

## Fostering vaccine confidence: Voices from the DRIVE Demand project

*By: Laura Kallen, Digital Square*



A young girl receives a vaccine at a pop-clinic in Bamako, Mali implemented as part of DRIVE Demand in 2024. Photo: PATH / Ibrahima Togola

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged immunization programs around the world. UNICEF estimates that, between 2019 and 2021, there were [67 million children](#) who missed out on all or some of their routine vaccines, and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines was also limited in many settings. These vaccination gaps put populations at risk of preventable diseases and increase vulnerability to future epidemics.

To help accelerate COVID-19 vaccination and catch young children up on missed routine immunizations, many governments introduced, adapted, or expanded the use of digital health tools in their immunization and health systems. Such digital tools have immense potential to improve routine vaccination and pandemic response by identifying which households are unvaccinated, enabling precision service delivery. Using evidence-based communications, digital platforms can then be used to trigger action.

With support from The Rockefeller Foundation, Digital Square at PATH implemented the Digital Results Improve Vaccine Equity and Demand (DRIVE Demand) project from June 2022 to June 2024. DRIVE Demand aimed to aid and inform efforts to increase vaccine access and acceptance rates in six countries—Honduras, Mali, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, and Zambia—through digitally enabled interventions. The project worked with the countries’ health ministries to adapt, expand, or switch to new digital health tools that better meet the long-term needs of the health ministry while simultaneously addressing barriers to vaccination such as access, trust, and information sharing. Much of the latter was informed by behavioral research focus group discussions, led by the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics as part of the project, along with community-based user testing of social and behavior change (SBC) messages optimized for sharing via SMS and digital social media platforms.

In this blog, we amplify the perspectives of some of the participants and implementers of DRIVE Demand on issues around vaccine hesitancy and confidence—and how accurate and timely information sharing through digital channels can help build confidence and improve vaccine uptake.

The right information can make all the difference.

Information can have a large impact on people’s behaviors, such as whether or not to get vaccinated. These DRIVE Demand participants reflected on the power of accurate, tailored, useful information.



**My husband stopped all our children from getting the COVID vaccine because he did not understand, but then the nurses explained it to us and we all got the vaccine.**

**JANE ZIMBA**

Focus group participant, Kafue district, Lusaka, Zambia

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Whether through radios, mosques, religious gatherings, or wherever people gather, it is important to convey the right information about the importance of vaccination to overcome existing difficulties among the population and among healthcare workers. For me, if information is provided in a timely manner and in the right way, it facilitates good work practice, because we all want to do the vaccination work well.

**AICHATA MAIGA**

Community Health Worker, Reference Health Center in Commune I, Bamako, Mali

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Community champions are key to help encourage vaccination.

Along with having the right messaging, social and behavior change (SBC) communication must also consider the messenger. In Uganda, DRIVE Demand hosted focus groups with teachers to inform the Ministry of Health’s strategies to use teachers as local vaccine champions. Similarly, in Mali, the project utilized pre-existing mothers’ groups as places to both share information and foster mothers as vaccine champions among their communities.

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My passion lies in caring for children. Although many parents initially hesitate to embrace vaccination, we, as teachers, have strived to clarify that it is safe for their children and themselves. I feel at ease sharing vaccination information, particularly in today’s world where vaccination is vital to protect against numerous diseases. Our collective effort contributes to a healthier community.

**KITAKA ROALD**

Teacher at Naggulu Umea Primary School in Wakiso District, Uganda

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I am confident and at ease when discussing vaccination with parents. I readily encourage parents to ensure their children receive vaccinations.

**MARGARET IKOKO-KYEBANDO**

Teacher at Naggulu Umea Primary School in Wakiso District, Uganda

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According to [the mothers' focus group participants], if everyone had the right information, there would be no problem with vaccination. These women are part of the same community and will be channels to disseminate the correct information.

**PROFESSOR FATOUMATA DIAWARA**

Mali Institute for Health Research

Digitally enabled messaging can help save lives.

When equipped with the right type of messaging and imaging tailored to local concerns and values, digital platforms for immunization promotion can be powerful tools to increase vaccination coverage. DRIVE Demand Thailand worked with the Department of Disease Control Foundation to create mock-ups of immunization promotion graphics for mobile platforms and tested them with Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) in Bacho and Rueso districts of Narathiwat province.



I think the digital SBC messages are beneficial for locals to understand what will happen to their children if they are unvaccinated and reach children in need. The displayed mock-ups can make more visualization and impact apart from sharing the message only.

**ARLEEYAH WALAEH**

VHV in Bacho district, Narathiwat province, Thailand



I think the digital messaging is impactful. Apart from sending text, images can make people visualize the effect if their children are vaccinated or unvaccinated. When I interviewed caretakers, I showed them the mock-ups. They smiled when they looked at the photograph of a happy family.

**MRS. ROKIYOH SALAEH**

VHV in Rueso district, Narathiwat province, Thailand



Building local capacity and ownership helps ensure sustainability.

As a two-year project, DRIVE Demand intentionally sought to ensure that all activities, platforms, and adaptations could be sustainably carried on after the project—and the COVID-19 pandemic—ended. To do this, the team partnered closely with local authorities and partners throughout the project to ensure alignment, shared visions, and adequate local capacity to manage efforts going forward so that all six countries could reach their immunization targets and strengthen preparedness for future pandemics.



With the influx of resources into country health systems due to Covid-19, the DRIVE Demand project prioritized sustainable interventions from the onset. DRIVE Demand partners sought to ensure that digital health adaptations for Covid-19 would build better health systems for the future.

**GREGORY KUZMAK**  
Health Director, The Rockefeller Foundation



We understand the importance of the work that has been carried out in the localities. We have obtained all these results. The results are not enough; these efforts need to be sustained because, until now, many children have not yet received their vaccines. They need to receive these vaccinations to protect them against vaccine-preventable diseases.

**TENIN TRAORE**  
Regional Health Director, Bamako, Mali



With this focus on sustainability, the DRIVE Demand project illustrates how user-led design and development of data-driven digital innovations can have a lasting impact.