



# A tribute to COVID “Yoddhas”

Stories of community-led action from  
urban informal settlements in Mumbai

# Preface

From 2016, Mumbai-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA), recruited and trained a pool of community volunteers from urban informal settlements in order to build capacities within local communities to take charge of their own health. SNEHA works at the community level in close collaboration with public health systems to improve the health and safety of women, children and adolescents in the informal settlements of Mumbai.

During the first lockdown, which was announced in March 2020, these community volunteers were rechristened COVID “Yoddhas” (Community Warriors), and served as an important link between SNEHA and local communities. The Yoddhas contributed in many ways to the pandemic response. They helped create awareness about COVID-19 in urban informal settlements; they participated in relief work, they put in efforts towards negating misinformation; and they helped in maintaining sanitation and hygiene in the vicinity of the settlements. The Yoddhas also supported pregnant women, new mothers, and children’s access to health and nutrition services during the pandemic. Moreover, in the later stages of the pandemic (2021 onwards), they helped in the organisation of COVID-19 vaccination camps, in online registrations for vaccinations, and also accompanied people to vaccination camps.

We present in this booklet the stories of seven COVID Yoddhas, collected between September 2020 to September 2021. We have translated and edited the stories mildly but retained the informal parlance (for instance, we have referred to COVID-19 as ‘Corona’ the way Yoddhas refer to the disease).

These stories illustrate how the participation of communities in their own health can happen in a meaningful manner. Often, there is much talk about engagement with communities in the health sector, but bringing such processes about in the true spirit is challenging. We feel that NGO-led participation efforts have much potential in urban informal settlements in India, where formal cadres of community health workers have not been scaled up. Each story we have shared here is unique and gives a snapshot of what happened in the urban informal settlements of Mumbai during the pandemic from the eyes of people living there.

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# I am a COVID Yoddha and I care!

Ashok (name changed) is 44 years old and has been living in Mumbai since his childhood. He is an electrician. He has a two-room house where he lives with his mother, wife and his two children. His brother's daughter also lives with them. He has been working as a volunteer with SNEHA since 2018.

## Volunteering is better than watching television all the time

I had rented out one room in my house to ICDS for running their Anganwadi center<sup>1</sup>. My wife and I used to help the Anganwadi workers in weighing children, as well as distributing ration<sup>2</sup> in the community. During this work, I came in contact with SNEHA staff, who suggested that I could volunteer for the organisation in my free time, so that I could help the community. I was busy with my work during the weekdays, but I thought that in the evening or over weekends I could meet people in the neighborhood and share some information on health. I felt this was good work and much better than watching television all the time.

## COVID-19 imposed hardships and feelings of helplessness

When the COVID pandemic hit Mumbai, everything stopped. My work also stopped. I had some savings which helped us to survive through the bad period. But I felt helpless on hearing about slum areas being a high-risk zone for infection. I felt bad about people contracting COVID and dying without any treatment.



Yoddhas helped Anganwadi workers in the distribution of take home ration (THR<sup>3</sup>) to young children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

## COVID-19 relief work

During the lockdown, field staff from SNEHA contacted me over the phone and asked if I would like to help in COVID relief work in my area. I readily agreed since I felt this was the need of the hour. Also, with no work, I had all the time to support my community in this crisis. People from SNEHA called me to a nearby office, from where I picked up fruit and vegetable boxes to distribute in my area. The local administration was also distributing food boxes on the main road, which I collected and distributed to the needy families who were living inside narrow lanes. I also gave many food

boxes to factory workers as well who were stuck in the factories due to lockdown and had no money to buy food. When the local councilor provided food items, my friends and I cooked food in our colony and distributed it to nearly a 100 people every day during the peak of the lockdown.

## Spreading the right messages

In my regular weekly meetings with staff from SNEHA, I had come to know more about Corona and the difficult situation in our country. I felt that a lot of wrong information was prevalent in the community on ways to protect oneself from infection. This made me realize the urgency of giving the public correct information. I learned about the correct messages that needed to be given in the community for preventing the spread of Corona.

One important concern I had was about maintaining distance. I kept thinking 'how is it possible to follow this advice in a place like Dharavi?'. One madam from SNEHA had told us about identifying places in the community where the chances of spreading infection were high - like, public toilets, corners of lanes, grocery and meat shops where crowds could gather. In these places, it was important to keep distance. I also put out some posters that the staff shared with me. I liked the idea of putting posters in crowded places. I also told people to wash their hands frequently after using the toilet or touching anything outside their house. When people told me about soap being expensive, I gave them information about a much cheaper soap available in the market. I told them that washing hands was important and not the brand of soap they used.

## Referrals for COVID screening

I had learned about the symptoms of Corona, and if I came across people with symptoms, I referred them to the nearby testing center. SNEHA had given me a list over WhatsApp. People were not always ready to get tested and I had to argue with them sometimes. I told them, 'See, there are senior citizens and children in your house. For the sake of your own family, it is important that you get tested.' I also accompanied a few people to testing centers, especially those who were scared to go alone and had no idea what to do.

Now I feel that people are a little relaxed and are not following instructions properly. I have to repeatedly talk to people as people don't listen in one go. SNEHA has taught me to talk to people politely and give information that is needed based on a person's existing knowledge. This training has helped me in making better connections with people. My work as a volunteer has helped me expand my knowledge, and this I will pass on to my children.

Sometimes, when people ask me 'Why do you care?', I show them my ID card which SNEHA and the municipal corporation have given to me, saying I am a COVID Yoddha and I care.

<sup>1</sup>Anganwadi centres are part of the Government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program initiated to combat child hunger and malnutrition. These centers provide supplementary nutrition, non-formal pre-school education, and health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services in convergence with public health systems.

<sup>2</sup>Food grains

<sup>3</sup>THR are the food items given to children aged six months to three years, pregnant and lactating mothers in the Supplementary Nutrition Program (SNP) of ICDS. Under SNP, all children (six months to three years), pregnant and lactating women are entitled to receive THR from their local Anganwadi centres, and children aged three to six years are eligible to receive Hot Cooked Meals.

# Infections can happen to anyone, we all are the same, aren't we?

Radha (name changed) is 42 years old and has three children. She came to Mumbai from Karnataka 21 years ago after her marriage. She has been working with SNEHA as a volunteer since 2016.



*Yoddhas organized lane meetings with women in the community to create awareness of COVID-19.*

## I feared Corona but I wanted to help

When Corona hit Dharavi, everything stopped. I was worried about my family and others in my area. During the lockdown, SNEHA had contacted me over the phone to ask about my willingness to work on relief activities in the community. My husband had warned me about the risk of infection if I participated. I was scared but I still decided to go ahead. I thought that doctors, policemen and many others are working day and night, so I should also help if I can. In comparison to their work, this help I am doing is nothing. It is small work but it is essential for my community. So, I decided to be a Yoddha.

## Informing SNEHA about the ground situation

During the lockdown, people lost their jobs; daily labourers did not have much to eat and there was a lot of fear of catching the infection. When SNEHA asked us to help in ration distribution, I made a list of people who needed ration, gathered identification documents and helped in providing food to people. Staff from SNEHA had also educated us that it was important for pregnant women to continue seeking care even during Corona. When I went to visit a few pregnant women in my area, I realized that they were very scared of the infection and so avoided going to hospitals. A few had missed their antenatal visits, sonography appointments, and in one case, a pregnant woman had not even registered at the hospital. I shared this problem with the SNEHA staff in our regular online meeting. I connected the staff with such families so that

they could convince them to visit the hospital and get the care needed during pregnancy.

## A story of stigma

A few days into the lockdown, I came to know about a boy in the adjacent lane who had suffered from Corona. I heard that there was a huge commotion when he and his family were taken to the quarantine center. I contacted the family over the phone and came to know that their neighbours had behaved badly with them. They had made a video of the family being taken by hospital staff and had shared it on WhatsApp. This video enraged the boy and he wanted to take revenge. His family was also quite upset at the behaviour of their neighbours. I felt bad for the family and decided to talk to the neighbours. I went to the lane and gathered the nearby families. I explained to them that in this situation, the boy and his family needed the support and best wishes of their neighbours, and it was time to help them. I explained that Corona is an infection, and it can happen to anyone. We should put ourselves in others' shoes before judging them, we all are the same, aren't we? Actually, the neighbours were scared of getting the infection, but I spoke to them and asked everyone to follow precautions. After this, I contacted the family and told that boy to forget about the incident. I explained to the family about the ignorance of people in general, their fears and that they do not really mean harm. I counselled the family about their situation and advised them to not react in anger. The family soon came out of the quarantine and everyone was healthy. I went to meet the family and told them to continue taking care of their health. I also held a meeting about Corona in the lane and called this family and their neighbours to make peace. I think that timely interference in such situations is extremely important. Otherwise, things can worsen. SNEHA has trained me well to deal with such situations.



*Yoddhas counselled women and their families to continue hospital visits for uptake of maternal health services.*

# Worrying about what other people think of you helps no one!

Sana (name changed) is a 28 years old woman who lives in a rented house with her husband and four children. She migrated to Mumbai from Kolkata three years ago when her youngest daughter was born. She has been working with SNEHA as a volunteer since 2018.

## Becoming a Yoddha

Three years ago, I was new here and I didn't know anybody. At that time, staff from SNEHA used to come to weigh my child and give me information about her growth. Since I liked listening to them, I started attending all the meetings they held. One day, one madam from SNEHA asked me if I would like to be a volunteer. I was not sure if I would be able to give time for activities outside my house or even go outside for a long period. But they told me not to worry about these things and that I could work at my convenience. Initially, I used to go along with one madam from SNEHA to visit the area. Later, I became comfortable with visiting people on my own.

When Corona started, SNEHA people informed me about the situation and told me to take care of myself. They told us to spread the information about protecting ourselves from Corona in the community. From them, I learned about the symptoms of Corona like fever, cough, and breathlessness. I also learned about a helpline number from SNEHA. I would go and tell my neighbours about Corona. I would also tell them to check with the doctor if they had any symptoms. I assured them that even if they tested positive, nothing would happen as the doctors would keep the patient in the center for 14 days and give them medicines.



Due to the fear of COVID-19 in hospitals, parents postponed the immunization of their children. Yoddhas counselled women and their families to continue hospital visits for uptake of child health services.

## Reaching out to pregnant women and mothers with newborns

Staff from SNEHA gave us information on the kind of care that pregnant women and new mothers should take during Corona, and also where they can access health services. I conducted a

survey in my area to identify newly pregnant women and mothers with newborns. I knew that going to other people's houses was risky, but I thought that was important too- since pregnant women need care and medicine. Also, many of these women were not going to the doctor due to the fear of catching Corona in hospitals. I told them that it was important to get care from nearby hospitals when pregnant, I also told them how to take precautions while visiting hospitals. It was not possible for me to go to the hospital with every woman, but sometimes I did go when someone had no other support. What else could I do? It was a crisis situation.

## Collective action to maintain hygiene in the community

Staff from SNEHA always tell us about the importance of maintaining hygiene in the community, but during Corona, this became an essential part of my work. It was a very challenging task since public toilets do not get cleaned regularly and the garbage collector vans do not come daily to collect garbage. People clean their houses but they throw garbage in the streets. People from SNEHA had made me aware of all these issues and had suggested that community members together can demand better services for the disposal of garbage. So, all nearby volunteers connected with the local contractors who was hired by the municipal corporation to clean our area. When people got together, demanded such services and monitored the cleaning of toilets and streets, things got better. On one occasion, I confronted a woman who had a habit of spitting on the road. She did it even when our kids were playing in the lane. I gathered all the women in my lane and told the woman that this was not correct behavior, as it was unhealthy and could result in the spread of the disease. We all requested her to quit this habit.

My husband does get worried about my volunteer work sometimes. He feels that people might curse me for the things I do. But I tell him that if everybody sits at home worrying about what other people think of them, then who will do such work. I cannot contribute beyond a certain point to society. But I feel that I should do whatever I can for my family and for people nearby. I feel that people may or may not appreciate me, but the staff from SNEHA always appreciates my work and that feels nice. After all, not everyone gets called to volunteer.



Possibility of spread of COVID-19 infection was high in public toilets. Besides conducting sanitation drives in the community, Yoddhas also put up posters in both male and female toilets to raise awareness related to COVID appropriate behaviours.

# Whistle! Whistle! Time to mask-up

Sulekha (name changed) is 38 years old. She migrated to Mumbai fifteen years ago after getting married. She has studied till the 10th standard. After the birth of her second child, she quit her job. Her husband works as a security guard but lost his job during COVID-19. Sulekha joined SNEHA as a volunteer in 2019.



The free masks and sanitizers distributed by Yoddhas in the community also allowed them to have discussions on COVID appropriate behaviours with community members.

## Beyond personal problems

I have been working as a volunteer for more than two years now. There are many women in our community who have never gone out of their homes. They know very little. As a volunteer, I get information from SNEHA and I am able to give it to such people. We have a lot of problems with money at home at present. My husband is out of work. But I am continuing my work as a volunteer because I don't think only about money. People know me because of my work. They trust me and call me if they need help. If I say something, people think it must be right.

## Enabling access to healthcare and participating in relief work

The lockdown was a difficult time for people. I met a woman who was four months pregnant and had not yet registered with the hospital. She had also had an abortion earlier. I explained to her to go see the doctor and register her name for antenatal care as soon as possible. In another case, there was a young girl who had a headache and stomach ache. It was late at night and she was alone with her mother. Her mother called me for help. I insisted on taking her to the public hospital. The private hospital would have charged her Rs. 25,000 to 30,000 and the family did not have that kind of money.

During the COVID lockdown, sometimes there was no food in my community. I heard of many families not getting food to eat for a day or two. So, I called the madam at SNEHA and told them about this situation. They sent ration for one week and we distributed it among ourselves. Someone from the local corporation also came forward and we helped him distribute food.

## Whistling as a strategy

Once the lockdown had lifted, I felt that people were not taking precautions properly. One day, I found some boys were playing in the garden without any masks. Some had it on, but their faces were not covered properly. SNEHA has given us whistles to blow whenever we see people without masks. Whistles are useful. I went there and blew the whistle hard. Then I asked them to mask up. The whistling startled them. The boys wanted to know who I was and why I was telling them to mask up. So, I showed them my identity card as a Yoddha- the card that I had received from SNEHA and the municipal corporation. Showing the card worked, and they all wore their masks promptly.



Yoddhas distributed masks and sanitizers to people, and used posters to advise them to adopt COVID-appropriate behaviours.

# Storytelling as a changemaking tool during COVID-19

Reshma (name changed) is 18 years old. Her family is originally from Uttar Pradesh but had migrated to Mumbai many years ago. She has five siblings. She is currently pursuing a Diploma in Pharmacy. She has been working with SNEHA as a volunteer since 2019.



A female Yoddha taking a session with young children about COVID-19 and the importance of hand washing.

## A Yoddha

My father encouraged me to volunteer with SNEHA. At first, he was skeptical, but his perception of SNEHA changed over time. He told me that it was a good idea to volunteer. He said, 'If you want you can go. These are all educated people. It is a place where all women get together. You will learn something and it is always good to have information and help others if we can.'

People at SNEHA have taught me a lot of things about eating healthy food, avoiding junk food, and maintaining hygiene, especially during my periods. I have also attended their leadership training workshops and I am called a changemaker now. As a changemaker, whatever SNEHA teaches me, I teach the younger children in my area.

## Distributing sanitary napkins during the lockdown

When COVID started in March 2020, everybody was scared. No one was talking to each other. A few kids in our area lost their parents. This made everybody scared that such a thing might happen to us as well. People stopped going outside for jobs. They did not have anything to eat at times. People said that it was better to be hungry than die. My father had helped many people by sending them

home in trucks that left from Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. During that time, SNEHA had called me to collect sanitary napkins from their center. During the lockdown, girls needed this, and getting napkins was difficult. When I distributed napkins, they were very relieved. They felt happy.

## COVID awareness through Masjid's wazu<sup>4</sup>

SNEHA had asked us to spread COVID-related information as much as possible. Among us (Muslims) we do wazu five times a day. My uncle is a maulana<sup>5</sup>, so I had requested him to use this opportunity to help people follow COVID protocols. Along with other volunteers, I requested other Masjids to do the same as well. Now at the time of wazu, they make announcements to wash hands properly.

## Storytelling to inspire kids to do better

During the lockdown, many children couldn't go to school. I gathered all of them and took some classes so that they would study. Children in this area do not have much information on what to do. Even children who are very good students opt out of school because of a lack of awareness. I tell children stories that inspire them to stay in school, become better people and do something good with their lives. I take the help of SNEHA in getting the right kind of stories. In these areas, it is very easy for children to get distracted and lose focus on their studies. We need to create a good environment for children so that they have the choice of becoming what they want to be.



A young Yoddha using posters to facilitate a COVID-19 awareness meeting in a small lane with women in the community.

<sup>4</sup>Wazu means ablution in English. It is a compulsory practice for every Muslim to wash their face, elbow, head and feet before performing prayers.

<sup>5</sup>A Muslim man respected for his religious knowledge.

# Help and get helped - volunteering as a two-way process



COVID-19 vaccination center in informal settlements of Dharavi. Yodhdhas in these vaccination centres helped in crowd management and registration on the online portal for vaccination.

Rakesh (name changed) is 27 years old. He is from Mumbai. He had dropped out of school due to family issues, but has rejoined school again and is now in High school. He has been working with SNEHA as a volunteer since 2019.

## Improving communication skills

I am a volunteer with SNEHA. I have learned a lot of things here. One of the things I have learned is how to talk to people in a way that they listen and understand you. I have learned to be patient with people.

## Work during the lockdown

During the lockdown in March 2020, people were very afraid. There were no opportunities for earning, so people decided to go back to their villages from Mumbai. There was also a threat of catching Corona and dying alone in Mumbai. So, I had sent my family back to the village. Getting transportation back to the village was not easy during the lockdown. There was no public transport. We had to pay a middleman Rs. 1000 per person to arrange for train tickets. Later, in fact, I came to know that there was no need to give money to anyone. So, I helped others get home and not get cheated.

During the lockdown, I was in constant touch with staff from SNEHA. I informed them about people getting sick or dying in our area. I also made lists of people who needed ration and distributed food. At that time, everybody was helpless and needed support

but we could help only a few. People sometimes blamed me and said that I was favoring only a few families. It was very challenging to explain to them that we could give food only to those who needed it the most.

This volunteering work is a two-way thing. I get information about things I didn't know from SNEHA. So, it is good for me. I pass it on to others. People trust me and ask about things. So, it is good for others as well. I like to help others. I feel good and confident when I do so.

## COVID-19 vaccine related work

I helped in organizing and getting people to visit vaccination camps in the slums. I went house to house and informed people about the camp. When I got my first dose, I went and told everyone about how I was fine and that no one should hesitate to take the vaccine. I tried to explain to people why getting vaccinated was important. I also made lists of people in the area who had to be vaccinated and gave them to a madam at SNEHA.

I also helped people fill forms. Some of the forms that were online could not be filled by people, while some came directly to the vaccination center without filling the form. In such cases, I helped them out with these formalities. A few people had old mobile phones and could not access the CoWIN application<sup>6</sup>. I helped them too.

I also helped to manage queues in the vaccination centers. I told people to stand in a line. Some people did create a ruckus about this, but ultimately, they all listened.

<sup>6</sup>Indian government's web portal for COVID-19 vaccine registration

# ‘Sister, you are very intelligent’, the people say

Amrita (name changed) is 18 years old. She is in High school and has been associated with SNEHA for the last five years. She wants to become a doctor. She has three siblings.



*During the COVID-19 lockdown, women and girls in the community did not have access to sanitary napkins. Yoddhas helped in the distribution of sanitary napkins in the community.*

## The lockdown and access to sanitary pads

I have known SNEHA for many years since they helped me during my adolescence. Staff from SNEHA taught me about what happens to the body when one grows up and also explained about periods. I learned from them about maintaining hygiene during periods. Now, I take sessions with other young girls in my area about these issues. I feel really good that we know about these things and are well informed. During the lockdown in March 2020, I had received sanitary pads from SNEHA, which I had distributed in the community. I was given a list of young girls living in my lane. I met these girls, gave them the pads and enquired about their health.

## Dealing with COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

When vaccinations started, I tried to spread the message about COVID vaccines in my community as much as I could. I visited many households and asked them if they knew about it. People will avail services only if they know where to go. During my visits, I realized that many people were worried about taking the vaccine. I told them that it was fine to take it, and gave them the example of

my own parents who had taken the vaccine and were fine. I also helped them fill out forms and register online for the vaccine. When needed, I took people to the vaccination center as well. Now people say, 'Sister, you are very intelligent. Our vaccination happened so fast. We did not have to wait much.' I found that some people were not wearing masks at the vaccination center. So, I told the madam at the center not to give vaccines to such people. This made everyone wear their masks properly.

My studies have not gone well this year due to COVID. But I will get through. I hope to become a doctor. SNEHA has helped me, and now I want to help others.



*At the COVID-19 vaccination centres, Yoddhas received people, checked their IDs, registered them on the online portal and suggested the dos and don'ts before and after the COVID-19 vaccination.*

# Appendix: Research summary of this work

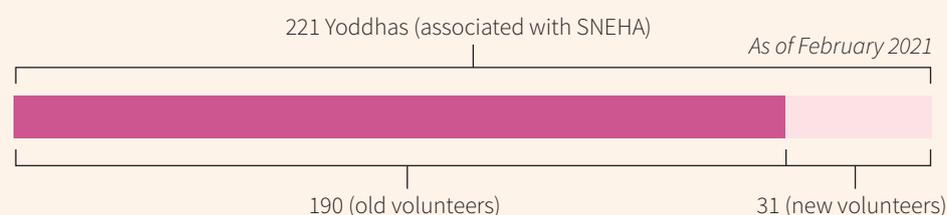
## Background

The Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action, a Mumbai-based NGO undertook the Mission Dharavi project (June 2020 to May 2021) to address the needs of communities in these informal settlements during the pandemic. SNEHA has been working in Dharavi for over 10 years on women and child health. During the pandemic and lockdown, SNEHA adapted its programs to incorporate activities such as COVID-19 awareness generation in the community, provision of food and other essentials. It also worked in close coordination with health, nutrition and other public systems to ensure continuity of services. SNEHA had access to a large pool of trained community-based volunteers in Dharavi. Many of these volunteers were rechristened as COVID Yoddhas (warriors) in the Mission Dharavi project to help with field activities. We at SNEHA undertook a qualitative study from October 2020 to May 2021 to appraise this program. As part of this study, we examined various strategies used by COVID Yoddhas to help communities during the pandemic.

## Methods

We interviewed 12 COVID Yoddhas who had volunteered in the efforts to combat COVID-19 in Dharavi during the lockdown period. We also conducted three online focus group discussions with them (15 members in total) to better understand current situation in the community, their work, challenges faced in performing their duties and motivation to volunteer during the pandemic. We also used routine monitoring data to understand some of the activities Yoddhas were contributing to.

## Findings



Most Yoddhas were already working as volunteers in the community. The Yoddhas we spoke to shared that the information and knowledge gained from SNEHA gave them confidence and opportunity to help the community during the crisis due to COVID-19. Male COVID Yoddhas also shared that during the lockdown, they could not go out to work and hence they could spend time in volunteering activities. The COVID Yoddhas also received ID cards from Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) during the pandemic, which seemed to give some legitimacy to their work.

Yoddhas reported working on mainly five kinds of activities- activities directly related to the COVID-19 and its prevention, activities of helping the community access routine health care during the lockdown, activities linked to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), activities like distribution of food, and lastly, being involved in evidence gathering. Yoddhas were part of awareness generation activities and provision of direct services to the community like distributing masks or rations or getting toilets cleaned.

# Reported activities by COVID Yoddhas

## December 2020-January 2021

Themes	Activities
<b>COVID-19 prevention, screening and referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted regular home visits and group/lane meetings for disseminating COVID-19 related information in the community</li> <li>• Distributed COVID-19 related IEC (Information, Education and Communication) material in the community</li> <li>• Used social media to share COVID-19 e-posters and informational videos</li> <li>• Shared information about nearby quarantine centres, online consultation by government doctors and MCGM COVID-19 Helpline number</li> <li>• Distributed masks, sanitizers and advised people to practice preventive measures</li> <li>• Counselling community members to get tested for COVID-19 in case of any symptoms</li> </ul>
<b>Access to other public health services during COVID-19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling community members to not fear and continue seeking care from hospitals</li> <li>• Facilitated uptake of health services for antenatal care, immunization and other critical ailments</li> <li>• In case of emergencies, accompanied patients to the health care facilities</li> <li>• Helped various organisations in arranging health camps in the community</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion of WASH in the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created awareness about maintaining sanitation and hygiene while using public toilets</li> <li>• Conducted hand washing demonstration in the community</li> <li>• Installed dustbins in public toilets and conducted sanitation drives in the community</li> <li>• Coordinated with public sector sanitation workers for cleanliness of public toilets and gutters</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution of ration and food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared information about the public distribution system<sup>7</sup> and availability of ration for the community</li> <li>• Coordinated with Anganwadi workers for ration distribution to young children, pregnant and lactating mothers</li> <li>• Made list of the most vulnerable people in the community and arranged for their food using various networks</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence gathering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted door-to-door surveys to identify pregnant women, infants and others requiring help</li> </ul>

## Conclusions

Our discussions with Yoddhas suggest that Yoddhas have played an important role during the lockdown serving as an extension arm for SNEHA's work in the community. Most Yoddhas shared that they put in additional time into volunteering work since it was a challenging time-period, and they had wanted to step-up, do something 'extra', and help the community tide over the crisis. Our experience has shown that Yoddhas can step-up to handle crisis and make important contributions to the community. These Yoddhas, as well-proved during this crisis, can be an important community resource for future crisis as well, thereby contributing to the overall resilience of the community to disasters and shocks.

Yoddhas are a part of SNEHA's program to enhance community engagement in health. More about the strengths as well as challenges of our constantly evolving community engagement efforts have been published below. Click below to view.

[A qualitative examination of the mission Dharavi project](#)

[Institutionalizing community participation processes in urban informal settlements: Lessons learnt from community volunteers in SNEHA's Child Health and Nutrition \(Aahar\) Program \(2016-18\)](#)

<sup>7</sup>Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Act in India provides subsidized food grain to its beneficiaries

