

Sarpanches take on additional tasks to curb the spread of covid



Amid the surge in covid cases across the country, village leaders are striving to control the spread of the disease, some even in densely packed communities. For over a year now, they have initiated measures to build awareness and ensure that people follow covid safety protocols such as wearing masks, physical distancing and sanitizing their hands regularly.

The initiatives of these Sarpanches were elaborated upon during a virtual Sarpanch Samvad organized by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti on April 30, 2021.

Welcoming the Sarpanches, Additional Secretary, Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen, DDWS, Mr. Arun Baroka said that he was eager to learn about their efforts during the exceedingly difficult time to contain the spread of the disease, while assuring them of support. He also asked them to outline their efforts to make their villages ODF Plus.

Reiterating similar sentiments, Director, SBM-G (DDWS), Mr. Yugal Joshi said that hygiene and sanitation were even more important during the covid pandemic. He hoped they were using the creatives sent by DDWS to build awareness among the communities about covid appropriate behaviour. He encouraged them to share their experiences.



Sarpanches who participated in this edition of Sarpanch Samvad were - Ms. Dhanmati, Pradhan Jashpur, Chhattisgarh; Ms. Meenakshi Gadge, Sarpanch Adilabad, Telangana; Mr. Lakshman Singh, Sarpanch Bhatinda, Punjab; Ms. Sarita Meena, Sarpanch Jaipur, Rajasthan; and Mr. Om Prakash, Sarpanch Kota, Rajasthan.

Sarpanch **Lakshman Singh** who has been continually active in working towards ODF Plus, as also during the COVID period talked at length about their efforts during the last year to ensure hygiene and sanitation. At the outset, SHG women were given the task of making and distributing masks. All schools and government institutions were sanitized periodically. Thankfully, their community sanitary complex was functional by then and all visitors and migrant labourers were given full use of the facility. With the support of Roundglass Foundation, solid waste is being collected, and segregated, and liquid waste was managed efficiently.

Sarpanch **Meenakshi Gadge** whose leads a model village in Telangana said that apart from maintaining covid safety protocols, they have been sanitizing the entire village every two days. With the support of the district administration, they have also organized testing and administration of vaccine. She was happy to announce that they did not have a single positive case. As far as their efficient solid waste management programme is concerned, they have so far earned Rs. 4 lakhs from selling their vermi compost that is made from wet waste collected from households and gobar; and Rs. 50,000 from sale of plastic waste. Further, all households have soakpits which ensures that there is no stagnation or overflow of wastewater while ensuring that the groundwater table is enhanced.

“We have taken numerous measures to curb the spread of covid,” said **Pradhan Dhanmati**, adding that their workers have been cleaning and sanitizing all public areas. Even though they have taken many measures to spread awareness about keeping safe, there were a few positive cases in the village. While extra care is being taken to protect the community from

outsiders, they have provided all possible support to those in quarantine and those that needed hospitalization. She has been repeatedly calling affected households on her mobile and telling them about how they can control the spread of the virus.

Among the main duties during the pandemic for **Sarpanch Sarita Meena** were to convince people to take the vaccines for their own health and safety. She is now ensuring that those above 18 get the vaccines on time. The village has also done some commendable work in solid and liquid waste management.

Sarpanch Omprakash Meena said that they had distributed masks and sanitizers to the community to prevent corona infection. Further having formed a covid care committee, they make certain that disinfectant is constantly sprayed to keep all areas safe. All assistance is provided to those in quarantine and to those in need of hospitalization.

Congratulating the Sarpanches for their leadership during this critical time, Mr. Yugal Joshi motivated the leaders to keep up their good work, given that hygiene and sanitation are key to controlling the spread of the virus. He also asked them to record their good practices in the form of videos that other villages can learn from and replicate.

