Relief and Revival Measures in the COVID – 19 pandemic situation

Program Actions proposed through the BAIF network

BAIF Development Research Foundation (www.baif.org.in) is involved in promoting rural farm-based livelihoods in over a dozen States of India. The COVID – 19 pandemic has begun to disrupt the rural livelihoods and BAIF plans to use its ground presence to play a supportive role to contain the negative fallouts of the pandemic. BAIF programs are spread out in over 80,000 villages spread out in about 300 districts of India. However, the planned work in response to the COVID – 19 pandemic is proposed to be taken up initially in about 25 Clusters covering 250 villages per State, in 12 States viz Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. About 500 farmers (women and men) will be reached out in each Cluster of villages. Thus the total coverage in the initial stage will be about 1.5 lakh farmers in 3000 villages spread out in 300 Clusters of 12 States of India.

Based on the experience of first six months, the approach can be extended to about 100 Clusters (1000 Villages) per State.

The proposed work will consist of three sets of Components:

Component 1: Establishing and Activating Communication Network

At the present juncture, there is total lock-down restricting movement of people and materials. This is also a situation of inadequate awareness about the disease and lack of full understanding of the measures to be taken. During this phase the work will focus on creating a strong social and information network and a database of farmers / CRPs / Staff. A detailed communication program with the farmers (women and men) will be taken up involving the network members and roping in the common-action groups such as SHGs, Farmer Activity Groups, Agri-Business Centers etc. The online telephonic surveys and the dissemination of communication messages will be partly done through the Field Staff and CRPs and partly through 'Sanvadini' an Outbound Call Center which is established by BAIF for communication with farmers. The program activities as part of this component will cover:

A. Create Communication Database
   1. Create a database of Farmers with phone numbers to be contacted
   2. List out Field Staff / SHGs / CHWs / CRPs (eg Pashu Sakhi / Krishi Sakhi / eDost) in our project areas along with the phone numbers of the concerned
   3. List out Sarpanch names in the project villages along with phone number

4. Identify available Medical facility in the project area
B. Survey and Surveillance
   1. Map the baseline situation (through an online telephonic survey through community level resource persons) as on March 31st in terms of migration of urban population back to the villages, migrant workers who had gone out and have returned, number of daily wage workers in the village who are out of employment
   2. Identify the number of likely COVID cases, those confirmed positive, those quarantined or needed to be quarantined, and any deaths from COVID 19.
   3. Continued surveillance to track the above numbers over next two months
C. Delivery of Communication Messages
   1. Orientation of GP members / CRPs / Opinion Leaders on identification of cases, resources management etc
   2. Develop a repository of communication material
   3. Take up planned telephone calls / messages / videos to convey health tips, myth busters, advisories etc

Component 2: Relief Support

The condition of tight restrictions on movement is expected to ease after the effects of social distancing reduces the build up of symptomatic cases COVID – 19 and incidence of positive cases. At this stage relief support could be provided through identified Supply Points such as Gram Panchayats, Farmer Organisations such as dairy societies, ABCs, SHGs etc. The typical supplies will be either personal care products such as soap, sanitisers, masks etc or other supplies such as dry rations. Where needed, the communities will be supported to take up supply of meals to patients under quarantine. The activities to be taken up during this Phase will include:

1. Production / Supply of sanitisers / masks / soap etc through SHGs / CRPs / etc
2. Engaging Grampanchayats and supporting them and the Government machinery
3. Nutrition Protection: If necessary and feasible, organise low-cost community level food service ' catering to returned migrants / quarantined cases / aged population

Component 3: Planning and Supporting Revival of Livelihoods

The disruption caused by the epidemic will throw out of gear the ongoing livelihood activities of the people. BAIF's ongoing livelihood support programmes (Cattle breeding, Agricultural development etc) which have gone into dormancy, will need to be put back on the track so that the livelihood activities of the farmers can be revived. This is expected to provide a lot of psychological succour to distressed families and will bring back resilience to their living. This is planned to be taken through the following activities:

1. Survey and identify Ground Zero situation in respect of livelihood activities: agri production, market linkages, transportation bottlenecks etc
2. Identify backlash on livelihoods and corrective measures required
3. Provide on-demand advisories / guidance to farmers through experts via the Call Center on livelihood management issues (eg taking care of animals / crops to salvage and secure current livelihoods.
4. Plan livelihood protection measures to be taken up as the epidemic subsides
5. Preparatory steps for ensuring revival of livelihood activities with minimal lead time: Cattle Breeding Centers, Agriculture Extension Centers, Supply of farm Inputs, activation of Farm Output market linkages, etc
6. Revival of cattle development program; promoting goat development activities
7. Other Livelihood Protection: agricultural activities, plantation, other locally relevant economic activities;

The above three components will move forward with a different pace in different geographies and will thus progress in an overlapping manner. The three components will broadly spread over a one year period from April 2020 to March 2021.

Central Support Activities

During the roll out of these three phases in the field clusters, a number of tasks will be handled centrally in support of these field programs. These will consist of:

1. IT Support for Database Design / Creation of Communication Network for the various clusters
2. Operating Communication services through field teams and through the Call Center 'Sanvadini'
3. Compiling / producing Communication material for dissemination
4. Deploy eLearning Modules for strengthening livelihoods
5. Undertaking livelihood support back up measures
6. Coordination