

Knowledge Organizations focus on initiatives for socioeconomic rejuvenation and resilience using S&T during COVID 19 pandemic

Knowledge Organizations across the country have started creating scientific awareness on COVID-19 using social, print and electronic media and have started initiatives for building resilience at community level during and post lockdown period in response to the advisory issued by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) as part of their Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR).

DST funded labs CSIR-NBRI, ICAR Labs, Chandigarh University, Manipur University, SKAUST, Srinagar, Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot, Punjab contributed their knowledge and resources for the development and distribution of sanitizer as per World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, mask preparation as per the guidelines issued by Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) and services for COVID 19 testing.

A mobile App based regular advisory to pregnant women has been initiated under already ongoing projects at AIIMS New Delhi. Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir (SKAUST), Srinagar initiated a telemedicine facility for monitoring the health of farm animals under ongoing projects. In order to address breathing-related issues, a herbal decongestion spray on the principles of Ayurveda has been developed. More than 5000L of sanitizer has been distributed among migrant population at AIIMS-New Delhi, Safdurjung-New Delhi, Police Department of Haryana & Punjab, and UP and the process is continuing towards the containment of disease. The technology of herbal sanitizer developed under the DST funded ongoing project has been transferred to companies for bulk production and sustaining the supply for public consumptions at an affordable rate, and the protocol has been shared with Voluntary Organizations for distribution at the local level.

A Psychological First Aid-Epidemic (PFA-E) for COVID-19 to minimize psychosocial problems during an epidemic is under development using google form. Literature is being published related to COVID and psychosocial response by the community through authentic resources. A distancing-compatible farm work plan and movement strategy for farmworkers to minimize contact for different crops is being developed. Ready-to-use bio-surfactant-based formulation for hands and surface sanitization; a non-toxic, biocompatible, and cost-effective body wipes to fight against this deadly virus, and a prototype for sterilization using ozone Micro-Nano-Bubbles (MNBs) are being proposed and would be ready within 6 months.

The Science for Equity Empowerment and Development (SEED) Division, the interface of S&T with society at DST supported these Knowledge Organizations and is working towards varied societal challenges, to ensure preparedness of the society to face challenges & threat posed by the growing pandemic and to mitigate long-term impact of COVID-19.

Professor Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, DST, while elaborating the need for immediate and long term S&T interventions urged that the SSR is the way forward and the actions reported reflects the spirit of service and voluntarily contribution of the knowledge and resources of our scientists to the widest spectrum of stakeholders in society. However, he added that the focus will be there on socioeconomic rejuvenation and resilience.

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