

Suchana's COVID-19 update

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Lockdown update

Suchana's situation

COVID-19 has disrupted many organisations across the world, and Suchana is no exception. On the 24th of March 2020, the government of India enforced a national lockdown for 21 days. During this first lockdown Suchana was completely shut to adjust to the circumstances. India's strategy for slowing the spread of the virus has been to introduce temporary lockdowns of various severities for a limited period, have a few days without lockdown, and then introduce another temporary lockdown for a further limited amount of time. Unfortunately, this tactic has meant many organisations have been unable to plan ahead as depending on the removal of a lockdown or loosening restrictions to continue work has proved unreliable.

West-Bengal remains in a semi locked-down environment with curfew enforced for 3 days of the week and all educational institutions remaining shut. This has left Suchana in a state of flux as it hasn't wanted to inadvertently cross the unclear lines, spread a false sense of security amongst communities which have limited and/or unreliable sources of information anyway, or be liable for the spread of COVID in Birbhum, West-Bengal. Suchana has therefore not participated in any of its usual programmes.

Work during lockdown

Suchana has managed to participate in some community support activities during lockdown – many families in the area don't have access to basic protective gear such as masks and soap, or can't afford them (especially during the pandemic as most rural agricultural labourers are employed in the informal sector with welfare and financial support being minimal or non-existent). To combat this, Suchana has distributed masks, detergent and soap, as well as basic educational materials such as notebooks, pencils, erasers and storybooks to over 1000 children across 30 villages.

Alongside this, Suchana continued with some projects that have not required face-to-face interaction with students. These include –

- Collection of master copies of printed books from printing company for future use and use on the website
- Subtitling of ITE community projects
- Start of new book printing process
- Writing reports
- Creation of a local facebook page to upload covid information and educational activities for Suchana students
- Work on updating the website



Future plans

It is clear now that the COVID-19 pandemic will have impacts well into the next few years and temporary lockdowns may become the new norm. It is understood that for Suchana to be able to function in any way in the field it was set out for (education), we must figure out more extensive ways to adapt our methods and aims. A recent report published by UNESCO states that 'an estimated 463 million children lack the equipment or electronic access to pursue distance learning' – these are the children Suchana works with and must find ways to continue providing quality education to.

Currently, Suchana is conducting a series of virtual meetings with management staff to discuss how this could be done in a safe but effective manner. We will keep you updated on any further progress!

