

Nigeria: Using interactive formats to engage young people about COVID-19 vaccination and services

With funding support from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), BBC Media Action aimed to empower young Nigerians to make informed decisions about taking the COVID-19 vaccine and adopting preventative measures to protect against HIV and HPV. Young people reported that the programmes helped to improve their understanding of COVID-19, HIV and HPV. Outreach events inspired attendees to take the vaccines.

Context

As at December 2022, 55% of the Nigerian population were reported as double vaccinated, despite the WHO goal of 70% vaccination by mid-2022. The [WHO](#) mentions the COVID-19 infodemic and this affected young people in Nigeria and made it even more important that content be original, non-didactic and creative in order to successfully reach and engage with young Nigerians on the topic of COVID-19 and vaccine hesitancy. Furthermore, there are wider health issues that are relevant and important to youths in Nigeria, therefore it is important that COVID-19 vaccination activities are considered in the context of wider youth and adolescent health services.

The project

The UNICEF funded 'Youth Co-creation Project' sought to support ongoing efforts to further

increase COVID-19 vaccination and promote the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices among young Nigerians. Working on-site in three focal states namely Ebonyi, Katsina and Rivers whilst broadcasting national and regional focused content on media stations across the country. The project delivered factual discussion programmes *Talk Your Own (TYO)* in English/Pidgin and *Mu Tattauna (MTTN)* in Hausa language, radio public service announcements in multiple languages, social media content for Facebook, outreach activities with in and out of school youths, and training for social media influencers and handlers.

Research methodology

Face-to-face qualitative research was conducted at the end of the project using focus group discussions (FGDs) with participants of project outreach events and audiences of the media content. Participants were 18-30 years old, living in urban and rural localities across the three project focal states. In-depth interviews (IDIs) with social media influencers trained, and resource experts engaged on the project as well. Case study interviews were also conducted with outreach participants who took action during or immediately after participating in the event. Quantitative data on indicative reach of programme outputs, especially the radio magazine programmes, was collected through the [UNICEF U-Report](#) polls, and analysis of social media content and pages of social media influencers and handlers trained on the project was also undertaken.

Key findings

The research shows that:

- o **Reach:** Of the U-reporters who participated in the poll in Rivers and Ebonyi states, 66% and 62% respectively have listened to Talk Your Own while 43% in Katsina state have listened to *Mu Tattauna*.
- o **Awareness:** According to research participants, the programmes and outreach events helped to improve their awareness of where to access COVID-19 vaccines and HIV testing services.
- o **Knowledge:** About 9 in 10 (91%) of U-reporters across the project states who participated in the poll and have listened to the programmes said they learned lessons from listening to MTTN and TYO. Focus group participants mentioned learning lessons such as knowing the meaning of HPV and where to get health and lifestyle-related services.
- o **Understanding risk:** Respondents reported an improvement in their comprehension of the risks of COVID-19, HIV and HPV. This was attributed to the persuasive discussions in the radio programmes, digital content and outreach events.
- o **Stimulating discussion:** U-reporters in Rivers (78%), Ebonyi (85%) and Katsina (66%) states who listened to the programmes reported that they discussed issues from the programmes (TYO and MTTN). Specifically, participants in focus groups said they discussed the COVID-19 Vaccine, HIV and HPV preventive measures and testing with friends, family and peers.
- o **Vaccine take up:** There was a positive response to COVID-19 vaccination at the outreach events and some participants of the events shared that **they took the vaccine at the venue**.
- o **Extending reach:** Social media influencers who received training on the project claimed that there was a significant boost in their confidence and capacity to use social media and other digital platforms. They reported that application of lessons learned contributed to increased following of their social media pages and audience

engagement, management support as well as production of new content and modification of existing content focusing on health-related issues.

“Sincerely, the programme has increased my knowledge a lot to the point of convincing me to agree to receive this [COVID-19] vaccine and also get tested [for HIV].”

Male, outreach event, 26 - 30 years, Urban, Katsina

Key implications

- The media outputs and outreach events contributed to improved understanding, promoted discussions, and changed perceptions about COVID-19 vaccine, HIV, and HPV among young Nigerians in project focal states. It did this through engaging content, training and strategic collaborations. The programme delivery through radio, digital and outreach events ensured presentation of these health topics was in a manner that was both informative and engaging. Specifically, the programmes helped improve audiences' understanding about:
 - a. risks associated with COVID-19, HIV and HPV;
 - b. preventive measures for HIV & HPV;
 - c. access to COVID-19 vaccinations and HIV testing services.
- The programmes also played a crucial role in fostering discussions on these health topics within social networks, emphasising the importance of sharing accurate and reliable information.
- Leveraging on existing outputs and UNICEF's campus storm events contributed to significant impact for a six-month long project.

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