

## Greetings to all!

**"When the first lockdown was imposed, the Nomadic Tribes and De Notified Tribal communities (NTDNT community) who live in remote locations and have limited access to information, had no knowledge of what a lockdown meant", says CIIF Woman Exemplar Deepa Pawar (2018 cohort) from the Gadiya Lohar (Iron Smith) community, who has contributed to the journey of epidemic preparedness by working with the NTDNT during COVID-19; supporting the United Nations call for "Epidemic Preparedness."**

Since 2020, United Nations marks December 27<sup>th</sup> as the day of "Epidemic Preparedness" to create awareness on health, hygiene and advocate the importance of prevention, preparedness, and partnership against epidemics.

While the pandemic for people living in the upper echelons of society was a health emergency, in communities where Deepa works, it was a humanitarian crisis. These NTDNT communities who are continuously migrating for a living, were forced to stand still; which snowballed their issues into the bigger question of 'survival'. With limited access to food, no education, and no employment opportunities, Deepa shares that the communities felt anxious and there was a deep sense of fear and helplessness. The world saw the pandemic unfold and Deepa saw a deep mental health crisis waiting to wreak havoc.

This is where Deepa's work started on health and enforcing fundamental right to life, through her NGO "Anubhuti". She worked extensively on awareness creation on lockdown practices, health, and hygiene, ensuring that the families of the NTDNT community have access to the right information, and raised funds to ensure that there was enough ration throughout for such families. Oftentimes members of these communities have no valid ID proof, and inaccessibility to social security pushes them into extreme distress. Deepa ensured ration availability through fundraising and focussed on providing mental health support to the

individuals through group counselling. Deepa conducted multiple awareness and sensitization sessions with the community members on disaster preparedness, gender, and nutrition, to develop a healthy space for communication and support among the community members.

Being the first woman graduate, the first health activist, and the first NGO leader to emerge from her community, she is working relentlessly on building the resilience of these communities who live at the periphery of society and struggle to cope with such epidemics or disasters.

Through media advocacy, today, Deepa has brought the ill-effects of lockdown on NTDNT community to the fore, by linking it to the constitutional right to life with dignity.

**Ensuring 100% vaccination for the community, Deepa's efforts have led to zero suffering for the families of the NTDNT community also ensuring that no family sleeps in hunger.**

She believes in the power of informed citizenship and wants to drive an awareness campaign on social security schemes to prepare the NTDNT community for many such epidemics and draw mass attention towards the COVID-19 impact on the lives of the NTDNT community.

To support Deepa in her journey of building a resilient community, kindly contact us at:

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