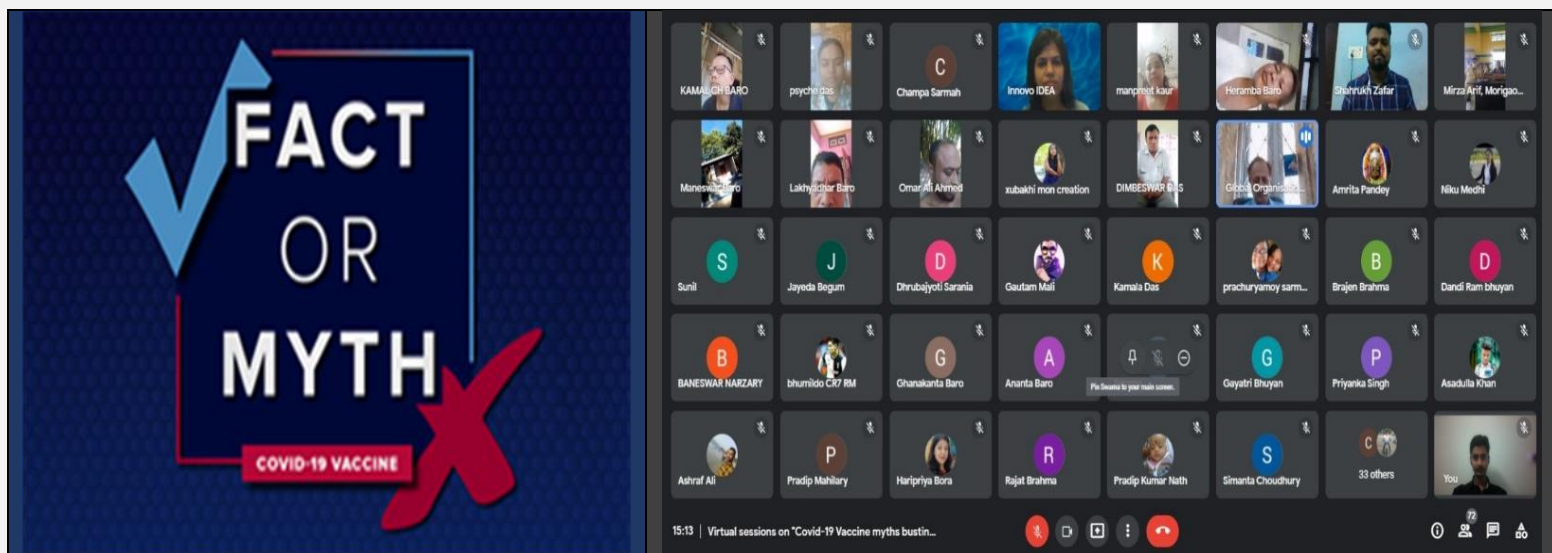


ASSAM EVENT REPORT

AN ONLINE INTERACTIVE SESSION ON “BUSTING COMMUNITY COVID-19 VACCINE MYTHS WITH DR RAJEEB SARMA, DIRECTOR, ASSAM HEALTH MINISTRY”



ORGANIZED BY:



INTRODUCTION

The arrival of COVID-19 has transformed many lives. It has infected more than 3 crore people causing 4.21 lakh deaths in India as of 24th July, 2021 during its first and second wave. While the second wave of the virus has not ended, the country is expected to be hit by the third wave soon. However, according to the experts, the scaling up of vaccination and the COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviour by people is going to play a key role in determining the effect of the third wave. In January 2021, the government of India started a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive. According to the government data, more than 40 crore COVID-19 doses have been administered in the country so far. Although the vaccination drive in the country is going at a good rate but a large population is still left to get vaccinated.

A year after the COVID-19 pandemic started, we now finally have the vaccines and we are in a position to immunize the population to fight against the COVID-19 but the myths and misinformation related to the vaccines have come out as a new challenge. These myths and misinformation around the COVID-19 vaccines are circulating on both traditional as well as social media platforms. They are further leading to vaccine hesitancy among people in the communities. They are not only hesitant, in fact, people are also scared of the vaccines because of the rumours associated with it. The hesitancy and fear among the people are proving to be dangerous as it is having a huge impact on the vaccination drive in the country. Although the COVID-19 Vaccine hesitancy has been seen across all the areas, it is found to be more in the rural parts compared to the Urban areas, and India is a country whose more than 60% of its population lives in the rural areas. Several news articles talk about the vaccine hesitancy among the people in the rural parts of the country. The belief in myths and misinformation related to the COVID-19 Vaccines has a strong hold in the country especially in the rural areas due to lack of awareness regarding the vaccines among the people. Hence, the community awareness regarding the COVID-19 vaccine is the need of the hour to cope up with the hesitancy among people and making the vaccination drive a success. Other than that, it is also necessary to aware people from the organizations like CBOs, CSOs, etc. who are

working in the communities, so that they can pass on the correct information to the community people.

In the above context, **Institution for Disasters, Emergency and Accidents (IDEA)** organized a series of online interactive sessions on **“Busting COVID-19 Vaccine Myths”** with the community people of Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The session with the Community people of Assam was organized at 3 pm in the afternoon on 24th July, 2021. It was organized in Assamese language. The session witnessed the participation of around 80 people which includes staff & Volunteers of several NGOs as well as Community people of Assam. We were also joined by Mr. Rajeev Sharma (Director, National Health Mission, Assam) as an expert for the session to answer the queries of the participants.

PROCEEDINGS

The session began with the introduction of Institution for Disasters, Emergency and Accidents (IDEA) and its work followed by the introduction of the topic as well as the introduction of the expert for the session. After the completion of the introduction round and opening remarks on the topic from the expert for the session, we opened the floor for questions from the participants. The Community people asked about the myths and misconceptions about the COVID-19 Vaccines that they have heard from various sources and which one is true and which one is a myth. On the other hand, the staff and volunteers from the NGOs shared the myths and misconceptions that they come across in the communities and asked the experts that how they should address them. They also shared their experiences and several ideas on how they are working on the awareness of people regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine in the communities. The session expert answered all the queries of the participants related to the vaccines. Along with that, he also suggested several ideas on how they should address the belief in myths and misconceptions of the people related to the COVID-19 Vaccine in the communities. Following are some of the most common queries and Myths asked by the participants in the session:

Queries:

- Is the vaccine safe for lactating women?
- If a pregnant woman takes the vaccine, is it safe for the baby?
- If one doesn't get the side effects after vaccination, what is the effectiveness?
- How effective is the mask in preventing COVID-19 Virus?

- Can people affected with Diabetes, TB or BP also take the vaccine? Is it safe for them?
- Is the second dose mandatory?
- In how many days one should get vaccinated after recovering from COVID-19?
- Can the two doses of the vaccine be different? Or we should take the same vaccine in both doses?
- Does the fever after getting vaccinated lowers down the immunity?
- After how many days the mother can get vaccinated after the child birth?
- Which vaccine is more efficient, Covidshield or Covaxin?



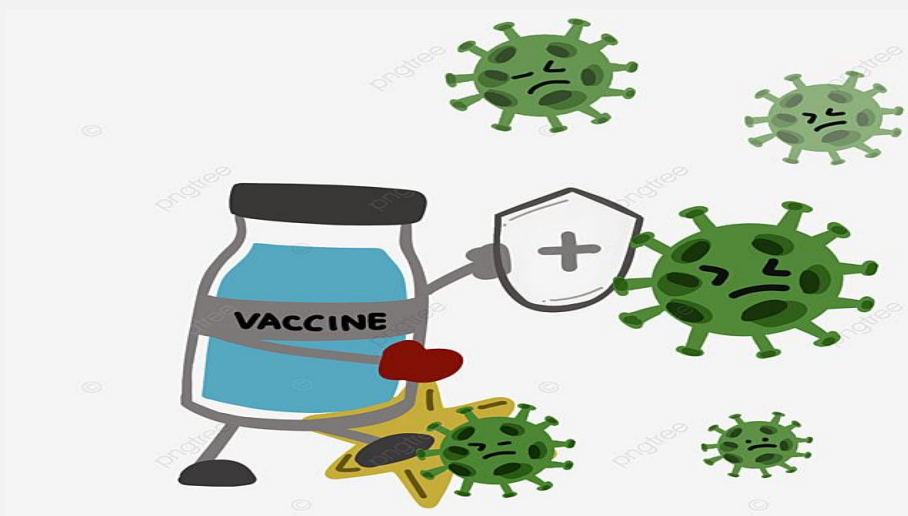
Myths and Misconceptions:

- People who get vaccinated die or will die after 2 years.
- Vaccines make boys/girls become sterile.
- We should not follow the COVID-19 precautions after getting vaccinated.
- Why would I take the vaccine as I have already been affected?
- Vaccines makes people sick.
- If the vaccines are effective, why people are dying after getting vaccinated?
- If I take the vaccine, I will get infected from COVID-19.



CONCLUSION

During the session, the participants asked several queries as well as myths and misconceptions that they have or they come across in the communities of Assam. However, these queries and myths are not limited to this state only. They exist across the country and are leading to COVID-19 Vaccine hesitancy among people. Making people aware about the vaccine is one of the key factors to overcome this challenge. It is important to stay informed and clear up common misconceptions around the vaccines and keep others informed who don't have the resources to get information. The government is taking several steps to get people vaccinated so that we can fight against the COVID-19 pandemic strongly and it is our duty as a responsible citizen of the country to not fall victim to misinformed notions or vaccine myths which can play a significant role in weakening the fight of the nation against the deadly virus.



#SayNoToMyths

#SayNoToHesitancy

#SayYesToVaccines