





#SaathNirbhar: Wellbeing Together

COVID 2.0 Response by vartaLeap and ComMutiny



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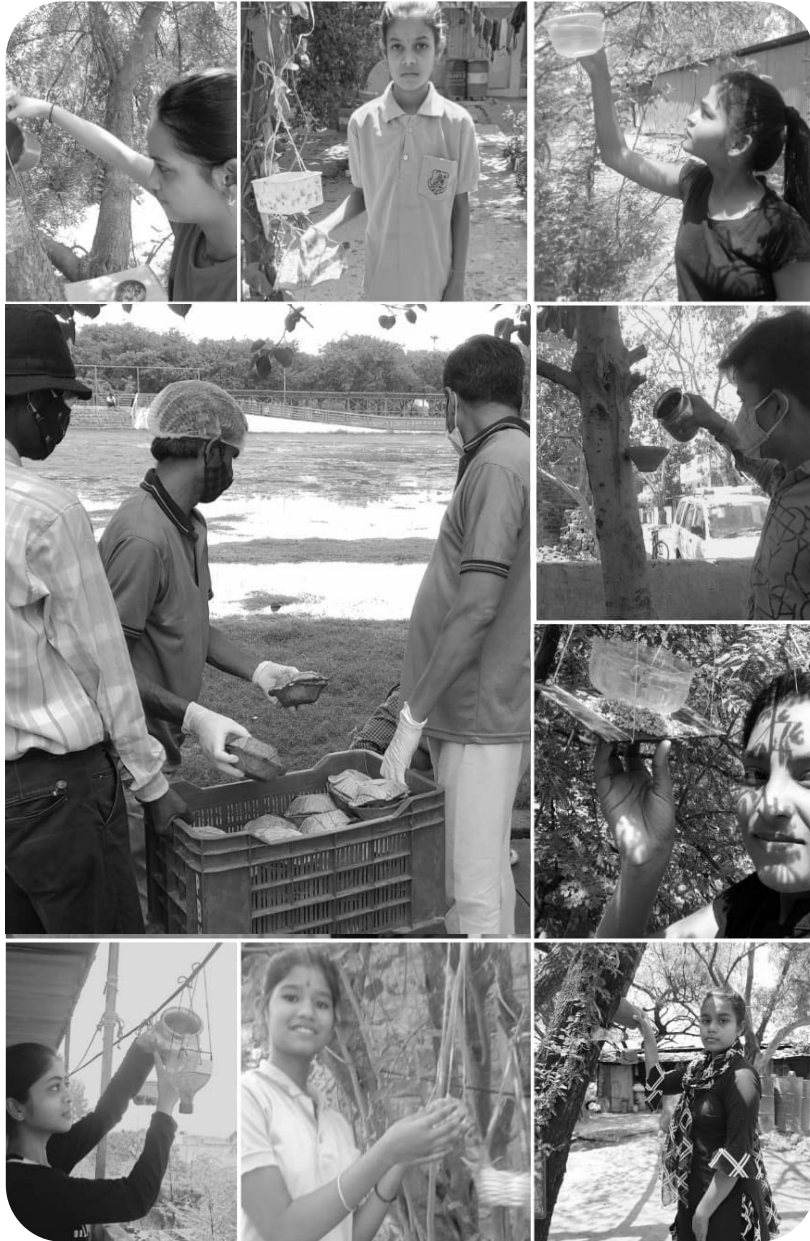
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#SaathNirbhar

Wellbeing Together

1

For any collaboration to succeed, it must account for certain key ingredients - **Trust, Cooperation, Communication, Accountability** and **Coordination**. Holding true to these, the members at the **vartaLeap** Coalition one of the **largest 'democratic'** coalitions came together with their spectacular collaborative spirit and energy to support each other and learn together, particularly as the second wave of COVID-19 ravaged the country. **vartaLeap's** efforts towards COVID Response truly is representative of a country that stands undivided and is deeply interdependent - **#SaathNirbhar!**

What started out as an organic response from members to the SOS messages from within the community, soon turned into an organised movement with different stakeholders in the coalition playing to their own strengths. As the **hunger and health crisis** mounted, youth leaders and youth workers on the ground led initiatives to support the most vulnerable communities including locations with extremely limited access and support. This made way for donors, funders and institutions to reach underserved populations.

Many organisational and individual coalition members played a crucial role in strengthening the response by volunteering time, through resources and by facilitating key collaborations.

vartaLeap is a cross-sectoral coalition (with over 250 representatives) that aspires to move youth-centric development from the margins and make it a new norm in every space that young people occupy or that impacts young people. A significant milestone for this ecosystem during this time was to witness how their efforts towards creating empowering spaces for **jagriks** (jagruk nagrik - active, awakened citizens) bore fruition! Hundreds of young people who had undergone jagrik journeys stepped up all across the country and led relief and recovery initiatives in their communities and beyond.

As the crisis continued, we recognised the dire need to work on recovery in addition to the ongoing relief efforts. At a time when isolation, despair and hopelessness were being experienced by over **90%** of the country, the shared feelings of **collective love, leadership and solidarity** that emerged from the **#SaathNirbhar** experience of the coalition, inspired us to take it out to the world. Through intricately designed innovations and spaces we created intergenerational wellbeing experiences to support the process of neutralising feelings by switching them into positive energy through group engagements, interactions and dialogues.

Our greatest learning from this '**democratic coalition**' has been that, when you create empowering spaces for people, one can unlock untapped potential and achieve the impossible, despite all limitations.

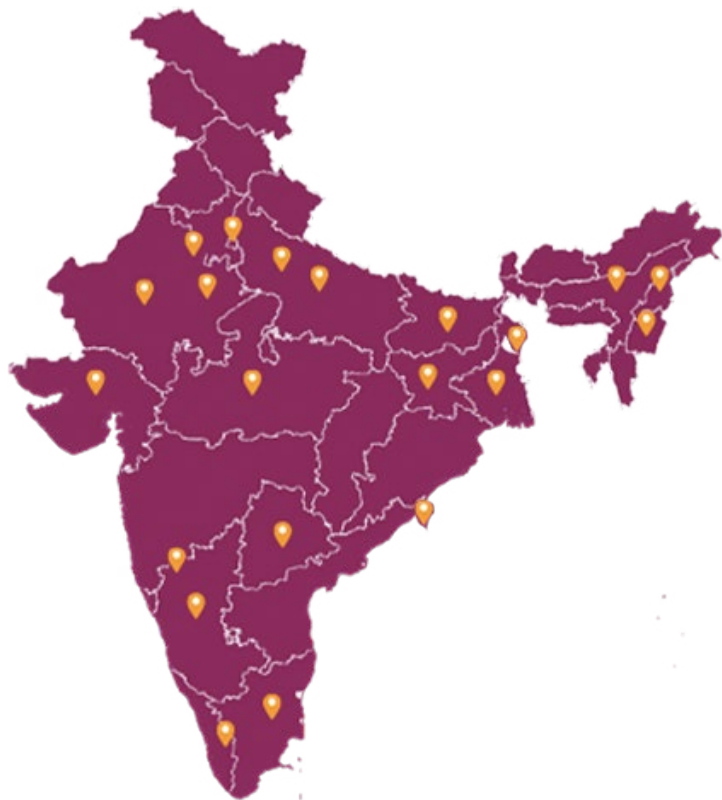
We hope that the impact of the 3rd wave is not as aggressive. But if it is, we know we are better equipped to navigate it as a powerful collective, co-led by intergenerational cross-sectoral leaders, ready to do what it takes with complete ownership and initiative!

- **Pavan Bhatia**, Founder, Gen WE



Impact

Relief and Recovery



In an overwhelming expression of interconnectedness and camaraderie, the ComMutiny-vartaLeap ecosystem ventured head first into relief and recovery work during the second wave of COVID-19. The network became a space where resources were raised, accessed and distributed. The members who had a strong presence in the grassroots became the last mile responders by reaching hundreds of marginalized communities. Responding to the dire circumstances, especially in April and May, the Coalition supported these communities in accessing emergency health services, by distributing ration kits, cooked meals, etc and with time, creating innovative journeys centered on building collective societal wellbeing for resilient communities.

Communities

Migrant Labourers, Sex Workers, Persons from the LGBTQI+ community, Tea Garden Workers, Tribals, Dalits, Adolescent Girls, People with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, Artisans, Religious Minorities, Women and Children

Impact

6.2 Lakh People

65+ Locations

17 States

Support Raised

Relief:

Cash : 59 Lakhs
In Kind : 2.63 Crore

Recovery:

83.34 Lakhs for
wellbeing journeys

Relief | Health

The second wave of the pandemic created an unprecedented demand for health care services which resulted in an acute shortage of hospital beds, ambulances, doctors, nurses, etc and the worst of all, oxygen. As people struggled to access meagre services within the restrictions set in place by the lockdown, the death tolls rose dramatically.

Our members undertook relief initiatives, small and big, to bridge this gaping hole caused by the horrifying collapse of the healthcare infrastructure. In addition to running ambulance services, oxygen supply services, distribution of PPE kits, COVID care kits, organising vaccination drives and awareness campaigns, the members also designed many remarkable innovations like a maintaining real-time database for availability of medical resources to managing telephonic consulting helplines and connecting COVID patients and their families to doctors.

5 lakh People Impacted

Oxygen Cylinders / Concentrators, PPE kits, Sanitizers, Masks, Gloves, Medicines, Oximeters, COVID Care Kits, Vaccinations



Relief | Health

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During the peak of the second wave, Wolfpack's team of young volunteers wandered the streets of Delhi with a cab/ scooty/ bike (whatever could be managed) and a few oxygen cylinders to refill and deliver them to extremely critical patients. A team also verified hospital leads, patient requests and refill stations, day in and day out. The situation was dire and in the fear of infecting their families, they couldn't go back home for months. From managing a temporary relief-work hub where they could also live to raising resources, the many valuable partnerships they found in the vartaLeap-ComMutiny strengthened their relief efforts manifold.

“In sports, games and competitions are just the tip of the iceberg. Sports can be an institution and rehabilitation for individuals, creating changemakers bound by values and the spirit of collective effort. In times of a calamity like COVID, this force unites and enables the players to lead from the front and scrum it away!”

[Saif Ullah Khan, Founder - Wolfpack, Rugby Development and CSR Manager - Indian Rugby Football Union]

Jail is often the last place people think of when it comes to relief work, so when YES Foundation got the chance to support the Sitapur District jail during the second wave, they sourced COVID care kits and oxygen cylinders for them.

“Even before COVID-19, we had a long crisis of Oxygen. The need for medical facilities is often neglected in jails. We are really thankful to Yeh Ek Soch Foundation for supporting.”

[Piyush Pandey, Doctor District Jail, Sitapur]

Relief | Hunger

The loss of livelihood due to lockdown created a hunger crisis for communities that structurally and historically lack social security. Restricted mobility during lockdown further aggravated the inaccessibility to food and other services essential for survival. With the daily access to food disrupted, marginalized communities were impacted most deeply. Our ecosystem members reached these communities and supported them by distributing ration kits, cooked meals, nutrition kits for children, biscuits/juice packets and running community kitchens.

1,20,880 People Reached

8,46,160 kgs of Ration Distributed



Relief | Hunger

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With its reach in transgender and commercial sex workers communities in the districts of East and West Singhbhum, Jharkhand, People For Change, has supported those who had nearly no source of income during the pandemic with 3000 ration kits and direct cash transfer over a course of three months.

“*Building on larger mission of entitlement of the transgender and commercial sex workers communities, we have linked them with social entitlement (for example, aadhar card) during the time of COVID-19.*

[Souvik Saha, Founder & Executive Director, People for Change]

For families living hand-to-mouth in the Kangpokpi, Churachandpur, Noney, Tengnoupal and Bishenpur districts of Manipur, home isolation due to COVID-19 meant starving to death. InSIDE North East was able to reach almost 3000 people below poverty line, widows, orphans and HIV positive people with ration kits.

“*The happiness of these people when we distributed the ration kits was priceless. It re-energized our team members who were risking their lives on the frontlines.*

[Hejang Misao, Co-founder & Director, InSIDE North East]

Recovery | Wellbeing

The urgency demanded by the COVID-19 immediate response in terms of relief work, left little room for reflection. The second wave bombarded people with traumatic experiences of hospitalization and isolation, death and grief in the family and close community & loss of livelihood and social security. Those who weren't touched by the tragedy first hand, were constantly struck with information that triggered feelings of despair, loneliness, and the constant uncertainty about the future. This adversely affected the wellbeing of people and pushed some to acute depression.

Two months into the COVID-19 relief initiatives, we reflected on and shared individual experiences of managing wellbeing during this time. We realized that young people are more likely to experience enhanced wellbeing when they feel in charge of their feelings as well as by experiencing the agency to contribute to social change.

Togetherness Table - A collaborative and intergenerational intervention designed to help people to develop 'feelings literacy', such that they can identify, label, neutralise and transform negative feelings into ones that are positive.

Q-Ki National Championship - Q-Ki is a reality check game show played by intergenerational teams who compete through interactive quizzes, plutory (Plural Story) performances and Imaginative practices that aim to foreground the need for building collective societal wellbeing during COVID-19 through its amplification and outreach strategies. In addition, it also creates wellbeing for the participants who experience co-creation, empathy and connections. A number of organisations and community leaders who were on the frontlines during COVID response also joined as participants, deeply recognising the need for wellbeing awareness.

Participants are from **98 teams** | **57 organisations** | **16 states** | **2000 people reached directly** | **Online reach 2.5 Million+**

We have also organised vartaLaaps - series of intergenerational conversations on collective-preventive wellbeing; many well received online conversations on preventive and collective wellbeing through Tweet-a-thons, Q & A polls etc.

Recovery | Wellbeing

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As a part of the Q-ki National Championship, the teams from Aawaj (Madhya Pradesh), explored various elements of preventive and collective wellbeing within their communities. The teams spoke to a number of people in their network which helped them understand various perspectives/stories on wellbeing and come up with imaginative practices that could help address the contextual issues.

“The last two years have been traumatic and depressing for everyone, more so for the youth. That is when the Q-ki National Championship added happiness and color to the lives of not just our 14 Q-ki team members, but our entire youth network of 250 people. It gave young people who were worried about their future, something to enjoy, learn from and excitedly look forward to.

[Nitesh, Project Coordinator, Aawaj]

“Q-ki has been an exciting and energised learning journey. The thing which surprised all of us was to see 100 teams pan India coming together and participating with the spirit of Love and Togetherness. This whole process taught us how important emotional wellbeing is. Also, before taking care of someone else you should take care of your wellbeing. During this journey the team got really connected and helped us to think beyond our boxes.”

[Q-Ki Teams from Had Anhad]



Lessons Learnt

Deep Jyoti Sonu Brahma,
Co-Founder, Farm 2 Food Foundation
Shankar Venkateswaran,
Chairperson, Oxfam India

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Collectives Matter

- * Increased reach and effectiveness – providing linkages between partners on the ground and donors
- * Created a shared sense of responsibility, provided emotional support, inspiration and positivity during crisis
- * Collective wisdom helped create balance between the on ground requirements and the big picture
- * Provided learning opportunities to all the stakeholders involved
- * Programmatic/logistical support – material (oxygen cylinders, concentrators etc.), facilitation (for return of migrants, linkages with relatives across states/cities etc)

Challenges

- * Funding did not often cover salaries and overheads
- * Overload of convergence spaces – Difficult to find the balance between attending meetings, on-the-ground response and learning from others
- * Need to reduce response time
- * Managing logistics during the relief period was not easy, especially if it involved covering long distances
- * Managing the paradox of inclusion and efficiency in a coalition

Action Forward

- * Creation of a system/ protocols to respond effectively to any new emergencies/disasters
- * Develop standard templates of responses based on our collective experiences which partners can adopt and adapt to their contexts
- * Creation of emergency funds for quick response. This will reduce the response time
- * Advocacy to support grassroots organisations and build their capacities for rebuilding communities and strengthening resilience

Gratitude

The strength of the vartaLeap-ComMutiny ecosystem lies in the solidarity and joint efforts of the ecosystem members and our allies towards the common mission of **'Every Youth a Jagrik, Every Space Nurturing Jagriks'**.

Even as we deeply value the independent efforts of every member in the ecosystem and all our allies for going above and beyond to support millions across the country during the second wave; we would like take this opportunity to especially celebrate their collaboration to strengthen the message of interdependence in these times through their relief and recovery efforts - **#SaathNirbhar: Wellbeing Together!**

We are grateful to each organisation and individual who stood in solidarity, living interdependence through their being and doing and ensuring that this happened at scale, in time and with deep empathy.



Gratitude

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From the Coalition - Solidarity Partners



From the Coalition - Strategy and Resource Mobilisation and Management

Anshu Gupta
Arjun Shekhar
Ashraf Patel
Deepjyoti Sonu Brahma
Kanika Sinha

Meenu Venkateswaran
Navendu Mishra
Pavan Bhatia
Pratibha Pathak
Rajesh NS Meher

Shankar Venkateswaran
Souvik Saha
Zeeshan Ahmad

Gratitude

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Allies - Organizations



HUMAN CAPABILITY
FOUNDATION



CaaStle



Allies - Individuals

Aakash Sethi
Amrita Sinha
Arun Mehra
Atul Chugh
Atul Sinha
Baljit Singh Bakshi
C.K. Sinha
Carroll

Deepika Mathur
Divya Kela
Gagan Adlakha
Gaurav Uppal
Harjas Duggal
Hrushikesh
Ishaan Arora
Jerry Thomas

Jiten Chouksey
Jyotsna Prashad
Kanika Sinha
Kapil Bhandari
Kshitij Rohatgi
Lillian Strand
Mahima Sinha
Mark

Meenal Gupta
Meeta
Mohinish Sinha
Nagarajan
Neti Srinivasan
Nitin Das
P K Verma
Pavan Bhatia

Poonam Jagdish
Pratyush Rajvanshi
Preeti Gupta
Rajanikar Kumar
Ram
Ranjeet Singh
Robin Chhabra
Robyn

Rohini Prakash
Saifullah Khan
Sharad Kharra
Shashi Arora
Steve Elefson
Sumit Sonkar
Sunil Duggal
Timothy

Vandana
Vandana Mahajan
Viraj Prasad
Yash Srivastava
Yashvardhan Sinha

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Anjani Grover
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Deepjyoti Sonu Brahma

Hardik Kakar
Himani H
Kanika Sinha
Kartik Kakar

Mohammad Zeeshan
Pavan Bhatia
Pooja Jain
Pratibha Pathak

Rajesh NS Meher
Shankar Venkateshwaran
Vishakha Tak



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