

Our Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

February 2021, Vol. 7

On April 1, 2020, Azim Premji Foundation¹ and Wipro committed a sum of Rs 1,125 crore to contribute towards a nation-wide, response to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Over the last 10 months, our comprehensive response to the pandemic has addressed two inextricably tied dimensions of the crisis – healthcare and humanitarian. During this time, we worked towards an **integrated healthcare response**, focusing on strengthening the frontline work, more effective testing, and augmenting treatment capacity across select-regions. Meanwhile, our **humanitarian assistance** focussed on immediate assistance in the form of food, dry rations and personal hygiene kits as per need, as well as short-to-mid-term support for livelihood regeneration and access to entitlements under various welfare schemes in some of the most vulnerable regions in the country.

Now, as the immediate implications due to pandemic appear to have abated, we have ramped-down our efforts in proportion to the situation. However, we know that it has not ended and we are ready to scale up efforts, if and as required.

Table 1: Illustration of our comprehensive response, to-date²

Healthcare

Our integrated healthcare response in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Puducherry, Telangana, and Uttarakhand touched a population of about 10 crores.

- **Strengthened the ‘frontline’** by training and equipping frontline healthcare workers for improved awareness, screening, quarantining; also augmented frontline resources through our partners and working to build better community ownership.
- **More effective testing** was enabled through better utilisation of existing facilities and setting up new testing systems; our support helped increase RT-PCR test capacity as well as make testing more accessible by creating distributed capacity in remote locations.
- **Augmented treatment facilities** by increasing oxygen bed capacity in primary and secondary health centres to treat mild and moderate cases and adding ICU beds at tertiary care centres in underserved locations.
- **Other allied aspects** included making health facilities more accessible through services such as helplines, field booths and ambulance services; better data management and analytics support to the departments for better decision making

We collaborated with partners who run **public-spirited hospitals and community health programs in other geographies** to strengthen their response.

Our **learning partnerships** with institutions such as National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, Christian Medical College, Vellore, St. John’s Medical College, Bengaluru and Bangalore Baptist Hospital helped us understand and promote better clinical processes.

Humanitarian

Our work with partners for livelihood regeneration, including access to entitlements, in vulnerable rural areas reached over **82 lakh people in 12 states**.

Immediate assistance in the form of food, dry rations and personal hygiene kits was provided on a need basis; this has reached around **88 lakh people**, to date, across **26 states and 3 union territories**; our food support translates to around **32 crore meals** so far.

¹ Azim Premji Foundation comprises the Field, the University, and the Philanthropic Initiatives.

² This volume captures our work till date, with specific updates for 15th Dec. 2020 – 15th Feb. 2021; previous volumes can be accessed [here](#).

Our Efforts

1. Overall

2020 has been a year of learning, un-learning and re-learning. The pandemic brought forth not only the humongous medical challenge of a ferociously contagious new virus but also an avalanche of humanitarian crises. Within days, we saw millions of migrant workers forced out of their jobs, their 'make-shift-homes' in the cities. Not sure of where their next meal would come, whether they would ever have a roof or whether they would ever see their loved ones again, they started walking back home on foot.



We had to do something.

On April 1, 2020, Azim Premji Foundation and Wipro committed a sum of Rs 1,125 crore to contribute towards a nation-wide response to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Our immediate response to this crisis had a two-fold objective – to help mitigate the immediate effects of the pandemic, particularly on the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities in our society, and to support our medical and service fraternity in their response to the pandemic.

Our next phase of response included a set of structured steps to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods with our existing partners along with a comprehensive plan to strengthen healthcare systems through an integrated healthcare response in locations where we have direct field operations or our partners have a strong on-ground presence with the state government/local administration.

This coordinated response was enabled by 1600 members of our own organization, over 55,000 team members of around 500 partners, thousands of public-school teachers that we work with and a large alumni network of our University along with Wipro's technical expertise and distribution reach. The entire organisation was swiftly re-purposed to respond to the needs of the pandemic. For instance, we added nearly 300 partners in the first few weeks of our response work and shortened our turnaround time for providing humanitarian grants to around three days to enable our partners to respond better and faster to the situation on the ground.

Till date, we have reached over **82 lakh people** in rural areas of **12 states** for livelihood regeneration, including access to entitlements; in the meanwhile, our immediate humanitarian assistance has reached around **88 lakh people** in **26 states** and **3 union territories**; our food support translates to around **32 crore meals** to the most vulnerable.

As part of healthcare assistance, we extended support to **22 states and 3 union territories**, working with the public health system as well as public-spirited hospitals and organisations. Our healthcare response in **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Puducherry, Telangana, and Uttarakhand** was integrated and comprehensive, encompassing strengthening of frontline, testing, and treatment capacities in select regions.³

We have now ramped-down our efforts in proportion to the situation, while ready to scale up again, if and as required. The figure below (Fig. 1) recaps the journey of our response, till date.

³ Data as on 15th February 2021.

*Image source: 'What have we done?' The Dispatch, Issue 2; to read more access [here](#)

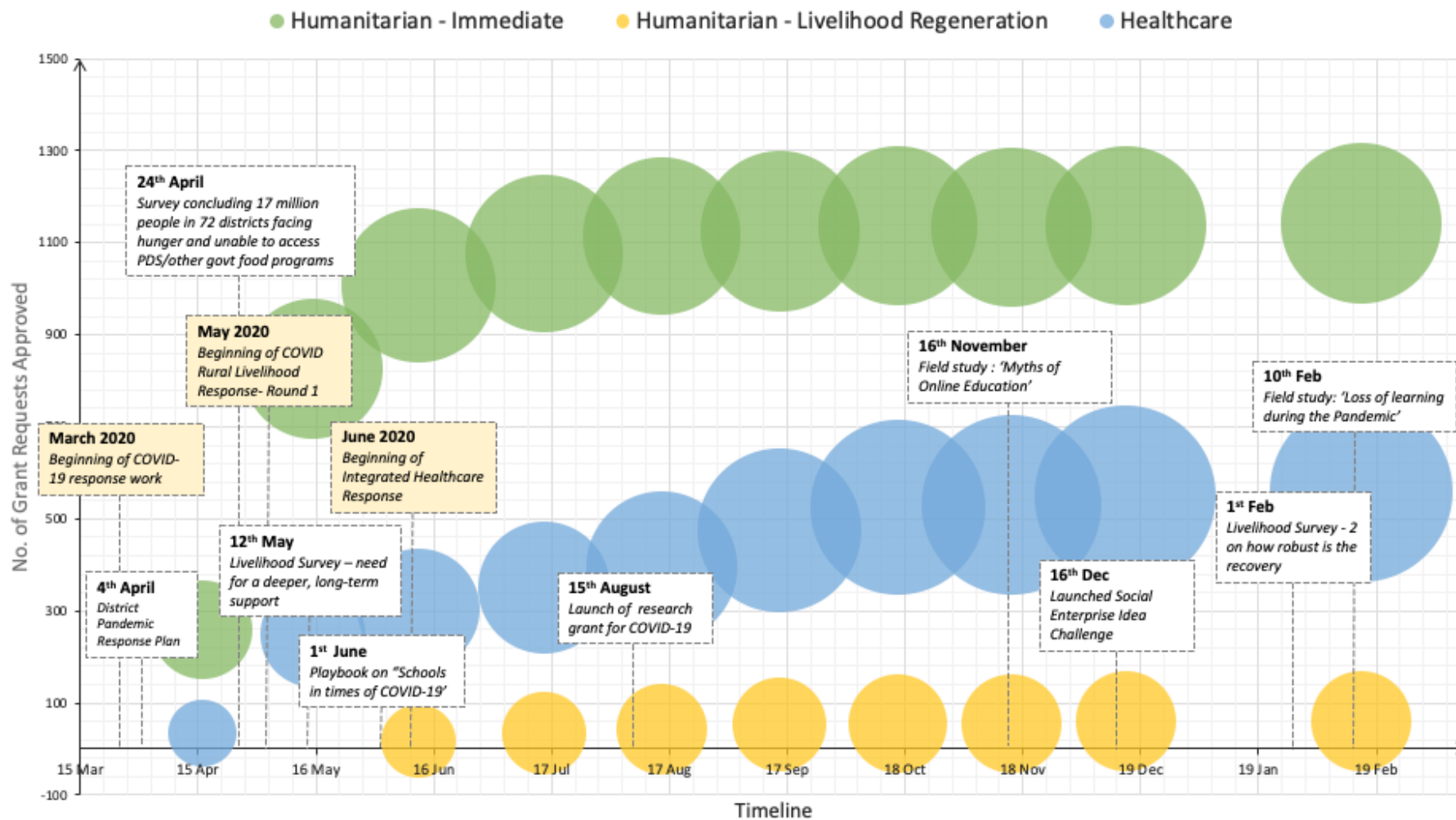


Fig. 1: Progression in our response, till date⁴

⁴ Size of bubble represents total value of support till date under each domain. Access all resources at <https://azimpremjifoundation.org/Covid-19>

2. Healthcare Support

In the initial period, we supported state/district administrations to address immediate demand-supply gaps and procurement constraints brought about by the pandemic. However, over the course of time, we realised that the only way to contain the spread of COVID-19 is through a strong integrated response, that is, by strengthening all the elements (see Fig. 2) simultaneously and in coherence with each other. Since then, our support has been around organising such an integrated response by helping to fill gaps and strengthening these elements within reasonable time. All this, in close collaboration with respective state and district administrations either directly or through our partners.

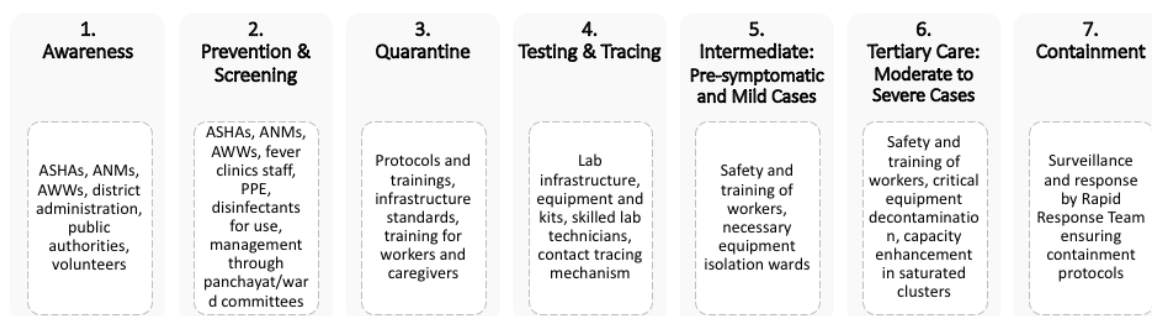


Fig. 2: Key elements of an integrated healthcare approach

We have focussed our efforts within select regions of **Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand** (where we have our own field operations) and in **Jharkhand** (where our partners have a strong ground presence), touching a population of more than 10 crores. Over the last two months, we have not seen significant new capacity addition needs for testing or treatment and have calibrated the frontline work according to the situation. Hence, have ramped-down our efforts in proportion to the situation while ready to scale up again, if and as required. Below is a brief summary of our efforts in the last two months, while a region-wise summary of support provided till date, is available in [Annexure 1](#).

Strengthening the frontline

Over the last two months, we have intensified our frontline work within the locations where we started.

- In Rajasthan, we extended our awareness building efforts through more advocacy/hand-wash points, IEC material (big hoardings) in Sirohi and Tonk. Similar hoardings are being put up in Chittorgarh, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, Rajsamand and Barmer.
- In Chhattisgarh, we extended ongoing frontline efforts with partner organisations in blocks of Bemetara, Raipur, Raigarh and Janjgir districts; we also expanded work to another block in Baloda Bazar and Janjgir districts.
- In Uttarakhand, we supported the provisioning of screening kits (pulse oximeter, IR thermometer, etc.) at CHCs, PHCs and Sub-centres in Bahadrabad block of Haridwar district; conducted orientation of health staff at these facilities, provided IEC materials for awareness building in the region.
- In Bangalore, we continued our frontline efforts to build awareness, continue emergency helpdesks to support people with COVID-19, work closely with PHCs in delivering vaccines etc.

More effective testing

Continuing our focus on adding testing capacity to remote/difficult-to-access areas, we added RT-PCR machine, RNA extractor and Bio Safety Cabinet at Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

Augmenting treatment facilities

We have continued to balance our efforts between primary, secondary and tertiary care, ensuring that existing facilities are strengthened and effectively utilised, and new facilities added, wherever necessary. For instance, In Delhi (through Wipro Foundation), we have supported our partner Doctors For You to run 150 beds – 100 normal and 50 HDU in the COVID Care Centre in the Commonwealth Games (CWG) centre.

Read more about our integrated healthcare response work in Jharkhand in the accompanying Field Note 7.

Azim Premji University's Field Study on 'Loss of Learning during the Pandemic'

*Prolonged closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, for almost an entire year, has had a significant negative impact on the learning levels of children. This loss of learning comprises both the loss of regular curricular learning that children would have acquired if schools remained open, as also students 'forgetting' abilities learnt in the previous class. This study, undertaken in January 2021, reveals the extent and nature of the 'forgetting/regression' among **16,067 primary school children in 1137 schools in 44 districts across 5 states.***

*The **key findings** of the study are that **92% and 82% of children** on an average have lost at least **one specific foundational ability** from the previous year across all classes **for language and mathematics**, respectively.*

The report emphasizes that the extent and nature of learning loss is serious enough to warrant action at all levels. Supplemental support, whether in the form of bridge courses, extended hours, community-based engagements and appropriate curricular materials, will be needed to help children gain back foundational abilities when they return to school. Teacher capacity to ensure student learning in these unusual circumstances must be in focus, particularly with respect to pedagogy and assessment needed to deal with students at diverse learning levels.

Full report available [here](#).

Fifth National Social Enterprise Idea Challenge: Response To COVID-19 Crisis

The National Social Enterprise Idea Challenge is a yearly initiative hosted by Azim Premji University's Social Enterprise Cell. This year we invited Ideas from students of schools, colleges and Universities to help institutions, communities and individuals face and overcome many problems due to the COVID - 19 crisis. For this round, we received 85 submissions from students all over India – to read more, access [here](#).

3. Humanitarian Support

Our support for livelihood regeneration intended to address, very specifically, the immediate issues of food insecurity and livelihood vulnerability through an emergency response (Fig. 3) with our existing partners in rain-fed areas, prioritising the most vulnerable households in the region.

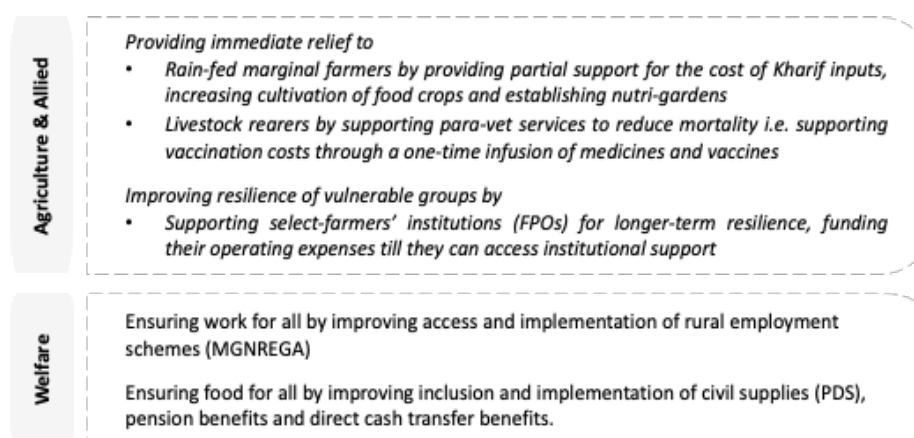


Fig. 3: Objectives of COVID Rural Livelihood Response

Till date, we have reached over **82 lakh people⁵ across 12 states** – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal – in more than 300 blocks. In the last two months, we have **expanded** work further in **Gujarat and West Bengal**.

With this, we completed our current round of COVID Rural Livelihood Response work.

Table 2: State-wise, illustrative reach of our livelihood regeneration support, to-date

#	State	Districts	People Reached
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Anantapur, Chittoor, East Godavari, Kadapa, Kurnool, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram	13,67,705
2.	Assam	Bongaingaon, Chirang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Karbi Anglong, Majuli	3,61,950
3.	Chhattisgarh	Koriya	97,500
4.	Gujarat	Ahmedabad, Aravalli, Bhavnagar, Dahod, Dang, Mahisagar, Narmada, Navsari, Panchmahal, Patan, Surendranagar, Tapi	8,77,535
5.	Jharkhand	Bokaro, Dumka, East Singhbhum, Godda, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Khunti, Koderma, Lohardaga, Ramgarh, Ranchi, West Singhbhum	11,62,700
6.	Karnataka	Chikkaballapur, Gulbarga, Yadgir	1, 37,785
7.	Madhya Pradesh	Alirajpur, Anuppur, Barwani, Betul, Burhanpur, Chhatarpur, Dewas, Dhar, Dindori, Hoshangabad, Jhabua, Katni, Khandwa, Khargone, Niwari, Raisen, agar, Shahdol, Sihi, Singrauli, Tikamgarh, Vidisha	6, 06,305
8.	Maharashtra	Yavatmal	1,26,595
9.	Odisha	Angul, Boudh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Kendujhar, Koraput, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur	13,82,115
10.	Rajasthan	Ajmer, Banswara, Bhilwara, Karauli, Pali, Pratapgarh, Rajsamand, Sirohi, Tonk, Udaipur	10,78,777
11.	Uttar Pradesh	Mau	1,95,000
12.	West Bengal	Alipurduar, Bankura, Birbhum, Kalimpong, Jhargram, Jalpaiguri, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Paschim Medinipur, Prasari, Purulia, South 24 Parganas	8,17,780

In addition to the above, we have supported efforts for immediate assistance to those who are still unable to access institutional help, till date we have reached around **88 lakh people⁶ across 26 states and 3 union territories**; our food support translates to around **32 crore meals** so far – state-wise details of our reach available in [Annexure 2](#).

⁵ Estimated number; does not represent unique beneficiaries. i.e. each beneficiary could have received more than one type of intervention across agriculture and welfare and also within welfare, hence counted more than once.

⁶ These numbers are an approximation, derived from the number of ration kits and hygiene kits disbursed at household level, assuming 5 members per household/family

Annexure 1: Region-wise summary of integrated healthcare assistance, to-date⁷

State/UT	Region	Population	Frontline ⁸	Testing and tracing	Treatment
Chhattisgarh	Raipur (Dhamtari, Baloda Bazar, Bemetara, Raipur)	48,63,653	52,320 PPE kit and 32,500 N95 mask; Awareness building in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions, in collaboration with local NGOs; screening equipment at panchayats; Personal hygiene kits and sanitisation for quarantine centres	1 Automated RNA extractor machine; 5 CB-NAAT machines with starter kits	Equipment and other support for isolation and treatment including ICU for Dhamtari Christian Hospital, the designated COVID hospital Oxygen plant and oxygen concentrators for dedicated COVID facility being set up in Ayurveda college, Raipur. Equipment – including ventilators, multi-para monitors etc. – for new ICU ward at Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Hospital, Raipur Oxygen facilities for CHCs and screening equipment for district hospital at Bemetara
	Raigarh (Janjgir, Raigarh)	31,13,691	3100 PPE kits and 3600 N95 masks; Awareness building in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions; in collaboration with local NGOs; screening equipment at panchayats; Personal hygiene kits and sanitisation for quarantine centres; cooked meals for patients and staff in the centres	2 Automated RNA extractor, 2 RT-PCR test machine and other essential equipment for setting up a testing lab at Govt. Medical College, Raigarh	Enhancing HDU and ICU capacity at Late Shri Lakhiram Agrawal Memorial Government Medical College, Raigarh; support for equipment like ventilators, Auto BiPAP machines, multipara monitors, oxygen concentrators, high flow nasal cannulas etc. Oxygen concentrators and cylinders for district hospital at Janjgir
Karnataka	Kalaburagi (Kalaburagi, Bidar, Yadgir, Vijayapura)	76,21,228	20,352 PPE kits, 22,012 N95 masks; IR thermometers and pulse oximeters for frontline workers; glucometers and digital BP apparatus for sub-centres; Communication materials; training for frontline staff and panchayat task forces; protection kits for frontline staff; Setting up Gram Arogya Kendras at the panchayat-level in Yadgir to improve awareness and screening; Focused frontline effort in urban slums in Vijayapura	2 Automated RNA extractor machine, starter RNA extraction kits; 2 CB-NAAT machines with starter kits	High flow nasal cannulas, ventilators, multi-para monitors, ICU beds, and other equipment for district hospital at Kalaburagi; ambulance services Yadgir: Improving facilities in COVID care centres, augmenting ICU capacity in the district hospital; ambulance services
	Ballari (Ballari, Koppal, Bagalkot, Raichur)	76,61,079	8500 PPE kits and 7500 N95 masks; IR thermometers and pulse oximeters for frontline workers;	2 Automated RNA extractors, 1 RT-PCR test machine	High flow nasal cannulas for district hospitals at Ballari and Koppal

⁷ As on 15th February 2021 – this includes materials that have been delivered or committed over the next few weeks.

⁸ Awareness, quarantine, and screening; protective equipment is for frontline as well as institutional workers

			Communication materials; training for frontline staff and panchayat task forces; protection kits for frontline staff; Comfort kits comprising clothing, and items for personal hygiene and safety for persons in quarantine	In addition, establishing a turnkey RT-PCR lab at district govt. hospital, Ballari	
	Bengaluru (Urban, Rural)	1,06,12,474	10000 PPE kits and N95 masks; Intensive frontline work over 50 wards covering 8 large slum clusters to reach over 1 lakh households, equipment and other support, including counselling, for frontline staff; support helpdesks at 9 hospitals; outreach through cable TV, bus advertising, wall paintings	Setting up RT-PCR labs at 3 public hospitals; 5 high capacity Liquid Handling Systems (for RNA extraction) at premier public institutions; CB-NAAT machines for distributed capacity	Augmentation of treatment facilities, including ICU capacity, in 5 public-spirited, private, city hospitals; Augmenting capacity for oxygenated beds and ICU in public hospitals; additional doctors and nursing staff in two facilities through a partner Local COVID care centres, and dedicated COVID health centres with oxygen
	Mysore (Mysore, Mandya)	48,06,896	5250 PPE kits and 2250 N95 masks	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	Indore (Indore, Khargone)	51,49,743	7830 PPE kits and 5500 N95 masks; Awareness building in Khargone, in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions, and others; targeted intervention in crowded areas like markets and business centres; Equipping frontline workers with equipment, materials and capacity building to improve screening and tracing	1 Automated RNA extractors and 1 RT-PCR test machine	-
	Sagar	23,78,458	1000 PPE kits and N95 masks	1 Automated RNA extractors and 1 RT-PCR test machine; RNA extraction kits	-
	Bhopal	23,71,061	11,680 PPE kits and 11,350 N95 masks	1 RT-PCR test machine	-
Rajasthan	Jaipur (Jaipur, Tonk)	80,47,504	13,710 PPE kits and 33,200 N95 masks; Personal hygiene kits, food, and water to quarantine centres; protection kits for frontline staff; Awareness building in Tonk in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions; targeted intervention in crowded areas like markets and business centres; Equipping frontline workers with equipment, materials and capacity building to improve screening and tracing; Support for quarantine centres with equipment, protective kits	1 RT-PCR test machine	Ambulance services at Jaipur

	Jodhpur (Jodhpur, Barmer, Jalore, Pali)	1,01,57,219	700 N95 masks	-	-
	Udaipur (Udaipur, Rajsamand, Chittorgarh, Banswara, Pratapgarh; Sirohi)	1,08,59,586	2500 N95 masks; Awareness building in Sirohi in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions; targeted intervention in crowded areas like markets and business centres; Equipping frontline workers with equipment, materials and capacity building to improve screening and tracing; Support for quarantine centres with equipment, protective kits	1 RT-PCR test machine	-
Uttarakhand	Kumaon (Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar)	42,28,998	12180 PPE kits and 34601 N95 masks Hygiene kits for quarantine centres; protection kits for frontline staff; Awareness building in Almora and Nainital in collaboration with frontline staff and local institutions; Equipping frontline workers with equipment, materials and capacity building to improve screening and tracing	4 Automated RNA extractor machines, 4 RT-PCR test machines, 5 CB-NAAT machines; 8 bio-safety cabinets	Supporting CHC at Nainital to improve treatment – especially oxygen – facilities Improving oxygen facilities in COVID care centres at Almora
	Garhwal (Haridwar, Dehradun, Pauri, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Tehri, Uttarkashi)	58,57,294	5220 PPE kits and 14,829 N95 masks Awareness building in Chamoli, Dehradun, Pauri, and Tehri in collaboration with frontline staff, panchayat and other local institutions; Equipping frontline workers with equipment, materials and capacity building to improve screening and tracing	2 Automated RNA extractor machines, 2 RT-PCR test machines; 16 CB-NAAT machines with starter kits; 10 bio-safety cabinets	Increasing bed capacity at intermediate treatment centres (CHCs) in Dehradun Ambulance services at Pauri
Puducherry	Puducherry	9,50,289	2000 PPE kits and N95 masks	-	-
Telangana	Sangareddy	15,27,628	2505 PPE kits and N95 masks Communication materials; training for frontline staff; protection kits for frontline staff IR thermometers and pulse oximeters at CHCs and PHCs	2 CB-NAAT machines with starter kits	Ventilator, multi-para monitors and other equipment for district hospital
Jharkhand	Gumla, Khunti, Lohargada, Ranchi, Simdega	55,32,719	35,933 PPE kits and 34,000 N95 masks IR thermometers and pulse oximeters for frontline workers; additional facilitator at each panchayat to augment frontline Communication materials; training for frontline staff and task forces; protection kits for frontline staff	2 Automated RNA extractor machines and 5 CB-NAAT machines at central test facility CB-NAAT machines at 15 CHCs to augment and decentralise testing	Oxygen concentrators at 15 CHCs; Expanding critical services in Dedicated Covid Hospitals at Ranchi and Simdega; establishing Dedicated Covid Health Centres at CHC/district level; telemedicine facilities

Annexure 2: State-wise immediate humanitarian assistance, to-date⁹

#	State	People Reached		
		Urban	Rural	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	74,405	2,37,213	3,11,618
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0	1,750	1,750
3	Assam	25,901	1,18,016	1,43,916
4	Bihar	1,24,639	1,81,266	3,05,905
5	Chhattisgarh	62,803	1,60,373	2,23,175
6	Gujarat	1,11,581	2,07,458	3,19,039
7	Haryana	3,188	30,788	33,975
8	Jharkhand	1,11,405	2,62,088	3,73,492
9	Karnataka	17,07,724	5,08,372	22,16,096
10	Kerala	25,937	19,185	45,122
11	Madhya Pradesh	1,07,160	4,26,305	5,33,465
12	Maharashtra	9,43,730	1,73,517	11,17,246
13	Manipur	1,500	22,200	23,700
14	Meghalaya	31,751	34,251	66,001
15	Mizoram	1,315	1,315	2,630
16	Nagaland	5,750	1,250	7,000
17	Odisha	1,31,040	3,44,991	4,76,031
18	Punjab	4,500	4,500	9,000
19	Rajasthan	1,62,858	3,39,450	5,02,308
20	Tamil Nadu	1,96,196	1,82,837	3,79,032
21	Telangana	3,56,084	52,656	4,08,740
22	Tripura	0	1,000	1,000
23	Uttar Pradesh	43,374	69,402	1,12,776
24	Uttarakhand	33,450	64,121	97,571
25	West Bengal	2,96,073	5,27,970	8,24,042
26	Delhi	2,01,676	32,700	2,34,376
27	Jammu Kashmir	5,655	9,894	15,549
28	Puducherry	1,500	2,500	4,000
29	Others	1,897	547	2,444
30	Grand Total	47,73,088	40,17,911	87,90,999

⁹ As on 15th February 2021