How National Public Health Institutes Can Address COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation and Hesitancy

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Overview

01 Africa CDC’s 15 country study of COVID-19 perception

02 Solutions to improve COVID-19 vaccine acceptance

03 Key takeaways
Covid-19 continues to be a dynamic and evolving pandemic.

More than 2/3 of Member States have experienced a third wave, with far more cases and deaths than in the early months of the pandemic.

In addition, many new variants of concern have emerged with devastating consequences.

As of 27 September 2021, Africa has recorded over 8.2 million cases and 209K deaths.

Control of the pandemic is rested on the development and availability of a safe and effective vaccine.

However, even a highly effective vaccine requires sufficiently widespread willingness to accept it to successfully protect populations at large.
COVID-19 Vaccine Perceptions in Africa

December 2020

Prepared by
COVID-19 Vaccine Perception in Africa

• The aim of this study is to investigate public knowledge and perceptions of both the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccine acceptance among adults (aged 18 years and above) in 15 African countries.

• To guide needed communications and engagement strategies to support the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines.

• This survey of public opinion was conducted in 15 countries across Africa between August and December 2020.

• It is a mixed methodology study combining face-to-face and CATI – computer assisted telephone interview.
RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1. Research design
   - Media habits
   - COVID awareness and understanding
   - Measures of vaccine uptake and hesitancy

2. Fieldwork
   - 15 Countries
   - 15,000+ respondents

3. Analysis
   - 1. Preliminary topline from ORB
   - 2. LSHTM analysis and implications to follow

4. Outputs
   - Implications for communication strategies
   - AFRICA comparisons
   - Country fact sheets

QUESTIONNAIRE

RECOMMENDATIONS
Uptake of COVID-19 vaccine

By country

Potential uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine in Africa is **high**, though there are significant regional differences. **One in five** respondents say they would **not take** the vaccine.

**All respondents**

- Yes: 80%
- No: 18%
- DK/REF

**Trend for countries in Janssen project**

- Ethiopia (91%)
- Nigeria (78%)
- DRC (47%)

**Comparison – globally**

- UK (75%)
- South Korea (84%)
- Ecuador (73%)

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7 All Respondents: Morocco=1000, Tunisia=1000, Nigeria=1172, Sudan=1075, South Africa=1056, Niger=1173, Cote d’Ivoire=1039, DR Congo=1007, Ethiopia=1001, Burkina Faso=1037, Kenya=1000, Senegal=1010  |  * Showing NET Agree here – in the Janssen project ‘Agree’ scale was used for this question.
Reluctance to take COVID-19 vaccine

Attitudinal groups

Those more likely to refuse COVID-19 vaccine

- People who have seen COVID-related disinformation
- People who think the threat of COVID-19 is exaggerated
- People who trust social media for information
- Those who do not know anyone who has had the virus

Would you take a new COVID-19 vaccine?

Belief in conspiracy theories

- Belief in conspiracy theories: Yes 75%, No 23%, DK/REF 2%
- No belief in conspiracy theories: Yes 83%, No 14%, DK/REF 3%

Vaccines are safe

- Agree: Yes 85%, No 13%, DK/REF 2%
- Disagree: Yes 59%, No 37%, DK/REF 3%

All Respondents: Yes = 5183, No = 7387
All Respondents: Agree = 9786, Disagree = 2284
Reasons given for not taking a COVID-19 vaccine

Top reasons for not taking the vaccine:

1. I don’t trust the COVID-19 vaccine
2. I do not believe that the virus exists
3. I do not feel that I am at risk of catching the virus
4. I believe that vaccines can give you the disease they are designed to protect you against

Respondent in the DRC: It normally takes 15 years to manufacture a vaccine so how can a new vaccine be manufactured in just a year?

Respondent in Kenya: The vaccine should be tested in Europe first.

Respondent in Senegal: I don't believe there is Corona as I have not seen it.

Respondent in Nigeria: I don't believe there is Corona as I have not seen it.
Disinformation

Q: And finally, could you tell me for each of the following statements, whether you believe them to be true or false?

A significant proportion believe in vaccine-related rumours. Those from North Africa, men, younger respondents and those who believe that the threat from COVID-19 is exaggerated are more likely to believe these disinformation stories.
Advocacy for COVID-19 vaccine

Despite regional differences the World Health Organisation (WHO) and healthcare professionals are key sources that need to provide their seal of approval in order for respondents to trust in the safety and efficacy of a potential COVID-19 vaccine.
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COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness and Response

- Coordinate
- Cooperate
- Collaborate
- Communicate

Africa Task Force for Coronavirus (AFTCOR)

- Surveillance/Points of Entry Screening
- Laboratory Diagnostics and Subtyping
- Infection prevention & control
- Clinical Management
- Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- Supply chain and stockpiles
- Research, standards and regulations

Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 OUTBREAK
• **RCCE** TWG consults and identify needs of Member States to help them deploy COVID19 vaccines

• **Coordinate weekly communication** meeting with WHO AFRO to debrief on enhancing activities of PH-RCCE-CoP steering committee and discuss strategies to improve participation of Member States
Mass Media engagement

- Support for the Africa CDC COVID-19 activities, including Digital and Public Relation engagements.
- **Weekly press briefing** on COVID-19; several journalists and media organizations from across the world via zoom and livestreaming on Africa CDC Facebook and Tweeter pages
VACCINES ACCEPTABILITY CAMPAIGNS

• Vaccine acceptability campaign launched from Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 with various activities.
• **Live chats on COVID-19** (reached 55,322,465)
• **AUC staff Webinar**
• **Share the Truth Campaign** (reached 25,313,202)
• **Vaccines weekly messaging posters**
• **I DID IT campaign** (Ongoing)
• Engagement of Social media/community influencers
Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Response

Critical role of NPHIs in pandemic preparedness and response

Africa CDC and network of NPHIs: unity of purpose
COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness and Response

Development of continent-specific guidelines

More than 50 guidelines on surveillance, laboratory, IPC, case management, RCCE and others
Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Continental political leadership to guide the pandemic response

On 8 May 2021, African Health Ministers of Health endorsed an adapted strategy to fight COVID-19 underpinned by enhanced approaches to Prevent, Monitor and Treat.
Rapid responders and volunteers:>

- **25** Countries
- **>230** Rapid responders and volunteers

Community Health Workers:

- **+28** Countries
- **>18,800** Community Health Workers

Deployed as of 10 September 2021
COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Africa CDC’s response: short term training

As of August 2021
Importance of Technology | Launched Trusted Travel Platform

Simple, Free, Secure, Convenient & Connected with Free Toolkits for African Countries to Deploy Vaccine Passports

- Cross Border Travel Solution
- Vaccine Record Management
- Vaccine Allocation & Administration Scheduling
- Post Vaccine Administration & Feedback Management
Africa CDC and MasterCard Foundation launched the **Saving Lives, Saving Livelihoods Programme**

On 8 June 2021, the MasterCard Foundation announced that it will deploy $1.3 billion over the next three years in partnership with Africa CDC to save the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in Africa and hasten the economic recovery of the continent.
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The 4th wave is here, and we should anticipate that more countries will experience a 4th wave

Intensify risk communication and community engagement

New COVID-19 waves, presence of variants and low level of vaccine coverage means we have to continue adhering to public health and social measures

Without vaccines and vaccination, Africa will struggle to end the pandemic
Vaccines + Vaccinations = Saved Lives

Vaccination Centers

- **Facility:** storage & vaccination
- **Personnel:** vaccinators, nurses and other non-clinical staffs
- **Supplies:** gloves, masks, face shields, syringes, needles, alcohol preps
- **IT infrastructure**
- **Community engagement**

60% of population

(800 million people)*
(1.6 billion doses)**

*Population estimate of Africa = 1.2 billion people
** Population estimate of Africa = 1.2 billion people
THANK YOU

LEARN MORE AT
africacdc.org/covid-19
Safeguarding Africa’s Health