



Vaccination Action Network

Local Solutions to Catalyze Change

Top Takeaways

- Vaccination interventions must seek to address key barriers - such as implementing evening hours to accommodate those with standard workdays.
- The importance of vaccination must be shared clearly and consistently, highlighting real-life examples of COVID-19 impact.
- Risk communication should be translated into local languages and shared through creative outlets like film and storytelling.

Moonlight Community Cinema to Combat Low Risk Perception of COVID-19 in Makueni County, Kenya

As the COVID-19 pandemic stretches into its third year, an ongoing challenge has been conveying the continued risk of the disease and the benefits of vaccination as media outlets have shifted their attention and myths and misconceptions have proliferated. In Kenya, low risk perception was shared as one of the top challenges experiences by members of the Vaccination Action Network (VAN), driven by the decline in reported COVID-19 cases in 2021. As shared by Ministry of Health representatives at a VAN meeting, number of cases fell by 99% from December 31, 2020 through February 20, 2021, while the number of newly vaccinated adults declined by 94% in the same time period. Other critical challenges include a lack of understanding of COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines, fear of side effects, and access to vaccination services.

Bretta Vilita Mutisya is intimately familiar with these challenges. As Head Health Promotion Officer in Makueni County, a mostly rural county southeast of Nairobi, Ms. Vilita Mutisya has worked diligently to improve COVID-19 vaccination coverage. Her understanding of local needs has contributed to the development of new approaches to community sensitization and addressing access-related barriers, leading to an increase in fully-vaccinated adults in Makueni County.

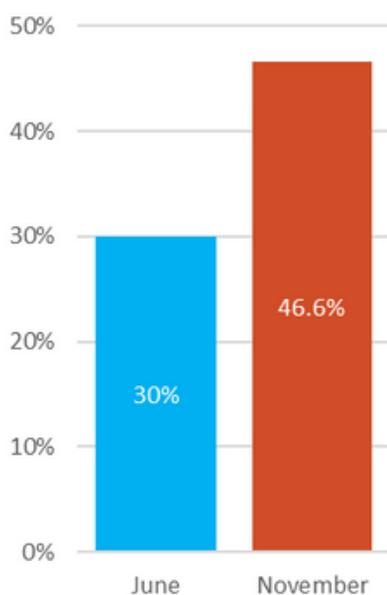
Exploring the Challenges Faced by Hard-to-Reach Community Members

As COVID-19 vaccination uptake began to increase in Makueni County, Ms. Vilita Mutisya and her team focused on identifying and addressing barriers for populations that had been harder to reach, namely men 35-years-old and younger. Health promotion officers attended organized market days, filled with thousands of people, to speak with community members. Through these conversations, they learned that men and youth population were not getting vaccinated due to the perception that COVID-19 was no longer a problem, lack of access to vaccines due to their long workdays, and concern about vaccine safety. Ms. Vilita Mutisya and her team knew it was important for people to see stories of how COVID-19 has affected real people, while simultaneously creating opportunities for them to get vaccinated that aligned with their schedules.



About the Vaccination Action Network

The Vaccination Action Network (VAN) is an Africa-led action-oriented collaborative that brings together vaccination leaders and senior public health officials to solve the toughest challenges in improving COVID-19 vaccine demand and uptake across Africa. VAN provides a space for learning and peer exchange among immunization practitioners, focusing on demand-related challenges, best practices, and lessons learned that are specific to the local context.



2022 Fully Immunized Coverage

Developing Moonlight Community Cinema

Ms. Vilita Mutisya and her team developed a week-long series of “Moonlight Community Cinema” events held in a central location during evening hours. These events prioritized communicating the dangers of COVID-19, the benefits of vaccination, and the safety of vaccines through short videos, which included messaging in local languages. The hope was for community members to realize the need to take action against COVID-19. “We wanted the reality and knowledge shared around the disease and vaccination to hit home,” shared Ms. Vilita Mutisya.

This Moonlight Community Cinema series ran from 4:00 pm – 11:00 pm daily from August 24 through August 28, 2022. The team set up large screens and projected COVID-19 stories, interspersed with gospel videos and music. Sharing the message through videos that there was a higher risk of not taking the vaccine proved to be impactful. “Consistency is key with messaging and recognizing who your audience is when creating messaging is critical,” Ms. Vilita Mutisya said.

Taking Action to be Protected

The Moonlight Community Cinema events included on-site vaccinators, providing the opportunity to get vaccinated late into the evenings. Ms. Vilita Mutisya’s team estimated that because of the strategic location and timing of the Moonlight Community Cinema events, 7,000 people were able to view the videos sharing accurate information about COVID-19 and the vaccine.

They succeeded in vaccinating an additional 500 people during this one-week campaign, and further found that attendees spread the message within their households. Community members came later to be vaccinated in the clinics after hearing from others about the benefits of getting vaccinated. “Individuals saw and heard what they needed to do to be protected,” Ms. Vilita Mutisya said, as vaccination rates continued to increase in Makueni County.

Ms. Vilita Mutisya further shares a call for action for leaders to increase budget line allocation for COVID-19 vaccination - stressing the need for multiple interventions for highest impact.



This story was shared by Bretta Vilita Mutisya, Head Health Promotion Officer in Makueni County, Kenya. In this role, Ms. Vilita Mutisya serves as the unit head of health promotion activities for the county, exercising her skills in demand creation interventions, advocacy communication, social mobilization, social and behaviour change communication, and addressing vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

The Vaccination Action Network

