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Internews



CCIH
Christian Connections
for International Health

Faith on the frontline of COVID-19 vaccination: *Overcoming vaccine hesitancy in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe through the CoV-FaB project*

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CCIH 2023

HOPE IN HEALTH: OUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN



About the COV-FAB Project



- *The Promoting COVID-19 Vaccine Equity through Faith-Based Networks in Africa (CoV-FaB)* is a 2-year project funded by **IMA world Health** through ACHAP to CHAs, to promote COVID-19 vaccination uptake through Faith-based Networks to advance COVID-19 vaccine demand and delivery.
- Implemented in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone,
- Other countries include; CAR, Zambia, Madagascar, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, and Liberia.
- Other partners: Internews
- Goal: *To contribute to a reduction in COVID-19 morbidity and mortality in Africa and strengthen the capacity of Christian Health Associations to respond to future health emergencies.*



About ACHAP

- African Christian Health Associations Platform (ACHAP) is a regional body comprising of 43 health associations in 32 countries.
- A networking & joint advocacy organization for Christian Health Associations & other Church Health Networks.

Members include;

- ZACH in Zimbabwe, CHASL in Sierra Leone



Overview Of The Pandemic



- More than 8.9 million cases and 174,243 deaths, as of May 2, 2023 (WHO, 2023 - <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19>).
- Sierra Leone, 8.42 million people and Zimbabwe, approximately 15.5 million are two countries in SSA that have been heavily impacted by the pandemic.
- Sierra Leone: 7,762 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 125 deaths, as of 20 May 2023, a total of 8,124,614 vaccine doses have been administered.
- Zimbabwe: 265,030 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 5,695 deaths, as of 13 May 2023, a total of 13,935,112 vaccine doses have been administered. (*WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard*)



Vaccine Hesitancy.

- According to the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE), vaccine hesitancy refers to a delay in acceptance or refusal of a vaccine despite its availability (McDonald, 2015).
- Vaccine hesitancy generally stems from factors related to complacency, convenience, and/or confidence (McDonald, 2015).
- Complacency: Low perception of the disease risk rendering a subsequent vaccine unnecessary or of insufficient value when calculating a benefit-risk assessment.
- Convenience: Is the vaccine affordable, available, cultural and religious contexts, health literacy.
- Confidence: Is the vaccine safe? Is it effective? Can the motivations of policy makers be trusted?



Drivers of Vaccine hesitancy

COVID-19 vaccines are surrounded by a myriad of Myths, and misconception which is resulting in vaccine hesitancy.

Faith

- COVID19 pandemic is a punishment from God.
- It is a sign of the devil /Mark of the beast (666).
- Death after 1 year or two years.

Norm.

- It's for the rich, it's over, I can't get it.
- The vaccine is given to reduce birth rate in Africans.
- Covid cannot kill Africans or blacks, so the vaccine is designed to kill Africans/blacks
- Vaccines lead to infertility

Experience

- Grave vaccine side effects.
- Money making for government.
- The vaccine is not safe and effective that's why they insisted the use of face mask even after vaccination
- Contains a microchip which changes people's DNA.
- Covid-19 vaccines leave a man, not a man anymore.



The challenge of Faith in Vaccines hesitancy



- Some Faith and religious beliefs have provided protection against COVID-19 encouraging followers not to take COVID19 vaccines, seriously.
- Furthermore, Faith leaders and communities have promoted false and even harmful cures and divine interventions as opposed medical intervention.
- A case of the Apostolic churches in Zimbabwe, who do not participate in vaccination programmes because they are against the use of modern medicine.



Addressing Vaccine hesitancy: The role of FLs

- Religious leaders have a captive audience at weekly services and other regular and special events.
- Providing emotional and spiritual support.
- Collaborating with healthcare workers. (Case of SL)
- Lead by example, publicly getting vaccinated and sharing their experiences.
- Addressing vaccine hesitancy through community dialogues, enabling them to demystify the myths and misconceptions.
- Leveraging their platforms to disseminate accurate and evidence-based messages to the congregants.
- Organizing vaccination activities.



Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy SL and Zimbabwe

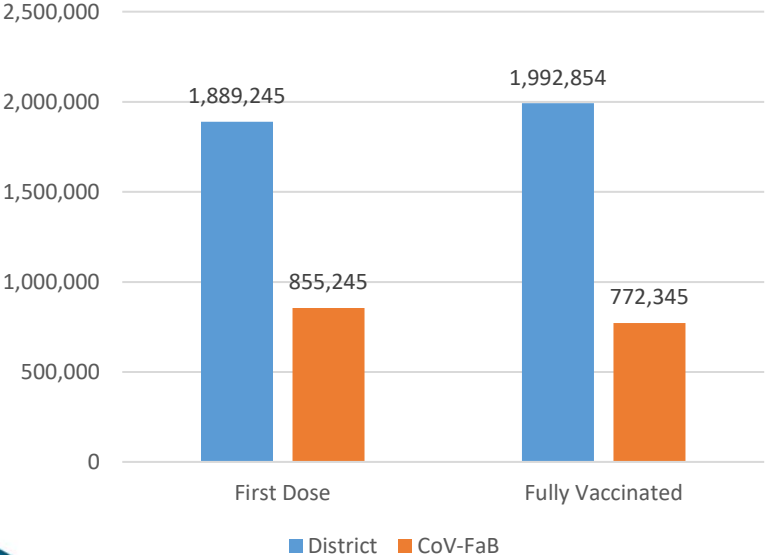


ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	ZACH	CHASL
Information and advocacy meeting.	To equip Faith Leaders with information to educate and advocate for vaccines uptake in their communities	09	N/A
Faith Leaders Engagement meeting on Sermon Guides review and IEC Material review. Adapted from United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, IMA, ETC...	Equip religious leaders with adequate information to share with their congregants on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.	09	12
Briefing meeting with the Inter-religious council about the CoV-FaB project	To get buy-in of Faith leaders and address their concerns.	N/A	07
Community dialogues with FLs. <i>In Kroo Bay 12 community members had their vaccine immediately after the meeting.</i>	To create an inclusive and supportive environment where accurate information is shared, concerns are addressed, trust is built, and collaborative efforts are undertaken to increase vaccination uptake	60	20
Media engagement workshop	To build capacity of RLs, gain the required knowledge and skills, rollout effective media engagement activities on the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.	23	12
National level meeting with Faith Leaders to establish drivers of vaccine hesitancy and discuss strategies to improve vaccination uptake.	To establish drivers of vaccine hesitance and draft strategies on how they can be addressed.	20	N/A

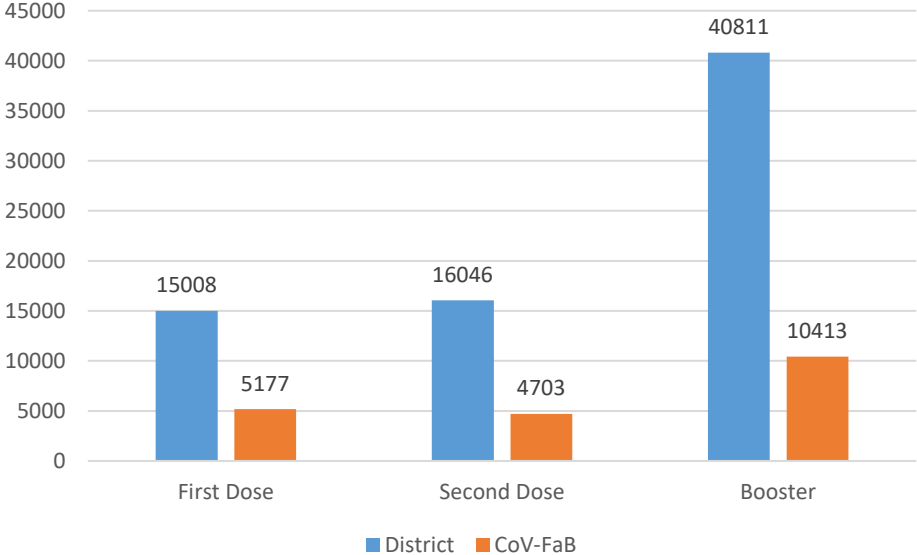
CoV-FaB contribution as of March 2023



CoV-FaB-SL Vs District Contribution



CoV-FaB -Zim Vs District Contribution



Testimonies from Faith Leaders

Sierra Leone -Rev. Patrick Momoh – Kissy Community “I have always believed that Covid-19 virus is an artificial one and only God can kill me, but with the advent of this advocacy workshop and some of the sermon guide reviewed, this has motivated me to take the Covid 19 vaccine and have also opted to be a champion on Covid 19 vaccination.

Zimbabwe -Rev. Chamunorwa Mugabe – Methodist Church “ I have been able to encourage the different communities under our church to vaccinate, I was among the people who were doubting Covid-19 and the vaccines, but after getting the right information from ZACH, I continue to be an advocate of COVID-19 vaccine uptake. My wife was vaccinated when she is pregnant, and she produced a very healthy baby with all body parts intact.



Lessons learned

- Community dialogues with religious leaders revealed that communities lack information regarding the significance of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Faith/religious leaders possess the potential to mobilize the community effectively once they are equipped with the required knowledge and skills.
- Emphasizing the importance of vaccine uptake and sharing straightforward, evidence-based messages has inspired Faith-leaders to promote useful information about the COVID-19 vaccine. This effort aims to counteract myths and misconceptions and encourage people to get vaccinated, ultimately preventing the spread of the virus.





THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

