



## Key milestones 2019-2021

### 2019 & 2020

Fiona and Varsha met at the [Charity Entrepreneurship incubation programme](#) in 2019. While narrowing in on promising ideas which could be the core of an ambitious, impact-focused, evidence-driven nonprofit, we became excited by a recent [J-PAL Randomised Controlled Trial](#) (RCT) in Haryana, India. The study found that a careful combination of sending curated text reminders to parents, alongside identifying community influencers and recruiting them as volunteer immunisation ambassadors, significantly increased the number of children completing their routine immunisation schedules. We founded Suvita in August 2019 to scale these programmes up to reach as many children as possible. In India, one child dies every four minutes from a vaccine-preventable disease. **Our mission is to build a world in which every child has access to their basic vaccinations.**

In our first year, we **merged with another value-aligned nonprofit, Charity Science Health**, expanding to a team of 12 and taking on an existing SMS reminders programme. In response to COVID-19, we quickly shifted to remote work; paused and restarted SMS reminders based on government guidance on routine immunisation; and supported state and district government partners with pandemic response. We also acted as **implementing partners in an [adaptive trial](#) led by Harvard Assistant Professor Sebastian Bauhoff**. This study found that SMSs did *not* significantly increase covid-safe behaviours at the tail end of the first wave of the pandemic, so we decided not to scale up this initiative beyond the trial period.

In the second half of the year, we **began piloting the ambassador programme** in Saran district, Bihar. You can read our detailed [Pilot Report here](#) to see what we learned. In short, **we demonstrated that it is operationally feasible to run entirely phone-based nomination and recruitment of immunisation ambassadors**. This novel approach is both pandemic-friendly and potentially more cost-effective and scalable than the original (in-person) RCT design. We also found some **early evidence that ambassadors do indeed spread specific information** - when we gave 45 ambassadors a number which parents could call to enrol for SMS vaccine reminders, we received 30 enrollment calls in the subsequent week.

In December, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of **Maharashtra** to roll out **SMS reminders for pregnancy care and routine immunisation** across the state. We see this signing of the MoU as a reflection of state government priorities and a testament to their trust in our ability to deliver.

## 2021

While all our team members are safe and well, 2021 has been a particularly challenging year for many in India, including our friends and colleagues. During the second wave, we significantly reduced our team's workload, and all India-based team members had an extra week off to allow time to deal with the personal challenges relating to the second wave. We pivoted to prioritise covid-related messaging in the second quarter and we continue to carefully weigh up the right balance of covid-focused and routine-immunisation-focused work, given our strengths and the evolving circumstances.

In response to the second covid wave in India, we delivered over 350,000 (3.5 lakh) messages about the proning technique to over 250,000 (2.5 lakh) enrolled families across seven states. The messages contained a link to a YouTube video explaining the proning technique in the recipient's local language. Our links were clicked over 22,000 times (i.e. by 8.8% of individuals, or from 5.6% of delivered messages). We are analysing data from both link clicks and phone surveys that we conducted around the time of messaging to better understand their impact.

### In Bihar...

We conducted **further iterations of the immunisation ambassadors programme**. By the end of 2021, we had recruited **729 immunisation ambassadors** in Saran district, Bihar. We estimate that they will reach over **11,000 children** with immunisation-related messaging.

We also continued to expand our SMS reminders coverage. We completed a caregiver survey in June with over 500 families enrolled for our SMS reminders. Based on the positive results, we received approval from our government partner in Bihar, the State Health Society, to expand SMS reminders to a second district - Patna. By the end of 2021, we had **enrolled over 115,000 (1.15 lakh) children for SMS reminders** in Bihar.

#### Impact insight - SMSs

**Parents in Bihar have confirmed that they value the SMS reminders, which increase their ability to complete their child's vaccination schedule. In Bihar, we recently surveyed 332 caregivers who have received our childhood vaccine reminders. Most (197) recalled the messages and said that they were either useful (84) or very useful (99). 55 parents (17% of those we spoke to; 11% of the total we attempted to reach for the phone survey) said that they probably or definitely would not have got their child vaccinated on time without our reminders.**

### In Maharashtra...

By the end of 2021, we had **enrolled over 35,000 pregnant women and 50,000 children for SMS reminders** in Satara district. Our government partner, the Public Health Department, **conducted its own internal monitoring** of our SMS reminders programme in Sep-Oct 2021, following up with over 4,500 enrollees. They were pleased to confirm that the programme was delivering successfully.

*An aside: with government buy-in (through the MoU and positive outcome of their internal assessment) and increased confidence in our ability to deliver the reminders, **we are keen to expand to the rest of the state and are looking for confirmed three-year funding** to undertake this effort. Check out our [two-pager](#) if you are curious to learn more and please reach out to us if you are interested in supporting this effort.*

We have been working as the **implementing partner** of a [J-PAL-funded](#) pilot study led by Assistant Professor Sebastian Bauhoff of Harvard, which looks at the logistical feasibility of using the government's Reproductive and Child Health data to conduct a large-scale randomised controlled trial of SMS reminders (as well as other interventions which we are not directly involved with, such as incentives to community health workers, 'ASHAs') for increasing vaccination uptake. We wrapped up the implementation stage at the end of 2021 - analysis is ongoing.

At the end of 2021, we also received formal agreement from the Public Health Department to begin piloting the immunisation ambassador programme in Maharashtra state. This is beginning in early 2022.

### Impact insight - SMSs

*Again, parents in Maharashtra have confirmed that they value the SMS reminders, which increase their ability to complete their child's vaccination schedule. In Maharashtra, we recently surveyed 372 caregivers who have received our childhood vaccine reminders. Most (210) recalled the messages and said that they were either useful (54) or very useful (152). 78 parents (21% of those we spoke to; 15% of the total we attempted to reach for the phone survey) said that they probably or definitely would not have got their child vaccinated on time without our reminders.*

### By the numbers across both states:

We recruited

**45** immunisation  
ambassadors  
in 2020 and

another

**684**  
in 2021.

Our target is

**3,000**  
more in 2022.

We enrolled

**43,320** families for  
SMS reminders  
in 2020 and

another

**176,734**  
in 2021.

Our target is

**250,000**  
more in 2022.

### 2021 impact

In total, we estimate that our work in 2021 helped a total of **4,572** additional children to complete their full immunisation series.

We estimate that this saved **44** children's lives.



## Looking forward

In 2022, we plan to:

- **iterate and scale** our programmes;
- generate **more compelling evidence** around our programmes' impact;
- **level up our back-end tech** systems to facilitate future programme improvement;
- and further **test and prioritise our top strategic pathways for reaching mega-scale**.