

Women rising to the occasion: SHGs Response to COVID19

Women of around 20,000 SHGs across 27 Indian States are producing facemasks, running community kitchens, delivering essential food supplies, sensitising people about health and hygiene and combating misinformation⁸.

Some of their key achievements and initiatives include:

- More than 19 million masks, 100,000 litres of sanitiser and nearly 50,000 litres of hand wash have been produced.
- 10,000 community kitchens across the country have been set up to feed stranded workers, the poor, and the vulnerable.
- Members of SHGs, working as banking correspondents (bank sakhis) are providing doorstep banking services to far-flung communities, in addition to distributing pensions and enabling the neediest to access credits through DBT.

Use of innovative communication and behaviour change tools:

- **Bihar's JEEVIKA:** Spreading awareness on topics such as handwash, sanitation, quarantine, isolation and social distancing.
- **UP's SRLM 'Prerna':** Creating awareness, on COVID-19 by using rangolis, marking lines and circles to re-emphasise the need for 'social distancing'.
- **Jharkhand's SRLM:** Didi Helpline is being operated 24 hours to help migrant labourers access verified information.
- **Kerala's Kudumbashree:** Dispelling fake news regarding COVID-19 through their network of WhatsApp groups.

"Across the country, women's SHGs have risen to this extraordinary challenge with immense courage and dedication. Their quick response to food insecurity and shortages in goods and services shows how this decentralised structure can be a vital resource in a time of crisis. The strength of India's rural women will continue to be essential in building back economic momentum after the most critical period is over." Alka Upadhyay, Additional Secretary MoRD.

⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/04/11/women-self-help-groups-combat-covid19-coronavirus-pandemic-india>