

# 05

*During the pandemic one of the most critical aspects was to reach factual information on real-time basis to people. This especially posed a challenge given the country's vast topographical diversity. The Community Radio Stations played a significant role in reaching correct information to people at a time when they were mostly confined to their homes.*

*The fifth story is of Ashwathy Murali, the perky radio jockey from **Radio Mattoli**, Kerala, who enthused the villagers to take the COVID-19 vaccination and walked the talk by being the first to do so herself.*

*Hello, I am Ashwathy Murali via Radio Mattoli in live phone-in programme.*

*Let's see who is joining us today.*

*Caller: Hello, I am Geetha, calling from Mananthavadi. I want to know why do we use masks? What's the need for it?*

*Ashwathy: I will tell you why it is necessary. The virus spreads through saliva. When we talk to someone, we accidentally spit out droplets of our spit and the other person may also spit while talking. The spit carries the virus which causes the infection.*





Ashwathy, a presenter at a Community Radio Station in Wayanad district, Kerala, a State situated near the southern tip of India, helps bust myths and address vaccine related hesitancy by sharing information in her local dialect.

**RECORDING**



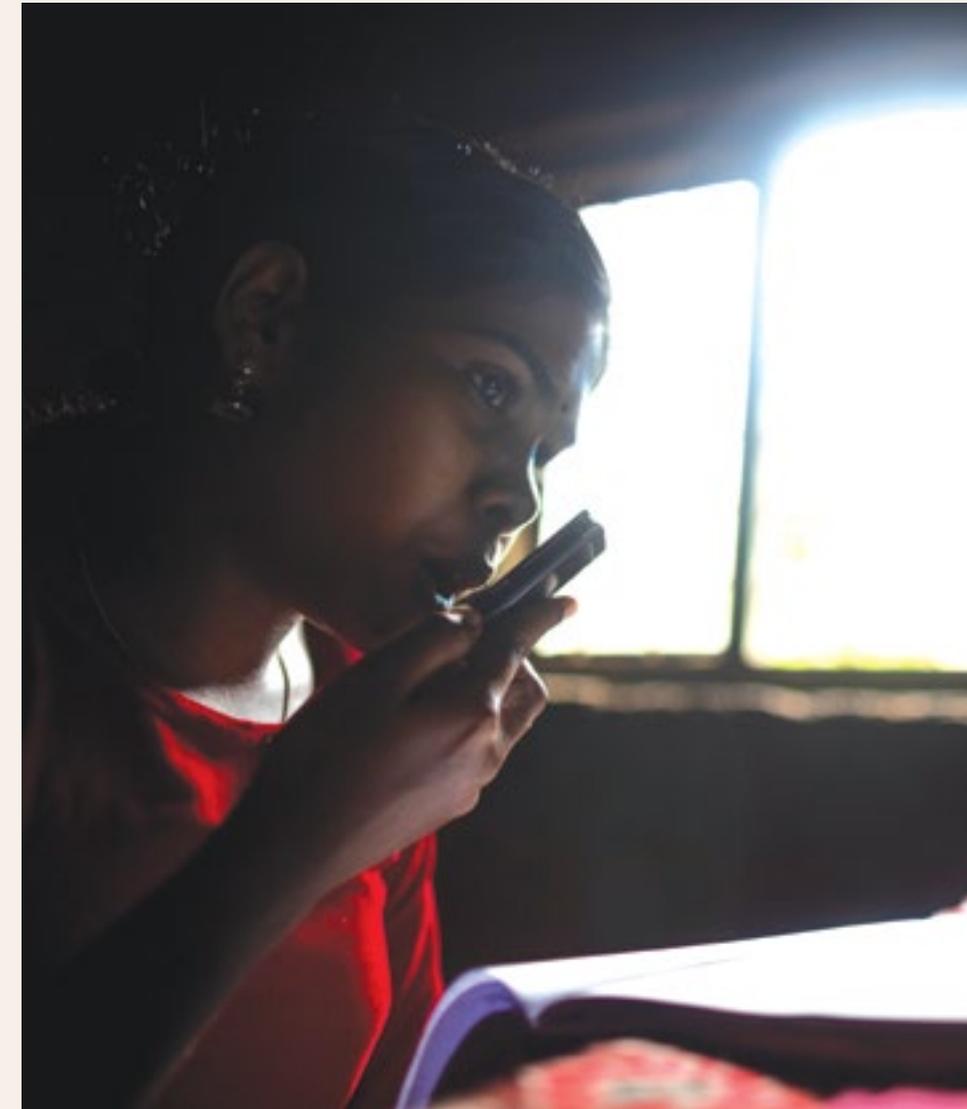
18% of the people in Wayanad are tribals. Most of the tribals are from the Paniyar community, one of the most backward communities. Ashwathy acts like a bridge between them and the world outside their community.



**“This terrain does not allow access to multiple sources of information”, says Ashwathy.**

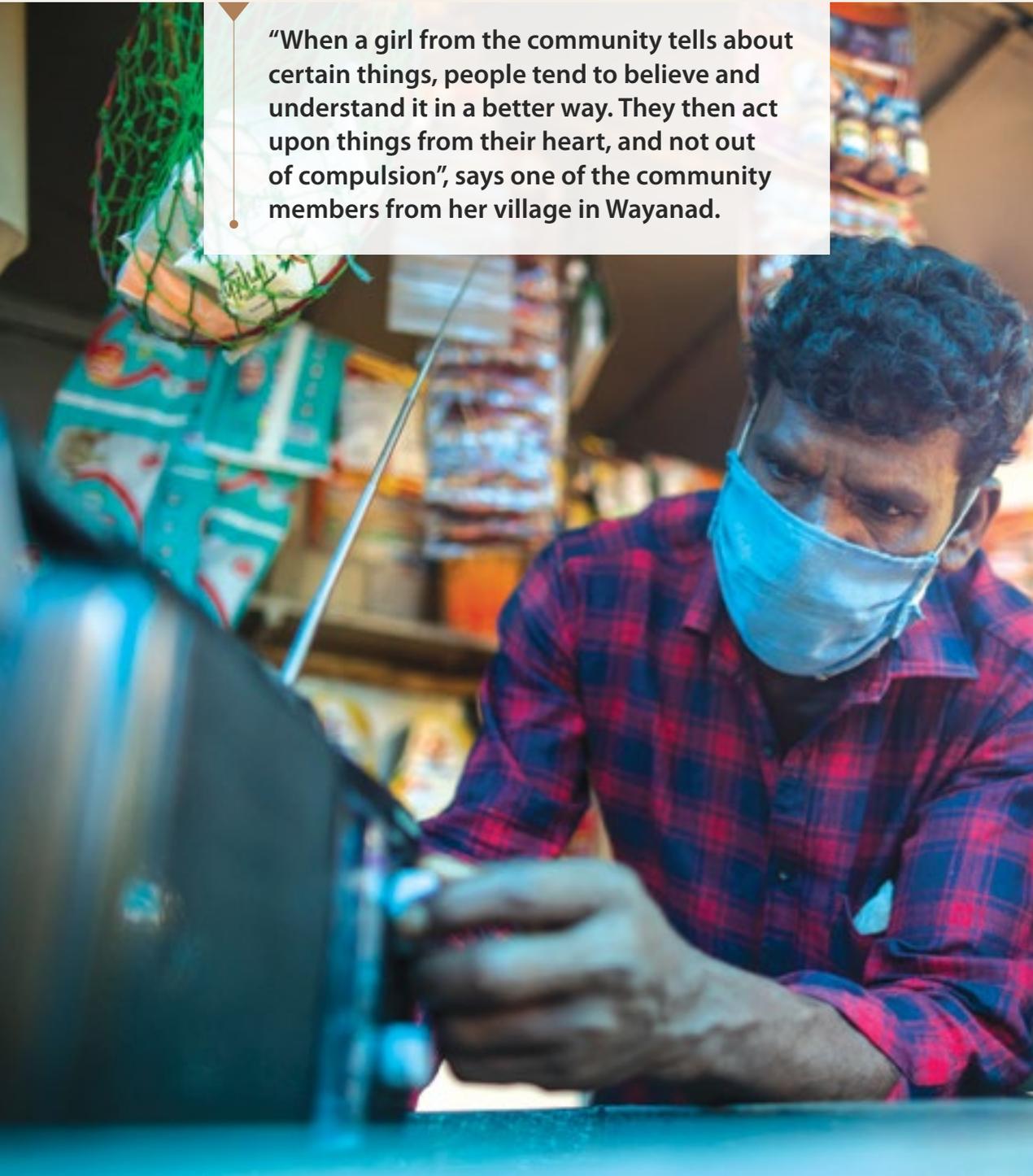
**“The one source of information one would find in every household in my village, is a radio. Therefore, when the vaccination drive started, I knew that this was the only way in which I could reach people to address their misconceptions.”**

“I used to hear the radio since I was in eighth standard. I always liked Radio more than TV. During the pandemic, I listened to programmes that featured doctors. Since they were in English, I wrote down everything they said. Then I translated with the help of Google in a way I could understand, and finally into Paniya language”, says Ashwathy recalling her experience.



“Though often I had to burn the midnight oil, it was all worth it when I was able to address the queries from the community. Every person vaccinated gave me a sense of personal triumph”, she says.

“When a girl from the community tells about certain things, people tend to believe and understand it in a better way. They then act upon things from their heart, and not out of compulsion”, says one of the community members from her village in Wayanad.



Ashwathy’s audience cuts across all age groups and community members are glued to their radio sets when she interacts with them through a live phone-in programme. When the District Collector asked some of them how they were aware of the safety measures, they said they knew everything from *Radio Mattoli*.



“I wanted to get vaccinated first and show my community that it is important to get vaccinated. I made my grandma understand why she should get vaccinated”, says Ashwathy.

When the other people saw that she was fine, others too came forward for the vaccination.

