

## **Guidance note on the role of women collectives to support continued delivery of health & nutrition services for mothers and adolescent girls**

This note suggests alternate ways of carrying out activities under the Swabhimaan programme to support continued delivery of maternal and adolescent health & nutrition services. These are in line with DAY-NRLM's Food Nutrition Health and WASH (FNHW) strategy and the advisory issued by the National Mission Management Unit.

These are aimed at the following target groups i) adolescent girls ii) newly-wed women iii) pregnant women iv) women with children under two, in the context of required physical distancing during the lockdown in the midst of the COVID 19 outbreak.

While this note has been drafted for Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar, where Swabhimaan is being implemented, these can be taken up by SRLMs with similar initiatives related to identifying and addressing gaps in service delivery for ante and post natal care.

The note is divided into two parts:

- I. [Action points](#) for Poshan Sakhis
- II. [Risk communication](#)

### **Preparation of this note:**

- The note has been prepared using inputs/suggestions of all programme staff from across Odisha, Bihar and Chhattisgarh where the Swabhimaan Programme is being implemented.
- All technical inputs have been taken from documents vetted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- All national and state level circulars issued by the Ministry of Rural Development, State Rural Livelihood Missions and allied departments involved in provision of essential services to nutritionally at risk- adolescent girls, newly wed and pregnant women, and mothers of children under two have been referred to.
- This is to ensure effective convergence/coordination for ongoing efforts and to avoid duplication of key messages
- Existing IEC materials released by the MoH&FW have been circulated by DAY-NRLM. The key messages in this documented have been collated to instruct and design creatives specifically for SRLM cadre.

## I. Action points for Poshan Sakhis

1. In lieu of kishori baithaks/maître baithaks/amcho basuls, counselling and tracking of nutritional status for adolescent girls (AG), newly-wed women, pregnant women (PW) & mothers of children under two (MU2) are to be done via telephone
2. Create awareness amongst target groups on [basic preventive measures](#) against COVID 19, address [prevalent myths](#) in the community and reduce panic.
3. Counsel at-risk target groups on the importance of a [proper diet, and nutrition to build immunity](#).
4. Ensure households with at-risk target groups have access to soap & water. Counsel family members on proper hygiene practices, especially hand-washing techniques. Use available IEC materials for this.
5. Counsel [husbands](#) of pregnant women and mothers of children under two on actions during and post pregnancy to care for the health of the mother & her child
6. Work in coordination with ASHA, Anganwadi worker and ANM (AAA). Support [early detection](#) and referral of suspected COVID-19 cases amongst target groups or those in their family or surroundings
7. Share details of identified at-risk pregnant women, mothers of children under two with the [AAA](#). Coordinate to ensure access antenatal & post natal care services during VHSND/ Mamta Diwas and that physical distancing norms are adhered to in all community outreach/events
8. Ensure target groups avail PDS and THR entitlements and support access to VRF loans to procure eggs, vegetables, pulses, and soaps in households with at-risk target groups
9. Work with village panchayats to ensure drinking water is made available to the community via water tankers
10. Monthly review of activities of poshan sakhis/mangun mit/ kishori sakhis/cluster mit/master book keepers to be done via conference call/whatsapp call

## II. Risk communication: 5 discussion areas for target groups and their families

1. [Common signs & symptoms of COVID 19](#)
2. [Dos & Dont's to protect yourself from COVID19 infection](#)
3. [What precautions should pregnant women take?](#)
4. [Breastfeeding during COVID19](#)
5. [What to eat to build immunity?](#)

**1. Common signs & symptoms**

- Fever
- Dry Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Some patients also have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea

**2. Preventive measures to protect yourself from COVID 19 Virus**

DO's	DON'TS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with a flexed elbow.</li> <li>• Wash your hands frequently using soap and water</li> <li>• Maintain the distance of 1 meter between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing</li> <li>• Stay at home if sick</li> <li>• Continue breastfeeding regardless of COVID-19 status by maintaining precautions as specified by AAA. Practice respiratory hygiene, including during feeding. If you have respiratory symptoms such as being short of breath, use a medical mask when near your child</li> <li>• Wash your hands thoroughly with soap or sanitizer before and after contact with your child</li> <li>• Routinely clean and disinfect any surfaces you touch</li> <li>• If you have fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing</li> <li>• Spit in public places</li> <li>• Touch your eyes, nose and mouth</li> <li>• Attend social gatherings</li> <li>• Stigmatise migrants who have returned home</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat freshly cooked hygienically prepared food</li> <li>• Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly, peel skin of vegetables and fruits before eating</li> <li>• Thoroughly cook meat and eggs</li> <li>• Keep track of homecoming migrants/labourers in your own family/village. Encourage them to self-isolate and get screened</li> </ul>	
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### 3. What precautions can pregnant women take?

- Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase risk of infections. Protect yourself from COVID 19 by taking the following actions:
- Cover your cough with flexed elbow or paper tissue/handkerchief (using your elbow is a good technique)
- Do not consult local healers for such symptoms and do not consume any herbs/natural medicine without consulting ANM/ASHA
- Avoid people who are sick
- Wash your hands frequently using soap and water
- In case members in your family have returned from work outside the state or in a neighbouring village, ensure they take precautions and get screened

### 4. Breastfeeding during COVID-19

- Pregnant woman should wash her hands before and after touching her baby,
- Mother should practice respiratory hygiene by wearing a mask and not sneezing in front of a baby during breast feeding;
- All surfaces should be kept clean and disinfect she has touched
- If a mother is confirmed with COVID-19 infection or who is a symptomatic and wishes expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump and bottle and should follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use.
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed expressed milk to the baby

### 5. What to eat to build immunity?

- Ensure women are regularly eating the take home ration/ ready to eat, which would have been given to them in advance since AWCs are closed.
- Ensure consumption from one food group daily from *tirangabhajan*.  
1) Energy rich foods, - cereals and millets (such as wheat, rice, ragi, bajra, jowar, etc.), fats (nuts, oilseeds, cooking oil, butter, ghee, etc.), sugars (table sugar, honey, jiggery etc.)

2) Body building foods – pulses (all dals, beans, legumes), eggs, flesh foods (meat, poultry, fish), milk and milk products (curd, paneer, etc.)

3) Protective foods – fruits and vegetables (dark green leafy, yellow and orange coloured, citrus)

- Try to get all 3 food groups in each meal of the day to get right amount of energy, carbohydrate, fats, protein, vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, and antioxidants your body needs. From each food group choose a variety of foods.
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water and fluids daily preferably unsweetened beverages to keep your body hydrated.

## Annexures

### Key messages for other stakeholders:

#### Key messages for Husbands of Pregnant women

- Have meals together to ensure she is eating a healthy diet
- Ensure all family members at home are washing hands regularly. (Share video/ poster of how to wash hands)
- Ensure she is eating her micronutrient supplements (IFA and calcium tablets)
- Share the burden of work at home
- Empathise with your wife as emotional ups and downs are common during pregnancy
- Be prepared for the delivery, keep contacts of AAA in place.

#### Key messages for AAA

- In the absence of VHSND/ Mamta Diwas, ANC services should be provided at SHCs/ PHCs/CHCs/DHs/MCs with preference to high-risk pregnancies and at facilities which have not been identified primarily for COVID 19 response.
- Adjust schedules to limit to only essential visits.
- ANC sites to be physically delineated from COVID 19 care and adequate IPC precautions maintained
- Pregnant mothers with COVID 19 signs and symptoms to be triaged for COVID 19 care on priority to avoid transmission to non-infected mothers
- Key maternal complications for emergency referral and care to be shared:
  - a. Severe pre-eclampsia/eclampsia
  - b. Severe anemia
  - c. Mothers with bleeding
  - d. Mothers with high-grade fever
  - e. Mothers with severe abdominal pain
  - f. Mothers with convulsion
  - g. Unconscious mothers
  - h. Mothers with no foetal movement
  - i. Mothers with leakage of liquor

#### Key messages for PW & MU2 on ANC/PNC services

- If a routine scan or visit due in the coming days, contact the ANM/ ASHA for advice. PW will still need to attend ANC but the appointment may change due to staffing crunch.
- If women from the target group have symptoms suggestive of coronavirus contact ANM/ASHA and they will arrange the right place and time to come for visits.
- Ensure women with symptoms do not attend routine check-ups to avoid infecting other mothers or pregnant women.
- Update target groups on VHSND and on physical distancing and hygiene norms to be followed while attending

#### Key messages for Adolescent girls

- Ensure you wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Maintain menstrual hygiene; if you are using pads, change these every 6 hours. If using cloth, use a clean cotton cloth, wash and dry in the sunlight
- Eat at least one fruit daily
- Eat eggs at least once a week
- Consume 1 IFA tablet weekly
- Keep your body clean

## **Common Myths in the community**

### **1. Does the disease spread through food especially eating chicken, eggs and meat?**

There is no evidence that chicken, eggs and meat transmit the disease. Ensure food is cooked properly as a precaution. Those who rear chicken and goats are encouraged to consume eggs and meat.

### **2. Can eating garlic help prevent infection with the new coronavirus?**

Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from the new coronavirus.

### **3. Does the new coronavirus affect older people, or are younger people also susceptible?**

People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus. Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) seem more prone to becoming severely ill because of the virus.

### **4. Everyone who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill or dies?**

One in 6 infected can become seriously ill. People over 60 years or having existing illnesses are more at risk. Majority of the people (80%) will require no treatment and will recover on their own. A small proportion (<20%) may need hospitalization.

### **5. Only people with symptoms of COVID-19 can spread the disease?**

Even people with the COVID-19 infection but no symptoms can spread the disease.

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