

Upholding the Rights of the Minority Waste-Picker Community During COVID-19

Training community volunteers:

We shortlisted 15 individuals having an interest in community development and having a basic knowledge of survey and data handling. We have built a healthy relationship with these individuals over the last few years and they have been engaged in multiple events and programs organized by Awadh People Forum at their community. Based on this relation we assigned different areas to different individuals ensuring complete coverage and valid survey data.

Volunteer Training:

1. Survey methodology
(details included in forms, importance and meaning of every question)
2. Question presentation in work areas.
3. Informal/personal approach.
4. Data handling.
5. Introduction to Legal and administrative rights of peoples.
6. Introduction to social structure of the work area, approval from the community.
7. Introduction and facts about Co-Vid, process of maintaining social distancing.
8. Use of preventive measures during surveying process.

For educating about surveying process we engaged these individuals with our experienced team member working in different areas in India. We arranged 5 online meetings and training sessions for a better understanding of the process. We practiced mock surveys to make them more confident and expressive, this was important as the pandemic created a fearful environment.

The whole process took around one week, as the training team members were from different community and most of these areas were under complete lockdown and no mobility was possible.

Preparing and conducting a house-to-house survey:

Action team identified the survey areas, but houses in communities are not well arranged and due to this there were huge chances that some families could get skipped if the approach is not well organized, so we teamed up our volunteers and identified the total number of houses.

We surveyed 150 families and they all had complete documentation needed for acquiring governmental support, we got an estimate about the number of houses, our teammates took help from other community members in reaching out more precisely. Our survey team conducted house to house survey and marked the house doors with chalks. Contact information was gathered as few members were not home and our team contacted them afterward. Our team surveyed 100 families and recorded the data, this whole process helped us making new relationships with community people and increased our community working ground.

Surveying process:

1. Provided preventive measures for surveying team.
(mask, gloves, sanitizers, protective shields)
2. One dedicated personal was arranged for sanitizing our surveying team.
Sanitization procedures were followed before entering community houses.
3. Thermal screening was done every day before and after the survey procedures.
4. Co-vid test of surveying team was done and all the members were negative and healthy.

The surveying process was completed in 15 days covering 10 areas.

Writing report based on survey findings and wider data collected

We surveyed around 200 waste picker families and noted down their data, out of these 200, 150 families were having complete document proofs and required information for the survey. Our team synchronized the data in a more executable form to make an analytical report more understandable, the missing information was gathered from our community trainee volunteers and our data analytical team updated the data.

Dissemination of the report:

After the analyses our survey report showed us the problem these communities were facing, they were lacking basic facilities like healthy food, drinkable water, healthy diet, menstrual hygiene kits, etc. A list was formed to make a numeric assessment of materialistic needs in communities.

The data covered incident related to discrimination due to gender inequality at the community level, we listed several females in need of help. We also listed local leaders who were representing the community at the administrative level and engaged them with our motto and informed them about their legal rights and administrative duties.

Meeting with all stakeholders

Understanding the situation, a supportive counsel meeting of stakeholders at government as well as individual-level were arranged where all the problems were represented and a follow-up action was designed to handle the situation more efficiently.

(Preventive measures were taken into account and social distancing was followed by the team members and the community personal. Preventive kits were used for the whole process)

police and public health officials

we approached the official explaining the current situation and asked them to support these waste picker communities, many officials like Lekhpal, Gram pradhan was engaged with us in ration distribution so they identified these communities and helped them in receiving governmental help.

“SDM - Ayush Chaudhari” and “Nayab Tehseeldar - Abhiyanchal Pratap Singh” visited the waste picker community and discussed the problems with community people. These officials also explained the basic rights that could be claimed by the community individuals and this cleared some fog and created a more transparent environment.

We distributed dry ration and lunch packet for several days with governmental officials. We also requested government officials to provide some lineage to these community workers after the lock-down ends, so that they could work for the betterment of their lifestyle.

Elected Representatives

Faizabad is a part of Ayodhya now and many political leaders supported our work and visited our communities, boosting the confidence of community members and acknowledging their efforts for living and struggle with social norms.

Leaders of Ayodhya Nagar Nigam - Waqar Ahmad & Kamlesh Solanki engaged in our ration distribution process.

We also engaged with government Accountant Surender Singh, Sarva Singh and Hari Ram Maurya. The land of these waste pickers was under their supervision. It was a great success that these waste picker communities were acknowledged by a great number of officials who were indirectly supervising their living. The official assured complete legal help to our community individuals and local leaders of the community were also introduced to these officials so that they could engage with them in times of need.

We shared all the officials and political leader’s contact information with community leaders, this formed a new bridge connecting these officials with the community.

Currently all 15 trainee members are active in different community places and we take monthly report to know the situation and ongoing issues. Our trainee helped multiple individuals from their area in gaining government ration and medication support.

The waste picking work is back on track in these communities, and families are making their life normal after being locked for a 4-month time.