

Date 6<sup>th</sup> April

As the world continues to battle the Coronavirus (COVID-19), NAPP sees that women, children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced, are most at risk of suffering the devastating effects of this pandemic. People who have travelled abroad are also being looked at suspiciously and isolated even beyond their quarantine period and face discrimination in their neighborhoods. There have been instances of them resorting to drastic measures for fear of isolation and exclusion from the communities.

This has uncovered social and political fractures within society, with radicalized and discriminatory responses to fear, affecting the marginalized groups. Throughout history, infectious diseases have been associated with separation and isolation thus impacting many families and communities. The current situation of COVID-19 is starting to get into the same realm of discriminating and stigmatizing people.

Following the spread of COVID-19 from its original epicenter Wuhan in China, discrimination towards people from that province and country has increased. This includes individual acts of micro antagonism or violence, to collective forms of harassment. Some have even gone on to name it as the 'Chinese virus'. Rather than being an equalizer, given its ability to affect any and everyone across the board, the responses have particularly affected people of a region and migrants with limited health-care access and poor working conditions. This is especially so in resource-poor settings that lack effective forms of social protection. Self-isolation is often not possible leading to higher risk of viral spread. Ethnic minority groups are also at a greater risk because of comorbidities—for example, high rates of hypertension and diabetes in south Asians.

The possible angles of discrimination within the communities we work:

**Health system:** In this situation, the focus is on the strength of the health system in a country, which seem inseparable from broader social systems that surround it. Epidemics place increased demands on scarce resources and enormous stress on social and economic systems. Health protection relies not only on a well-functioning health system with universal coverage, but also on social inclusion, justice, and solidarity which effects most of our farmers and workers.

**Proper Documents:** In the absence of enough resources the inequalities are magnified with discrimination remaining long after. Division and fear of others will lead to worse outcomes for all. Furthermore, migrants, particularly those without proper documents, avoid hospitals for fear of identification and reporting, leading to a more catastrophic situation.

**Children:** Hundreds of millions of children around the world will likely face increasing threats to their safety and wellbeing – including mistreatment, domestic and gender-based violence, exploitation, social exclusion and separation from caregivers – because of actions taken to contain the spread of the virus. The stigma towards a particular race, religion or region might also put them into a situation of becoming a school dropout and resulting in increased child labour.

**Women:** In most situations of natural disaster, women and children get affected the most. Given the present scenario of lock downs in many countries across the globe, we should be prepared to see the worst in terms of gender based violence and discrimination that might happen to women as they might not have access to safety nets, Protection system, Health & safety etc..

**Migrating population:** While many countries have chosen to tighten controls at their borders to contain the spread of COVID-19, it is critical that such measures be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner to protect the most vulnerable. Migrants and their families are often part of marginalized and vulnerable groups that are already experiencing economic hardship as a result of containment measures. The impact of the closing down of activities due to the pandemic may particularly affect low-wage workers and those in the informal sector, including youth and women, who are often in precarious or temporary jobs and lack access to means of social protection. Domestic workers may be more acutely affected by social distancing measures and subject to discrimination.

## COVID 19 - FEAR of STEREOTYPING, DISCRIMINATION and STIMGA



We wish to ensure that our producer organizations will contribute for a better society by:

- Working with local governments, authorities and health partners to ensure vital supplies and protective equipment reach the most vulnerable in their communities.
- Disseminating vital public health messages and advice to slow the transmission of the virus to minimize mortality.
- Providing producer level support to parents, caregivers and educators to support home and remote learning.
- Providing peer-to-peer learning through social media and information sharing between young people to support their mental health and combat stigma, prejudice and discrimination.
- Promote National Protection toll free number to seek safety and protection for individuals.

Looking at above situation, NAPP producer organizations should support a clear strategy to work with the most impacted in their communities and ensure the protection of every member. We at NAPP are totally committed and will work alongside our producer members to ensure a clear Non-Discriminatory and Non stigmatized approach is practiced.

If you wish to submit your opinion on COVID-19 Pandemic stigma or discrimination – share your thoughts with [comms@fairtradenapp.org](mailto:comms@fairtradenapp.org) or contact you regional program consultant.

You can also reach me directly @ [sanjeet.khurana@fairtradenapp.org](mailto:sanjeet.khurana@fairtradenapp.org)

Keep Healthy - Be Safe - Stay Connected!

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