



The most populous state in India launches Zero Covid campaign

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Covid-19 is predominantly an urban phenomenon in India. However, a gradual ingress to peri-urban, rural, and tribal areas is taking place. The state governments of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh are acting to curb the spread by launching a '*mera gaon, corona mukt gaon*' (My Village, Corona Free) campaign. [The campaign](#) declares villages free from coronavirus infection. Gujarat, a state on the western coast of India, launched this campaign on May 1, 2021. Uttar Pradesh followed soon thereafter.

Uttar Pradesh (UP), a state in the northern part of India is the most populous state in India with over 200 million inhabitants. Only 22.27% of the population live in urban regions, which is lower than the national average of 28.53%. Gujarat, with a population of 60 million, is more urbanized than Uttar Pradesh with 42.6% of the population living in urban regions. Madhya Pradesh, a state in the central part of India, is following by launching a similar campaign.

As part of this Zero Covid campaign in the state of UP, the three villages and wards that perform the best will be rewarded in a variety of ways. The reward will generate awareness about the novel coronavirus and motivate Covid prevention behaviours. Villages that become Covid-free will also be given special benefits in social schemes launched by the state from time to time. The government declared, "This has been

launched so that villages and government can work together to make villages covid-free.”[1]

As an initial step, the government established monitoring committees comprised of representatives of civil society groups including Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Anganwadi worker (a functionary of Integrated Childhood Development Scheme), and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM). These monitoring committees conduct more than one lakh tests in the rural areas of UP every day through Rapid Response Teams. They identify suspected cases, expedite tests and treatment, build awareness among the villagers about Covid-19, and facilitate economic support from the government. They have been given medical kits, oximeters, and infrared thermometers to identify people with symptoms. In UP alone, the monitoring committees have visited 79,512 villages as part of a Covid-19 screening campaign launched by the government on May 5. The members detected infections in 28,742 villages and made targeted efforts to contain the virus in these villages.

As of the date of writing this report, 68% of the villages in Uttar Pradesh are free from the Covid-19 virus. Connecting communities and encouraging active involvement in the communities is, without a doubt, the key to reaching Zero Covid.