

## **Report of North Goa Genome Sequence Laboratory.**

Subject: High-Level Delegation from USAID Visits Goa in Recognition of Health System Achievements

PANAJI, GOA - On May 8th, 2023, a high-level delegation from USAID, led by Mr. Anka Lee, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Policy & Planning, visited Goa to acknowledge and learn about the significant progress the state has made in health system preparedness. Joining Mr. Lee were Mr. Warren Harrity, Program Support Office Director & Acting Deputy Mission Director, USAID India Mission, Ms. Natasha Burrows, Development Outreach and Communications Specialist - Health Office - USAID India Mission, Dr Vineet Srivastava, Program Director & Chief of Party, USAID RISE India, Dr Prashant Singh, Sr Advisor - Laboratory strengthening, USAID RISE India, Dr Abhishek Thakkar, Sr Technical Officer - Strategy & Partnerships, USAID RISE India, and Dr Vinella Gomes, Technical Officer, Health Systems Development, USAID RISE India.

The delegation toured the state-of-the-art Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) Lab at North Goa District Hospital, a testament to the successful partnership between Goa, USAID RISE, and Jhpiego. The NGS lab is a milestone in the state's ability to detect and respond to SARS-CoV-2 and other potential outbreaks.

The visit commenced with addresses by Dr. Vineet Srivastava and Dr. Abhishek Thakkar, highlighting USAID RISE activities at the national level and in Goa. This was followed by a discussion with state health officials from the Directorate of Health Services (DHS) who provided an overview of the state's current priorities, key achievements, and evolving needs.

Dr. Prashant Suryavanshi, State Surveillance Officer, emphasized the importance of partnerships that bring global evidence to local contexts by empowering state health systems. He showcased the state's success in eliminating rabies and highlighted the potential to leverage these achievements on global platforms.

Dr. Rajnanda Dessai, OSD, Advisor to Health Minister (Goa), underscored the need for a robust research and knowledge management ecosystem, emphasizing the importance of local capacity building, robust implementation, and global partnerships in designing and scaling up innovations and policies.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Geeta Kakodkar, Director of Health Services, who appreciated USAID's support in strengthening the systems for COVID-19 preparedness and response, as well as support for NQAS certification. She highlighted how the state has become self-sufficient in its genomic sequencing needs through the partnership with USAID RISE.

Mr. Lee expressed his appreciation for the impactful work undertaken by the state, particularly the women-led team conducting groundbreaking work at the NGS lab. He praised the state's impressive progress in ramping up COVID-19 testing and

acknowledged Goa's achievements in USAID's priority areas, including climate change and health, pandemic preparedness, global health security, and promoting women leadership in public health.

Dr. Vineet Srivastava emphasized the potential of Goa becoming a model state in developing unique public health models, such as NGS micro labs. He noted the importance of robust pandemic preparedness and response, especially considering the state's influx of tourists.

This visit signals a promising future for the continued partnership between Goa and USAID RISE, as they strive to enhance the state's health system resilience and self-sufficiency.

#### About USAID:

USAID, or the United States Agency for International Development, is an American governmental agency dedicated to administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance. With a focus on poverty relief, healthcare, education, and disaster response, USAID works to uplift communities and foster economic progress worldwide.

#### About USAID RISE:

USAID RISE (Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable Environments) is a strategic initiative that supports countries to prepare for and respond to environmental and health challenges. In partnership with local entities, USAID RISE empowers communities to build sustainable, self-reliant, and resilient health systems.

#### About Jhpiego:

Jhpiego is an international, non-profit health organization affiliated with Johns Hopkins University. For over 40 years and in over 155 countries, Jhpiego has worked to prevent the needless deaths of women and their families.

#### About North Goa District Hospital:

The North Goa District Hospital is a leading healthcare provider in the state, offering comprehensive medical services. It is committed to providing quality healthcare that is accessible and affordable for all citizens of Goa.