

Sarpanch Samvad: Village leaders ensure covid appropriate behaviour



Given that COVID appropriate behaviour is the key to reduce local transmission and break the chain of infection, Sarpanches from across the country have taken various initiatives to generate awareness and maintain strict safety protocols to protect their communities.

This was disclosed during a Sarpanch Samvad held on June 11, 2021, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Arun Baroka, Additional Secretary, Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G), Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Welcoming the village leaders, Mr. Kapil Chaudhary, Director, SBM-G, said that the DDWS was eager to hear of their experiences in curbing the spread of Covid-19. He also encouraged them to speak of their initiatives in solid and liquid waste management with the use of funds from the 15th Finance Commission.



Sarpanches that participated in the virtual interaction were:

- Shri V. Apparao, Sarpanch, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
- Ms. Anita Rawte, Sarpanch, Kanker, Chhattisgarh
- Shri Shailendra Malviya, Sarpanch, Agar Malwa, Madhya Pradesh
- Shri Chentino Woch, Village Head, Kohima, Nagaland
- Ms. Veena Jamval, Sarpanch, Samba, J&K
- Shri Shivraj Solanke, Sarpanch, Beed, Maharashtra
- Ms. Swapna Kakoti, GP President, Majholi, Assam

All the seven Sarpanches have been continually active in covid protection for the past one and a half years. During covid and for SLWM, focus is being given to people's participation. While volunteers have been supporting the PRI in covid care, others have been volunteering through shramdaan for cleanliness and waste management activities.

From disseminating **IEC messages** to generate awareness among people about covid appropriate behaviour, and safety protocols to observe, the village leaders have put in maximum efforts to curb the spread of infection. They formed teams comprising of ASHA and Anganwadi workers, PRI members as well as Swachhagrahis that went door to door, to inform

people of the guidelines to follow to be safe. In some villages, loudspeakers were used to make important announcements.

As a part of **covid appropriate behaviour**, people were asked to use masks every time they stepped out of their homes; use hand sanitizer, wash hands frequently and maintain physical distance. Masks and sanitizers were distributed to the households.

Sanitization of public spaces: All public spaces, government buildings, schools and anganwadis were regularly sanitized with the spraying of hypo chloride solution or by using bleaching powder or a fogging machine. Also, handwashing stations were set up at common places.

Covid care: While some villages had been fever screening, others have provided medicine kits and organized testing. Those who had mild symptoms were asked to isolate themselves at home and those with co-morbidities were assisted to get to the hospitals and food rations distributed. Leading by example, many of the Sarpanches took the first vaccine in the village and encouraged others to do likewise. WhatsApp groups were formed to make important announcements about covid care and where they can avail of necessary assistance.

Solid waste management: All villages have in place systems to manage solid waste, many of them using funds from the **15th Finance Commission** for this purpose. Having distributed two colour coded bins to each family, the wet (biodegradable) and dry (non-biodegradable) waste that is segregated at source is collected by sanitation workers or Green Ambassadors who ensure that recyclables are sold to junk dealers while the wet waste is converted into compost.

Plastic Waste Management: All the villages which are soon to be declared ODF Plus have been actively curbing the use of single use plastic. Such plastic when collected is shredded using plastic pulverizing machines before being sent to cement factories. Cloth bags are produced in bulk and people are encouraged to use them instead of plastic carry bags.

Liquid waste management: Nearly all homes in most villages have individual soak pits into which their greywater is channeled. While preventing overflow of wastewater onto the village paths, these structures help enhance the groundwater table. Close to handpumps and wells, community soak pits have been constructed to take care of wastewater.

ODF Sustainability: All the villages are ensuring ODF sustainability, having previously constructed IHHLs in every household and ensuring usage. Some are imposing fines on those caught throwing garbage out in the open or if found defecating in the open when they have access to toilets. Community toilets are being maintained and efforts are being made to ensure visual cleanliness of the villages.