

Shivnath Mandal



He shares that women had it worse at the quarantine centers. In particular, there was a lack of security for women, separate toilets; and lack of soap and water. There was no proper place for them to wash their clothes.

Shivnath Mandal (Dhanuk) and his family of seven are residents of Kalyanpur Tole, Bhagwanpur Rural Municipality – ward no. 4, Siraha District. After it became difficult for Shivnath to support his family working in Nepal, he left to go to India. It has been 24 years since he started working in Bangalore, India. He goes to Bangalore every year during the month of January for employment and returns home after the month ends. It helped him earn more than the NRs 400 – 500 he would earn back home.

The worldwide spread of the corona virus caused a sudden lockdown. He was forced to stay in a dormitory as his work came to a halt. In a month's time, the food items in the dormitory also ran out. With the money he had earned for two months, he tried to sustain himself. He soon ran out of this money as well.

Everyone in his family was worried. There was no way back home. The thought of how he will raise his family who are back home created a state of anxiety, panic and fear for him. He worked hard to search for a train ticket to go home. Finally after 15 days he got the ticket. Due to the large number of people traveling by train, the journey was very difficult for Shivnath. After days of traveling by train, eating biscuits for four days, switching to a bus and finally walking on foot he reached Loukaha at the Nepal-India border.

He stayed for 21 days in the quarantine center at Bala Sundari University located in Bhagwanpur Gaonpalika Ward No. 1. It was an uncomfortable stay at the quarantine center. 9 to 12 people have to sleep in one room. He shared how there was a lack of sanitation, soap and beds. The toilets were unclean and on top of it all not being able to meet and talk with his family made his days painfully long and inconvenient.

He shares that women had it worse at the quarantine centers. In particular, there was a lack of security for women, separate toilets; and lack of soap and water. There was no proper place for them to wash their clothes.

After his results arrived and showed that he was COVID negative he was finally able to return home and was reunited with his family.

“The lockdown has extended for a longer period than we expected. I am worried about earning and feeding my family. Because people know I had to stay in quarantine I am not being able to get any jobs – no one calls me for work. I wonder how I will make a living if this continues,” despairs Shivnath with a defeated expression on his face.