

## **Covid-19 mitigation and the Local Governments of Kerala**

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Mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala has been a highly orchestrated effort within four government departments, namely, Health, Home(Police),Local Self Government and Revenue(Civil administration). The government-people interface of the Health department ie, the Primary Health Centre is under the control of the LSG. Thus, the LSGs have an added responsibility in this matter. At the grassroots level, it holds a centre point.

Following are the major responsibilities carried out by the Kerala LSGs in the process of Covid-19 mitigation:

### **1.Setting up the organization at the grassroots.**

The LSGs are divided into several constituencies which we call 'wards'. A ward may include 500-700 families. Kerala has established ward level Health-Sanitation-Nutrition committees, which is presently called the 'Rapid Response Team'(RRT) due to its stature. They are responsible for all immediate responses in the name of LSGs. Female ASHA workers are the activists who lead the works of the RRT. They collect data, propagate instructions and so on.

### **2.Identifying Quarantine centres and First Line Treatment Centres (FLTC) within the LSG jurisdiction.**

There are Home Quarantine and Public Quarantine facilities. LSGs have to identify both and ensure that every incoming person will be accommodated in either of these. They have to verify the isolation facilities in the concerned houses in advance and if the house quarantine facility is not satisfactory, recommend public quarantine facility.

First Line Treatment Centres are meant for Covid-19 affected patients who don't have serious problems and only primary medical treatments are required.

### **3.Day-to-day running of the Public Quarantine Centres and FLTCs.**

Running the Public Quarantine Centres and FLTCs is a big task. Daily food, drugs and other essential things have to be provided.

### **4. Issuing entry permits to migrants coming to Kerala.**

Whenever people from other states register in the portal their wish to return home, entry permits have to be issued by the concerned LSGs and quarantine centres are arranged accordingly.

### **5.Running Community kitchen.**

This is a major task in the initial stage. There are two types of people who require the services of community kitchen- migrant labourers from other states and stranded persons without family and own house, like beggars and mentally retarded. Cooking food and distributing to the require lot of volunteer support. Migrant labourers are charged Rs.20(0.25 USD) and destitutes are given free food. Rice for the community kitchen is arranged by the government and everything else is mobilised locally by the LSG. Every LSG is running one or more community kitchen.

### **6. Arranging food for stranded pet animals and stray animals.**

This was required in the initial stages, in the locked down areas where there were nobody to care for stray animals.

#### 7. Community surveillance.

Surveillance of the quarantine centres has become most important nowadays. Unauthorised travel of people under quarantine is strictly observed by LSGs and reported to the police if required. RRT is in charge of this task.

#### 8. Keeping essential supply chain on Containment Zones.

In the Containment zones, people are not permitted to go outside their houses. A system to provide essential items like food materials, medicines etc, against payment, is arranged by the LSGs. There are accredited volunteers who are entrusted with these tasks.

#### 9. Distribution of social welfare pensions

All the 16 types of welfare pensions were distributed in a war footing to the concerned families (which amounts to around half of the families in the state) to ensure availability of liquid cash with the people. This was supervised by the LSGs.

#### 10. Distribution of food kits

Food kits for one month was distributed to all families in the state through the Public Distribution System. LSGs are responsible to ensure fool-proof distribution.

#### 11. Selection of community volunteers.

The state government has prepared a scheme to select 0.35 million community volunteers to be posted at various centres to provide emergency se

rvices if social transmission of covid-19 happens. All the volunteers are selected by the LSGs and trained by Health department.

#### 12. Sanitation of public places

It is the duty of the LSGs to periodically clean, sanitize and fumigate public places like markets and bus stands.