her efforts to reach out to the local community, counsel the general population and TB patients on COVID-19, and facilitate provision kits for needy TB patients.

Nagaratna, another CC in Bagalkot was honoured, along with taluka health officials, at a function organized by a math in Hungund taluk of Bagalkot district, for her efforts to build awareness, distribute medicines to TB-HIV patients at their homes and support health officials as they work to keep the taluk COVID-free.