

# COVID Management in Unreachable PVTG Communities

Thirteen of the 62 tribal groups with a total population of 2.94 lakh in Odisha have been identified as PVTGs and given special protection because of their dwindling numbers. So far, 314 members of the PVTGs have tested positive for Covid-19, of which all are recovered to good health. In the month of May and Jun 2021, almost all the members of these communities from the 45+ age groups have been vaccinated on priority after on-spot registration in co-ordination with district administrations to reach out to these villages with no road connectivity.

Till date some of the PVTG areas are very challenging to reach those villages. The villages in Swabhiman Anchal are inhabited by Didayi tribes. These villages are located on hilltops across the reservoir making it difficult for our teams to reach them. These areas are not motorable and the others are mostly located on hills with elevations more than 700 metres. Of these, 14 villages are in the erstwhile Maoist stronghold Swabhiman Anchal which remained disconnected from the mainland until 2020. To provide support the communities, team from MPA K.gumma carried out vaccines, testing kits and other items to distribute. These areas are disconnected due to lack of road communication and mobile network.

In Chatikona of Rayagada district some of the PVTG areas are very hard to reach the PVTG villages. Some cases it takes five to seven hour trek covering more than 10 KM even some cases it is more than that through a hill, jungle and stream to reach the villages. Trekking through sharp and steep hilly terrain and dense forests and walking on foot is the only way to reach them. The villages are inhabited by people of the Dongria Kondh tribe, one of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG), who are specially monitored after a rise in Covid-19 cases amongst them. The Covid team of Chatikona comprising of OPELIP staff like CRPs and line department health workers like ANM, ASHA worker and Anganwadi workers together visited these villages to mobilise and vaccinate the communities in unreachable areas with great passion.

The second most challenge is to mobilise the PVTG community to get vaccinated. OPELIP Team has started an awareness program in their native languages. Then village headmen and local leaders are roped in to convince them. Till date many of the PVTG areas have been vaccinated.



A health team on its way to Khambesi in Rayagada district for door to door active surveillance, distribution of masks and awareness on Covid-appropriate behaviour.



A health team along with members of OPELIP on their way to Hundizali village on a hilltop in Rayagada district



Door-to-door survey and vaccination underway at Hundizali village for members of the Dongria Kondh PVTGs