

Experiences of home quarantine by Jiya in an urban basti Vadodara

(On April 09, Rehana, one of our associates, sent me (Sangeeta Mecwan) a list on WhatsApp and asked me whether the last name in the list that read Sneha Sanghvi (name changed) - urban basti was our Sneha (Field Officer). She was worried about her as this list was of the 24 patients attended by Dr Saad Shaikh from Muavin Hospital on April 03, 2020. He was detected as Corona confirmed case. I immediately called Jiya who told me that her mother had gone to the hospital as she had fever and headache. She was surprised to see her name in the list I had forwarded to her. She told that her mother was quarantined in the house where she worked as care giver and her family members, that is her sister Jiya, her brother in law, her father, cousin and nephew have been home quarantined. She was worried for her mother as well as her family. I called Jiya and talked to her. She told me about the incident and was quite disturbed then. She was hurt by her neighbours' behaviour and expressed her anger for being locked in the house. I called Manushi and conveyed this news to her. She also called Sneha and Jiya. We comforted them and assured Jiya of all the support she needed. I asked her to contact some of her friends and neighbours who would help her with the necessities while we arranged for a ration kit for her. Manushi told her to call the police for help or try the helpline numbers on the pamphlet that the nurse from the corporation had left behind. She tried those numbers but they were not of use. No one responded on them or they sent a constant 'engaged' tone. Manushi meanwhile arranged for the ration kit by buying some of the stuff from her local grocer and some by ordering online. Reena (who worked with us as a non-formal educator in basti where Jiya lives and happens to be her cousin and their friend's wife) picked up the kit from Manushi's place and gave it to Jiya. She has a pass to ply daily as she works in the 'Kalji' care a trust working for the elderly. Sneha called Aftab (Name changed) to inquire about the gravity of the situation. He told her not to worry but ask Jiya and the other family members to follow the protocols which is for their own safety. He was tested also because he worked closely with the doctor but had not got his reports by then (He, along with the eight people tested, have not got his reports even till the date.). Tandalja had been declared as the 'red zone' already. He also told Sneha that there would have been a spelling mistake which read Sneha instead of Reva (Name changed) but the age mentioned was correct - 50 years. I conveyed the status to Rehana as well.

This story is penned down by Jiya herself. I requested her to do so because such reflections in own words are a big learning)

My name is Jiya (30 years, home maker). I stay with my parents in urban basti in Vadodara since the last 25 years. My family comprises of my parents (father - 54 years, daily wager, mother - 52 years, care giver), my husband (30 years, driver) my cousin (24 years, daily wager) and my son (3 years)

I am sharing a very painful incident that me and my family are undergoing. My mother is a care giver. She worked for an aunty who lived in in a society in close to our basti. My mother continued her services even during the lock down period because aunty who was 70 years old needed someone to attend to her for 24 hours. Uncle (her husband, 75 years) could not manage it singlehandedly. There is one more nurse who shared the care giving of aunty with my mother. They worked in shifts.

On April 02, my mother had slight fever and a headache. I gave her a tablet which I always keep in my medical box. She did not feel ok. So my husband took her to Muavin Hospital in Tandalja (Charitable Trust Hospital), the very next day i.e. April 03, 2020. Dr. Saad Shaikh examined her and gave her some medicines. She was cured in the following two days.

On April 08, 2020, a person came to our house and started inquiring of our family members. She started writing the information which included names, age and what they did. I asked her who she was and why she needed the information. She told me that she was a nurse from the corporation. Her name was Bhavnaben Parmar. Dr. Saad Shaikh from Muavin hospital who had treated my mother was confirmed as Corona positive. I was in tears. She said that I should not be scared. All we had to do was

not to go out of our house nor let anyone in. Then she asked me to call my mother. I told her she had gone to work; she was a care giver.

She took the address where my mother worked. She reached there accompanied by one more nurse and a male person from the corporation. They inquired about the people living in /coming regularly to that house which comprised of the uncle and aunty for whom my mother worked, the nurse Belaben and her six-month-old child and my mother. They put the home quarantine sticker on the main door of the house explaining to uncle and aunty the reason behind this. (my mother had been treated by the doctor some days ago who was detected as corona positive). They informed them that the quarantine period was 14 days and that no one had to come into or go out of the house for this period. They gave a choice to my mother and Neha ben (name changed) whether they wanted to stay quarantined with uncle and aunty or they wanted to go back to their homes. If they chose to go their homes they would not be allowed to ply daily to this house and will have to stay away for the entire period. It was difficult for uncle to manage things on his own so he told the corporation staff that my mother and Neha ben would remain quarantined with them.

The staff then came to our house in the corporation vehicle this time. They stuck the red sticker of 'home quarantine' on the main door of our house. The sticker read 'No one should meet the members of this house nor should these members go out of this house'- April 08 to April 22, 2020. Our neighbours gathered seeing this board and the vehicle and started inquiring. We explained to them. As soon as they heard that the doctor who treated my mother was detected as corona positive, their attitude changed. They stopped talking to us. They shut the doors if they saw any of us. I cried a lot. Every one of us was tensed. I was scared for my son who is just three years old. I was anxious whether they would take us to the hospital and what else would they do to us. We lost our appetite. I called my friend Aftab who works in Muavin hospital and told him about this. He told me not to worry. These were some formalities that the corporation staff had to do for the people who were in touch with the doctor on April 03, 2020. I was a bit relieved.

But the next day the names of the doctor and the 24 patients he treated on April 03,2020 was in the paper. I was informed my mother's name was also in the list. All these patients were home quarantined with their families.

We got a phone call from the corporation on April 09, 2020 asking whether anyone of us had fever, cold or cough. When we told them, we did not have any of these symptoms, the phone calls stopped. I sent my cousin brother to bring milk the next morning. All our neighbours started staring at him. One of them shouted at him and asked him where he was going. My brother was scared. He came back home without the milk. Everybody's behaviour in the basti changed towards us. There is an open space in front of our house which is also a playground for children. But now no one came to play. Our RO is out of order since some days. I jump to the other side of the fence into the neighbouring colony to fill the drinking water. But when the residents of this colony came to know of our quarantine status, they closed the area of my entrance into their colony.

One aunty who stays opposite to us gave us some vegetables and flour. While she was enquiring about us, one other neighbour reminded her of our quarantine status and advised her to avoid the road that passed our house. She promptly responded to him by saying that she has been using the road and will continue using it. People can stay away from her if they were so scared.

The news of our home quarantine status reached SAHAJ. I have been associated with it since I was about eight years old. I have learnt a lot from the organization. Manushi Didi and Sangeeta Didi spoke to me and told me not to worry. They assured me of support in any kind and explained to me that

quarantining is a measure for our safety. I was relieved. I told my father about this. SAHAJ has always helped those in need and that is why I love it. I would want to work with SAHAJ again.

My sister Sneha was also worried about us. She too assured me of any help I wanted. I shared with her my communication with Sangeeta Didi and Manushi Didi. I told her that right then we needed vegetables. No one was ready to touch the money that we gave to buy vegetables. If possible, she should arrange for the vegetables. My brother in law (Sneha's husband) brought vegetables for us the next day. One of my brother Shivam (name changed) helped us a lot. He would drop whatever we needed. We just had to phone him. (Jiya and Sneha's *real brother passed away two years back due to brain haemorrhage*). My other friend Reena brought grapes for my son because she knows he loves them. She also brought the ration kit from Manushi Didi's house. My maternal aunt who stays close by brought grains for us.

On the ninth day of our home quarantine, the aunty for whom my mother worked fell ill. Uncle took her to a private hospital but he was asked to go to Gotri General Hospital as they thought it risky to treat her because of her age. He took her to Gotri General Hospital. They tested her for corona. She got her reports on April 17, 2020. She was confirmed having corona infection. My husband got a phone call from the corporation, the same day. They told him that my mother had to be tested also as she had attended the aunty who was a confirmed corona positive patient. My mother gave her test. We were worried. The corporation staff came with the police this time. They removed the old 'home quarantine' sticker and put a new one which read 'This house will remain closed from 08/04/2020 to 30/04/2020. Once again, the neighbours started inquiring. We anxiously waited for my mother's report. Our anxiety increased when we did not get it even at the end of the second day. My husband called the nurse from the corporation. She told him that as it was Sunday, they would get the report the next day. Our impatience grew. We kept on calling her in the morning on Monday, but she did not pick up the phone. Then in the afternoon we got the report on our WhatsApp and much to our relief my mother's report was negative. It was like 'Diwali' for us. Uncle (aunty's husband), Neha ben and my mother had been tested and all of them were found negative. We brought our mother in the house. She was very happy. She had spent her time sitting outside our house for three days. She ate and slept outside. She had asked us to keep her utensils, clothes and bedsheets separate.

My mother was called to the Urban Health Center to collect her reports. She met uncle who had also come to collect his reports. He blamed my mother for passing on the infection to his wife and that is why he had to take her to the government hospital. Aunty passed away on April 25, 2020.

It has been a tough time for us since April 08, 2020 till date. Even today, some of our neighbours do not behave properly with us. We are still under 'home quarantine'. We are eagerly waiting for April 30, 2020 when they would take off the 'Home quarantine' sticker from our door.