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Rockefeller Foundation awards $5.5M grants to scale-upÂ Indiaâ??s COVID-19Â testingÂ

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The Rockefeller Foundation has announced two new grants to The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms and PATH. The grants, totalling $5.5 million, will support the domestic manufacturing of critical testing materials and the deployment of scalable testing programmes, essential to mitigating COVID-19. Additionally, the grants will advance efforts to leverage data and technology to strengthen pandemic surveillance and response.

“Expanding access to COVID-19 testing, especially among high-risk populations, is critical to safeguarding the health of Indians,” said Prof K VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India.

The Foundation’s new grants include:

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) is receiving funding to scale up the local manufacturing of reagents and testing solutions in India, providing the country with the elements needed to domestically produce reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing kits.

“RT-PCR tests remain the gold standard for confirming active COVID-19 infections,” said Dr Taslimarif Saiyed, CEO, Director C-CAMP. “By helping scale up domestic test production, this grant will strengthen India’s diagnostic capacities and improve its ability to mitigate the virus.”

PATH has received a grant to expand Covid-19 testing capacity in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab. With this funding, PATH will support state governments to develop and deploy optimised testing strategies that can be replicated and scaled up rapidly, seek to make COVID-19 screening and diagnostic tools available at an affordable cost, create an ecosystem of faster diagnosis of COVID-19 in key geographies, and establish pandemic surveillance models.

“The evolving nature of Covid-19 has highlighted the need for rapidly deployable testing strategies,” said Neeraj Jain, Country Director, PATH India. “By using this partnership to establish working models, we can help ensure more people have access to testing and provide public health officials with the information they need to keep their communities safe.”

“Scaling up COVID-19 testing provides crucial data insights that can help inform India’s response and direct targeted interventions to those most in need,” said Dr Naveen Rao, Senior Vice President, Health, The Rockefeller Foundation.