

Reaching out to Katkari Tribe in COVID Times



Katkari tribe, categorised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribe Group (PVTG), with a high percentage of malnutrition, and hence poor immunity, became extremely susceptible to contracting the deadly COVID-19 virus in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. The reluctance in getting themselves tested for COVID-19 or contacting government hospitals during the pandemic added further to their woes. Myths around vaccination causing impotence or even deaths stopped them from seeking support, which further mandated immediate attention.

The Lok Manch partner Ankur Trust and team members launched an initiative to reach out to the tribal hamlets and provide them critical support. The initiative was supported through the project “Break the Chain of COVID-19 Pandemic through Community Health Surveillance System” in Pen area. Supported by the Indian Social Institute in collaboration with the Lok Manch of the Jesuit Collective, the team initiated a massive reach out in the 40 hamlets of Katkari tribe in the Gram Panchayat.

Two online community training programmes for volunteers consisting of nursing students, health professionals and social work students were organised. The programmes apprised them of the situation of the Katkari tribe.

The battle is long from being over; suspected cases still continue to rise and people still live with fear and reluctance to seek treatment. However, efforts are on to reach the neediest and connect them with the right support as needed.

A Mobile Clinic was initiated in collaboration with Ankur Trust and Maitreyi Raj Foundation. Volunteers visited remote hamlets to identify the COVID infected and provide the required support in treatment. Dry ration and medicine kits were distributed to encourage tribals to come forward and seek treatment. Once assured that they would not be admitted in the hospitals, nearly 320 people came forward to seek medical support. In addition to this, awareness generation activities using simple yet illustrative IEC material around COVID-19 symptoms and essential protocols were also undertaken from time to time.

