



# COVID-19 RESPONSE REPORT

MARCH - MAY 2020

Swabhiman is a cross disability organization, advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in Odisha, India and South Asia. Which has been in the forefront of several policy changes that have positively impacted the lives of persons with disabilities. It specifically focuses on supporting education, strengthening youth for availing employment opportunities, increasing public awareness on the issue of disability, working towards accessible cities and conducting research for enabling advocacy.

Swabhiman began operating in “Disaster Mitigation” in the aftermath of the “super cyclone” in Odisha, then Orissa, in 1999. The 1999 Super Cyclone ranks among the worst natural disasters in India. Nearly 10,000 people died, according to official estimates. More than 3.5 lakh houses were destroyed, several villages were completely washed away, more than two lakh animals were killed and 25 lakh people were marooned. Swabhiman was largely involved from 2000 in “Livelihood Restoration” of people with disabilities along with getting their rights established.

Being susceptible to frequent natural disasters due to monsoon, Swabhiman was at an advantage of humanitarian response. However, the nature of the pandemic, its social restrictions, lockdown of the entire state and with all activities stranded, Covid19 intervention was something novel and first of its kind.

[www.swabhiman.org](http://www.swabhiman.org)  
[www.childrenfestival.org](http://www.childrenfestival.org)  
[www.sashakt.co.in](http://www.sashakt.co.in)



## COVID19 RESPONSE REPORT

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# Dedication

May23, 2020: This report is dedicated to memory of the 3720 men, women and children who lost their lives to COVID19, as well as India's courageous 1.25 lakh people who got infected, and the lakhs of frontline Corona Warriors who are battling day and night to save the rest of us.



The coronavirus is not going to go away, so we must learn to live with it. We have all got to learn to live with this virus, to do our business with this virus in our presence, to have social relations with this virus in our presence and not to be continuously having to be in lockdown because of the widespread infections that can occur.

**David Nabarro,**  
WHO Special Envoy for Covid-19



Image Courtesy @ BCCL 2020

# With Gratitude

Swabhiman would like to acknowledge the generous support of governmental, multilateral and other agencies, including: State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities Odisha, Odisha State Disaster Management Authority, Khordha District Emergency Response Team, Puri District Emergency Response Team, CBM India, Aditya Birla Capital Mumbai, NCPEDP New Delhi, Utkal Charitable Trust and Odisha State disAbility Network.

We are also grateful for the commitment of all our volunteers, circle of friends and well-wishers representing three countries worldwide, 20 states of India and 30 districts of Odisha.

We walk together, we move together,  
we think together, we resolve together,  
and together we take this country forward...

**Narendra Modi,**  
Prime Minister of India



State Commissioner for Persons  
with Disabilities Odisha



Odisha State Disaster  
Management Authority



Khordha District  
Emergency Response Team



Puri District  
Emergency Response Team



CBM  
India



Aditya Birla Capital  
Mumbai



NCPEDP  
New Delhi



Utkal Charitable Trust  
Bhubaneswar



Odisha State  
disAbility Network



# List Of Abbreviations

DPO	Disabled People's Organization
DSSO	District Social Security Officers
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OSDN	Odisha State disAbility Network
ICRC	Inclusive Child Resource Centre
WHO	World Health Organization
OH	Orthopaedically Handicapped
VI	Visual Impairment
HI	Hearing Impairment
CP	Cerebral Palsy
MD	Multiple Disability
MR	Mental Retardation
S&HI	Speech & Hearing Impairment
SI	Spinal Cord Injury
TB	Tuberculosis
LV	Low Vision
LD	Locomotor Disability/ Learning Disability
ID	Intellectual Disability
CHC	Community Health Centre
PHC	Primary Health Centre
SSEPD	Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
INR	Indian Rupee (Currency)



COVID-19: Who is protecting people with disabilities? People with disabilities feel they have been left behind. Containment measures, such as social distancing and self-isolation, may be impossible for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe. This support is basic for their survival, and States must take additional social protection measures to guarantee the continuity of support in a safe manner throughout the crisis.

**Catalina Devandas,**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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# Message From Chief Executive



Dear Friends and Partners of Swabhiman,

Like many of you, Swabhiman and Odisha State disAbility Network are closely following the news about COVID-19 and its progression around the world. India has survived many trials, but Covid19 is clearly a different battle. An invisible enemy, striking fast, killing many and has left us with a frail economy and recession challenges.

As we come to terms with what this means especially for persons with disabilities, we are doing everything we can to protect our team and the communities in all the places where we work. Food, daily living, health, finances and accessibility are the five most important challenges we are dealing with among our communities of people with disabilities.

Our COVID19 response, and future recovery plan has a five-pronged approach.

- Provision of immediate relief of food, essentials and hygiene kit.
- Advocacy for immediate relief to persons with disabilities.
- Awareness on COVID19: Symptoms, Impact and Safekeeping
- Digital, virtual and offline education evaluation and discussion
- Survey and reports for understanding challenges faced by persons with disabilities and future planning of "Life after COVID19 Lockdown"

State and District administration are working on war-footing. Actively working in the ground, reaching out to the needy, while maintaining the COVID19 safety protocols, Swabhiman

demonstrated that it is a courageous partner that can rise to the challenge.

Swabhiman entered into humanitarian action with support from the state emergency response authorities and the state disaster management authorities to distribute dry ration, hand wash material, protection kits, essentials to the most vulnerable population - people with disabilities and their families, those who are economically impacted by the lockdown and the frontline workers.

But the COVID19 crisis is far from over. We cannot become complacent. For another 18-24 months, or preparation of a vaccine followed by mass vaccination, whichever is early, we must follow the COVID19 safety protocols. We must strengthen our healthcare infrastructure, education structures and livelihood milieu to ensure that people with disabilities are well protected in any future pandemic or emergency situation.

Thank you for your continued support on the long road to recovery ahead.

**Dr Sruti Mohapatra**

Chief Executive, Swabhiman

Chief Convenor, Odisha State disAbility Network

Date: 23 May, 2020

Place: Bhubaneswar



# The Context

## Covid19 Pandemic

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of 21st century and the greatest challenge mankind has faced since World War II. The coronavirus outbreak came to light on December 31, 2019 when China informed the World Health Organisation of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause in Wuhan City in Hubei Province. Subsequently the disease spread to more Provinces in China, and to the rest of the world. The WHO declared it a pandemic. The virus has been named SARS-CoV-2 and the disease is now called COVID-19.

Since its emergence in China late in 2019, the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica. Cases are rising daily in Asia, Africa the Americas, and Europe. COVID-19, stressing every one of the countries it touches, has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars.

# Odisha Overview

On 11 March 2020, WHO declared Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic and reiterated the call for countries to take immediate actions and scale up response to treat, detect and reduce transmission to save people's lives. On March 13, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik declared it a 'disaster' and ordered the immediate closure of educational institutions, cinema halls, public swimming pools and gyms, even though the state had not reported a single case of infection then. Government officials were sufficiently empowered to enforce the restrictions by invoking the provisions of

Epidemic Diseases Act, 189 and sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Rs 200 crore was set aside to augment the Public Health Response Fund to tackle the threat of the virus. Ever since, the state has taken more steps, including signing of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with two private hospitals to set up what would be the country's first dedicated facility for the treatment of patients with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. Two hospitals with a combined strength of 1,000 beds have been planned.

## Media

Of the five districts and the towns which were worse affected by 21 March, included Khordha, Ganjam, Cuttack, Kendrapara, and Angul, while the towns included Bhubaneswar, Puri, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Balasore, Rourkela, Bhadrak, Jajpur Road and Jajpur (PTI, Mar 21 2020, 17). Khordha district and Bhubaneswar were worse hit - The contagion has been reported from six of the 30 districts of the state. Khordha district with 16 cases in Bhubaneswar - records the maximum number of COVID-19 patients, followed by Bhadrak district with 3 cases, and one each from Jajpur, Puri, Cuttack and Kalahandi districts (5 Apr 2020, The Hindu). Mendhasal near Bhubaneswar has identified population of persons with disabilities. Astaranga is our identified block for project implementation for education of children with disabilities

in rural areas. It is in Puri district, one of the priority districts in Odisha for COVID-19 infection. Bhubaneswar – Apart from the large number of cases, the first asymptomatic Case of a Covid+ Persons with disabilities in Bhubaneswar was recorded on 02 Apr 2020 (Business Standard) and Covid-19 claimed its first victim in Bhubaneswar (07 Apr 2020, India Today). The deceased tested positive for coronavirus after his demise.

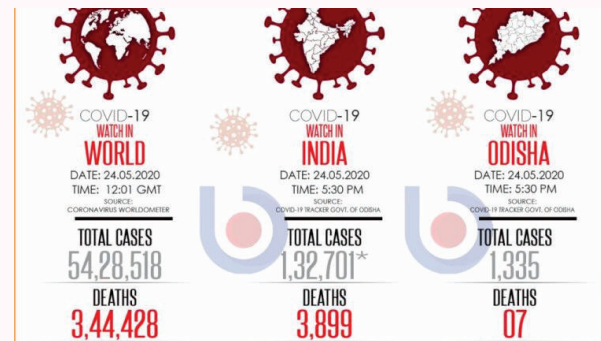
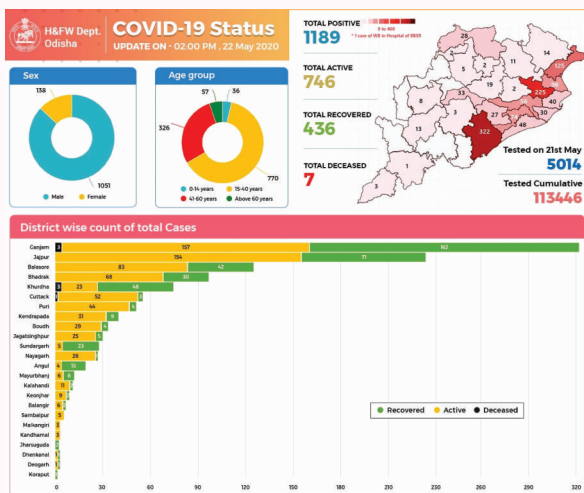
And news reports, Swabhimani did a quick survey on the status of persons with disabilities in Odisha since the beginning of the Corona virus and based on the status report, Swabhimani proposed to work in Khordha district, Astaranga Block (near Puri) and Bhubaneswar slums.



## Odisha Timeline (Till 23/05/2020)

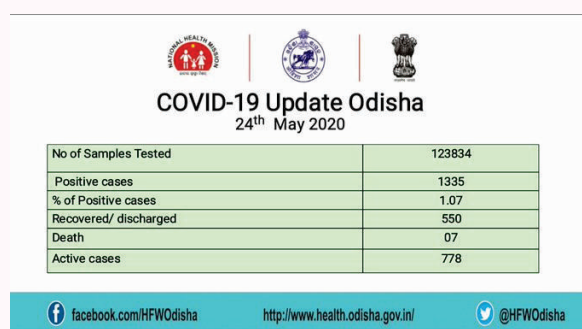
- On 16 March, a 31-year-old man from Bhubaneswar who had returned from Italy became the first confirmed case in the state of Odisha.
- The samples of a 72-year-old man from Bhubaneswar who died on 6 April came back positive on 7 April, marking the first coronavirus death in the state.
- Odisha reports its 2nd death in the state. A 77-year-old man from Bhubaneswar who died on 5 May night at KIMS Covid Hospital.
- On 23 May Death case stands at 7.
- Total Tests as of 23 May 2020

RT PCR tests (Cumulative)	155690
Cumulative Samples Positive (Till 23-May)	1948
New Positive	156
In quarantine centers: 153	
Local: 03	
Total Cumulative Samples Positive	2104



Total Corona Cases in Odisha, India and the World

Infographic on #COVID19 status of #Odisha up to 10:00 AM, 23rd May, 2020



Last update on #COVID19 in #Odisha: As on 22nd May, Midnight.

We're all online now, and, just as importantly, we're all willing to use this for any part of our lives, if you can work out the right experience and business model. Today, anyone will do anything online.

Ben Evans,  
Tech Analyst

# Swabhiman Response To Covid19

## Area Of Operation

Based on the news reports and Swabhiman's presence, we proposed work in Khordha district, Astaranga Block (near Puri) and Bhubaneswar slums.

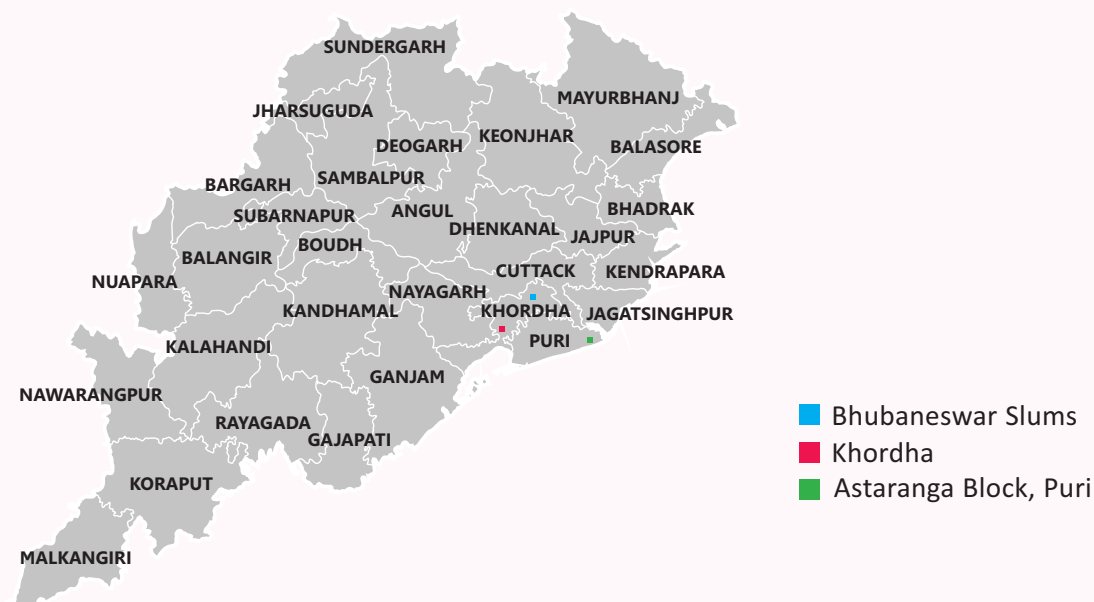
The proposed locations are

- Worst affected COVID-19 areas in Odisha.
- Economically and infrastructure wise devastated in 2019 FANI cyclone and are economically poor.
- Have a huge population of persons with disabilities.

Khordha district and Bhubaneswar – Apart from the large number of cases, the first asymptomatic Case of a Covid+ Persons with disabilities in Bhubaneswar was recorded on 02 April 2020 (Business Standard) and Covid-19 claimed its first victim in Bhubaneswar (07 April 2020, India Today).

The deceased tested positive for coronavirus after his demise. The slums of Bhubaneswar are densely populated, have the most underprivileged living there and are both unclean and unhygienic. Fringe hamlets like Mandhasal have no health infrastructure.

Astaranga and Khordha economy - was badly hit during 2019 FANI cyclone. FANI was one of the rarest of rare summer cyclones, the first one to hit in 43 years and one of the only three cyclones to hit Odisha in the last 150 years. It caused havoc in Puri and Khurda districts and left marks of extensive damage to life and property of more than 1.65 crore people in 12 districts it passed through. So poverty is a crucial issue in this region.



# Domain Of Operation



Mobilization of Volunteer



Awareness Raising on COVID19



Rapid Assessment



Activities to ensure our  
front-line staff  
(remain safe and are not  
exposed themselves)



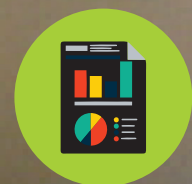
Provision of Necessities



Covid19 Protection  
Kit Distribution



Advocacy



Survey and Reports



# Mobilization Of Volunteers

Swabhiman developed a Rapid Action Team comprising of volunteers and staff members. On 23/03/2020 two activities were done. After an online meeting it was decided to use the time constructively in building knowledge base of Covid19 and disability. Prior to lockdown team members had been given books to read

on various aspects of disability. On the basis of that a timetable was finalised for seminars on chosen topics over an online meeting platform. Same day, Speak for Animals trained volunteers, including from Swabhiman team, on Social Distancing, safe hand washing and personal safety.

## Awareness Raising On Covid19

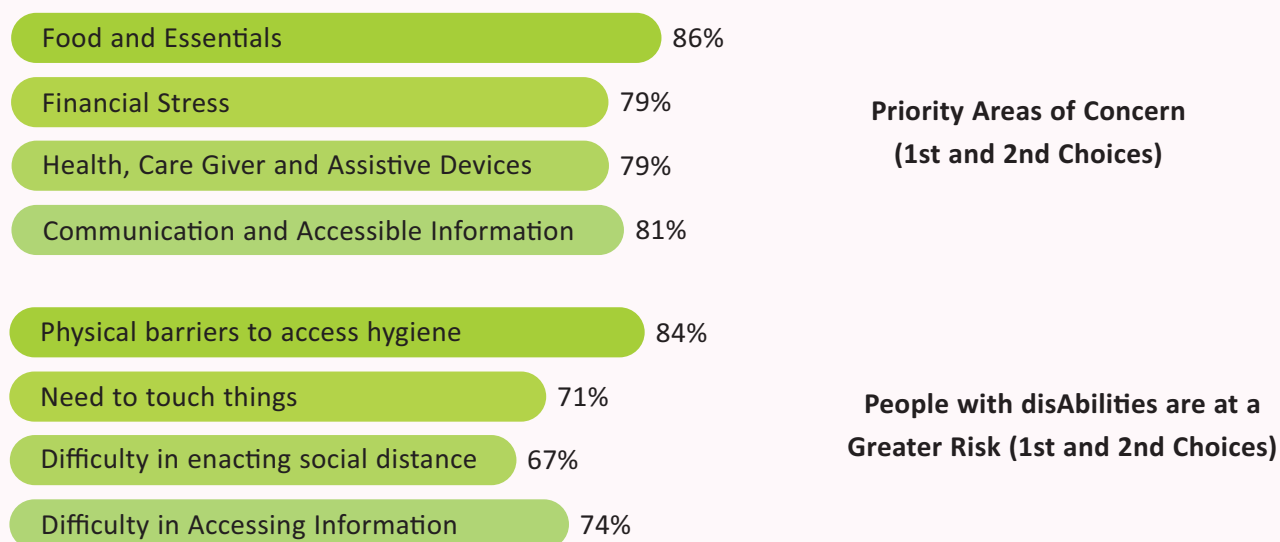
Swabhiman started its awareness campaign with briefing of staff on COVID-19, outbreak and current status of the state, how to recognize the danger signs of COVID-19, and keeping safe. Staff and community members were also trained in dos and don'ts of COVID-19 (Prevention mechanism, promotion aspect on Handwashing/sanitizers with 60% alcohol content, not to touch eyes, nose and mouth with handstands, social distances, and

reporting mechanism in case of suspected cases in homes, health centers and outreach clinics. Swabhiman published Covid 19 information in Odia and English in Braille, large print, easy read and print. Team members and volunteers visited about 70 slums to grow awareness about COVID19, symptoms, prevention, safe handwashing, and practices after contracting the virus.



# Rapid Assessment

A rapid assessment was conducted involving 1048 respondents with disabilities from across Odisha. It was found that there were four areas of concern that were common to most respondents.



## Activities To Ensure Our Front-line Staff (Remain Safe And Are Not Exposed Themselves)

### 1. Use of WHO guidelines

Swabhiman used the WHO guidelines and the CBM guidelines. WHO guidelines followed were – “WHO-2019-nCoV-HCWadvice-2020; WHO-2019-nCoV-IPCPPE\_use-2020; WHO-COVID-19-Community\_Transmission-2020; Advice on the use of masks in the community, during home care and in healthcare settings; Q&A/ Infection prevention and control for health care workers caring for patients with suspected or home bound”

CBM guideline was followed to the letter by all our field volunteers – “Guidance for CBR/CBID workers (this includes paid and volunteer workers) in the COVID-19 pandemic”

### 2. Detailed safekeeping briefings

Online meetings were held every morning (10.30am) and evening (6pm) to discuss morning plans and evening round up to ensure safety protocols were in place.





# Access To Necessities

## 1. Food

Swabhiman with the support of various organizations and volunteers distributed 395 dry ration kits in slums areas of Bhubaneswar, fringe hamlets, and Astaranga block of Puri to households of persons with disabilities. The total

beneficiaries reached was 1693 including 395 persons with disabilities. The distribution started on 19/04/2020 and continued till 23/05/2020. 244 dry ration kits were distributed at doorsteps of persons with disabilities. Rest in their neighbourhood school/association.



### Kit 1

The kit consisted of 5 kgs rice/atta, 1 kg chuda, 1 kg dhal, 1 ltr refined oil, 1 kg sugar, 1kg potatoes, 250 gms onion, 250 gms soya vadi, salt, curry powder and haldi powder.



### Kit 2

41 kits – 1 kg chuda, 1 kg sugar, 3 kgs rice (Extra to few families)

## **2. Cooked Food**

Swabhiman also distributed two meals – one chuda and the second cooked food to 38 people (persons with disabilities & Family members) stranded near AIIMS Hospital due to the lock down. These 38 people were served for 12 days (6-05-2020 till 17-05-2020) which is a total of 456 people.

Menu – Rice, dalma and mango chutney. In alternate days dalma was substituted by egg curry or soyabean curry.

## **3. Nutrition Kit Distribution to**

### **Malnourished Children with disabilities.**

200 high protein kits consisting of dalia 1kg, suji 1kg, sattu 1kg, atta 3kgs, sugar 1kg, oil 1ltr, rice 10 kgs, dal 1kg and dozen eggs were distributed.

## **4. Full access to the WASH**

On 21/03/2020, a letter was sent to Subroto Bagchi, spokesperson of COVID-19 of government of Odisha on the challenges of coronavirus on trans persons, persons with disability and elderly of Odisha and which could only be met when the principle that “No one should be left behind” gets applied in letter and spirit. The letter was signed jointly by Meera Parida, Founder, Sakha, Sruti Mohapatra, Founder, Swabhiman, Bharati Chakra, State Head Helpage India, Samir Ranjan Das, Soumya Mishra and Akhila Sivadas of CFAR.

## **5. Assistive Aids and Equipment**

Wheelchair was provided to a woman with disabilities in Mendhasal, orthopedically impaired, a childhood case of bilateral polio and mobile on wheelchair. Hearing aid was provided to persons with disabilities of Potlampur in Ganjam by direct intervention of Swabhiman.

## **6. An adequate Income / Pension / Ration Card**

3 persons with disabilities (Kendrapada, Bhubaneswar) were linked with Covid19 relief from GoO including 1000 rupees and 5 kgs rice.

## **7. Medicines and other Health**

### **Requirements**

Urobags were provided to a spinal cord injured woman with disabilities in Bhubaneswar. Multivitamin syrups were provided to 20 malnourished children with disabilities.

## **8. Counselling**

Over 400 persons with disabilities were counselled over telephoned on various aspects of Covid19, stress, flu, relief amount, relief contact person, doorstep delivery of ration from Big Bazar, stores for medicines, linkages to doctors, sanitisers, making masks at home, mask cleanliness, location of quarantine centers, nearest medical authorities, diabetes medicines and insulin, diapers at low cost, free bottled water etc.

## **9. Access to Helpline and Hospitals**

On 3rd May 2020, our beneficiary Saroj Mohanty's (youth with disabilities) of ICRC-1 had a health issue. Therefore, was taken to the Capital Hospital Bhubaneswar. Doctors refused to do check-ups, tests and intervention due to restriction, lockdown and Coronavirus. Swabhiman took up the case. With intervention of secretary SSEPD, got an appointment from a senior doctor in Capital Hospital, Dr Ashok Patnaik. After treatment and medication, he is doing well.

## **10. Appropriate and Accessible Information**

Swabhiman published Covid 19 information in Odia and English in Braille, large print, easy read and print.



## 11. Financial Support to OSdN Partners

OSdN in Balesore was supported with INR 50000 for distribution persons with disabilities impacted doubly by Covid19 and Cyclone Amphan leading to complete impoverishment. 5 persons with disabilities were provided immediate cash relief to tide over hunger, travel, hospitalization and medicines ranging from 3000 – 10000 INR.

# Covid19 Protection/ Sanitary Kit Distribution

## 1. Protection Kit distribution to Health

### Professionals

CBM supported, personal protective kits were provided to frontline workers (86 doctors and health professionals) in 26 PHCs and CHCs of BMC. The kit consisted of hand wash, gloves, N95 mask, sanitizer and 250 microns face shield NAP5.3).

## 2. Sanitation/Dignity Kit Distribution

Sanitation kits with hand wash, gloves, sanitizer and N95 masks were distributed

to 50 BMC sanitation workers, 50 street vendors, and 20 traffic police. Other hand wash kits with bath soap (1), detergent bar(1), surf (1) and mask (3) were distributed to 644 individuals. 239 individuals also received a pair of latex gloves. 1000 packets of sanitary napkins were distributed to families with women and girl child thus converting sanitation packets to dignitary kits in 500+ instances.



# Advocacy

Swabhiman led intense advocacy through phones, emails and whatsapp messaging led to the sign language interpretation of GoOs daily COVID19 bulletin at 4.30pm. it was followed by an even more intense advocacy to remove the inept, sign language interpreter to stop making a mockery of the sign language interpretation and finally replacement of first interpreter with a better interpreter.

- Ration Card Challenges: Many persons with disabilities got left out of government support programmes and benefits due to lack of ration card. Swabhiman lobbied for four persons and got success for one and three cases are pending
  - Name: Biswajit Patra – Kendrapada (At/Po Patarpur, GP - Patarpur, Block - Aul, District - Kendrapada)
  - Case: A person with 100% OH. Married with a 6 year old girl child. He had no ration card. His mother, an Anganwadi helper, had a card which was cancelled after his father's death. With hunger staring at the face he called Swabhiman. Plea: " I have not sufficient food my ration card is been cancel (My Ration card no. 17012610002) and I am not able to get any ration that is distributing by the Govt. amidst the hazardous NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID19) pandemic. And the officials are giving the reason for cancelling my ration card is that my mother is a Govt employee (Anganwadi Helper) and she gets only Rs.3500/- (Three-thousand five-hundred) monthly salary. And the whole family depends on her income. Please help me."
  - Action Taken: Swabhiman intervened on behalf of Biswajit and reached out first to District Supply Officer, Kendrapada

Emergency Response Team, DSSO Kendrapada, then Collector Kendrapada and finally, SCPD.

- Status: Received Rs. 1000 in cash and 5kgs of Rice for one month. Ration Card hasn't been issued. Swabhiman is following it up.

## Hearing Aid Replacement in Covid19 times

- Case: J. Kalidasu of Potlampur GP, Chatrapur Block of Ganjam district was in urgent need of a hearing aid. DDRC was closed and he had no access to doctors or ENT professionals for a hearing aid.
- Action Taken: Through Ganjam Emergency Response Team, Swabhiman reached out to CDMO Ganjam. After one week of no action, DLU-East called Secretary Health, Secretary SSEPD, Collect Ganjam. After an intense follow up with officials, Swabhiman reached out to SCPD.
- Status: He was called by CDMOs office to the District Hospital Chhatrapur and in one day, both his test and assessment was completed. The very next day he received a new Hearing Aid.

## Catheter, Diapers and Urobags

- Case: women with disabilities in Bhubaneswar. With closure of all courier services, could not receive her annual purchase from the US of urobags.
- Action Taken: Through BMC Nodal health Officer, Swabhiman reached out to 36 government and private hospitals for the medical essentials.
- Status: After one week's intense follow up she received all essentials at her doorstep from an organization.



# Surveys

## 1. Awareness of GoI Guidelines on Inclusion of persons with disabilities in Covid19 Response.

Synopsis: Guidelines were issued on March 26th 2020 by Govt. of India. The status of the awareness of Disability Inclusion Guidelines was conducted by a five member team of Swabhiman. Each team member was in charge interviewing respondents in 6 districts.

The guidelines issued by Government of India stated the safety and protections of persons with disabilities during the nationwide lockdown, due to the outbreak of Corona virus, was to be considered in priority while designing the COVID19 response. The survey looked at finding the response of government functionaries to the circular.

The surveyors contacted the district partner of OSDN in each district, and after communicating with them collected the numbers of District Magistrate and DSSO. They had telephonic discussions with 112 respondents including persons with disabilities, government officers and DPO heads, to understand essential measures taken in district level to ensure the

safety of persons with disabilities during COVID-19.

The survey brought to the fore

- Complete lack of awareness among district and below level functionaries on COVID19 guidelines of GoI.
- No particular alternative formats of communication and awareness were developed according to the guidelines issued, but in all the districts some alternate methods and formats have been used.
- No district has taken any initiatives for providing the essential support services at doorsteps during the lockdown due to COVID-19, currently pension is allotted total persons with disabilities along with other pension holders, the advance pension of 4 months is allotted to all pension holders.
- No Exclusive Healthcare facilities are there for the persons with disabilities. But all districts have set healthcare units in each gram panchayat which is for all.
- No exclusive helpline is there for persons with disabilities, one general 24X7 helpline is available for all.
- Various NGOs and other activists were working to aware and ensure safety of persons with disabilities in Odisha during COVID-19.



Covid19 Awareness in Accessible Formats on Covid19	Nil
Safety Protocols in Accessible Format	Nil
Ration at Doorstep Delivery	70%
Exclusive Health Care facilities	Nil
Helpline with video and sign language interface	Nil

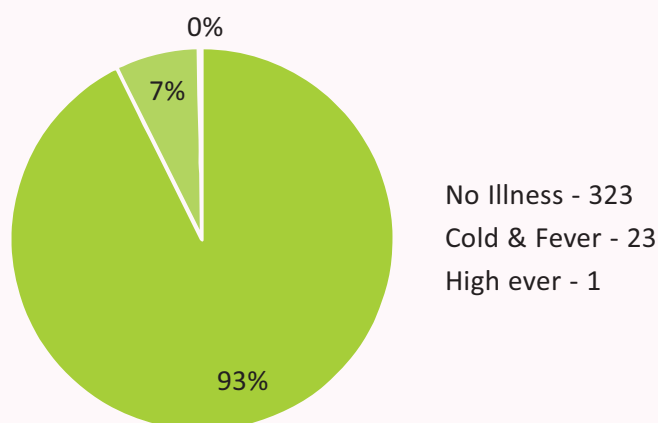
Detailed report available in Swabhiman. Please write to [swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com](mailto:swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com)

2. Individual child wise, household, health and well-being survey and assessment Swabhiman covered 317 children with disabilities on 28/03/2020, out of which 23 numbers of children were affected by normal cold and flu; and 1 child exhibited symptom of viral fever. Immediately parents were counselled to visit nearest CHC. Children with disabilities was diagnosed as simple fever. Date was updated weekly.

Status of 28th March, 2020

HEALTH STATUS		
Center Name	Cold & Fever	High Fever
ICRC 1	6	-
ICRC 2	-	-
ICRC 3	-	-
ICRC 4	-	-
ICRC 5	5	-
ICRC 6	5	-
ICRC 7	2	1
ICRC 8	5	-
Total Cases	23	1

Health and Well Being of children with disabilities



Detailed report available in Swabhiman. Please write to [swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com](mailto:swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com)



### 3. Digitalization of Education – Will children with disabilities Miss the Bus?

Swabhiman interviewed 387 students telephonically, among whom 218 had smartphones either individually, or one in the family.

Out of 387 students, only 220 (56.84%) students are continuing their study and the rest 167 will drop out or not continue their study. In this study we covered total 140 boys with disabilities and 80 girls with disabilities, from primary to post graduation and technical courses. The finding matches the prediction of social mobility experts who are warning that the shift to online learning could severely hold back some students, including those from poorer backgrounds, care leavers, students with caring responsibilities and those with disabilities (Guardian, 05/20/20).

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing, have low vision or are blind, those with learning disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or a physical disability that requires use of a computer keyboard instead of a mouse, students with mental illnesses or various other challenges, are extremely stressed as teachers are sending lessons in PDF without proper explanation, teaching, or in alternate format. They find it difficult, almost impossible to answer or respond without individualised teaching, or alternate formats of assessment or reading material.

Our study found deaf students in particular finding it difficult to lip-read on screens and understand webinars in which multiple people are speaking. Autistic students (their parents) say they are struggling with the anxiety caused by new systems. Father of a student who has dyslexia and dyspraxia, says she is extremely demotivated as she has “challenges with coordinating and finds using the online portals unfriendly. It takes her a long time to work it out.” Mother of class VII students with CP said: “My son is able to access learning materials through the Whatsapp but finds it very difficult to understand, without a teacher or expert to explain doubts.”

Of the 387 students who were telephonically interviewed, only 220 (56.48%) had smartphone, either personally, or collectively in the family.

Segregation of data on Possession of Smartphones (Of the 56% who had smartphones)

Segregation by Gender	
% Boy Students	64.22%
%Girl Students	35.78%
Segregation Class wise	
Till Class 7	66%
Class 9	6.4%
Class 10	10.1%
Class X Appeared	6.4%
Plus 2 & 3	5.5%
PG	2.8%
Professional & Technical	1.4%

Detailed report available in Swabhiman. Please write to [swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com](mailto:swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com)

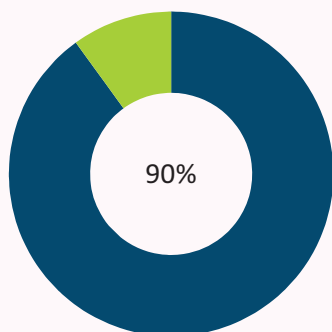
#### 4. World Bank Learners Digital Learning Support availability/requirement

World Bank's Disability Inclusion team initiated a survey world-wide to understand if learners with disabilities and their families have access to the supports they need to continue learning while schools are closed due to COVID-19. This survey was to be completed by parents of children with disabilities, teachers for children with disabilities, and persons with disabilities. NCPEDP introduced Swabhiman as the partner from India.

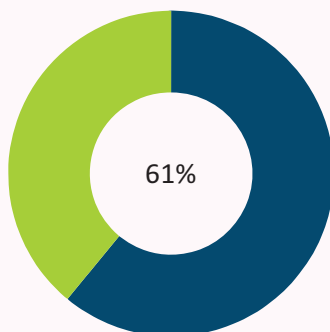
Swabhiman reached a total of 1126 persons with disabilities from not only Odisha but other states of India (10%). The persons with disabilities numbered 567, parents of children with disabilities 429 and Teachers interviewed were 130.

Categories	Persons with disAbilities	Parents	Teacher
HI	12	14	4
CP	5	18	4
MD	7	18	11
MR	61	78	18
OH	300	126	28
Paralysis	1	0	0
S & HI	27	44	20
SI	4	9	3
Speech Stammering	2	3	2
TB	1	-	-
VI	132	68	18
LV	15	25	8
Autism	-	10	4
Down Syndrome	-	2	-
Dwarfism	-	1	2
ID	-	10	6
MR + CP	-	1	-
Sickle Cell Anemia	-	1	-
OH + CP	-	1	-
LD	-	-	1
S & HI + MR	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>130</b>

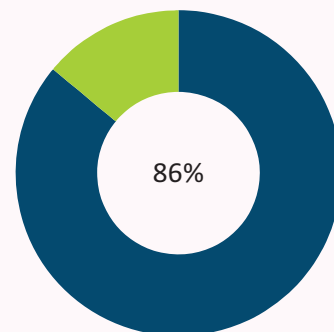
### Priority Areas of Concern for Parents of Children with disAbilities (1st and 2nd Choices)



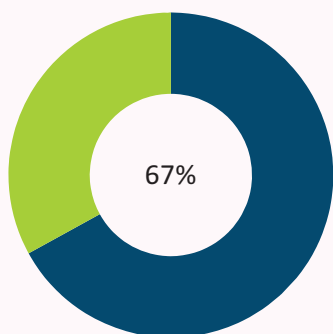
Teacher will not give attention to children with disabilities



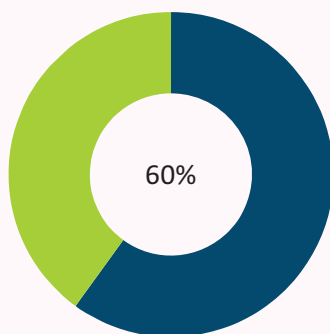
Do not have accessible educational materials with them



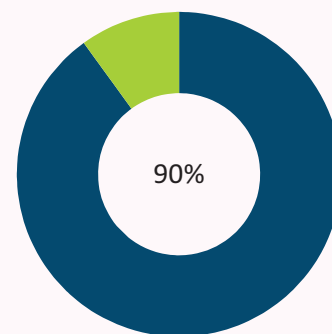
Do not know how to use the technology appropriately to continue their learning



Will fall behind in learning due to inaccessible distance learning modalities

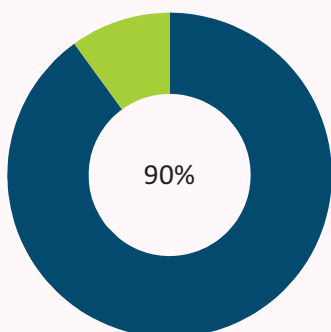


Cannot cope with post COVID19 social and education scenario

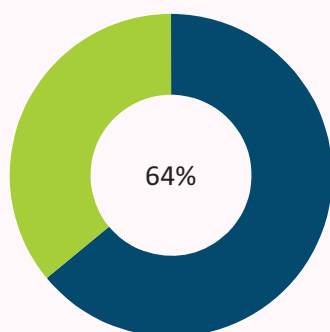


Speech & Hearing Impaired Children, those with Autism, Intellectual disabilities can not learn social distancing

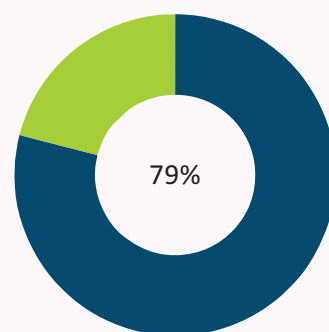
### Priority Areas of Concern for Teachers of Children with disAbilities (1st and 2nd Choices)



Maintaining social distancing, use of mask and hand washing among children with disabilities

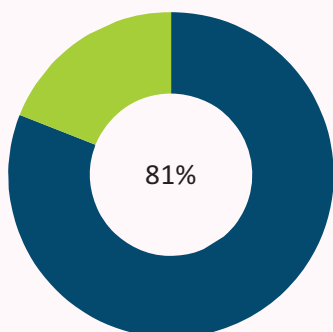


Students do not have smartphones and computers at home

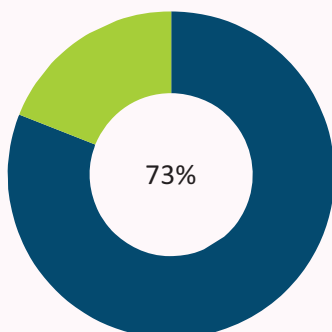


Teaching those with learning disorders, autism and LV without touching

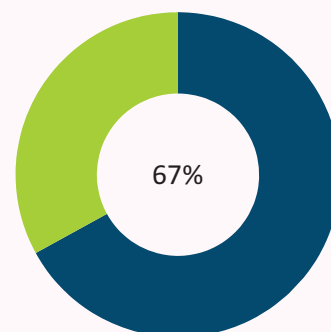
## Priority Areas of Persons with disAbilities (1st and 2nd Choices)



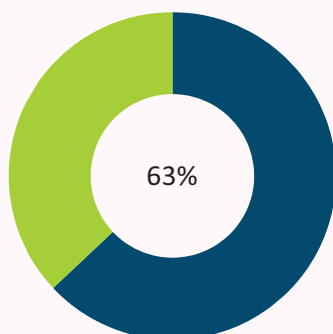
Concern about health, hygiene, and cleanliness



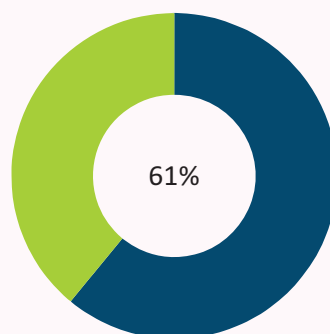
Study materials in alternate format



Requirement of laptops, tabs, smartphones



WiFi and Data support



Education Support Groups – Scribes, Readers, Escort, Attendant

Detailed report available in Swabhiman. Please write to [swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com](mailto:swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com)



Persons with disabilities must be included in all responses to COVID-19 and related humanitarian interventions, from health preventive measures to social protection responses. Discrimination of persons with disabilities in access to COVID-19 treatment, including life-saving procedures and equipment such as ventilators, is a serious human rights violation.



The Global Action on Disabilities - Joint statement (Excerpt)

# Reports

Swabhiman was part of several detailed discussions in online platforms which led to important reports being published, highlighting the status of persons with disabilities in the Corona phase and during lockdowns. The number of individuals and organisations who contributed to the different reports ranged from 24-57. Swabhiman has published two reports individually. All the reports are available in Swabhiman and respective organisation's website. please write to ***swabhiman.bhubaneswar@gmail.com*** for full report.

## 1. "COVID-19: Issues, Challenges, and the Suggestions for the Inclusion of persons with disabilities"

The report has been the outcome of the meeting initiated and organized by ASTHA, Newdelhi, against the background of pandemic COVID\_19. Persons with disabilities are the most vulnerable section of the society and due to their bodily limitations are more susceptible to the deadly disease like COVID\_19 that has cost the lives of millions across the globe. The document brings forth the various issues and challenges the persons with disabilities and those who require constant medical intervention have been encountering due to lockdown and COVID-19 crises. Based on the information and suggestions provided by around 20 organizations and professionals from various parts of the country and working in the field of disabilities, the document can be used as a source of information for the states and organizations to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities in this humanitarian crisis.

## 2. Locked Down and Left Behind (A Report on the Status of Persons with Disabilities in India During the COVID – 19 Crisis) - NCPEDP Report

Issues Highlighted:

- Communication, Accessible Information, Access to Helplines: There is a general lack of accessible information around COVID-19. Most people have not been

able to access helplines. Moreover, there is no dedicated helpline for persons with disabilities which makes it harder for them, especially people who are deaf / hard of hearing.

- Access to Essentials (Food, Clothing, Shelter): Access to food and groceries have become particularly difficult for persons with mobility issues. What compounds the problem is when communication barriers make a difficult situation dire. NCPEDP's survey revealed that 67 % of persons with disabilities interviewed have no access to doorstep delivery of essentials by the government. Only 22% have the access to delivery of essentials<sup>3</sup>.
- Access to Health Care and Medical Aid: Health care workers are not equipped to deal with disabled people. Persons with disabilities with such conditions as diabetes are facing problems getting their tests done during this time as no pathology labs are open, and home collection of blood samples has stopped due to the lockdown. Those taking lithium for mental health treatment have also had to stop blood testing, to control for dosage. The almost 50% drop in supply of blood in blood banks has made blood transfusion a major challenge. This has put people with thalassemia at great risk. People with spinal cord injuries are facing a huge shortage of medical kits as well as medical services such as fixing catheters.

People on prescription pain killers have difficulties in accessing essential medicines. Persons with severe disabilities who need diapers, catheters, urine bags, disposable sheets, bandages, cotton, antibiotic medicines etc. are unable to procure these either due lack of funds, unavailability of these items, or inability to physically get them oneself or through the help of another.

- Access to Caregivers, Support Group and assistive Devices: The near total lockdown meant that caregivers were overnight not able to be with the persons with disabilities who depend on them. Even in cases where the caregiver was willing to attend duties (despite their own risk of getting infected), the lack of transport options made it impossible. Assistive devices can play a critical role in the life and functioning of a person with disability. The lockdown, with its consequential restriction on services and purchases, has put some persons with disabilities at risk. Persons with disabilities who depend on social and peer support groups and systems, reading rooms, listening circles, cafes and friendship groups have been suddenly left isolated and alone, without lifesaving social contacts.
- Financial Challenges: In many states (like Maharashtra) pensions to persons with disabilities have not been released. In states like Jharkhand and Bihar, payment has been delayed by 5 months, and are being released very slowly. During this pandemic many people have lost their jobs. Many of them do not officially come under the BPL category, as a consequence of which they are not receiving any financial assistance or free rations, although they are in financial distress.
- Discrimination, Violence and Abuse: Instances of abuse and attacks on persons with disabilities tend to go up in times of

great stress as they are often not in a position to adequately defend themselves. Abandonment of family members with disabilities is also a grave challenge. Increase in number of people within a household, sharing and decision making during scarcity, impoverishment and not having purposive activities complicate relationships in households, resulting in more conflict and negligence.

### 3. CDPF - Written Evidence to International Development Committee of UK Parliament Humanitarian Crisis Monitoring: Impact of Coronavirus COVID-19

From Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum: CDPF are most concerned that despite in many cases inclusive Commonwealth Country guidelines, disabled people are being left out of COVID 19 responses. Further concerns were :-

- Guidance is often not accessible in terms of Sign Language, Easy Read or Braille.
- The social welfare measures for disabled people are often not reaching them on the ground; for example in Orissa State in India, local DPOs carried out a survey and found that no disabled people had received food or financial compensation they were entitled to.
- Lockdown measures are hitting disabled people who rely on personal assistance particularly hard and PPE for those who provide personal care is in short supply or non-existent;
- Those with psycho-social impairments such as autism, find it additionally difficult and need dispensation to go out in a safe way. Some Governments have agreed this.

### 4. South Asia Covid19 Comprehensive report SAARC region comprises of over 21% of the world's population which remains vulnerable towards COVID-19. The Member States have reported 330,369 cases, a total of 7,867

deaths in the region, and 130,458 recovered cases. On March 15, 2020, during a video conference of the SAARC Heads of State and Government, Indian Prime Minister proposed a Coronavirus Emergency Fund. This emergency fund was set up in response to the global coronavirus pandemic. The initiative seeks to mitigate the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic in South Asia region. The other members of the SAARC expressed their support of Narendra Modi and his proposal for the coronavirus emergency fund.

Asia and the Pacific is home to an estimated 690 million persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities face barriers to full and effective participation in society, with many having intersecting disadvantages when disabilities interact with other characteristics, including gender, age, ethnicity, income and place of residence. Like other regions, SAARC region persons

with disabilities also expressed major inconvenience and recommendations are as such:

- All policy responses to COVID-19 should be disability-inclusive, ranging from public health and containment measures to economic stimulus packages and socioeconomic impact assessment
- Provide continued access to all goods and services, including disability-specific support services, necessary for safeguarding the wellbeing of persons with disabilities
- Deliver public information in accessible formats – with public communication messaging that is bias-free and respectful of all population groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Make medical and quarantine policies and processes accessible and disability inclusive.
- Safeguard the income security and livelihoods of persons with disabilities.

## Online Education

With studies getting hampered due to the ongoing lockdown to combat COVID-19, Swabhiman introduced online education for students enrolled in Project Saksham. To begin with, students of government schools who were promoted to Class 9 and 10 this year, are being regularly imparted online education in Maths and English. Emphasising that the students must remain indoors as part of

precautionary steps against COVID-19, Swabhiman is encouraging students to pursue online studies as courses remained incomplete due to closure of educational institutions following the coronavirus outbreak. Moreover, the lockdown has been extended till July 31st when all educational institutions in the state will remain shut.

1. Online classroom – Swabhiman conducted 24 classes in Mathematics, English and Odia subject through online platforms and Whatsapp groups. Resource persons Sanjib lochan Mohanty and Ashok Sahoo, and team member Priya Mehar conducted the classes. Number of attendees was small because of lack of smart phones, computers, slow internet and weak data packs. Assignments are given to students every day.

## 2. Class Wise Virtual Teaching / WhatsApp assignments

Class	Subject	Number of Classes Held from 02/04/2020 – 23/05/2020
Till Class 7	Mathematics, English, Odia	18 Online 36 WhatsApp group assignments
Class 9	Mathematics, English, Odia	3
Class 10	Mathematics, English, Odia	3

## 3. Storytelling and Comics

Story telling classes based on Moral values, Travel Saga and Heritage Art of Odisha were conducted by volunteers of Swabhiman (Anwesha Ambaly – Tata Steel; Partha Sarathi Samal – Google), presently young professionals.

Class	Number of Classes Held from 02/04/2020 – 23/05/2020
Till Class 7	3 Classes 1. Bhutan Trip 2. Koraput Voyage 3. Good Values in students
Class 9	
Class 10	
Class X Appeared	



Online education has now become mainstream, unlike yesteryear when it was just a one-time event

## 5. Navonmesh Creativity – Submissions for Contest

Class	Subject
Till Class 7	Art, Music and Dance
Class 9	
Class 10	
Class X Appeared	



**Mayank Kumar,**  
Co-funder of upGrad

## 4. Others

Class	Subject	Number of Classes Held from 02/04/2020 – 23/05/2020
Till Class 7	Need to Preserve Resources after the Pandemic	1
Class 9		
Class 10		
Class X Appeared	Need to Preserve Resources after the Pandemic Understanding Disability	3

## 6. Online Therapy (02/04/2020 till 20/05/20)

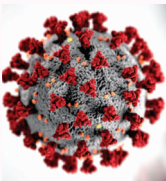
Physiotherapist directly communicated with the parents during the online therapy session. However,



50% parents have smart phone, so limited sessions could be held. Mothers, mostly, gave therapy to their children.

Date wise	Number of Children with disAbilities.
14/05/20	7
15/05/20	11
18/05/20	7
20/05/20	8

# IEC Material



## COVID-19

### CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

**COVID - 19** is the short name for "Coronavirus disease 2019".

It is a new virus.

The first cases were diagnosed in people who had visited a market in China that sold live seafood and animals.

Doctors and scientists are still learning about it.

The virus spreads easily and has now affected people in over 108 countries.

It has just been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization

Scientists and doctors think that most people will be ok, especially kids, but some people might get pretty sick.

Doctors and health experts are working hard to help people stay healthy.

**What is Coronavirus?**

Coronavirus is like flu.

People who are ill with the virus may:

- Have a cough
- Have a high temperature
- Find it harder to breathe normally.

Most people who have the virus feel unwell but do not need to go to hospital.

People who have Coronavirus are usually better after 14 days.

The Government has now asked people who have the symptoms to stay at home for 7 days and not go near other people.

**How coronaviruses spreads?**

Coronaviruses spreads through droplets sent into the air when people cough or sneeze.

The virus can spread in communities from one person to another through contact with surfaces that have germs on them.

**What can I do so that I don't get COVID-19?**

You can practice healthy habits at home, school, workplace and markets to help protect against the spread of COVID-19:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. If you sneeze or cough into a tissue, throw it in the trash right away.
- Keep your hands out of your mouth, nose, and eyes. This will help keep germs out of your body.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Follow these five steps—wet, lather (make bubbles), scrub (rub together), rinse and dry. You can sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- If you don't have soap and water, have an adult help you use a special hand cleaner.
- If you feel sick, stay home. Just like you don't want to get other people's germs in your body, other people don't want to get your germs either.

**What to do if you think you have Coronavirus**

You will need to find out if you have Coronavirus if you have:

- the symptoms of the virus
- recently been to a country where lots of people have the virus
- been close to someone who has been told they have the virus.






Do not go to your doctors if you think you have Coronavirus.

Do contact helpline numbers straight away (Odisha – 9439994859/104). This will tell you what you need to do next. They may tell you to stay and home and not be near other people for several days. This is called self-isolating.

**How to help stop Coronavirus spreading**

It is important that we all do our best to stop the virus spreading.

The best way to do this is:





- to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- to put any tissues you use in a Dustbin
- cough or sneeze into your sleeve instead of your hand, if you don't have a tissue
- try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands.

It is really important that you wash your hands carefully and regularly. You should do this after coughing or sneezing and before eating any food. You should always wash your hands when you get home or into work.

**Advice on hand washing**

Doctors and nurses have told us that when washing your hands you should follow these steps:

1. Wet your hands under warm running water
2. Apply a small amount of soap
3. Rub your hands together and make sure that the soap and water cover all over your hands
4. Carefully wash your palms, the backs of your hands, your fingertips, thumbs, your wrists and nails
5. Rinse your hands under running water
6. Dry your hands thoroughly


Issued by Public Interest for Persons with disAbilities by

**Swabhiman**



Email: swabhiman@gmail.com | www.swabhiman.org

## ଝଟି ପାଦରେ ହାତ ଧୋଇବା

୪୦ ରୁ ୬୦ ସେକେଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତ ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ପରିଷ୍କାର ହୋଇଯିବ





୧. ଚେଣ କଟିବା

ସବୁକୁ ଧୁଅଁ ତଳେ ଦେଖାଇ, ହାତରେ ଚେଣ କଟିବା

୨. ଖେଳାଇବା

ସବୁକୁ ଧୁଇ ହାତରେ ଭଲଭଳି ଲଗାଇବା

୩. ଘଷିବା

ଭଲଭାବେ ସବୁ ଚେଣକୁ ହାତର ସବୁ କୋଣରେ ଘଷିବା

୪. ଧୋଇବା

ଧୁଇ ହାତକୁ ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ଭଲଭାବେ ଧୋଇବା, ସବୁ ନଖ କୋଣକୁ ସତା କଟିବା

୫. ପରିଷ୍କାର ପାଣିରେ ଧୋଇବା

ହାତକୁ ଭଲଭାବେ ଧୋଇ ସତା କଟିବା

ସ୍ବାଭୀମାନ ଭୂବନେଶ୍ୱର ଆରୁ ବନବିହର ଜାତି ଆସବୁ ବୋଇନାଟୁ ଚରାଇବା

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Covering his mouth and nose with a traditional "gamchha" prime minister quoted from Yajurveda, "Vayam Rashtre Jagrutyaa," and explained the meaning of the mantra as "We will all keep our nation eternal and awakened."

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

# Recommendations

These recommendations are the outcome of the various online discussions initiated by Swabhiman and including OSDN partners, persons with disabilities, parents, NGOs and DPOs.

## **Information in Accessible Format**

- Persons with disabilities must receive information about Covid19, infection mitigating tips, neighbourhood quarantine centers, public restriction plans, the Covid19 related relief and services offered in a diversity of accessible formats
- Accessible Helpline numbers with videos and ease of access calling with use of accessible technologies.
- All news channel to broadcast news twice with sign language interpretation.
- All government briefings to have sign language interpretation, and minutes to be widely circulated in alternate format.
- Certified Sign language interpreters and special educators from institutions of repute.

## **Finances**

- Persons with disabilities must be provided an ex gratia cash transfer of 5000-10000 rupees to tide over extra ordinary situations.
- Unemployment allowance to be set up for next 18 months and paid regularly to all employable youth with disabilities.

## **Personal Assistance and Carers**

- Emergency passes on priority to those requiring close personal assistance from carers or family members; to ease the local travel of carers and attendants.

## **Rapid awareness-raising and training are essential for all personnel involved in the response.**

- All emergency personnel to be linked to NGOs with expertise in specific disabilities to better address needs of persons with disabilities.
- At the national level, there should be a registry where people can inform their medical condition (eg blood disorder) and access the information about the various links through which they could get their demands filled.

## **Health & Well Being**

- Persons with disabilities in need of health services due to COVID19 cannot be deprioritized on the ground of their disability.
- Therapy centres, Counselling etc. should be allowed to function with proper protection gears and processes.
- COVID-19 testing centres and quarantine centers should be made accessible.

## **Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) can and should play a key role in raising awareness of disabled people and their families.**

- DPOs can and should play a key role in advocating for a disability-inclusive response to the COVID19 crisis to their Governments, Health Service and Communities.
- Civil Society Organizations and the government need to work together to ensure that all persons with disabilities are reached, with or without a disability certificate, ration card or other documents [ given the fact that a large segment of the population does not possess any documents].

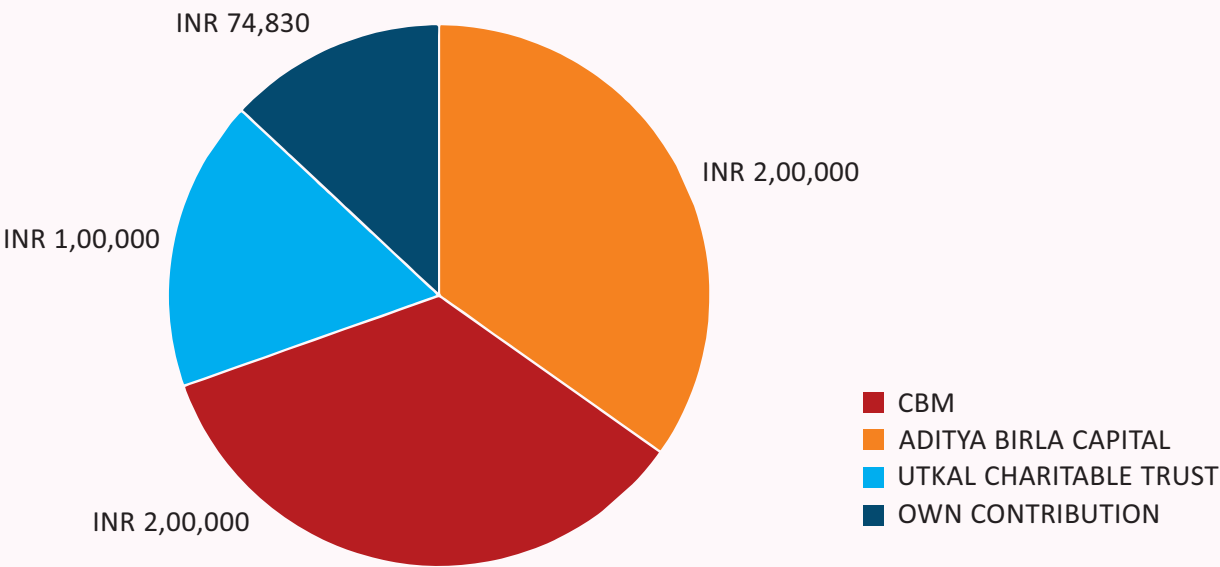
# Financial Summary

FUNDS RAISED FOR COVID19  
INR 5,00,000

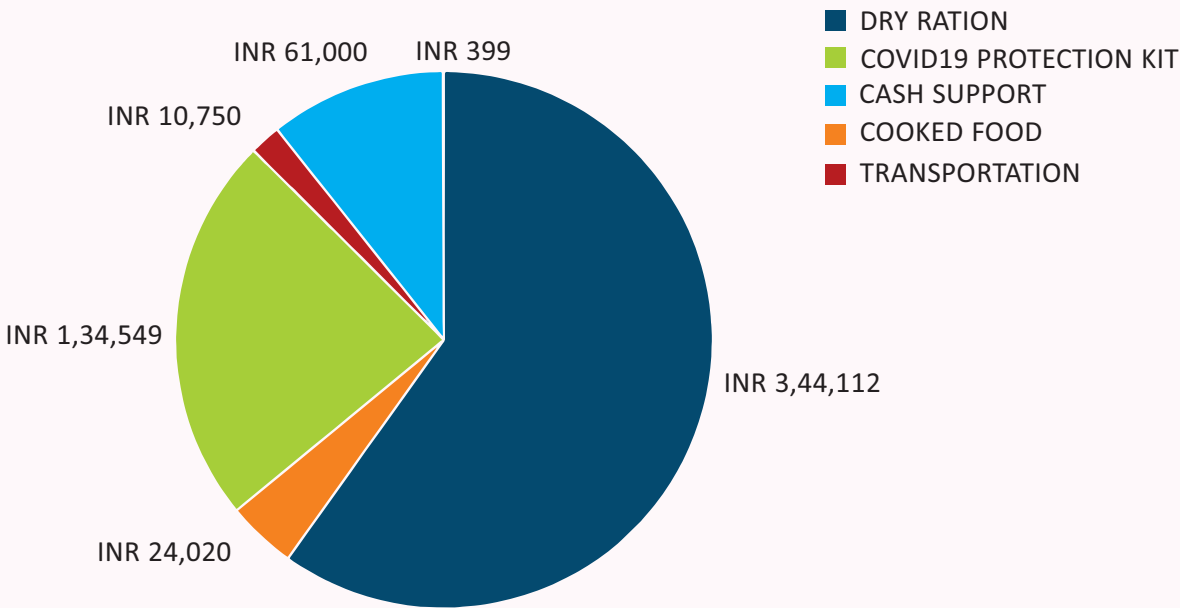
TOTAL SPENT FOR COVID19  
INR 5,74,830

CONTRIBUTION FROM OWN FUNDS  
INR 74,830

FUNDS RAISED FOR COVID19



TOTAL SPENT FOR COVID19



# Meet Our Covid19 Warriors

At the root of India's brave fight against COVID-19 is the hard work of the our corona warriors, soldiers without the soldiers' uniforms. Swabhiman hails the contribution of our team members and volunteers who during the coronavirus pandemic, went from house to house distributing relief, hand wash kits, creating awareness on Covid19 infection, on how to avoid getting infected and the protocols of safety. They also distributed PPE, masks, face shields, gloves and sanitisers to doctors, traffic police, street vendors and sanitation workers.





Chinmay Pradhan  
Team Member



Swatishree Maharana  
Team Member



Satyajit Behera  
Team Member



Kanak Baral  
Team Member



Saswati Subhadarshini  
Team Member



Lalatendu Bhoi  
Team Member



Rojalin Prusty  
Team Member



Debasis Nayak  
Team Member



Suchismita Das  
Team Member



Pujaswini Nayak  
Team Member



Mamali Panda  
Team Member



Avinash Dehuri  
Team Member



Jasmine Digal  
Volunteer



Sabita Dakua  
Volunteer



Balabhadra Behera  
Volunteer



Babita Gouda  
Volunteer



Manasmita Pradhan  
Volunteer



Suryakant Pradhan  
Volunteer



Itee Pradhan  
Volunteer



Soumya Ranjan  
Volunteer



**THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS**

STOCK MARKET BSE: 34357.22 -335.86(-1.68%) NSE: 9154.43 -159.50(-1.71%)

Home > States > Odisha

## Inclusive COVID-19 plans must for persons with disabilities in Odisha

The current crisis demands that people with disabilities must be treated as vulnerable groups and special provisions included for them at every stage of the public health crisis.

Published: 25th March 2020 10:13 AM | Last updated: 25th March 2020 10:13 AM



For representative/stock purposes (Shutterstock, Shutterstock, PPI)

By **Smritika M Das**  
Express News Service

**BHUBANESWAR:** Coronavirus has posed a challenge for every segment of the society and for 'special people' it is far more complex and traumatic.

From awareness barriers to compromised immunity and accessibility challenges at testing centres or isolation wards, people living with disabilities may have to face a lot of difficulties. If proper actions are not taken on time,

COVERED BY PLAYSTREAM

The current crisis demands that people with disabilities must be treated as vulnerable groups and special provisions included for them at every stage of the public health crisis.

The State Government will have to be ready with an emergency response plan by including the needs of people with disability.

Activists say, amid lockdowns, measures should be taken to ensure that essential support continues for them.

In the wake of coronavirus outbreak, hostels of all 98 special schools and 35 rehabilitation or therapy centres across the State will remain closed from March 23 to June 30, as per a decision taken by the State Government at a meeting on Saturday. Even the 103 special schools in the State will remain shut.

"The special students have already been informed and are being sent home with Rs 500 each as travel allowance. They have been briefed and adequately counselled about the situation," said Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma, Secretary in Social Security and Impoverishment of Persons with Disabilities department (SSPDI). The students are also being paid three months advance of their monthly assistance of Rs 1,200.

But, is shutting down all therapy centres or hostels an effective measure?

"Some therapy centres should go on with strict measures and supervision with the therapist using mask and taking other precautions. There are several people who need passive therapy every day, otherwise there will be curvature. Bodies will get stiff and develop additional secondary disabilities," said activist Shruti Mohapatra of Swabhiman.

There is stress on providing public health information using sign language, captioning, text messages and relay services.

"We have prepared an advisory regarding coronavirus outbreak for hearing-impaired individuals. It has been telecast and being circulated through social media," said Sulechana Das, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.

"However, we need more bulletins about COVID-19 on TV in sign language. It's going to be very difficult to spread awareness about hygiene among autistic children and mentally-challenged persons. For people with intellectual challenges and slow learners, we have developed an easy read. Braille note for VI and large print for low vision people printed.

"We had distributed the same across 124 slums in Bhubaneswar," she added.

Swabhiman has also written to the State Government to consider the basic needs of specially-abled persons during health crisis.

However, it is awaiting Government's response. On Sunday, National Association for Deaf also released its list volunteers who could act as sign language interpreters for hospitalised patients of 'special' COVID 19.

Surprisingly, no separate isolation wards or quarantine rooms have been created for the specially-abled so far.

"No separate facility has been made for such patients. Also, they can't be accompanied by care givers due to nature of the infection which is a worry," a source said.

Earlier, WHO had raised concerns that physical obstacles, discriminatory laws and existing stigma can exacerbate the health crisis for the specially-abled persons.

**Steps taken**

- Three months advance payment to beneficiaries of Madhu Babu Pension Yojana
- Special schools, hostels and therapy centres shut till June 30
- Advance payment of monthly assistance funds to students of special schools for next 3 months
- Travel allowance '500 each is being given to the students of residential spl schools

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## Fighting COVID-19: What Needs To Be Done For People With Disabilities

By **Smriti Mohapatra** Last updated Apr 16, 2020 **FEATURED** **GUEST COLUMN**



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COVID-19 is a global pandemic. People with disabilities (PwDs) are at risk from COVID-19. And many are less likely to access health services, and more likely to experience greater health needs, worse outcomes and discriminatory laws and stigma.

Here are some of the challenges posed by COVID-19:

1. **Chronic Conditions-** Many PwDs do have specific disabilities or chronic conditions that make the illness more dangerous.
2. **Isolation-** Many PwDs need regular, hands-on help from other people to do every day self-care tasks. Also, living in supplies of groceries, when shopping of any kind is always extra taxing, requires extra hands for transportation. For some of us, even cleaning our homes and washing our hands frequently can be extra difficult, due to physical impairments, environmental barriers, or interrupted services.
3. **Disruption of Services-** Many PwDs need regular assistance in terms of personal care, necessary therapy and support to maintain our independence. Outbreaks can disrupt these services. Aides and caregivers may become sick, lockdowns may require them to stay home, or they may be prevented to enter societies/apartments.
4. **Workplace Accommodations and Flexibility:** Social isolation is supplemented by working from home which leads to work delivery not getting impacted. This is a regular need of many PwDs.

Present Situation

1. Not much has been done to provide PwDs with guidance and support needed to protect them during pandemic, though many belong to high-risk group.
2. Containment measures, such as social distancing and self-isolation, may be impossible for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe. Additional social protection measures needed to guarantee the continuity of support in a safe manner.

- and national levels should take measures to include PwDs in disaster management activities and to keep them duly informed.
2. Authorities are mandatorily required to involve concerned state commissioner for PwDs during disaster management activities.
  3. All information about COVID-19, services offered and precautions to be taken, should be available in simple and local language in accessible formats.
  4. Sign language interpreters who work in emergency and health settings should be given the same health and safety protection as other healthcare workers dealing with COVID-19.
  5. People responsible for handling emergency response services should be trained on the rights of PwDs, and on risks associated with additional problems for persons having specific impairments.
  6. Relevant information on support to PwDs should be part of all awareness campaigns.
  7. During quarantine, essential support services, personal assistance and physical and communication accessibility should be ensured for blind persons and persons with intellectual or mental disability.
  8. Caregivers of PwDs should be allowed to reach PwDs by exempting them from restrictions during the lockdown.
  9. To ensure continuation of support services for PwDs with minimum human contact.
  10. Resident Welfare Associations should be sensitised about needs of PwDs so as to allow entry of maid, caregiver and other support staff to their residences.
  11. PwDs should be given access to essential food, water, medicine, and, to the extent possible, such items should be delivered at their residence or place where they have been quarantined

Odisha Update

1. In the wake of coronavirus outbreak, hostels of all 98 special schools and 35 rehabilitation or therapy centres across the State will remain closed

- from March 23 to June 30.
2. The 103 special schools in the State will remain shut. The special students were sent home with Rs 500 each as travel allowance. The students are also being paid three months advance of their monthly assistance of Rs 1,200.
3. Three months advance payment to beneficiaries of Madhu Babu Pension Yojana

(The author is a renowned campaigner for rights of PwDs)

coronavirus COVID-19 physically challenged PwDs

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