

MOMENTUM

Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity



Haokhomang
Village Chief
Manipur

Difficult terrains, poor infrastructure and connectivity, and constant weather changes make many villages in Manipur extremely hard to reach. People living in these villages are extremely marginalized and vulnerable in many ways. As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across Manipur, the L Khaopijang village, which falls under the Churachandpur North subdivision became susceptible to the rapid spread and severe aftermath of the virus.



Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity Project supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which ensures equitable vaccination to vulnerable, hard-to-reach and marginalized communities engaged with local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) CASA and TCIF to maximize reach in the village. The Project engaged with the State Government and collaborated with the locals including village chief Haokhomang and various public players to take control of the situation.

Initially, the villagers were not open to conversations about vaccines but once they saw their village chief propagating the message and being a part of the awareness programs and vaccine dispensation activities to increase vaccine uptake they gradually came on-board.

Given the village is extremely remote and people there had no exposure to the external world, information regarding new scientific advancements had a difficult time penetrating the population. The villagers hardly communicated with each other and were completely cut off from the outside world. The state authorities and Project representatives gathered support from local stakeholders and institutions, such as the village chiefs and churches.

Haokhomang ensured that regular meetings were organized within the village as part of the vaccination drive. He himself went and sat in all the meetings and encouraged the villagers to take the vaccine. Together with the Project representatives, they were able to bust several myths and misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine. Easy-access vaccination camps were set up in the village so that people did not have to go far off to get themselves vaccinated.

With careful planning and methodical implementation from the village chief Haokhomang and other stakeholders, it was possible to change perceptions and achieve maximum vaccine coverage in the village. For being a radical changemaker, Haokhomang is our COVID-19 Vaccination Champ!