

# IDEATION

A RESOURCE FOR POLICY IDEAS



SECOND EDITION

*Accountability Initiative at the  
Centre for Policy Research*

Ideation is a knowledge resource brought out by the Accountability Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research. It seeks to offer today's decision-takers and policy shapers, distilled insights from both our work as well as interactions in the public policy and development spaces.

# THE GREAT SPREAD

*In spite of some initial wins, India has seen a massive increase in the number of COVID-19 infections. Media focus is on the country's metropolitans, but it is more than likely that the pandemic will leave a devastating trail in rural India too. It is not enough to ask what arrangements have now been made in rural areas. Rather, how fast and effectively local administrations will be able to respond to community needs in a situation that is constantly evolving. People will be key.*

In late 2020, the Accountability Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research started studying the experiences of frontline community health and nutrition workers in four districts across two states — Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. These workers are vital to the pandemic response as they are located within their communities. The study was preceded by a (ongoing) documentation of the administrative response called  'Inside Districts' in these two states and three others where we have permanent presence.

Some findings from the research study in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are:

- Regular activities carried out under welfare programmes, such as antenatal check-ups, immunisation, distribution of supplements *continued* during the nationwide lockdown from March 2020 to June 2020, but at a *lower frequency*.
- Over 50% workers reported that their responsibilities had *increased* — on average by an additional two to three hours of work per day. By 2021, they were supposed to carry out  at least 12 categories of pandemic and pre-pandemic tasks.
- 92% received at least one Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) resource (masks, sanitisers and gloves) in Rajasthan, and 100% received at least one resource in Himachal Pradesh. But the supply was  not timely and often inadequate.
- Less than two-thirds (58%) reported being recognised for their contribution. A sense of duty to help their communities and nation kept them motivated.
- As many as 70% faced community-level challenges, including violence.

Some of the challenges that have been documented in the study predate the pandemic, and what is done now in terms of resolution can determine the quality and outcome of response in the future.



*A pictorial representation of an ASHA, Anganwadi Worker and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. The all-women cadres are often the first point of contact for local communities on health and nutrition.*



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REPORT

# AMPLIFYING THEIR VOICES

“ It is also about the money. I am the sole bread winner in my family right now. My husband is sick. - Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, Rajasthan

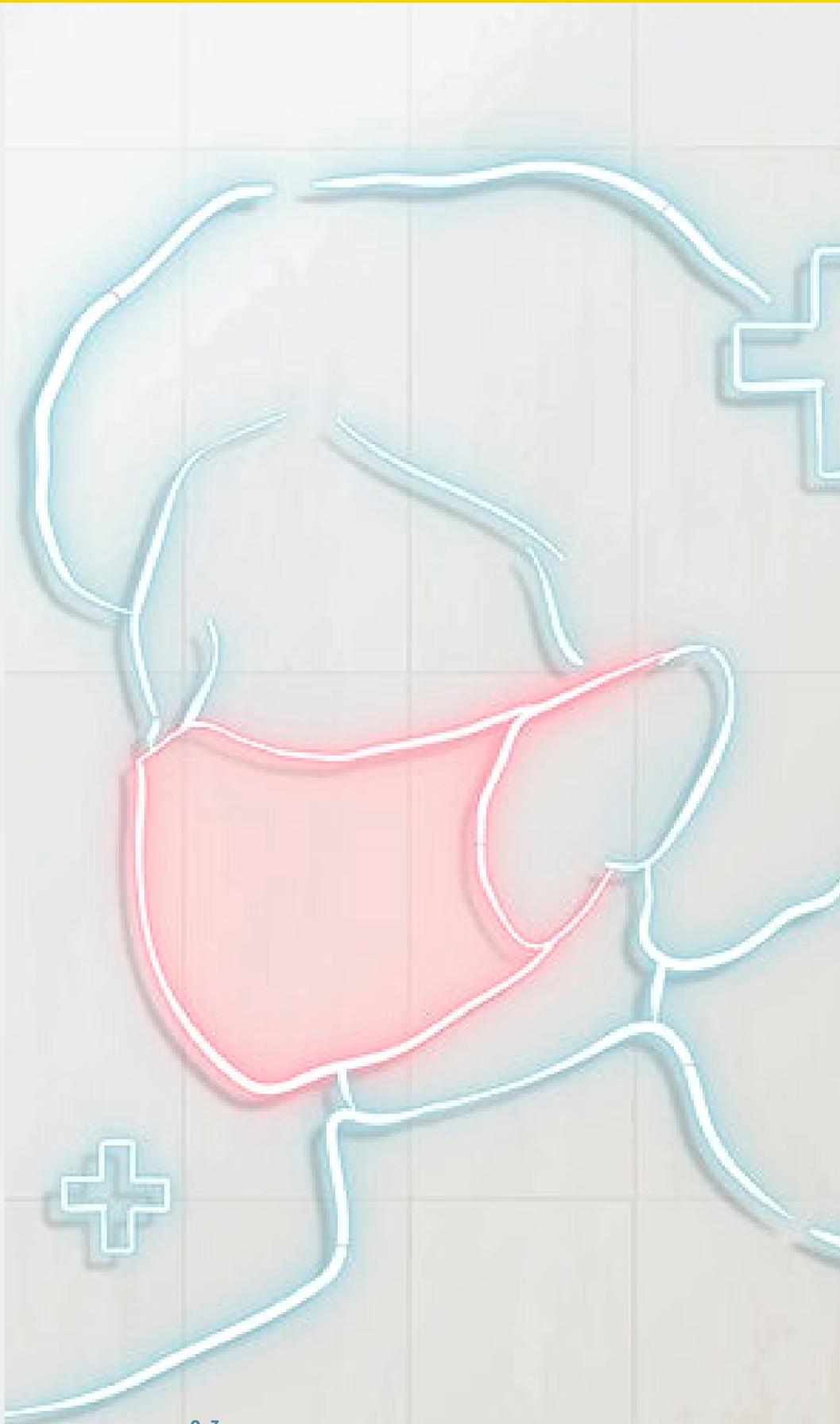
“ I have a population of 900 under me, so it has not been that difficult to fulfill tasks. - ASHA, Rajasthan

“ During COVID-19, coordination with others increased. We were not only coordinating for surveys but were also aware of the increase in workload, and so all of us were always ready to help each other. - Anganwadi Worker, Himachal Pradesh

“ People have started to salute me, they appreciate me, and they call me 'Corona Warrior'. All of this makes me feel that I am capable of doing something important, and I like that feeling. - ASHA, Himachal Pradesh

“ An Anganwadi Worker team member was hit by a stone. She had to get stitches on her head. - Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, Himachal Pradesh

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We welcome your comments and feedback.

You can reach out to the ideators at:

Avani Kapur  
Director of the Accountability Initiative  
[avani@cprindia.org](mailto:avani@cprindia.org)

Avantika Shrivastava  
Assistant Director Communications at the Accountability Initiative  
[avantika@cprindia.org](mailto:avantika@cprindia.org)

To set India up for success, concerted efforts between the national and sub-national levels would have to be achieved. The practice of this, however, seems distant.

“ India’s COVID-19 response has failed because it ignored a fundamental first principle of good governance — the principle of subsidiarity, which means that the central authority performs only those functions that cannot be performed at the local level and no other, writes Yamini Aiyar, Founder of the Accountability Initiative and President and Chief Executive of the Centre for Policy Research.



SENSEMAKER READ

[The second wave and the Indian State](#)

## INSIDE DISTRICTS

### THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE INSIDE INDIA'S DISTRICTS

While India has access to vaccines, a successful vaccination strategy will require community-level mobilisation on an unprecedented scale. It will also benefit from the involvement of NGOs that have access to communities. We have glimpses to offer on the situation.

-  'Private and Government Hospitals are Completely Occupied'  
- [Accountability Initiative staff member in rural Maharashtra](#)
-  'People Say that this Vaccine is for Vasectomy'  
- [Panchayat Secretary in rural Bihar](#)
-  'View Other Civil Society Organisations, Government as Allies against COVID-19'  
- [Co-Founder of Project Potential](#) & former participant of our [Hum Aur Humaari Sarkaar](#) learning programme



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# WHERE IS INDIA AT:

## ON NUTRITION

In India, 68% of deaths of children under five years of age are due to malnutrition (or 1,935 deaths every day). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent lockdowns, and ensuing constraints are likely to exacerbate the distress of the malnourished — in particular, pregnant women, young mothers, and children.

We list some recommendations to improve the provision of nutrition-specific interventions in the following policy note.



## ON EDUCATION

India has one of the largest schooling systems in the world. School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to an increased emphasis on digital education. There is a real danger that students without access to digital infrastructure will be left behind.

Meanwhile, government funds could be used to put in place the requisite infrastructure. But the pandemic has also caused a steep decline in government revenues, limiting the fiscal space for financing education in the medium-term. More in this policy note.



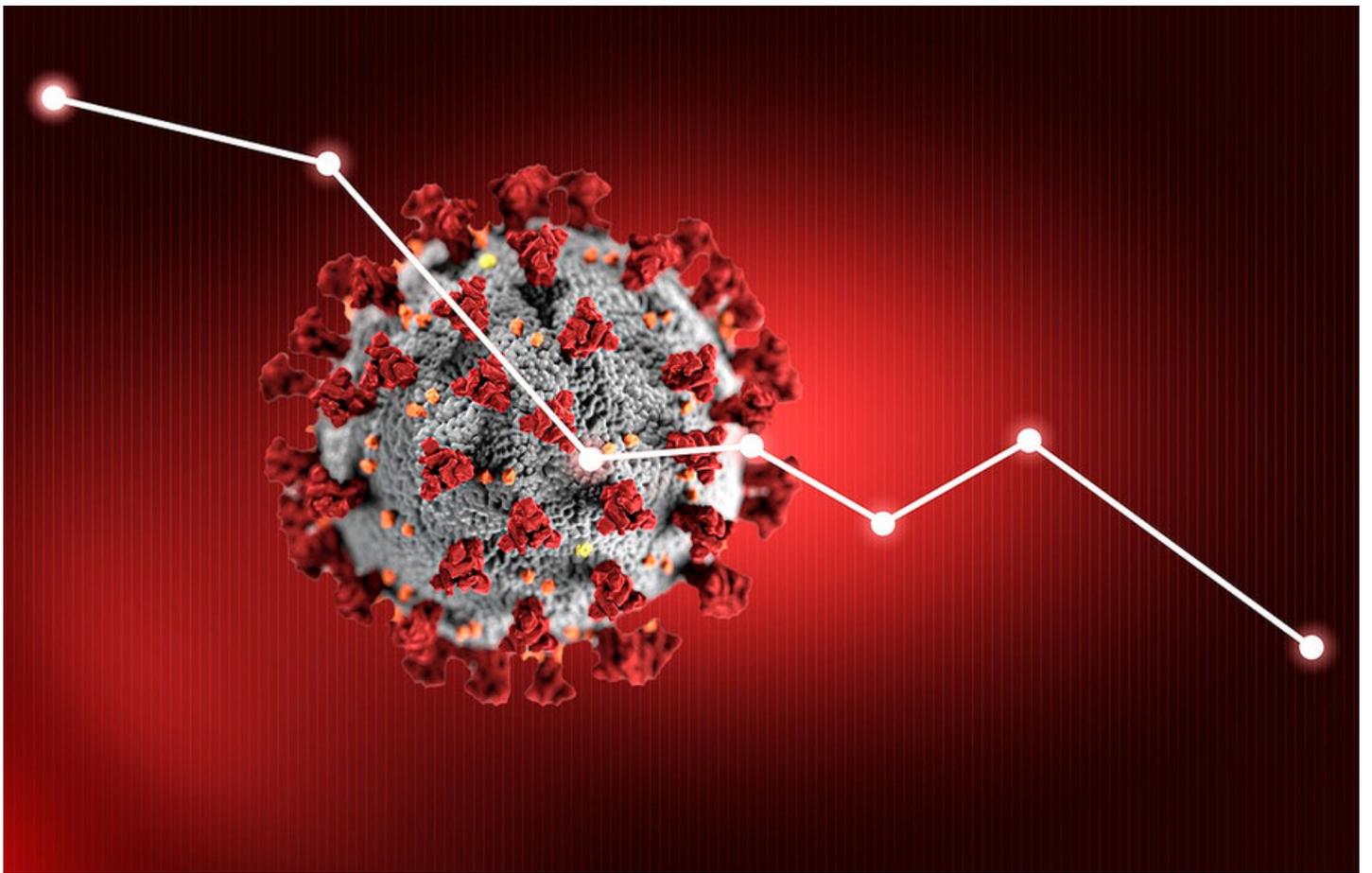
## ON WATER AND SANITATION

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) is Government of India's (GoI's) rural drinking water programme to provide functional tap connections to every household by 2024. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has impacted the scheme's finances, targets, outputs, and outcomes. More in our Budget Brief series.



The Swachh Bharat Mission is GoI's flagship sanitation scheme. In February 2020, the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (the rural arm of the scheme) was approved. What has been the status of the scheme's finances? What are the changes in the second phase, and how did the pandemic affect implementation? More in this explainer.





## EAR TO THE GROUND

# DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING

The policy space has long recognised the value of quality data.

As Avani Kapur discusses in a new article, even as data are collected for government schemes, centralised policies tend to overlook micro and local issues. [If the data collected is made available, this can enable frontline workers to take targeted decisions on, for instance, nutrition.](#)

Examples from our work too illustrate the continued importance of timely and quality data.



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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated why, for public administration to be effective, we need adequate funds and local, disaggregated data.

Yet the break-up of data on budgets and expenditures of urban municipalities is rarely available in the public domain for augmenting evidence-backed insights.

Press the icon to listen to a podcast on a research study we carried out in Tumakuru Smart City of Karnataka that covers both aspects.



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For investments to translate into improved public service delivery, having a strong public finance management (PFM) system is critical. The PFM should lay out the rules, institutions and processes by which public funds are managed.

A new journal article explores what a reframed PFM could entail.

# HELP YOUR TEAMS MAKE SENSE OF THE CONTEXT



We have a vibrant online community that your teams can join to understand and engage with pressing policy issues of the day. Why not circulate the Ideation or let them know where we are?



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