



The outbreak of Covid has thrown all of us into a new situation - from policy-makers to people in towns and cities, in villages and slum. An unknown fear has cast shadow over our minds; we are into making various predictions - from 'the epidemic will soon be over' to 'it is going to be a catastrophe in the coming months'. We do not know. What we know is that the familiar thin and weak people in villages or in the outskirts of cities, people who have little reserve of food or money, will bear the brunt of the new situation most.

In a series of bulletins we will bring news and information of people - adivasis and other marginalised, daily-wage labourers, migrant workers, miners, sex workers, street pickers and and many more, who are going to be most affected by Covid. The Collective is for and by them.

It is an unprecedented situation. No speeches from politicians, very few promises from the authorities - all we receive is, news about Covid on television screens or to our mobile phones. While many of us have kept ourselves occupied to learn every details of the virus, some are trying to find ways to offer help to those who need most. PFCI stand by those 'some' and have dedicated this bulletin to connect with them, to join them.

At the end of this bulletin, there is a brief note about PFCI, also our contact address. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

### More than a flu!

Covid is more than a flu! Yes it is. While we are fearful of contracting the virus, and are trying everything not to get the 'flu' - from washing hands, gloves to self-isolation, and health professionals and scientists are doing their best to save their patients or to find a robust vaccine, and while leaders in governments are trying to impose stringent measures in order to stop the spread of the disease, it appears Covid is more than a flu virus. Covid has changed our life, our behaviour, and above all it has given the opportunity to reflect on life we are accustomed to.

Covid can help us build a better society or can throw us into a worse one than what we have today. Covid brings hope.

[Please share your thoughts.]

### People first!

Covid will bring us closer to people who survive by selling their sweat or labour or forest produce, migrant workers and miners, artisans and many more, and those who bravely stand up against inequality, discrimination and injustices in society.

Protect  
Resist  
Survive



# Covid clips!

## Jharkhand



A health worker at a village centre is going from well to well explaining people how to protect from Covid.

## Odisha



Chromite mining, Sukinda valley, Odisha

The Odisha government has issued an order (8980/H&FW, 24 March, 2020) excluding mining and steel industries from any restrictions measures imposed to prevent the spread of Covid pandemic. Mines include iron, coal, limestone, dolomite, manganese, chromite etc.

## W Bengal

### Bhatpara - N 24-Parganas:

Residents in a shanty town, who had been victims of a communal violence in the recent past, now face an additional blow to live safe and secure. With 'lockdown' imposed to control the spread of Covid, these riot victim need support.

AAMRA, a social organisation, joining

with a local community organisation, Bhatpara Nagorik Udyog, have collected essentials like rice, potatoes, salt, and have distributed among some 100 riot-victim families in the area.



### Sex Workers of Kolkata:

A Kolkata-based organisation, DURBAR, has appealed for help to support over 10,000 sex workers who face an uncertain future due to Covid. Most of them have no money to buy food.



## Artists against Covid



Courtesy: Deepika



## TB and Covid!



### A tale of two bugs

[THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020]

Vikram Patel, Pershing Square Professor of Global health at Harvard Medical School writes, 'The response to COVID-19 shows that India, global community, have the political will, technical capacity and financial resources to control infectious diseases. Now, marshal these assets to eradicate TB. ....

Every TB statistic is grim: We are home to 1 in 4 of the world's TB patients, over 2.5 million Indians are infected and, in 2018, over 4,00,000 Indians died of the disease. To put this in stark perspective, more people died of TB in India last week than the entire global death toll of COVID-19 to date. Given our urgent, energetic and multifaceted response to the latter bug, one is left wondering why we have failed so miserably for another bug, particularly one which has been exquisitely studied and characterised, which is preventable and treatable, and which most of the world has conquered.

[For the full article, see the link.]

### People first Collective India!

People First Collective India (PFCI), a group of health professionals, environmentalists, academics and social activists, are deeply committed to preserve the environment and protect the health of people who live in disadvantaged circumstances. We are particularly concerned about indiscriminate mining and associated industries disregarding people's health, lives and livelihoods and the environment they live in.

Write to:

[peoplefirst.collective@gmail.com](mailto:peoplefirst.collective@gmail.com)

## Dialogue

### Covid - Calamity or Chaos!

Dr Smarajit Jana, a leading public health specialist writes, 'I have been going through policies and strategies of a number of countries addressing Covid-19. While I remain engaged to control epidemic, I have come to a conclusion that we are blaming Covid one-sidedly but not ourselves for the chaos we have created, the anger we have generated against Covid. So I have decided to stand by COVID 19! Possibly you too will join me with a different view about Covid, about the interventions the policy makers and technical experts across countries have adopted. Let me clarify what I mean.

The high death toll due to Covid is because there are not enough ventilators or care givers in health care facilities - even in developed countries. That is the reality, not just how virulent the virus is. In fact Covid has opened our eyes to see how fragile our health care systems are. It is therefore time to review our healthcare system both at policy and implementation levels.

Secondly, people who are seen as 'not productive' are the ones who are the victims of Covid at the first place - the elderly, the homeless or the rural poor. Should we blame the virus for this?

We often use jingoistic jargons in public health - 'fight', 'war', 'eradicate' and so on. When the state takes over public health, in this case with the lockdown strategy, where it can lead to, so I fear. Putting a huge lock on the front door but keeping doors and windows open in a dilapidated building - is the lockdown not similar!

*[We invite you for a dialogue on Covid - please contact us with your comments.]*

### Links:

#### 1. A tale of two bugs:

<https://epaper.indianexpress.com/c/49951150>

#### 2. A simple guide for frontline workers by PFCI (in Hindi):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tFpFIYkhtlIQg8SGX5kQWsvRyFg0aVz4/view?usp=sharing>