

USAID COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Assistance Implementing Partners Forum

COVID-19 Vaccination Risk Communication and Community Engagement and Microplanning for COVID-19 Capacity Building of Community Health Workers to Address Vaccine Hesitancy in Selected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

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Addressing vaccine confidence and acceptance

CHALLENGE

The Department of Health (DOH) launched a vaccination campaign, which focused on capacitating the regional and local implementers in creating demand for COVID-19 vaccines. It aims to address the poor primary series immunization rates among elderly and the low uptake of COVID-19 boosters in the selected sites in priority areas in Luzon. This was done through evidenced-based demand generation and develop knowledge and skills necessary to conduct effective community engagement. The need to recalibration COVID-19 vaccination microplans to focus on the promotion of booster doses was suggested due to observed complacency of not needing booster doses. Capacity building on Risk Communication and Community Engagement Microplanning (RCCEM) using the different modules developed by DOH, WHO and UNICEF. Trained individuals cascaded the RCCEM training using the modules to Luzon project sites (Caloocan City, Quezon City, Batangas, Cavite, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija) provincial and city-wide health office Health Promotion officers (HEPO) and social mobilizers. The RCCEM and demand generation activities were complemented by house-to-house COVID-19 vaccination, prioritizing areas with low vaccination coverage and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas and people who belong in marginalized sector.

INNOVATION

The PinasLakas COVID-19 vaccination campaign, in partnership with DOH, WHO, and UNICEF, highlighted the need to conduct Risk Communication and community engagement (RCCE) training. This aimed to empower community stakeholders, create evidence-based microplans, and intensify COVID-19 vaccine demand generation in selected sites in Luzon with low COVID-19 vaccination coverage. The training capacitated the program managers, implementation teams, and community stakeholders with effective strategies and communication techniques. Highlighting community engagement as a strategy to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, the campaign sought to increase vaccination acceptance and COVID-19 vaccination coverage.

INNOVATION

The RCCEM training was cascaded to community health workers and social mobilizers in the selected sites with poor accomplishments. The Community health workers (CHW) implemented COVID-19 demand generation and community engagement strategies as stipulated in their respective microplans. As COVID-19 vaccination champions, CHWS conducted various barangay assemblies and house-to-house COVID-19 campaigns to promote booster doses for the general population and primary series vaccinations for our senior citizens. Evidence-generation tool such as the Hesitancy Monitoring Tool was able to profile households with unvaccinated individuals and capture reasons for vaccine hesitancy. Reasons for vaccine hesitancy were then fed back to the health offices to guide them in recalibrating their COVID-19 vaccination microplans and, at the same time, provided basis for the health offices in the conduct of supportive supervision to the CHWs and social mobilizers to effectively create more demand for the COVID-19 vaccines.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

The rollout of RCCEM training in 6 Reachhealth projects sites in Luzon, they were able to train 293 community health workers and social mobilizers and assisted in the development of 78 COVID-19 demand generation microplans of LGUs who participated the training. These microplans serve as strategic guides for implementing targeted vaccination campaigns and engaging with communities effectively to promote COVID-19 vaccines. As of December 31, 2022, the social mobilization activities in the supported sites successfully reached 13,219 individuals, and 10,297 of them received COVID-19 vaccinations. This conversion rate of 77.90% underlines the usefulness of the RCCEM training in generating demand and facilitating vaccine uptake in the supported sites.



Risk Communication and Community Engagement training



Social mobilizer using the hesitancy monitoring tool during the house-to-house COVID-19 vaccination

APPLICATION TO ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION OR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The acquired skills gained by CHWs from the training can be used in generating demand for other health services such as routine immunization. Through their enhanced capacity, they can further effectively recalibrate strategies based on evidence. The campaign's emphasis on community engagement and risk communication reflects the participatory nature of primary health care. By training CHWs, the campaign empowers local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes related to COVID-19 vaccination and other health programs such that of the routine immunization.