



## Supporting the Fight Against COVID in India's villages

May 2021

### BACKGROUND

The Antara Foundation (TAF) works at the frontlines in India's villages to improve maternal, child health and nutrition. We strengthen health systems, partnering with government and frontline workers (FLWs) to deliver sustainable innovations in public health at scale.

The sheer scale and speed of the COVID surge spreading across India has left us all heartbroken. Building an effective system response to COVID-19 in rural India is critical; ignoring India's villages could build up an invisible COVID surge, that will come back to hurt everyone. Because, in a connected world, we are only as strong as our weakest link.

### OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE TO DATE

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a severe health and economic toll on already marginalized populations, be they migrant workers or rural families. Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, TAF has supported the government's COVID-response efforts on various fronts, in our focus districts in Madhya Pradesh. We have –

- **Identified high risk:** Adapting our existing AAA<sup>1</sup> Platform, to identify and monitor COVID-19 high-risk individuals (e.g., infants, pregnant women, migrants, elders, people with co-morbidities).
- **Built frontline worker (FLW) capacity:** Technical training of FLWs on COVID-19 (virtual and on-site) on topics like generating awareness, identifying cases, contact tracing and addressing stigma.
- **Supported data and tracking:** Comprehensive checklists and monitoring formats (e.g., tracking migrant populations, population screening)
- **Continued critical maternal and child health services:** Ensuring continuity of critical maternal and child health services (e.g., immunizations, ante-natal checkups) through on-site handholding support, developing comprehensive checklists of protocols)



[Click to watch YouTube video \(3 min\)](#)

**In 2020, our COVID-response efforts covered ~2 million people in over 2,000 villages, via a community of 2,600 FLWs**

\* AAA refers to the three frontline health workers – ASHA worker (Accredited Social Health Activist), Anganwadi Worker and the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife – present in every village in India

During the COVID surge in April 2021, we continued to build capacity of FLWs in Madhya Pradesh for COVID vaccination (e.g., screening, counselling, mobilizing village communities), awareness generation, and ensuring adherence to government safety protocols. Our work in March-April 2021<sup>2</sup> –

- ~450 FLWs trained in virtual Zoom meetings, serving a population of >200,000 in two districts
- On-site support at vaccination sites and high case load delivery points (labor rooms) in four blocks

### THE ROAD AHEAD – COVID RESPONSE EFFORTS PLANNED IN 2021

In the next 6-12 months, even as India rolls out an ambitious vaccination program, rural areas will continue to see the fallout of the COVID surge. In the next few weeks, our work will cover more than 10 million people in about 6,500 villages in Madhya Pradesh across 5 districts, through more than 40,000 health workers.



[Click to watch YouTube video \(2 min\)](#)

We will work on three key initiatives –

- **Bridge supply gaps for health workers and facilities** – PPE, thermometers, oximeters, batteries and other critical supplies
- **Build frontline workers' capacity** – on COVID-19 screening, prevention, counselling and vaccination, through virtual training sessions, on-site handholding and remote support
- **Mobilize community demand for vaccination** – create and distribute informational materials, recruit local changemakers in key gram panchayats to address vaccine hesitancy



In the coming weeks, we will learn and adapt. Future efforts may include expansion to more districts, supporting testing, emergency care kits for high-risk pregnant women and children, and more local partnerships. We want our COVID support to have meaningful and lasting impact on overall health systems strengthening, i.e., to equip the public health system to deliver quality health services sustainably, and not to create a parallel system or stopgap measures alone.

**SUPPORT OUR WORK BY MAKING A DONATION [HERE](#)**

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*[The Antara Foundation](#) (TAF) is a non-profit registered in India that works on deploying innovations in public health delivery at scale, focusing on maternal and child health. [Antara International](#) is a US 501(c)(3) non-profit, whose funding supports on-ground activities of TAF, its partner organization.*

<sup>2</sup> Coverage figures shared are approximate estimates