



## List of Summaries for Covid-19 Rapid Assessment Studies

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdown, Institute for Social Studies Trust (ISST) undertook a series of Rapid Assessment studies to understand the 'Impact of Covid-19 national lockdown' on women in informal economy working in five vulnerable sectors in Delhi: domestic work, street vending, home-based work, waste picking, and construction work. This series of studies attempted to understand the immediate repercussions of the lock down and on the lives of informal women workers in the said sectors. These studies were based on primary data, collected through telephonic survey and in-depth interviews during the second phase of lock down (15 April- 3 May 2020).

Please find below summaries of the sector specific reports and their online link for the full report.

### **1. Impact of COVID 19 National Lockdown on Domestic Workers in Delhi: A Summary**

(Full report available at: [http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590124768\\_pub\\_ISST -  
\\_Domestic Workers Final compressed.pdf](http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590124768_pub_ISST_-_Domestic_Workers_Final_compressed.pdf))

Domestic work as a sector is invisible under-valued and under regulated. As such, the impact of the Covid-19 induced national lock down severely hit the sector as loss of earnings compounded with lack of social security and protection for the sector, makes it doubly difficult for the women workers in the sector.

83% of women reported severe to moderate economic crises for their families causing further anxiety over security of jobs. Though some received wages for March, many couldn't collect the same given the sudden lockdown and the overall fear of contracting the virus. Though some domestic workers have bank accounts but transactions of wages are preferred in cash, by both parties. Further, most domestic workers were skeptical of receiving wages for months of April and May and many expressed hesitation in asking for salaries when they had not been able to go to work, while others shared that employers were also reluctant to pay for non-working months.

Some women continued to go to work despite the lockdown while in some house, domestic workers who lived alone were asked to stay back with the family for the duration of the lockdown.

85% of the women managed their April expenses from their own savings. Payment of house rent was a major problem for most migrant workers and most are paying the same in small installments. In this study with domestic workers, we found 44% of the domestic workers accessed dry rations from the PDS shops followed by the local *kirana* (grocery) stores (26%). 51% women also complained that many *kirana* stores are now selling at inflated prices even when it is against the law. Domestic workers unions have pointed out that lack of smart phones, data services, tedious process of filling the e-coupons, printing of the e-coupon, etc. act as barriers for most people to submit e-coupons for temporary rations. Women with small children



complained of not being able to buy milk owing to complete shutdown. Lack of water, overcrowding and long queues was also reported by some of the workers.

Those with smaller families did not complain much about unpaid work but 54% women responded they did all the work inside their homes themselves. Some women also shared that they were also now doing the outside work of going to shops, etc. because of rise in harassment of men by the police.

Loss of earnings (43%), jobs, payment of rent (57%), children's education and fear of contracting the disease were some of the main concerns for domestic workers post the lockdown.

## **2. Impact of COVID 19 National Lockdown on Home-based Workers in Delhi: A Summary**

(Full report available at: [http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590047893\\_pub\\_ISST\\_-\\_Home\\_Based\\_Workers\\_Final-compressed.pdf](http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590047893_pub_ISST_-_Home_Based_Workers_Final-compressed.pdf))

Home-based workers have remained invisible to state interventions including the most recent announcements made under the “Self-reliant India Mission” where they did not find any mention. 92% of home-based workers in the study on ‘Impact of Covid-19 national lockdown on women home-based workers in Delhi’ have reported complete loss of income since March 20th while only 20% reported receiving JanDhan cash transfers of Rs.500/-, which they deemed highly insufficient. 57% reported facing major challenges in accessing banks/ATMs due to mobility restrictions/police patrolling which means that they have been unable to access any money received through loans/transfers. This aggravates the deprivation of women home-based workers, especially single women and women in female-headed households, who have limited or no access to credit and are currently left with no money. More than 80% of home-based workers are depending on their personal or household savings to manage daily expenses in the absence of income. The impact of lockdown on home-based workers has meant loss of entire household incomes in many cases, while the government schemes/welfare measures fail to cover majority of informal workers such as home based workers who lack registration and even visibility.

Home-based workers in Savda Ghevra and Bakkarwala JJ colony are heavily reliant on cooked food/ration from government sources. 33% reported challenges in accessing cooking fuel due to increased prices (about Rs.750/-) which has made it harder for them to cook food even when ration is received. None of the respondents had received any subsidy for cooking gas under schemes such as Ujjwala Yojana. It has also been found that women are disproportionately exposed to hunger during such food shortages.

Lack of masks/PPEs has also increased women’s risk of exposure to corona virus infection disproportionately as the burden of procuring food or other resources like medicines is being mostly borne by them. 33% of the respondents stated being unable to practice physical distancing due to unavailability of masks/gloves/sanitizers/soaps, huge crowds and multiple trips required to PDS and government canteens to access food.



However, lack of home-based work due to severe decline in manufacturing output and competition faced from workers who have faced retrenchment in other sectors of work are major post-lockdown concerns of the home-based workers. However, the biggest concern remains the fear of contracting the coronavirus disease due to lack of protective gears.

### **3. Impact of COVID 19 National Lockdown on Women Street Vendors in Delhi: A Summary**

(Full report available at: [http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590050642\\_pub ISST - Women Street Vendors.pdf](http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590050642_pub_ISST_-_Women_Street_Vendors.pdf))

There are roughly 2 crore street vendors in India forming 2% of the urban population (with recent numbers being estimated around 4 crore). Further 1/3rd (30%) of this population forms the women street vendor population, who are mostly found in weekly haats and street/roadside/footpath stalls, or helping their families/husbands in the back-end work. Amidst the lockdown, the women vendors have completely lost their livelihoods. Those selling through carts have reported being harassed by RWA's and colonies are not allowing their entry. Along with this, patrolling by police (found to be 6% in the data) has additionally restricted their movement. Further as street vendors is mostly a floating population and usually survive on loans, 54% of the respondents have taken loans to help them sustain during the lockdown period and 37.1% respondents are finding it difficult to repay the loans. Fear of getting COVID-19 came out very strongly in qualitative as well as quantitative responses. Given the reduction/lack of income, managing household has become a challenge with most of them using their personal saving for food and other necessities.

"This sudden announcement of lockdown has impacted by work. This is like what happened during demonetization. We should have given some time to sell our goods" – Women street vendor, April 2020

"Like bigger fish eats smaller fish to survive, we have the same situation. People like us are not given opportunities to improve our lives" - Women street vendor, April 2020

"Women vendors are not going out. Only men are working during this lockdown that too only for vegetable or fruit vending and even then, they are not allowed to work more than 2-3 hours" - Interview with Vandana Narang – Janpahal, April 2020

### **4. Impact of COVID-19 National Lockdown on Women Construction workers in Delhi: A summary**

(Full report available at: [http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590049662\\_pub ISST - Construction Workers.pdf](http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590049662_pub_ISST_-_Construction_Workers.pdf))



This study was conducted with women construction workers across various areas in Delhi to understand the impact of national lockdown on the lives of women Construction workers. Our study suggests that the lockdown has had a significant impact on the women workers in the sector. All respondents reported a loss of paid work. In order to provide a relief measure to the construction workers government of India announced a one-time Direct Benefit transfer (DBT). Delhi government decided to transfer Rs. 5000 to the accounts of the construction workers but only 7.40% of the registered construction workers who had renewed their registration in the current year with Construction Welfare Board Delhi received the benefit. Our study also shows that an abysmally low number of respondents received the DBT, reflecting a failure at the level of the state in reaching out to the construction workers. Over 72% of the respondents found it difficult to manage the expenses for the month of April. As a result the families are under immense distress and have been incurring debts. Despite this, unlike many other migrants who starting leaving Delhi for their homes in other states, some women reported that they could not go back their own villages because of their landlessness and lack of employment in their villages.

The lockdown also resulted in an increase in unpaid work as reported by 64% of the respondents. This increase has also been complemented by an increase in the responsibilities of arranging food and water for the family. More than 90% of the respondents were dependent on the PDS for their dietary requirement. There was also a significant dependence on other sources of obtaining food provided by government and non government actors. However, this didn't ensure that the food requirements were being met as 75% of the respondents reported that they were finding it difficult to arrange water or fuel to cook. Moreover, qualitative interviews also suggested that there has been a change in the routine which has affected their eating habits. Access to essential goods and services has also been difficult for women construction workers as 33% of them reported a difficulty in accessing sanitary napkins and contraceptives. Over 80% of the respondents also reported a shortage of cleaning essentials.

The immediate concerns of the women included continued loss of paid work, access to food and education of their children. They have also been going through emotional and mental stress because of the current circumstances and uncertainties of the future.

## **5. Impact of Covid19 Nationwide Lockdown on Women Waste Workers in Delhi: A Summary**

(Full report available at: [http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590124695\\_pub ISST - Waste Workers Final compressed.pdf](http://www.isstindia.org/publications/1590124695_pub_ISST_-_Waste_Workers_Final_compressed.pdf))

In Delhi, majority of women waste workers are involved in the work of segregating waste. While most work with their husbands as unpaid helper; several work in godowns where they labour for 8-10 hours each day for negligible wages. Due to the lockdown, these workers have suffered severe loss in income. Since godowns shut down and the owners refused to pay wages, majority of the women lost their jobs. Those who were self-employed, also faced difficulty in collecting waste owing to restriction on movement and those who managed to collect waste, shared that they faced difficulty in segregating and selling the same as all shops were closed.



Fear of the disease and lack of protective gear also stopped many from continuing their work and even if the worker decided to go out, it was difficult to collect waste due to lack of transport and police patrolling. Lack of space to collect waste and segregate it became another aspect which hampered the work, resulting in majority of the workers throwing away the collected waste wherever possible without any segregation. The dealers and contractors were also reported to be exploiting the situation as they insisted on buying the material at a very reduced price (from Rs. 30 per kilo, pre-lockdown, to Rs. 4 per kilo now). Those who tried to shift to selling vegetables also faced difficulty in doing so as police did not give many of them entry to the mandis (vegetable markets) and the vegetable dealers also sold their goods to only those vendors whom they knew from before. Those who were able to put up a vegetable stall also shared that earning were low as compared to the investment in the business as there were many vegetable vendors, making competition tough and prices low.

Apart from loss in income, the workers also were found struggling in terms of accessing essential resources such as food items, clean water as well as fuel. This not only increased their unpaid labour by several folds as they were having to stand in queues for many hours; but also made them more vulnerable to chances of getting infected as most times social distancing was not possible while efforts were made to access these. Fear of police patrolling also increased women's unpaid work of arranging resources as husbands refused to go out due to police fear. Problems in accessing health services/medicines, milk for toddlers and infants, and mobile re-charge facility also were highlighted as significant issues.

Waste pickers thus, remain in an extremely vulnerable situation with both their health as well as livelihood being under threat. The informal nature of their work and the instability of the recycle market will surely cause numerous job loss amongst them if the lockdown continues for some more time. They essentially require identity cards and protective gear so that they are able to go out and work and also protect themselves.