

that medicine alone is insufficient for the elimination of disease. Credit: Reach Alliance.

As India urgently scales up its vaccination campaign for the COVID-19 virus, a new study which examined the country's successful program to eliminate polio provides guidance on how this and future mass immunization campaigns can be successful, especially in vaccinating hard to reach groups.

The study, conducted by students and faculty with the Reach Alliance, a research initiative based at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, says that medicine alone is insufficient for the elimination of disease.

The World Health Organization declared India polio-free in 2014. While the country had the medical ability to eliminate polio for decades, new managerial strategies were necessary to achieve polio elimination among India's hardest to reach, including within [religious minorities](#) and impoverished communities.

"We found that the barriers to vaccination were deeply rooted in larger issues of social trust and political vulnerability," says, Anita M. McGahan, University Professor and the George E. Connell Chair in Organizations & Society at the University's Rotman School of Management and Munk School. "Many of these same issues will need to be dealt with by governments and health agencies globally in order to vaccinate the most vulnerable today against COVID-19."

The study found that managerial strategies were necessary to achieve polio elimination among India's hardest to reach. Namely, these strategies were the bundling of basic healthcare services when marketing

the vaccine, which tackled existing essential healthcare concerns in the communities; engaging stakeholders in vulnerable communities including [religious leaders](#), local media outlets, employers of migrant workers, and private health providers; and, implementing accountability mechanisms among healthcare workers which improved the accuracy of both polio surveillance and vaccination data.

More information: Alejandra Bellatin et al, Overcoming vaccine deployment challenges among the hardest to reach: lessons from polio elimination in India, *BMJ Global Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjgh-2021-005125](#)

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