



## COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS (CAGS)

AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT FOR RISK  
COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESSING  
STIGMA DUE TO COVID-19



### CGPP

Rina Dey, Communication Director,  
CORE Group Polio Project, India.  
[rainydey27@gmail.com](mailto:rainydey27@gmail.com)

Jitendra Awale, Deputy Director,  
CORE Group Polio Project, India.  
[jitendra.awale@gmail.com](mailto:jitendra.awale@gmail.com)

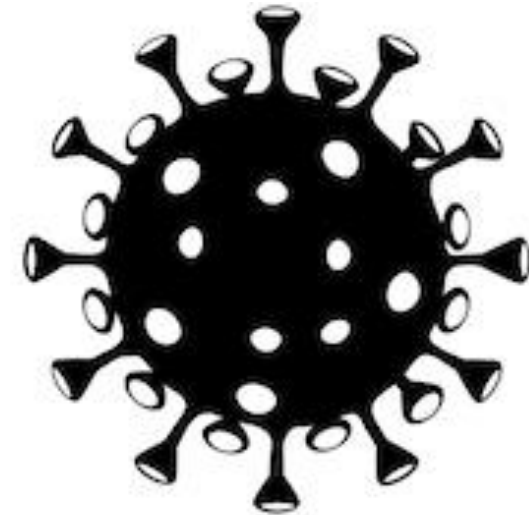
Dr. Roma Solomon, Director  
CORE Group Polio Project, India.  
[romasolly@gmail.com](mailto:romasolly@gmail.com)

Manojkumar Choudhary,  
M & E Specialist,  
CORE Group Polio Project, India.  
[manojcgpp@gmail.com](mailto:manojcgpp@gmail.com)



# **THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CREATED A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON HEALTH SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES.**

- **Ignorance and misinformation led to stigmatization of individuals and families**
- **Social boycotting**
- **Loss of livelihood**
- **Inability to access essential services**
- **Resulting in people avoiding testing, treatment and quarantine facilities.**





Since July 1999, CORE Group consortium partners ADRA, PCI and CRS, and 6 national NGOs, in partnership with World Vision, UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International and Government of India.

The CORE Group through Social Mobilization Network (SMNet) are working for polio eradication by mobilizing communities to participate in polio campaigns and avail routine immunization services.

# Formation of Community Action Groups (CAGs)

A vast network of 'community influencers' was created over the past two decades by the CGPP staff working for polio eradication, to support health workers in community mobilization for immunization, especially for polio campaigns and routine immunization.

2 million children missed immunization and stigma restricted people from seeking COVID care

These influencers were formed into local groups (CAGs) to promote immunization and combat fear and stigma related to COVID-19.

Village heads  
Health workers  
School teachers  
Religious leaders



Ration dealers

Shopkeepers

Local quacks/  
doctors

Individuals

# THE GROUP SIZE AND TRAINING

In a normal situation, each group is made up of around 10-15 people who come together to help families/members in their communities.

But in a pandemic or emergency such as COVID-19, the group is made up of just 4-5 members who work together and act timely.



Each member was trained by the project staff virtually or in person on immunization and COVID-19 key messages.

*We are protecting our children from Corona  
Let us not forget to protect them from childhood diseases*

Avoid close sitting arrangement

Maintain 1-2 meter physical distancing

Ensure appropriate cross ventilation

Mask & gloves are must for service providers

Mask is a must for mother/care taker

Don't let them stand inside the session site. Make waiting area outside to maintain physical distancing

Dedicate space and ensure availability of water & soap for handwashing

USAID coregroup POLIO Project

Leaflet on immunization

USAID coregroup POLIO Project

### Let's fight Corona virus not people

Inaccurate or incomplete information and fear of acquiring corona disease may lead to stigma and discrimination and it is important to understand the root cause of the problem and address it in time.

**Forms of stigmatization**

- Disease name calling
- Finger pointing
- Labelling
- Blaming
- Judging
- Making assumptions
- Suspecting
- Neglecting
- Rejecting
- Isolating
- Separation
- Hiding

COVID-19 positive

Empathy is the best medicine your community needs

Leaflet on stigma

# CAG MEETINGS

CAGs meet regularly, identify COVID-affected families needing support and then develop a plan to carry out the following tasks/responsibilities:

- Special emphasis on childhood immunization (As sessions were disrupted during lockdowns) motivating parents for immunization.
- Dispensing critical information on prevention of disease, especially COVID, including addressing stigma issues.
- Supporting COVID-affected person/family in accessing health services as well as arranging for essential supplies at their doorstep.



**A social innovation as volunteer efforts of community are institutionalized as 'CAGs' with definite operational guidelines and objectives.**

# EFFECT

- CAG members helped communities to dispel myths, clarify doubts and concerns
- Assisted over 3,800 COVID-affected families in accessing food and health care services.

**More than 500 CAGs formed**



**This initiative can be adapted to other health programs especially to promote vaccine appropriate behaviors and vaccine hesitancy**