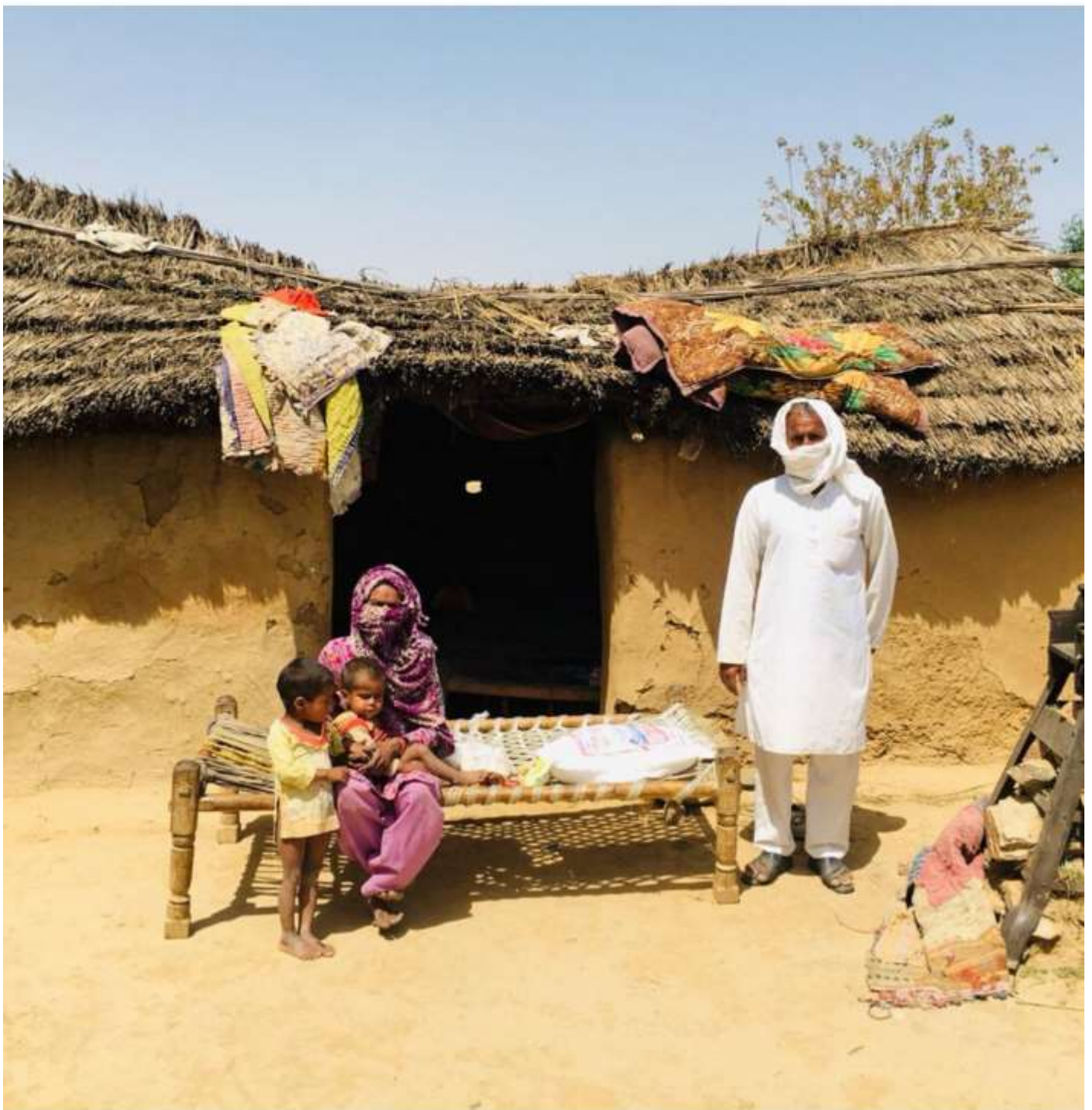


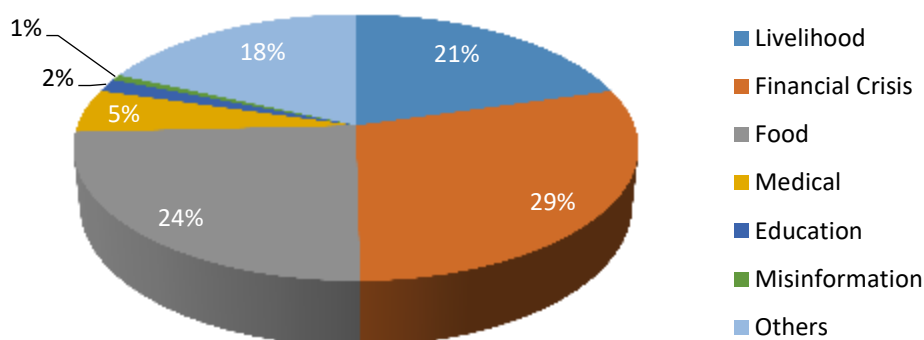


THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN RURAL INDIA



The Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) has been working on the ground through their 10,000 digital foot soldiers in 600 locations across 130 districts in India. DEF has been conducting several surveys across the country since the start of the country-wide lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a survey highlights the issues faced by the people in rural regions due to the lockdown. The survey was conducted across six states in the Hindi belt: Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and 741 people took part in this survey.

Overall feedback response (In %)



MAJOR FINDINGS

Many of the people who took part in the survey are daily wage earners, migrants and farmers. This section of the population has become unemployed because of the lockdown and they are facing a major financial crisis. Hence, 29% of the people who took this survey think that the biggest impact of the lockdown in their lives is that they have become financially weaker. This is followed by food - 24% of the respondents believe that scarcity of food is the biggest problem of the lockdown. This has happened because the price of basic groceries and vegetables has shot up due to less supply and high demand. Furthermore, livelihood is the biggest issue for 21% of those who took the survey. Farmers have been in lockdown during the harvesting season so they are facing a livelihood crisis. Some of the respondents believe that medical facilities are lacking. So those who already have medical problems are having issues obtaining care and medicines; 5% of the 741 people who took the survey said this is the biggest issue. The exams of students have been postponed because of the lockdown and 2% of the respondents believe that the students are going through a lot of trouble because of that. Moreover, those who are studying away from their native homes are facing issues in getting basic necessities. The problem of misinformation ranks the lowest at 1% because DEF's digital resource centers have been instrumental in busting Covid-19 related myths.

LIVELIHOOD

1. Farmers are struggling to get their crops harvested as the lockdown has stopped the physical movement of people and harvesting machines. The crops have ripened, and the laborers are not there to cut it. The persistent bad weather has added to their plight.
2. Due to the lockdown, farmers are living in houses and animals are causing great damage to the crop.
3. Due to the migration of laborers from the cities on a large scale, the cost of harvesting of 1 bigha ((14,400 sq ft) of wheat in the village was Rs 650-750, which usually costs Rs 400-450.
4. The market is closed due to which farmers are unable to sell the crops and vegetables and in spite of having their produce, the farmers are not able to earn money.
5. Cumin seeds factories are closed and many farmers used to work there, now they can't earn from there.
6. The crops of some have been harvested but the factories are closed, so crops cannot be sold.
7. Farmers in the villages do not have enough space in their houses to keep the food grains because the grain market is closed due to lockdown hence the crops are deteriorating.
8. The coriander crop has suffered a lot. Till March 26, about 70 percent coriander produce had deteriorated due to water inundation.
9. The condition of the animals is adversely affected as they are unable to get green fodder because their owners cannot get out, so they are not well taken care of.
10. Farmers have taken money on interest for sowing the crop and the produce is ready but are unable to sell it and the interest of the borrowed money is increasing day by day.
11. The farmers don't have access to pesticides so their crops are not doing well.



FINANCIAL CRISIS

1. Daily wage laborers, migrants and farmers are badly affected as they neither have cash nor have any means to earn money.
2. In semi-urban areas, ATMs don't have cash and this has led to people struggling for cash to buy basic day-to-day commodities.
3. People, who are handicapped or differently-abled, are unable to get their pensions on time and they are not able to go to work as well, due to which their financial condition is worsening.
4. There are many people who have money in their account. But they don't have ATM cards and their banks are far. They can't travel to the banks to withdraw money.
5. Daily wage laborers' economic condition has deteriorated due to the non-payment of daily wages.
6. Due to a lack of funds in Pragma Kendras, it is also difficult to conduct transactions.
7. Few elderly who live alone have found it difficult to get even two days of bread.
8. Widows are not receiving their pensions.
9. Due to the lockdown all the businesses are in loss.



FOOD

1. There is a rise in the prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, milk and other groceries due to shortage.
2. There is a shortage of gas cylinders.
3. There are many poor families who used to get basic dry ration through ration cards but due to the lockdown, they don't have access to that anymore.
4. Water scarcity has also emerged.
5. Vegetables and groceries are not available in the villages, the market is 5 -10 kilometers from the village and the police is not allowing people to move out of the villages, hence there is a scarcity of basic essentials.

PAUCITY OF MEDICAL FACILITIES

1. Non-availability of sanitizers and masks.
2. In district hospitals, they have stopped treating non-corona patients without giving due consideration to the state of the patient.
3. Due to the lack of doctors and high number of patients in hospitals, patients are not being treated properly because of which small diseases like cold and fever are likely to increase in the rural areas.
4. Prices of sanitizers and masks have gone up and poor people cannot afford them.
5. All Medicines are not available at the local pharmacies and due to lockdown one is not allowed to travel to the cities.
6. As buses and taxis are not available it is difficult for sick people to get treatment on time.

EDUCATION

1. Students who were studying in different states could not go back to their native places when the lockdown was announced. Because of lack of resources they are struggling to get food and basic essentials.
2. School and colleges are closed due to which the students' studies are being disrupted at the time of examination.
3. Students who were preparing for government exams like bank, SSC, IAS will face difficulties.

MISINFORMATION

1. One of the major problems during Covid-19 is misinformation; it has led to widespread panic in many cases.
2. Some of the rumors even have long lasting effects. For Example – consumption of some medicine will help people to keep their immune system boosted but its direct impact was on the liver. Hence, there is lack of awareness too.

OTHERS

1. Those who have planned their marriages or any other family functions have had to cancel them.
2. People's mental health is being affected due to the lockdown.
3. People coming from outside the villages are not able to keep themselves in isolation, they do not keep themselves separate and don't understand the severity of the disease.
4. Mental stress is also increasing as one needs to be inside in their homes for long time, people are getting depressed.
5. Government Mukhyamantri Dal Bhat Yojana has been started, but it is for the block areas, it is not available in rural areas.
6. Every person's standard of living has changed due to the lockdown.





Digital Empowerment Foundation
House No. 44, 2nd & 3rd Floor
(Next to Naraina IIT Academy)
Kalu Sarai, (Near IIT Flyover),
New Delhi – 110016

Contact

Email: def@defindia.net

URL: www.defindia.org