

Piramal Foundation, Redwing Labs pilot drone tech for TB diagnosis in Odisha

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Time taken to cover the distance to the diagnostic centre reduced by more than half



Anamaya, the Tribal Health Collaborative an initiative of Piramal Foundation, piloted automated drones for faster transportation of sputum samples for screening and diagnosis in hard-to-reach areas of Kalahandi district, Odisha. The pilot implemented in March 2022 in collaboration with Redwing Labs, saw a significant time reduction to cover the distance to the diagnostic centre. Anamaya worked closely with the District Collector, Chief District Medical Officer, Civil Surgeon, frontline workers and the staff of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) to ensure seamless operations.

The drone pilot was implemented in three blocks - Kesinga, Narla, and Bhawanipatna of Kalahandi district, to explore ways of accelerating pace of transportation to enable early diagnosis. The Anamaya team looked after the end-to-end project management, coordinated with the local government to arrange necessary permits and support. They also worked closely with the frontline workers to ensure timely sample collection at the source location.

With the deployment of drones, a distance of 36 kilometres of remote, hilly, uneven and forest-covered terrain which usually takes ~55 minutes by road, was covered in half the time, around 20 minutes. Redwing team customised the drones to suit the specific needs of this pilot and ensured operational efficiency of the drones. The drone used had a capacity to transfer two to three kilograms weight. 34 samples, in total, were collected from two villages during one flight each.