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The Government of India launched the largest vaccine drive in the world on 16th January 2021, to combat the pandemic. The drive was scaled-up in phases and first covered the Healthcare Workers and Frontline Workers who were most at risk from the pandemic. The challenge was not only demographic but was also in terms of reaching the vaccination across the country, across varied topographies and many a times to hitherto unreached areas. The credit goes to the team of Healthcare Workers who took it upon themselves to ensure that everyone was covered. It was not an easy task as deep rooted hesitancy had to be overcome and rampant myths about vaccination had to be countered.

The sixth story of India's COVID warriors is one such story of a team of Community Healthcare Workers covering miles and miles across hills and rivers, to reach remote communities and ensuring that no one was left behind in the vaccination drive.

Banswara district in Rajasthan, a tribal dominated region posed a huge topographical challenge for the administration even as the Healthcare Workers travelled to the last mile to far flung islands, across Mahi waters.





"I would have never ever thought that one day I will need to ferry vaccines and medicines on my boat to Kotda village, on the other side of the Mahi river. This was extremely difficult, especially when it rained as the village was cut off. This kind of planning by the administration makes us feel extremely confident and proud."
- Boatman

In Banswara district because of the river dam many villages are waterlocked and can be reached only by boat. Here Dr. Mukesh Maida is seen with his team of Healthcare Workers travelling to Kotda Village, a hilly region across the waters, populated by tribal communities.





“When the COVID vaccination campaign was launched, people had misconceptions about the vaccine efficacy”, says Dr. Maida speaking of their incredulity. “They would ask us, where did we come from? What was our purpose?”



“We went from village to village, door to door and explained to people the risk of exposure to COVID-19 disease and the benefit of vaccination. We told them that we too had taken both the doses of COVID-19 vaccine and were safe”, says Dr. Maida.



Slowly, the vaccination drive picked up. Committees were formed in villages and they started further explaining to the people how it was the best way of protection against the pandemic. Convincing the locals to overcome their hesitancy was an exercise both of patience and reasoning. Gradually, the word spread around.

“And as more and more people, especially women trickled into the vaccination centre, we knew that we had succeeded. Every woman vaccinated meant that their families would soon follow”, says Dr. Maida.



“There was a sense of mission. We did not want to leave even one eligible person in any village without vaccination”, he adds.



“People are understanding the importance of the COVID vaccination now. Sometimes people respond well and appreciate the team for visiting their homes and vaccinating them, even if they could not visit the centre themselves.”



“I have been vaccinated with my second dose and I am perfectly fine. The Government is providing us with the vaccine free of cost to protect us. I feel safe”, says a village elder.

