

ASHAs in Rajasthan: Selfless commitment to people in the long fight against COVID-19

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In Rajasthan, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the harvest season. Most ASHAs, are also expected by their families in supporting harvesting activities. This year though, the intensive involvement of the ASHAs in the pandemic prevented most of them from doing so, leading to considerable resentment and resistance from their families. This was no different for Gogi Devi, but she continued with tenacity to serve as an ASHA and fulfil her role as social mobilizer, community level care provider and link worker for the health facility.

Her efforts were rewarded when the Pradhan of the Gram Panchayat publicly applauded her role in COVID related measures for prevention and containment. This changed her family's perspective towards her work, who started appreciating her commitment towards her work. For Gogi Devi, her community's acknowledgment and recognition of her work are strong motivation to sustain her to carry on tirelessly. .

The work of ASHAs as integral pillars of COVID-19 response started immediately after the first case was diagnosed in early March this year in Jaipur. On March 8, all 9876 Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan organised a special Gram Sabha, in which ASHAs took the lead in explaining COVID-19 modes of transmission, precautions and control measures, since they had all been trained in preparation for this public activity. This strategic initial effort was the key in securing the support of the Gram Panchayat representatives in ensuring prevention and control measures in their jurisdiction and also in supporting ASHAs and other frontline workers to undertake their tasks without any hindrance.

The contribution of the ASHAs, in collaboration with the state's Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), enabled reaching out to households for active surveillance and information dissemination. In the midst of all this and while being vigilant about anyone with symptoms, ASHAs also continued to provide care for pregnant women, new-borns and children. They also mobilized transport to health facilities in cases when ambulances were not available.

Various ASHAs like Gogi Devi have played a critical role in spreading awareness about the symptoms and precautions against COVID-19. This has helped immensely in containment of the disease. They used the community trust and knowledge of the local social factors to build confidence among the people to support government efforts in containment and management of COVID-19.

Glimpses from Rajasthan: ASHAs at work against COVID-19



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