



NITI Aayog

# Empowered Group 6 Engages CSOs/NGOs/Industry/Intl Organisations in India's fight against COVID-19

Posted On: 04 MAY 2020 4:56PM by PIB Delhi

1. As the country faces an unprecedented challenge with the Covid-19 global pandemic affecting our nation, the Empowered Group 6 (EG 6) constituted by Government of India and chaired by CEO, NITI Aayog is playing a key role in galvanizing Civil Society Organisations, NGOs and development partners, Industry partners, and International Organisations to create synergies with the Government of India.

*The Empowered Committee 6 is chaired by Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO NITI Aayog, include Dr Vijayaraghavan, PSA, Kamal Kishore (Member, NDMA); Sandeep Mohan Bhatnagar (Member, CBIC); Anil Malik (AS, MHA); VikramDoraiswami, (AS, MEA); P. Harish (AS, MEA); Gopal Baglay (JS, PMO); Aishvarya Singh (DS, PMO); Tina Soni (DS, Cabinet Secretariat); and the work of EG6 is serviced by SanyuktaSamaddar (Adviser, SDG, NITI Aayog). The group has extensively engaged with CSOs, NGOs, Development partners, UN Agencies, Industry associations in over 15 meetings.*

## **2. CSOs, NGOs and development partners: A whole of society approach in letter and spirit:**

The EG6 has succeeded in galvanising a network of 92,000 CSOs/NGOs, a record of sorts, to harness their strengths and resources, expertise in key social sectors-nutrition, health, sanitation, education, and extensive reach in the community. The group has mobilised over 92,000 NGOs/CSO, appealing them to assist the State Governments and District Administrations in identifying hotspots and deputing volunteers; delivering essential services to the vulnerable, including the homeless, daily wage workers, migrants, and urban poor families; and in creating awareness about prevention, social distancing, and isolation.

- a. All Chief Secretaries were requested to appoint State-level Nodal Officers to coordinate with all NGOs and resolve their issues apart from leveraging their resources and networks. Almost all States have appointed Nodal Officers to liaise with NGOs/CSOs.
- b. All Chief Secretaries were requested to instruct the District Administrations to leverage the bandwidth of NGOs and CSOs; Nominate Nodal NGO for each district, or groups of Districts for coordinating with the District Nodal Officer; and identify areas and sectors to stop duplicity and overlaps.
- c. All NGOs were urged to lift and distribute Rice and Wheat in unlimited quantities from FCI godowns at the subsidized rate of Rs. 22/ 21 per kg. respectively so that no one in the country remains hungry
- d. AkshayaPatra, Rama Krishna Mission, Tata Trusts, Piramal Foundation, PiramalSwasthya, Bill and Milinda Gates Foundation, Action Aid, International Red Cross Centre (ICRC), Fradhan,

Prayas, Help-age India, SEWA, Sulabh International, Charities Aid Foundation of India, Gaudia Math, BachpanBachaoAndolan, the Salvation Army, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and many more organizations are doing a commendable job.

e. The EG 6 is monitoring and coordinating with NGO and CSO networks in all State / Union Territories and with 700 District Magistrates in the country on real time basis to fight the spread of COVID-19. The mobilisation of these 92000 NGOs has resulted in commendable outcomes as reported by State and District Administrations, where CSOs are actively engaged in :

- Assisting and supporting the local administration in setting up community kitchens particularly for migrants and homeless population working in urban areas.
- Creating awareness about prevention, hygiene, social distancing, isolation, and combating stigma.
- Supplementing the government efforts to provide shelter to homeless, daily wage workers, and urban poor families.
- Extending support for distribution of PPE and protective provisions – sanitizers, soaps, masks, gloves etc. for community workers and volunteers.
- Supporting the government in setting up health camps.
- Identifying hotspots and deputing volunteers and care givers to deliver services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, transgender persons, and other vulnerable groups.
- Developing communications strategy in different vernaculars whereby they become active partners in creating awareness at the community level so that COVID-19 spread is tightly controlled.
- A primary area of concern in these times is the mass exodus of migrant labourers from urban hubs of work to their villages is an area of concern. NGOs are coordinating efforts and working closely with the district administrations and state governments so that measures of care, quarantine, and treatment go hand in hand.
- In the next phase the group will mobilise Civil Society Organizations/ NGOs for movement against COVID-19 stigmatisation and in protecting the elderly & senior citizens

### **3. Aspirational Districts Programme: Localising collectivised solutions:**

The Aspirational Districts Programme piloted by NITI Aayog has been a phenomenal success in uplifting the lives of millions in 112 most backward (aspirational) districts of the country. As of now there are about 610 cases in 112 aspirational districts which is considered fairly low at less than 2% of the national level of infections. Of these six districts have reported first case after 21<sup>st</sup> April. Major hotspots are Baramula (62), Nuh (57), Ranchi (55), YSR (55), Kupwara (47) and Jaisalmer(34).

- a. NITI Aayog has taken steps to ensure that these districts are able to contain the spread of the virus and has actively referred the requirements in testing kits, PPE & masks etc. to respective Empowered Groups for necessary action in order to address supply constraints.
- b. Collaboration has been one of the guiding principles in ADP and these partnerships have enabled the District Administrations in ramping up isolation camps, setting up control rooms, door-to-door Food supplies, distribution of cooked foods, mobilization of SHGs for making home-made masks, sanitizers and re-usable &sterilizable protective gear while simultaneously sustaining their livelihoods during lockdown period. Osmanabad is one such district where a testing centre has been established by utilizing the CSR corpus.

- c. 'SURAKSHIT DADA-DADI & NANA-NANI ABHIYAN' programme launched by the Piramal Foundation in 25 aims at an outreach focused on senior citizens in order to sensitize them on preventive measures and requisite behavioral changes and document and address issues related to food, ration, medicines, etc delivery.
- d. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with NITI Aayog and other development partners, have 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. DMs/DCs of Aspirational Districts have been requested to examine and suitably use the resources on this website ([indiafightscovid.com](http://indiafightscovid.com)) for strengthening the communication strategy.

#### **4. International Organisations: Leveraging global networks for local efforts**

The EG 6 has 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, and country heads of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, ILO, UN Women, UN-Habitat, FAO, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. The UN in India has prepared a Joint Response Plan (JRP), which has been submitted to EG 6, with prevention, treatment and essential supplies as key components.

- a. 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 2 lakh PPEs and 4 lakh N95 masks, have been initiated by WHO and UNICEF.
- b. UNDP is 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. Further, an order of 10,000 Ventilators and 10 million PPE Kits to UNICEF was expedited by EG 6.
- c. The group has been engaging with the **Indian Red Cross Society** whose 40,000 volunteers are working with district administration in over 500 districts. It has created quarantine/ isolation facilities at 33 locations, facilitated donation of ventilators, masks, PPEs, and test kits valued at INR 5.50 crore, apart from extensive relief and advocacy across the 500 districts.

#### **5.Engagement with Industry and Start-ups: Private sector interventions for public good**

Empowered Group 6 and NITI Aayog has become 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.

It has opened up cross-sectoral dialogue within the private sector and start-ups to engender collaboration and synergetic response action, apart from brainstorming suggestions to mitigate the situation across sectors, including MSME, tourism, aviation, exports and manufacturing and services sectors.

**a). Role of the Private Health Care Sector:** The private healthcare sector has been deeply committed in partnering the Government to fight the crisis, offering capabilities even amid the compelling situation. Manufacturing companies are coming forward and utilizing their plant, machinery and skilled manpower to mass manufacture equipment. For example, CII has launched a coalition of high-end manufacturing companies in automobile, Machine Tools and Defence sectors to mass-manufacture ventilators. This is to augment the inventory of ventilators of different classifications as the capacity of ventilator manufacturing by existing manufacturers is low and import of ventilators is constrained. 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. are moving ahead to manufacture ventilators in large quantities with some them already initiated production.

**b) Non- Health Sector Intervention in Relief and Rehabilitation:** EG6 has played a crucial role in engaging the Industry Associations- CII, FICCI, NASSCOM towards mobilising relief interventions in coordination with the local administration at the state and local levels.

### **D) CII-**

- i. 50 lakh persons in 28 have been benefitted by CII's response initiatives.
- ii. 47 lakh hygiene materials including 13 lakh masks, 7.5 lakh gloves, 20,880 PPEs and 26.8 lakh sanitizers/ soaps have been distributed among the vulnerable population, policemen and medical workers.
- iii. Over 20 lakh people - including daily wage labourers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, marginal farmers, elderly, children, women workers and nomadic tribes have been supported with provision of food. 11.75 lakh cooked meals, and 12.5 lakh ration kits and 1,650 MT of food grains have been provided to the needy. Community kitchens have been supported across several cities.
- iv. CII Foundation has undertaken awareness drives and relief work in 150 villages in six districts in Punjab and Haryana, including making provision of ration and hygiene kits for over 8,000 farm labourers and marginal farmer households.
- v. The CIIF Woman Exemplar Network has undertaken awareness and distribution of Ration kits among 7,400 households from marginalized communities in UP, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

### **II) FICCI:**

- vi. Over 3.23 crores cooked meals and 1,50,000 kilos of dry ration have been served.
- vii. INR 3009.56 crores 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.
- viii. INR 5123.5 crores have been contributed to PM Cares Fund.
- ix. Over 58,57,500 masks, 7,86,725 litres of sanitizers, 25 lakhs PPEs, 10,025 ventilators, and 25,000 testing kits have been distributed.
- x. Water ATM facility has been set up for 7 lakh people.

### **III). NASSCOM:**

- xi. Cooked meal for 15 lakh people, dry ration and sanitation kits to over 5 lakh families, 2.4 lakh masks and gloves, 3.5 lakh soaps and sanitizers, and 2,50,000 PPE kits have been distributed.
- xii. Tested over 6500 samples under PCR testing.
- xiii. Online continuous learning facilities have been sponsored for more than 10,000 children.
- xiv. Research funding for COVID-19 of INR 4.2 crore is in the pipeline.

### **c) Start-ups and technology-driven innovations: Indian frugality at its finest**

Realising that entrepreneurs and innovators across the country are quick to respond to the challenge posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, EG 6 and NITI Aayog extensively engaged with Indian Start Ups, Start Ups of Indians in the US and other countries to better leverage their new innovative, low cost designs, applications, and equipments by linking them up with big industry platforms.

I) A host of new innovations, some emerging from start-ups that have been incubated by universities, have appeared in recent weeks. There are examples of start-ups developing robots deployed at entrance of office buildings and public places to dispense hand sanitizer, deliver public health messages about the virus, to carry food and medicines in isolation wards of hospitals. Apps have been launched offering online consultation with doctors and tests at home. Start-ups incubated in IIT Kanpur and IIT Hyderabad are developing low-cost, easy-to-use, and portable ventilators that can be deployed even in rural areas of India. Technology is playing a big role. In some states, drones are being used to monitor social distancing.

II) Industry bodies are playing a critical role by offering platforms for integrating efforts between universities, industries, start-ups, and the Government, in response to Covid-19. For e.g., CII is working with the office of Principal Scientific Adviser and have already received 28 innovative design and solution of ventilators from start-ups of IIT Kanpur, IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, IISc Bangalore, EDC Pune. By way of leveraging technology, CII itself have developed an online COVID-19 Critical Care Essential Items - Demand and Supply Connect Platform that matches buyers with suppliers and manufacturers.

#### **III) Ventilators solutions:**

- a. **Agva** : The cost-effective ventilator developed by this start-up is highly mobile and can be operationalised in ambulances and makeshift COVID wards like hotel rooms. Small form factor, low power consumption and minimal training requirement for operators, are some of the other features. The start-up presently has the capacity to produce 20,000 units per month and is one of the key manufacturers of Ventilators..
- b. **Biodesign**: Developed a robotic product called RespirAid, which enables mechanized use of manual ventilators. The product consists of two robotic arms along with tidal volume control and can be used by any person who can sedate and intubate a patient. The present manufacturing capacity is 2,000 RespirAid units per month.
- c. **Kaenaat**: This product is aimed at being 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. While the prototype is ready, the company is looking at a capacity of 5000 units per month only at the end of June, this year.

#### IV) Other solutions:

- d. **Qure.ai:** The start-up has developed AI enabled analysis of Chest X-Rays (CXRs) with a capacity of processing 10,000 CXR images per day. Emerging research findings demonstrate that COVID-19 infections exhibit bilateral opacity with respect to CSRs, the analysis of which this solution can execute. Their Natural Language Processing (NLP) based AI chatbot can also be utilised for monitoring COVID-19 symptoms.
- e. **Dronamaps:** The advance Geographic Information System (GIS) and geo-fencing enabled maps developed by this stat-up can be utilised for informing cluster strategies for hotspots.
- f. **Mfine:** It is an artificial intelligence powered online doctor consultation and telemedicine platform and can connect diagnostics labs, pharmacies, etc. The platform also supports a video tool for doctor consultation.
- g. **MicroGO:** The start-up has developed a handwash system for front line medical professionals which uses minimal resources and captures usage data. The start-up has presently a capacity of producing 100 units a day.
- h. **Staqu:** The company has developed a AI enabled thermal imaging camera for screening and is presently working with the authorities in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh to generate e-pass for essential services and citizens in need.
- a. **BEML Rail Coach Division:** There are also innovative interventions like converting an old sky train coach into a walk-through sanitizer tunnel; **Ambuja Cement Foundation and ACC TRUST** have re-purposed tankers and vehicles to spray disinfectant to sanitize hundreds of villages.
- j. With social distancing having become the norm, many companies are turning to digital applications for a solution. **SAP** is providing open access to its technologies which can be used for combating the outbreak. **IBM** has teamed up with World Community Grid, an IBM social impact initiative that allows anyone with a computer and an internet connection to donate their device's idle processing power to help scientists study the world's biggest problems in health and sustainability. **Microsoft** technology has supported the Govt. of Punjab to roll out COVA, their citizen app that offers real-time and authentic information on COVID-19.

#### **6. AarogyaSetu: Largest participatory risk assessment mobile platform with telemedicine feature**

EG 6 has urged all CSO, NGO, International Organisation and Industry partners to effectively utilise the AarogyaSetu platform in their operations. The application enables people to assess the risk of exposure to COVID-19 infection based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge Bluetooth technology, and Artificial Intelligence enabled algorithms. It is the world's fastest-growing mobile application with more than 80 million installations on the Google Play Store, just days after its launch.

It now brings online telemedicine and medical consultations (call and video), Home Lab Test and ePharmacy. AarogyaSetuMitr, the stack powering this new feature, is developed under the leadership of NITI Aayog and Principle Scientific Adviser, GoI. AarogyaSetuMitr has voluntary participation from organizations, industry coalitions, and start-ups

## **7. PPE and testing kits**

EG 6 has also been instrumental in involving several partners who have provided COVID related equipment free of cost including:

- RTPCR testing kits- 70,000 kits have been provided by TEMASEK Foundation
- RTPCR Testing Kits- 30,000 kits by BMGF Foundation (given to UP and Bihar)
- 3 Lac N95 and 5 lac surgical masks through development partners and donors.

Empowered Group 6 is providing a unified platform for mobilising all the key stakeholders in synergising their sector specific efforts in COVID19 response with not only the State and district administration where the action lies but also at a macro level by linking the UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs, start-ups and the industry partners for a coordinated and effective response. The EG 6 has shared with all stakeholders the Government's response so far- procurement of PPEs and ventilators, role of MEA, communication to CSs of all States, engagement with 92,000 CSOs, putting the stakeholders in touch with each other, immediate solutions to the bottlenecks being faced by the private sector in coordinating response. Further, collaborations have been created by linking the specific issues raised by connecting the industry to other Empowered Groups dealing with procurement (EG 3), logistics (EG 5) and several other EGs.

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(Release ID: 1620908) Visitor Counter : 766

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