

## **Pandemic and the Workspace of the Privileged**

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“As part of my work, I am closely involved with the frontline workers in Delhi. I would like to believe that I am able to contribute to their capacity building and development through regular interactions, field visits and trainings. Planning out such visits and meetings with the groups of frontline workers is not an easy task, especially given the number of responsibilities they are expected to take care of in limited time and with limited resources. But such interactions are never void of engrossing discussions initiated by frontline workers, who eagerly seek more clarity and information about the ongoing tasks. However, since the outbreak of the pandemic, my structure of operating has been severely affected. Ample meetings and tasks that I had planned to undertake in the coming weeks for my district are now interrupted. As my supervisors put it, my safety is of paramount importance.



*A picture from my field area before the lockdown*

I am relieved to be immobile, but I continue to wonder about the frontline workers who do not have this sense of security. I have the choice of staying safe while working from home and continue to receive my income. But frontline workers lack that choice - while I restrain from my tasks, they step up with greater responsibility. I wonder whether the resources available to them are enough to safe guard them and if they have the much-needed clarity. Like me, they

too had a little understanding of the outbreak. However, unlike the privilege that I have of completely isolating myself, they have undertaken the responsibility to be the actively engaged in activities to prevent or combat the spread amongst their community members. I am flushed with guilt as everyday it dawns on me the many tasks that I could have undertaken or at least initiated if I had not taken the time for granted. I cannot help but acknowledge how severely my role has been limited due to which I am not able to provide much support in these trying times.

The lockdown has left me immobile and therefore, has skewed my understanding of a workspace. I am used to utilizing different spaces for different tasks, this gives me a sense of compartmentalization. However, I can no longer do that. Unlike many, who are using the time to hone up their lifestyle skills, the immobility has taken a severe hit on my productivity and has made me that I am mostly dependent on spaces outside of my house for work and other associated tasks. As I struggle to cope up with the inevitable anxiety generated by the uncertainty of our futures, I wonder if the functionaries have the time to even reflect on their hardships. I miss my workspaces and realize how I took them for granted. But I ponder upon the trepidations of those who are operating in their workspaces with only limited resources and an inflicted sense of social responsibility.”