Karnataka ASHA: Demonstrating the true spirit of a Social Health Activist

About 1.59 crore households covered in a Vulnerability Mapping Survey by 42000 ASHAs

Annapurna is an ASHA working in Tunganagar in Shivamogga District, Karnataka. She covers a population of 3000 in the slum area and has been working there since 2015, when urban ASHA were introduced as part of the National Health Mission. One of her key tasks as part of COVID-19 activities is to conduct household surveys.

Karnataka’s 42,000 ASHAs have emerged as a crucial pillar in the State’s success in combating COVID-19. They have been actively participating in the COVID-19 household surveys and screening inter-state passengers, migrant workers, and others in the community for symptoms of COVID-19. Recognizing the increased vulnerability of certain population groups to COVID-19, in a one-time survey to identify households with the elderly, persons with co-morbidities, and immunocompromised individuals, about 1.59 crore households were covered. ASHAs regularly monitor such high-risk groups in their area with periodicity of follow-up visits varying from once a day in the Containment Zones to once very 15 days in other areas. They also visit the houses of persons expressing complaints of ILI/SARI symptoms, and high-risk individuals who have called the State Health Department helpline numbers.

Uniquely, ASHAs are part of the Rural Task Force headed by Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) at the Gram Panchayat level for addressing public grievances on both COVID-19 and non COVID-19 related services. Urban ASHAs have been on the forefront of dissemination of various awareness activities in the Fever clinics and Swab Collection Centres in Urban areas. They have also actively screened cases of ILI and SARI in the urban areas. They are also part of the screening teams at the International and Interstate check-posts.

Glimpses from Karnataka: ASHAs at work against COVID-19
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