

**Women and Health Inequalities: An Action Approach during Covid 19 Crisis.
Webinar organized by Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women's Studies,
Tezpur University, on 24th June.2020**

Speakers: Dr. Sunita Gogoi Hazarika

Dr. Rajesh Sharma

Dr. Sunil Kaul

Dr.Panchanan Das

Dr. Madhurima Goswami welcomed the speakers and all the participants to the webinar to discuss on women and health inequalities. Dr.Goswami gave some of her observations before the session started as how the Covid 19 crisis has affected people from all background and which has displaced many people. She said that it's a universal matter and this social crisis has affected women's health as women are not getting the required medical attention. The 2nd part of the discussion is about the action approach as how the public health organization has looked at the health issues of the women in the last four months crisis period.

Dr. Sunita Gogoi Hazarika, Gynaecologist,Tezpur acknowledged the crisis affecting the health of the people. She focused on some of her field experiences during lockdown referring five cases related to women's health. Dr.Sunita talked about how pregnant women are suffering due to lockdown as they cannot avail supplements and routine checkups. She mentions a case where a woman could not get her routine checkups and supplements and comes in emergency due to pain and delivers a premature baby who dies and later the mother suffers cardiac failure. She mentioned about cases where new born babies died due to missed vaccines and health checkup. There are numerous cases where women are reported to have suffered with health issues and suffer more due to delay in treatment as they are dependent on others instead of directly contacting the health workers. Dr. Gogoi talked about the ratio of women suffering during the crisis and concluded by saying that women should directly contact the health workers.

Couple of questions was raised by the participants who were answered by the speaker.

Dr. Rajesh Sharma,Additonal Director Health Service. Dr.Sharma stated this Covid-19 as natural disaster that is affecting the entire world from children to elder people. Dr. Sharma opined that women in Assam and the entire world are suffering especially with health issues. He compared the present situation of women's health especially maternal mortality with that of the women during Ebola crisis as same. The speaker also stated that women are suffering psychologically too due to other health issues. Dr. Sharma highlighted the guideline released by the Government and said that the Government had released so that the health issues of children and women will be ensured proper attention. Many of the health workers are women and their security is also ensured by the Government. The speaker said that pregnant women who come from Covid 19 hot spot should be taken good care during the delivery of the baby. Regarding the pregnant women who deliver baby and who have tested covid positive are ensured proper care and are

encouraged for breast feeding. Dr. Sharma concluded his speech by saying that women should be the centre of attention during the crisis.

There were some important questions raised by the participants who were answered by the speaker.

Dr. Sunil Kaul, Public Health Activist, Action North East Trust. Dr. Kaul started his speech on Medicine, Science and Social Sciences. Dr. Kaul talked about the present disaster and said that the Public Health Services are prepared to tackle this disaster. The speaker elucidated as to why women are highly risk of death during the crisis. He said that women are coarsely affected because women only come at the last moment due to hindrances from the family. The speaker also acknowledged about the lack of training of health service staff, frontline health workers serving without personal protecting equipment. The speaker emphasized on the importance of health services to poor women and that priority should be given to abortion services.

Couple of questions asked by the participants and answered by the speaker.

Dr. Panchanan Das, Professor of Gynaecology, Tezpur Medical College. Dr. Das stated that the people with liver and other health problems are affected more by covid 19. The pandemic has affected the entire world irrespective of caste, creed and gender. The speaker said that women are less affected by this covid-19. Dr. Das said that 70% health workers are female. Dr. Das also stated about the Government guidelines for the safety of the people and mentioned about the guidelines for the covid 19 patients.

At last Dr. Madhurima Gosmami thanked all the speakers and the participants for making a successful webinar on such an important topic on women and health.