Scaling up COVID-19 emergency prevention and response efforts in India

Duration: June 2021-July 2022
Implementing organization: UNICEF
USG Funding: USD $ 2 million

Background

The current COVID-19 emergency in India is being exacerbated by widespread mis/dis-information and associated stigma and discrimination causing social divides. USAID is funding UNICEF/India to implement activities which contribute to the Government of India's comprehensive COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy aimed at further intensifying efforts to strengthen COVID prevention behaviors, dispel myths, associated stigma and dis/misinformation related to COVID-19 disease.

Goal/Purpose

To provide support to national, state and municipal risk communication and community engagement campaigns promoting Covid appropriate behaviors (CAB) such as masking, handwashing and social distancing, and CAB Plus behaviors that address new and emerging needs such as home isolation, nutrition for COVID effected, danger signs to seek immediate medical care, COVID in children, psycho-social support to affected families etc. This program is also envisaged to strengthen RCCE preparations for the impending 3rd and 4th wave of COVID-19.

Key strategies

- 360-degree multi-media campaign: Fatigue around COVID related messaging necessitates that we reposition our communication approach through a national 360 degree campaign that responds to urgent pandemic needs and scales-up CAB and CAB Plus behaviors outlined above. This campaign will cover the development of communication, training packages, mass media such as radio, print, social/digital media, offline/online social listening and some mass media programs.
- Enhanced Capacity Building: Orient and train a variety of stakeholders for the implementation of communications actions in both urban and rural areas such as frontline workers, Self Help Groups, faith-based organizations, youth networks. Use virtual and in person capacity building opportunities to train them on counselling skills to reach out to families with key prevention messages. Enrolling community volunteers as change makers and positive role models for increased adoption of COVID appropriate behaviors.
- Engaging non-traditional platforms and partners in rural and urban areas: Identify and engage non-traditional partners, platforms such as edutainment, using artists federations, tribal leaders, state specific cultural groups and urban local bodies to promote COVID appropriate behaviors such as masking, handwashing, timely testing, isolating, managing mild cases at home, and accessing services.

Outcomes

By assisting the Government of India to scale-up and intensify its comprehensive RCCE strategy, UNICEF's activities described above are expected to contribute to ongoing efforts to reduce the current accelerated rate of COVID-19 infections, particularly among high-risk communities and strengthen preparations for future waves.

Opportunities

1. Collaboration with Facebook for an intensive Social media campaign for influencing behaviors
2. Using social media tools for field level capacity building will help enhance reach and impact
3. Actively monitor social media and mainstream media to identify any misinformation and clarify sources for authentic information
4. Track rumors through social media and interactive media (radio call-in shows, hotlines, interactive voice and response (IVR) etc). to inform and shape the Government of India communication strategy on vaccines.