

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
(MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS)
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3416
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 09.08.2021

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

3416. SHRI RAVIKUMAR D.:
SHRI MOHAMMED FAIZAL P.P.:

Will the Minister of **TRIBAL AFFAIRS** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has made an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on tribal communities and if so, the assessment report, the follow up actions taken and planned to be taken regarding those affected by COVID-19;
- (b) whether the Ministry has established a COVID response mechanism at the Central, State and district level for tribal communities to monitor and ameliorate COVID-19 and lock down impacts and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (c) whether advisories have been issued to the States on measures that need to be taken to deal with the COVID pandemic in tribal areas and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SMT. RENUKA SINGH SARUTA)

(a) to (c): A team of Officers was constituted by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), who were in touch with the officers in State Tribal Welfare Department, to assess the preventive and curative needs to curb the spread of COVID-19 among tribal communities and extend helping hand in meeting the urgent requirement in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. During discussion with the State Authorities, no State Government has drawn attention of the Ministry towards any precarious situation in districts with significant tribal population. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken up the following proactive measures to mitigate its adverse effects on the tribal community:

- i. State Governments were requested to constitute a team of officers in tribal welfare department to assess the situation arising out of spread of COVID-

- 19 in consultation with the District administration and attend to essential requirements on priority.
- ii. Guidelines on home isolation of mild /asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and SOP on preventive measures to be followed in Entertainment Parks and similar places to contain spread of COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare were circulated among States / UTs for adherence.
 - iii. The Secretary, Tribal Affairs (TA) wrote to all the Chief Secretaries of States to regularly assess the situation arising out of spread of COVID-19 in the tribal inhabited areas and ensure testing, availability of essential medicines, vaccination facilities. It was advised that for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), there should be a dedicated officer who can coordinate with the community leaders for any specific need as these communities are particularly vulnerable.
 - iv. News items appearing in newspapers, social media and other specific issues in tribal areas were shared with the concerned States for ensuring quick action.
 - v. A Video Conference was held with the NGOs and Centre of Excellence (CoEs) funded by MoTA for discussing COVID situation among tribal population in their working areas. Directions were issued to these NGOs and CoEs to remain in touch with the concerned District administration for provision of preventive, curative and other requirements among tribal communities to the best of their capacity.
 - vi. States were requested to conduct / intensify awareness campaign in the areas with significant tribal population to counter prevailing misconceptions among tribal communities regarding Covid testing and vaccination. It was requested to engage tribal community leaders in such awareness campaign for easy dissemination of correct and scientifically researched information about Covid-19 among the tribal communities.
 - vii. The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs also provided Rs 10 lakh from MP LAD fund to Bundu Anumandal Hospital in Tamar for establishing 10 oxygen supported beds through District Administration.
 - viii. State Tribal Welfare Departments were requested to ensure that livelihood activities of tribals do not hamper due to Covid.
 - ix. The Ministry revised minimum support prices of MFP with a purpose of providing enhanced income to tribal gatherers. Further, additional 37 MFP items have also been included in the list of MSP for MFP Scheme to expand the ambit and coverage of the scheme vide notification dated 26.5.2020 and 11.11.2020. Thus, the Scheme currently covers a total 87 items.
 - x. During 2020-21, on request of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs vide Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 16/04/20 issued guidelines aiming to relax the provisions of lockdown for Collection, harvesting and processing of Minor Forest Produce(MFP)/ Non Timber

- Forest Produce (NTFP) by STs and other forest dwellers in forest areas across the country.
- xi. During 2020-21, Ministry of Tribal Affairs provided funds to the tune of Rs. 5476.01 crore for various development activities including education, health, livelihood. Further, State Governments have been advised to include proposals for meeting health related urgent requirements in view of COVID-19 in the annual plan under Article 275(1) Grants for the year 2021-22 within their share of allocation for consideration by the Project Appraisal Committee in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 - xii. Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) was asked to coordinate with States to ascertain the problems being faced by tribals in disposal of MFPs, quantum of MFPs available with States, strategy for procurement along with plan for storage, value addition and sale of MFP.

Following efforts have been made by TRIFED during prevailing COVID situation to increase sale of tribal craft and products are given below:

- (i) During the financial year 2020-21, procurement of tribal craft and products for an amount of Rs. 1709 lakh was made and 2802 tribal artisans were empanelled.
- (ii) In 2020-21, 24 virtual and three on ground Tribal Artisan Melas (TAMs) were organized by TRIFED across the country. For expansion of supplier base, suppliers' conference was organized at New Delhi where about 250 tribal suppliers participated from across the country to finalise the supply orders for each Region.
- (iii) During pandemic, TRIFED launched an e-market place www.tribesindia.com for tribal artisan/suppliers to sell their products.
- (iv) During the financial year 2020-21 TRIFED organized Aadi Mahotsav from 1st February to 15th February, 2021 at Dilli Haat INA, New Delhi wherein 1000 tribal artisans/cooks from across the country participated.
- (v) A workshop on "Strategies for Promoting & Marketing of Tribal products" conducted on 14 February, 2020 bringing together various stakeholders including central Ministries, corporations, academia, industry associations, advertising consultants, designers, ecommerce groups like Snapdeal, Flipkart, etc. to revamp and expand the TribesIndia # GoTribal campaign.
- (vi) Although the outlets were closed during lock down system of sale through home delivery and mobile vans adopted to enhance the sale of

tribal products in the year 2020-21 and realized the sale for an amount of Rs.2963.09 lakh. In the current financial year 2021-22 sale is Rs.337.32 lakhs as on 31.7.2021.

(vii) TRIFED has been promoting E-Commerce sale from its own portal www.tribesindia.com and also present on all major e-commerce portals like Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, Paytm, and Gem. With promotion through digital and social media, through this initiative, TRIFED has made sales of Rs. 131.76 lakh in 2020-21 and during the current financial year 2021-22, the sale of Rs. 34.98 lakh has been realized as on 31.7.2021.

(viii) Under the scheme of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP), TRIFED also implements the initiative of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), launched in 2018-19, wherein tribal community owned Minor Forest Produce centric multi-purpose Kendras are set up in predominantly tribal districts which act as common facility centres for procurement cum value addition to locally available MFPs. Under Van Dhan Yojana, starting from 27 Aug 2019 onwards, TRIFED has so far sanctioned 2,275 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras consisting of 34,125 Vandhan Self Help groups in 24 States and 2 UTs, in which 6.77 lakh Tribal women forest gatherers have been on boarded. A total of Rs. 336.95 crore has been sanctioned by TRIFED for the purpose.

Besides, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) undertook various interventions for better healthcare in areas with significant tribal population as indicated below:

- i. States/UTs are being provided required technical and financial assistance for strengthening of their healthcare system, including management of the COVID-19 public health challenge, from time to time.
- ii. All States/UTs are provided with necessary financial support under India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package. Under the India COVID19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package (COVID Package), States/UTs have been provided financial support, besides the supply of essential materials such as PPEs, N95 masks, ventilators, etc from MoHFW. Details of funds allocation may be sought from NHM-Finance.
- iii. A Scheme on “India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package - Phase-II” (ECRP-Phase-II) during 2021-22 has been approved by the Cabinet on 8.07.2021 for an amount of Rs.23,123 crores, to be implemented in 9 months from 1st July, 2021 to 31st March, 2022. The Scheme is aimed to prevent, detect and respond to the continuing threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen national health systems for preparedness in India. The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with some Central Sector (CS) components.

- iv. Support is provided to the States for provision for establishing District Paediatric Units (42 or 32 bedded units including Oxygen Supported beds and ICU beds) in all the Districts of the Country including the Districts with predominantly tribal population.
- v. Support is extended to create pre-fabricated structures for establishing 6 bedded units at Sub Health Centres and Primary Health Centres and 20 bedded units at Community Health Centres for meeting the requirement of hospital beds in rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.
- vi. To fast-track the availability of Medical Oxygen in rural and peri-urban areas, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare envisages to provide 1 lakhs Oxygen Concentrators to the Community Health Centres (CHCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub-Health Centres (SHCs) including Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) in the country under PMCARES Fund, so as to bring medical management closer to people and ensure the availability of critical resource of Oxygen closer to the public. States/UTs are requested to give preference to the rural, peri-urban and tribal areas. Accordingly, so far, more than 18,000 Oxygen Concentrators have been allocated to various States. MoHFW is coordinating with the MoPetroleum and Natural Gas / Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) for the effective implementation of this intervention.
- vii. Vaccination drive has been intensified across the country to safeguard the citizen from the fatality of COVID including tribal people.
- viii. An amount of Rs. 3832 crore was release to States during 2020-21 as Scheduled Tribe Component (STC). Further, an amount of Rs. 4260.20 crore has been earmarked as STC during 2021-22.

Further, funds to the tune of Rs. 30521.89 crore has been spent by other Central Ministries (excluding MoTA and MoHFW) for various development activities for tribal people that includes Rs. 10027.77 crore under livelihood related activities. The ongoing intervention under PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMJKAY) has been extended for a further period of five months till November, 2021, wherein, provision is there to provide an additional allocation of 5kg of food grains (wheat / rice), free of cost to around 80 crore National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries including tribal people.
