

The recent rapid surge in COVID-19 cases, including in tier 2 and 3 towns, requires immediate action to contain spread of the virus

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The recent rapid surge in COVID-19 cases, including in tier 2 and 3 towns, requires immediate action to contain spread of the virus. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Ministry of Rural Development has initiated online trainings, in a cascading mode, for its vast network of over 69 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHG). This is to spread awareness through key messaging on COVID-19 vaccination, COVID-19 appropriate behaviours, health seeking behaviour and immunity building. The trainings were rolled out from 8th April, 2021 at the national level and will be followed by the ground level trainings of the SHG members. They are in continuation to earlier trainings on preventive measures against COVID-19 led by the Ministry of Rural Development in June, 2020. All master trainers and key staff of state, district and block level will be trained by national level resource persons and the trained master trainers will in turn train cluster level federation office bearers, social action committee members, Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and Community Cadres. The trained CRPs will train all SHG members and other community members at village level. Key messages will further be disseminated by SHG leaders in the community through various mediums. These will include pamphlets, announcements, wall writings, rangolis and meetings in small groups with adherence to physical distancing norms. An online orientation was conducted 8th April'21 for state mission staff from 29 states and 5 union territories to facilitate this.

These training sessions include re-iteration of preventive measures/ behaviour against COVID-19 and promotion of information on accessing COVID-19 vaccines. Topics covered include information on COVID appropriate behaviour, the importance of vaccination, vaccination schedule, spacing between two doses for each vaccine, vaccine registration and certification. The sessions also aim to address the fears related to the side effects felt with both the vaccines. The sessions further address trust gaps towards the public health system, specific misconceptions against vaccination held by various religious and cultural groups as well as gender biases within the household which may lead to male members being given preference for receipt of the vaccine.

Specific health risks for age groups across the life-cycle are also being highlighted along with information

on accessing health and nutrition services and available social security schemes. The need for continued consumption diverse diets, particularly through locally available nutritious foods are also emphasised to build immunity of the individual to better fight the disease.

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