

Brief on engaging private sector, NGOs and international organizations during COVID -19 pandemic in India

Considering the sheer scale of the crisis that the Covid-19 pandemic has unfolded, the Government of India formed 11 Empowered Groups (EGs) in order to augment and synchronize efforts for containing Covid-19 pandemic. Led by a Vice-Minister, each group comprised of officials cutting across various Ministries/Departments. These Groups are empowered to identify problem areas, provide effective solutions, delineate policy, formulate plans, strategize operations and take all necessary steps for effective and time bound implementation of them. Out of these 11 EGs, we are sharing the activities and experiences from the Empowered Group No. 6 (**EG-6**) which is responsible for coordinating with private sector, NGOs and international organizations for COVID-19 response related activities.

2. The **EG-6** relies on partnerships with its members being from eight different government ministries/organizations. The role played by **EG 6** has been facilitative in nature aimed at leveraging the institutional and informal partnerships built with the three groups of stakeholders over the years as identified below:

- (a) The UN agencies, World Bank, Asian Development Bank
- (b) Civil Society Organizations and development partners
- (c) Industry association – CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, NASSCOM

3. The **EG-6** encouraged around 92,000 NGOs to partner with district administrations all over India and contribute to response efforts to COVID-19 pandemic. Akshaya Patra, Rama Krishna Mission, Tata Trusts, Piramal Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Action Aid, International Red Cross Society, Prayas, Help-age India, SEWA, Sulabh International, Charities Aid Foundation of India, Gaudia Math, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, the Salvation Army, and Catholic Bishops' Conference of India were some of the partners which have embodied the whole-of-society approach in Covid-19 response management. The **EG-6** conducted detailed deliberations with key CSOs and NGOs working in different parts of the country and with different communities. Several challenges and issues raised by these CSOs were addressed by the EG6 to facilitate their working in the field during this crisis.

4. The NGOs assisted the government in identifying hotspots and deputing volunteers and care givers to deliver services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, transgender persons, and other vulnerable groups. In addition, they played key role to create awareness

about prevention, social distancing, isolation, combating stigma, providing shelter to homeless, daily wage workers, and urban poor families; as well as setting up community kitchens for migrants and services. They also brought to the attention of the Group the problems from the grassroots. Multiple agencies of the international development organizations (for instance, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and others from the UN system) designed and executed joint response initiatives, leveraging their presence across the country.

5. 'SURAKSHIT DADA-DADI & NANA-NANI ABHIYAN' programme launched by the Piramal Foundation in 25 States aims at an outreach focused on senior citizens in order to sensitize them on preventive measures and requisite behavioural changes; document and address issues related to food, ration, medicines delivery etc. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with NITI Aayog and other development partners developed a public good message repository with standardized content in local languages on mask wearing, hygiene measures, social distancing, motivation of frontline workers, among others.

6. The **EG-6** mobilised various UN Agencies and facilitated them in creating timely response action plans in coordination with various States and line ministries through intensive collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator for India, country heads of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, ILO, UN Women, UN-Habitat, FAO, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. The UN in India prepared a Joint Response Plan (JRP) with prevention, treatment and essential supplies as key components. WHO and UNICEF initiated skill building of 15,300 trainers, training for 3951 surveillance/ health officers on Integrated Health Information Platform, infection prevention and control training in 890 hospitals, support to ICMR for testing, strengthening risk communication and community engagement capabilities of healthcare workers, procurement of 200000 PPEs and 400000 N95 masks. UNDP was engaged in the procurement of medical supplies including ventilators (initially 1000 units as per the current requests, but potentially higher based on future demand) for 25 States. The **EG-6** also collaborated for ensuring 10,000 Ventilators and 10 million PPE Kits to UNICEF. The **EG-6** engaged with the Indian Red Cross Society whose 40,000 volunteers worked with district administration in over 500 districts. It created quarantine/isolation facilities at 33 locations, facilitated donation of ventilators, masks, PPEs, and test kits valued at INR 5.50 crore (USD 733902), apart from extensive relief and advocacy across the 500 districts.

7. The **EG-6** engaged with Industries and Start-ups to ensure private sector interventions for public good. The coalitions which the industry

organizations such as CII, FICCI, and NASSCOM have built over the years brought people and resources together, identified problems at multiple levels, channelized ideas and solutions and facilitated innovations. The **EG-6** acted as the interface for converging, collaborating and leveraging the strengths of the private sector actors to tide over this crisis by facilitating and accelerating COVID management measures including creation of response systems in areas of health sector monitoring and tracing, non-health industry driven solutions, relief and rehabilitation measures, and nation-wide awareness and advocacy, in addition to mitigating several challenges faced by different sectors of the industry and economy.

8. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) launched a coalition of high-end manufacturing companies in automobile, Machine Tools and Defence sectors to mass-manufacturing of ventilators. This is to augment the inventory of ventilators of different classifications as the capacity of ventilator manufacturing by existing manufacturers was low and import of ventilators was constrained at the initial stage of the pandemic. India's manufacturing companies like Tata, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharat Forge, Maruti Suzuki, Ashok Leyland, Hero MotoCorp, Godrej & Boyce, Sundaram Fasteners, Walchandnagar, Grasim, Hyundai, Volkswagen, Cummins etc. moved to manufacture ventilators in large quantities.

9. Under CII's initiatives, 47 lakh hygiene materials including 1.3 million masks, 7500000 gloves, 20880 PPEs and 2.68 million sanitizers/soaps was distributed among the vulnerable population, policemen and medical workers. Over 2 million people - including daily wage labourers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, marginal farmers, elderly, children, women workers and nomadic tribes had been supported with provision of food with 1.175 million cooked meals, and 1.25 million ration kits and 1,650 MT of food grains.

10. Under the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries(FICCI), over 3.23 million cooked meals and 150000 kilos of dry ration could be served. INR 3009.56 crores (USD 402 million) have been spent on COVID 19 related activities such as distribution of masks, cooked meals, dry ration, PPE, sanitisers, medical equipment and supplies, and medical facilities. Over 5857500 masks, 786725 litres of sanitizers, 2.5 million PPEs, 10025 ventilators, and 25000 testing kits had been distributed.

11. Under the National Association of Software and Service Companies(NASSCOM) initiatives, cooked meal for 1.5 million people,

dry ration and sanitation kits to over half a million families, 240000 masks and gloves, 350000 soaps and sanitizers, and 250000 PPE kits were distributed. Online continuous learning facilities have been sponsored for more than 10,000 children while research funding for COVID-19 of INR 4.2 crore (USD 560434) has been committed.

12. The crisis has brought out the best in the Indian start-up space as well. **Agva** developed cost-effective ventilator which is highly mobile and can be operationalised in ambulances and makeshift COVID wards. **Biodesign** developed a robotic product called RespirAid, which enables mechanized use of manual ventilators. **Kaenaat** is operationalised by people with minimal ventilator related training like Asha workers and is highly portable. The ventilator can be used for serving two patients simultaneously and has an in-built battery, oxygen concentrator and sterilizer cabinet. **Qure.ai** developed AI enabled analysis of Chest X-Rays (CXRs) with a capacity of processing 10,000 CXR images per day. **Dronamaps** developed an advance Geographic Information System (GIS) and geo-fencing enabled maps for informing cluster strategies for hotspots. **Mfine** is an artificial intelligence powered online doctor consultation and telemedicine platform and can connect diagnostics labs, pharmacies. The platform also supports a video tool for doctor consultation. **MicroGO** developed a handwash system for front line medical professionals which uses minimal resources and captures usage data. **Staqu** developed a AI enabled thermal imaging camera for screening and can generate e-pass for essential services and citizens in need.

13. Before Covid 19 situation, not a single N95 mask or PPE was manufactured in India. Today, there are 104 domestic firms making PPE and four manufacturing N95 masks.
