

“The community members treat us differently. No one wants to come near us”: Renu Devi Yadav



Renu Devi’s house is located 1 km south of Postal Marg (road) in Kalyanpur Tole, Bhagwanpur Rural Municipality – 4, Siraha District. Including her husband, Dharmendra Yadav, she has a family of 6.

Renu Devi Yadav had been working in Delhi, India for 5 years with her husband. They went to Delhi, India to earn a living as it was difficult for them to raise their children, send them to school and make economic progress in Nepal. She says that her main source of income came from working as a wage laborer. In the name of property, they have only 4 katthas of land. The money they earn isn’t enough for them to buy more land.

While working in India, the Indian government suddenly announced a lockdown due to the outbreak of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. She was forced to return home as her place of

employment was closed down. During the lockdown, they started running low on food supplies as well as the relief food items.

“I used to ask around with neighbors for food – that is how we survived a few days. We weren’t able to pay rent. Afterwards, we even had to go to bed hungry for three four days. Our children started getting sick due to the lack of food and we didn’t even have the money to pay for their treatment,” shares Renu.

Life in Delhi started to become very difficult and everyone started missing home. It’s only natural for anyone to think of home during hard times. But, how they could travel back home was still a big question looming over their heads.

As soon as the Indian government eased the lockdown, the Yadav family mustered up the courage and confidence to return home. To reach the Nepal-India border, they travelled first on foot, then got on a freight train, rode a tempo, and finally hitch hiked on a tractor.

When she reached the border of Bhagwanpur, she reveals that her family had to endure a lot of insults and abuse from the police. Officials of Thadi Police Post handed over their family to the quarantine center at Shri Balasundari University, Bhagwanpur Rural Municipality – ward no 1.

While they were in the quarantine, there were 78 other people with them. Among all of them, only 4 were women. The municipality provided tea in the morning followed by lunch and dinner. However, there was a lack of cleanliness in and around the living room. Masks and sanitizers were distributed in small numbers. There was a lack of fans for them during the mid-summer terai heat. Since the toilet and bathing area wasn’t separated for males and females, everyone had to use the same toilet and shower. Due to the large number of people, using the toilet was always an issue. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that it was hot in school and it would leak when it rained. As the PCR test results took more than 15 days to arrive, the mental stress among the people in quarantine just kept increasing and accumulating.

“The community members treat us differently. No one wants to come near us. Because we cannot travel anywhere for work, the problem of not being able to feed our family is increasing day by day,” despairs Renu Yadav.