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Pregnant & Lactating Mothers



TAMIL NADU

Vanitha was pregnant when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Once the vaccine was made available for the communities, the frontline workers were trying to mobilize pregnant and lactating women to take the vaccine. Given the misconceptions about the ill-effects of vaccine on the unborn child, Vanitha and most like her did not want to take the vaccine.

The MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity Project, supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), ensures equitable vaccination to vulnerable, hard-to-reach, and marginalized communities.

The state government collaborated with the Project, and delegated the awareness programs and vaccine dispensation activities to local change agents to increase vaccine uptake among under-represented groups.



In Tamil Nadu, the Project has engaged with local non-governmental organizations like ISAP, SAATHI, HelpAge, TCIF and Leprosy Mission to maximize reach amongst the priority groups.

Under the leadership of the State Government the Project team ran several counselling sessions with pregnant women like Vanitha and established that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for them and would in no way harm the unborn or newly born child. After several discussion with the Project team, Vanitha agreed to take her first dose of COVID-19 vaccination.

However, by the time it was time for the second dose, she was nursing her newborn child and had to once again fight off her trepidations of the potential ill effects of the vaccine at the lactating stage. Once again, the persistent pro-vaccine messaging by health workers and easy access vaccination camps were able to win over her conflicts and convinced her to get vaccinated for the second time.



Another heartening success story is that of Meena, who boldly fought rumours and apprehensions and completed her course of COVID-19 vaccine while being 8 months pregnant. Women like Vanitha and Meena are at the heart of the success of the mass COVID-19 vaccination drive among the pregnant and lactating women of Tamil Nadu, and continue to set examples for their peers to follow.