

CURE's Engagement in Slums during COVID-19 endemic

According to the UN-Habitat (ref:<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060042>), the impact of the COVID-19 is higher for the poor living in slums where overcrowding makes it difficult to follow recommended measures such as social distancing^[1]. People living in slums and other informal settlements, in particular women, children, older persons, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups need to have continuous access to sufficient amount of clean water and sanitation facilities on a regular basis. This will allow them to be able to comply with the key recommendations or health instructions issued by the Government to maintain hygiene. During this unprecedented situation, it is critical to reach out to the slum households to reiterate hand washing as a key WASH component for protection and good health. Continuous reinforcing of the importance of hand washing and safe sanitation in these settlements is very important.

Under the USAID supported PASS project, CURE is currently engaged in 148 slums reaching over 108,000 households in Delhi NCR and other selected cities in the country. The Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence (CURE) is trying its utmost to reach out to its slum community partners through innovative ways since the traditional and usual way of working in the slums through direct and physical interaction is not possible and advisable.

In the wake of the endemic, all CURE staff are working from home and are connecting with the slum communities through digital platforms. Working closely with the local administration, the private sector and the communities, and as part of WASH advocacy dissemination, CURE staff has established virtual groups via the digital platform, i.e. WhatsApp and Twitter Accounts with the communities. Till date, 24 CBOs or Swachhata groups and SHGs which were formed by CURE earlier with 2200 women and men members including the Pradhans or slum leaders, elders and youths have been now connected via the digital platform. The stress is to inculcate Handwashing habit as a effective BCC under current conditions. As a result, the communities are being sensitized about handwashing as a strategic approach towards personal hygiene and protection. Also the platforms are used to dissemination important messages and information and conveying the communities feedback and requests to the ULBs and local authorities. CURE continues to reach additional groups every day in the sites where they are engaged.

CURE is also collaborating with ULBs such as the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) and the private sector such as Hindustan Unilever to ensure that the poor have regular access to improved WASH facilities and services including soaps and disinfectants etc.

