

Foundation for
**Agrarian
Studies**

**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**

PANDEMIC STUDIES UNIT



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Genesis

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a deep and multifaceted impact on life, production, and work in rural India. While some of these effects are temporary, the pandemic has changed the Indian countryside in certain permanent ways. Studies of the impact of the pandemic and lockdowns are essential to give shape to India's public policy and the agenda of movements for change in the Indian countryside.

In April 2020, the Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) conducted a rapid assessment survey through telephone interviews of 52 informants from 21 villages across 10 States of India to understand the impact on rural India of the national lockdown announced in March 2020. This survey helped us in understanding the immediate effects of the pandemic and lockdown on different classes in the countryside. It also made us realize the necessity of establishing a forum through which we can undertake long-term studies of the pandemic's changing effects on rural India.

In 2020, we started a Pandemic Studies Unit (PSU) to understand the effect of the pandemic on India's rural economy, with a special focus on agricultural production, employment (including wage rates, and issues pertaining to women's work and migrant workers), indebtedness, food security, and education. FAS has since been at the forefront of studying the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown on rural India.

Survey and Analysis

FAS PSU has conducted two rounds of surveys based on telephone interviews in 26 villages across 13 States in India. These villages represent a diverse agro-ecological cross-section of the Indian countryside. FAS has been conducting detailed socio-economic surveys of these villages over the past decade through our India-wide programme of village studies titled the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI).

The first round of surveys was conducted in September-October, 2020, with the objective of studying the effect of the pandemic on the kharif production cycle. A total of 164 households were interviewed in this round of surveys. These households belong to different socio-economic classes in our study villages.

The second round of surveys focused on the rabi production cycle (2020-21). We interviewed a majority of respondents from the previous round, thereby creating a panel of households through which we can examine the pandemic's long-term impact on the rural economy.

Our results have been published on diverse platforms, both digitally and in print. We have also presented our findings at various lectures and seminars in the past two years.

1

Policy Briefs

Through our **Pandemic Studies Unit**, we have released several Policy Briefs on land reforms, migrant workers, and women workers.

OUTPUTS

FAS.ORG.IN

RAS.ORG.IN

2

Research Notes

Our bi-annual journal, **Review of Agrarian Studies**, published research articles that draw on the results of our surveys. These include notes on climate change, rural education, migration, agriculture, and more.

3

#FASBlog

Our **Blog** carries a wide range of posts on the pandemic and lockdown's impact on the rural economy and on marginalized sections of rural society.

4

In The Media

FAS team members and research collaborators have regularly written in mainstream outlets shedding light on different dimensions of the pandemic, with a particular focus on rural India.



Image Credit: Dungariya, Rajasthan - FAS PARI Photo Archives

Research Notes



Image Credit: FAS PARI Photo Archives

Authors

Tapas Modak and
Soham Bhattacharya

1 The Covid-19 Pandemic and Agriculture in Rural India: Observations from Indian Villages

S. Niyati and
R. Vijayamba

2 Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Food Security and Indebtedness in Rural India

Fumiko Oshikawa and
Sanjukta Chakraborty

3 The Pandemic and Disparities in School Education: Results from a Telephone Survey

Tapas Modak,
Sandipan Baksi, and
Deepak Johnson

4 Impact of Covid-19 on Indian Villages

M. Thangaraj and
C. A. Sethu

5 The Covid-19 Pandemic and Rural Dalit Households: Observations from Two Villages in Tamil Nadu - A Working Paper

Subhajit Patra,
Rakesh Kumar Mahato,
Arindam Das

6 Impact of Covid-19 on Employment and Wages in Rural India - In Progress



Image Credit: FAS PARI Photo Archives

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- 1 Studying Women's Work: Women Farmers in India**
- 2 Implications of the Collapse of Income from Migration: Reflections from Two Villages in Bihar**
- 3 MGNREGS and the Pandemic Crisis: Reflections from Tripura**
- 4 Impact of Covid-19 on the Indian Countryside: Some Findings by FAS Team**
- 5 Building Inclusive Food Systems**
- 6 When the Invisible Disappeared: Migrant Labour in Agriculture in the Pandemic**
- 7 The Covid-19 Pandemic and Indian Agriculture: A Note**

In The Media



Image Credit: Kalmandasguri, West Bengal - FAS PARI Photo Archives

Authors

R Ramakumar

1 **The perils of deregulated imperfect agrimarkets**

Tapas Modak

2 **High costs hurt farmers in lockdown year**

Deepak Johnson

3 **The Kerala government's policy interventions – expanding price support and ensuring direct procurement of farm produce – present an alternative course for agricultural policies in India**

Soham B

4 **Why are farmers in Punjab and Haryana angry?**

Biplab Sarkar and
Soham B

5 **Who will pay the price?**

R Ramakumar

6 **An agriculture-led revival as flawed claim**

R V Bhavani and
R Gopinath

7 **The COVID19 pandemic crisis and the relevance of a farm-system-for-nutrition approach**

Madhura Swaminathan

8 **The majority cannot afford a balanced diet**

In The Media



Image Credit: Hakimwala, Punjab - FAS PARI Photo Archives

Authors

Madhura Swaminathan

9 [Reset rural job policies, recognise women's work](#)

Jayan Jose Thomas

10 [India's poor may have lost Rs 4 lakh crore in the coronavirus lockdown](#)

Gaurav Bansal and
Soham B

11 [Harvesting misery](#)

A Special Team

12 [Rural distress](#)

Sandipan Baksi

13 [Epidemics and Capitalism: Accurate Identification of Contradictions](#)

Events

The Online Events team at FAS conducted several virtual lectures, seminars, and panel discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of rural life in India. FAS members and research collaborators have also participated in talks focusing on rural conditions initiated by other institutions.



[Pandemic Studies Unit \(PSU\). Inauguration: Sept. 29, 2020](#)

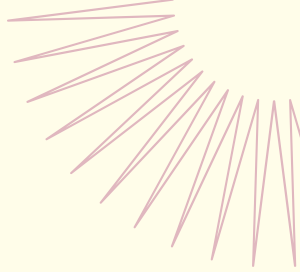
We inaugurated the FAS - PSU with presentations by Madhura Swaminathan, R. Ramakumar, and Deepak Johnson. A Panel discussion chaired by Vijoo Krishnan on agricultural policy in the time of a pandemic was held afterwards. Panelists included Aparajita Bakshi and Sudha Narayanan.

[Covid-19 and Indian Agriculture : June 04, 2020](#)

Madhura Swaminathan, Debeet Sarangi, and Ranjini Basu discuss the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown on rural India for a webinar organised by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung- South Asia, in collaboration with Focus on the Global South, FAS, Living Farms and NewsClick.



Events



[Panel Discussion on Findings from Telephone Surveys: Dec. 28, 2020](#)

Prof Amit Basole chaired this panel organized by FAS which discussed the findings from our telephone surveys on the impact of Covid-19 on the kharif production cycle and consumption in the countryside. Watch Tapas Singh Modak, Soham Bhattacharya, S. Niyati, and R. Vijayamba present their findings based on FAS data.

[Building Agricultural and Rural Resilience : Nov. 26, 2020](#)

Professor Shenggen Fan, Former Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) delivered the Annual Public Lecture organized by FAS.



[Impact of Covid-19 on Food Security: October 31, 2020](#)

The pandemic has worsened India's food and nutrition security. The crises of unemployment and declining incomes along with difficulty in accessing agricultural markets widened pre-existing gaps. Watch Abhijit Sen, Kalyani Ranghunathan, and Madhura Swaminathan discuss these issues in a panel organized by FAS and chaired by V Sridhar.

Events



[Education in Rural India: Impact of Covid-19: May 27, 2021](#)

In rural India, a general lack of basic digital infrastructure, and inequality in terms of its access has put many children at a severe disadvantage. In order to deliberate upon some of these aspects, FAS organized an online seminar titled “Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Rural India.”

[Impact of COVID-19 on Employment in the Informal Sector: February 11, 2021](#)

More than 80% of the non-agricultural workforce in India depends on the informal sector. This number exceeds 90% if we include agriculture. This virtual panel organized by FAS aimed to understand the differentiated effects of the pandemic on the informal sector.



[Studying Women’s Work: Women Farmers in India: March 29, 2021](#)



In addition to performing grueling farm operations, like sowing, transplanting, weeding, and picking, women are invariably involved in maintenance of kitchen gardens, livestock management, and collection of agricultural products for family consumption. Watch Madhura Swaminathan and Jagmati Sangwan in a webinar organized by FAS to expand your understanding of women’s work in agriculture, and the issues and demands specific to them.

OUTCOMES

01.

RURAL INDIA IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC THROUGH TELEPHONE SURVEYS: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF METHODS AND FINDINGS

Since the majority of rural India has access to telephone connectivity, telephone surveys provide opportunities to conduct rapid and regular studies. But this methodology also engenders new challenges that need to be addressed before considering it a viable alternative. FAS has organized a panel that will be presented in the forthcoming 81st Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics. This panel is the first of its kind. Our first two research papers critically examine survey design processes, respondent representation, and data quality. The latter two showcase some findings from our telephone surveys of rural India and respond to methodological issues raised by the first two papers.

02.

RESOURCES

'Agrarian Questions' (of Journal of Agrarian Change) has compiled studies, blog posts and online seminars on how the pandemic is impacting rural populations and agrarian conditions across regions. The publications based on studies by FAS PSU are included [here](#).

03.

JOURNALS

The diverse published contributions of FAS PSU are now being cited in several academic journals such as the Journal of Agrarian Change, The Indian Economic Journal, The Journal of Agricultural Economics among others.

04.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Centre for Sustainable Employment (CSE), Azim Premji University has put together a resource list of Covid-19 related surveys, their key features and findings. The telephone surveys conducted by FAS PSU are listed [here](#).

CORE TEAM



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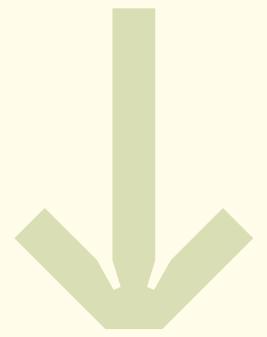
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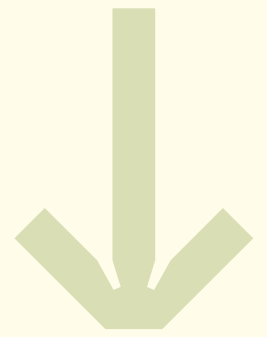
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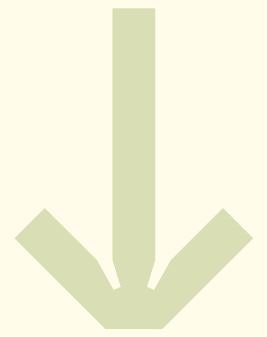
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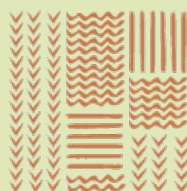
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