



Agartala's Enterprising City Governance Actions During COVID Crisis

Quick responses by Agartala Municipal Corporation



Ever since the onset of the COVID-19 virus and the news of its rampant spread across the world and our country, the **Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC)** has been very quick and immediate in making decisions, and taking the necessary actions and steps required to curb the spread of the virus across the city. First, the corporation began with sanitation work. At night, cars all over Agartala were sanitized, all the government owned buildings, schools, institutions, organisation etc. were immediately sanitized and disinfected.

Co-ordination between different actors in the city

The AMC focused, mainly on the sanitization process and then, took up the initiative of distribution of food and essential items across the city. A ward-wise systematic list was prepared and regulations were set forward to distribute cooked food and essential items to all the migrant workers in the city. The food was being cooked and prepared in the shelter homes, where the AMC had provided kitchens, and then the cooked food was distributed ward-wise. All of this was done at a corporation level. First it was the city government that took the necessary steps and later they were joined by other organisations. All the steps were taken by the AMC whereas the State Government provided external help and support. For 15 days, the city government served and cooked food for the needy. The city government made a ward-wise detailed list relating to the location and whereabouts of all the current residents, and the people that were entering and leaving the city. The councillors went to homes and distributed free ration food bags to many families. At the same time, encouraged self-help teams, who made masks for everyone. Around, 1,60,000 masks were made and distributed for free to the health care and sanitation workers, and a nominal fee was charged for others. Many government workers bought these masks from the corporation, thus helping the self-help team earn money.

The citizens and the city government proactively came together and took measures to address the problems faced by residents due to the lockdown in terms of food supply, masks, sanitisation etc which was the need of the hour.

Ward Level Management by AMC

The corporation formed a ward-wise committee to deal with this situation. Earlier, Tripura only had 2-3 positive cases, but now with heavy inter-city movement of the people, the cases have increased. Home quarantines, isolation centres, institutional quarantine facilities have been set up all around the city. The ward-wise committee has the citizens as members, the mayors and councillors at leadership positions and



numerous volunteers that are working free of cost. These volunteers are ensuring the cleanliness and sanitation across the city. They are ensuring that people wear masks, maintain general cleanliness, don't urinate or spit in public or private places, make constant use of sanitizers etc. These volunteers essentially watch over the citizens and prevent them from doing anything that might increase the risk of the spread of infection. The committee holds weekly meetings, almost twice a week and discusses these issues. All the people that are home quarantined, the committee ensures, that they remain in their houses. Food and essential items are delivered to their homes, their garbage is disposed properly and so on. These measures are carried out ward-wise and looked over by the committee volunteers.

Local initiatives should translate to sustainable actions

Now that AMC has been able to localise and manage the situation at individual ward levels by formation of committees, it is the perfect time to consider this as an opportunity to contemplate sustaining the functioning of ward committee across the city. The city has witnessed and learnt from the ward level initiatives wherein they could volunteer and support the elected representatives in relief activities in their respective wards. AMC will need to take necessary steps to ensure that the ward committees function actively henceforth and explore towards formally integrating with the existing governance structure in place.