



Harnessing Interpersonal Communication and Trusted Leadership to increase COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake in Hard-to-reach Wildlife Communities in Uganda

Barbra Natifu^{1*}, Leonard Bufumbo¹, Emma Kayongo¹, Paul Odeke¹, Brian Asiimwe¹, Arthur Kiconco¹, Mabel Naibere¹, Nanah Claren Nanyonga¹, Denis Mujuzi¹, Abdulaziz Tugume², Gessa Simplicious³, Elizabeth Kaniwabo⁴, Venansio Ahabwe¹, Ruth Musekura-Kwizera¹, Glory Mkandawire¹, Jen Orkis¹, Dr. Arzum Ciloglu¹, Leanne Wolff¹, Bashir Hangi³, Dr. Richard Kabanda², Dr. Gladys Kalema Zikusoka⁴, Dr. Judith Nalukwago¹

¹ Johns Hopkins University | ² Ministry of Health, Uganda | ³ Uganda Wildlife Authority | ⁴ Conservation Through Public Health

The participants strongly highlighted the need to use interpersonal communication to reach communities in and around National parks with vaccination promotion messages. Thus, USAID SBCA supported the Government of Uganda to refresh the 'Kijja Kuggwa' ('It will end') Hope Campaign to support IPC activities and integrate COVID-19 messages into the routine community activities of game rangers, fisherfolk and tour guides

Abstract Reference

PP18

BACKGROUND

In Uganda, communities living around National parks are often prone to infectious diseases and yet they have a low-risk perception of acquiring the diseases.



The COVID-19 pandemic increased the disproportionate access to preventive messages among these marginalized communities. As such, the USAID Social and Behaviour Change Activity in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Uganda Wildlife Authority, and Conservation Through Public Health conducted a qualitative participatory action research to understand the risk perceptions, barriers and facilitators to COVID-19 vaccination among wildlife communities living around Queen Elizabeth National Park in Rubirizi and Kasese districts, Southwestern Uganda.

METHODS

The study was qualitative and employed purposeful sampling of 36 participants aged 25 to 40 years. Two focus group discussions were conducted comprising of 15 fisherfolk, pastoralists and peasant farmers, 17 game rangers and 4 tour guides.

RESULTS

Barriers to Vaccination Uptake

The findings revealed several barriers, myths and misconceptions about Covid-19 vaccination and uptake including:

- Vaccines reduce sexual performance in men,
- Vaccines are aimed at population reduction of African race,
- Vaccines were perceived as a mere business,
- COVID-19 was viewed as a disease for the affluent,
- Vaccines were perceived as satanic (getting into the 666 community),
- Mixed or inconsistent information from the government about vaccination,

Barriers to COVID-19 Public health measures:

- Abandonment of preventive measures citing no risk of infection,
- Inconsistent face mask use, sharing of masks to go through security checks,
- Engaging in burial rituals such as vigils.

Facilitators to Vaccination Uptake:

- Leaders modelling desired behaviour was suggested as key to uptake and establishing government trust,
- Receiving messages from those who had been vaccinated or COVID-19 survivors,
- Use of Interpersonal communication (IPC) approaches such as Village Health Teams, church leaders, community meetings and use of community audio towers,
- Advanced audience profiling to identify appropriate channels to reach audiences.



Some of the Game rangers who participated in Day two of the audience consultations at Queen Elizabeth National Park. Photo credit: Dennis Mujuzi

CONCLUSIONS

The participants strongly highlighted the need to use interpersonal communication to reach them. Thus, USAID SBCA supported the Government of Uganda to refresh the Kijja Kuggwa campaign to support IPC activities and integrate COVID-19 messages into the routine community activities. The campaign uses a channel mix to promote COVID-19 vaccination messages through, Print, TV, radio, social media, and addresses rumours and misconceptions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to: Ministry of Health, USAID, USAID Social and Behaviour Change Activity, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Conservation Through Public Health, Uganda National One Health Platform and the study participants.

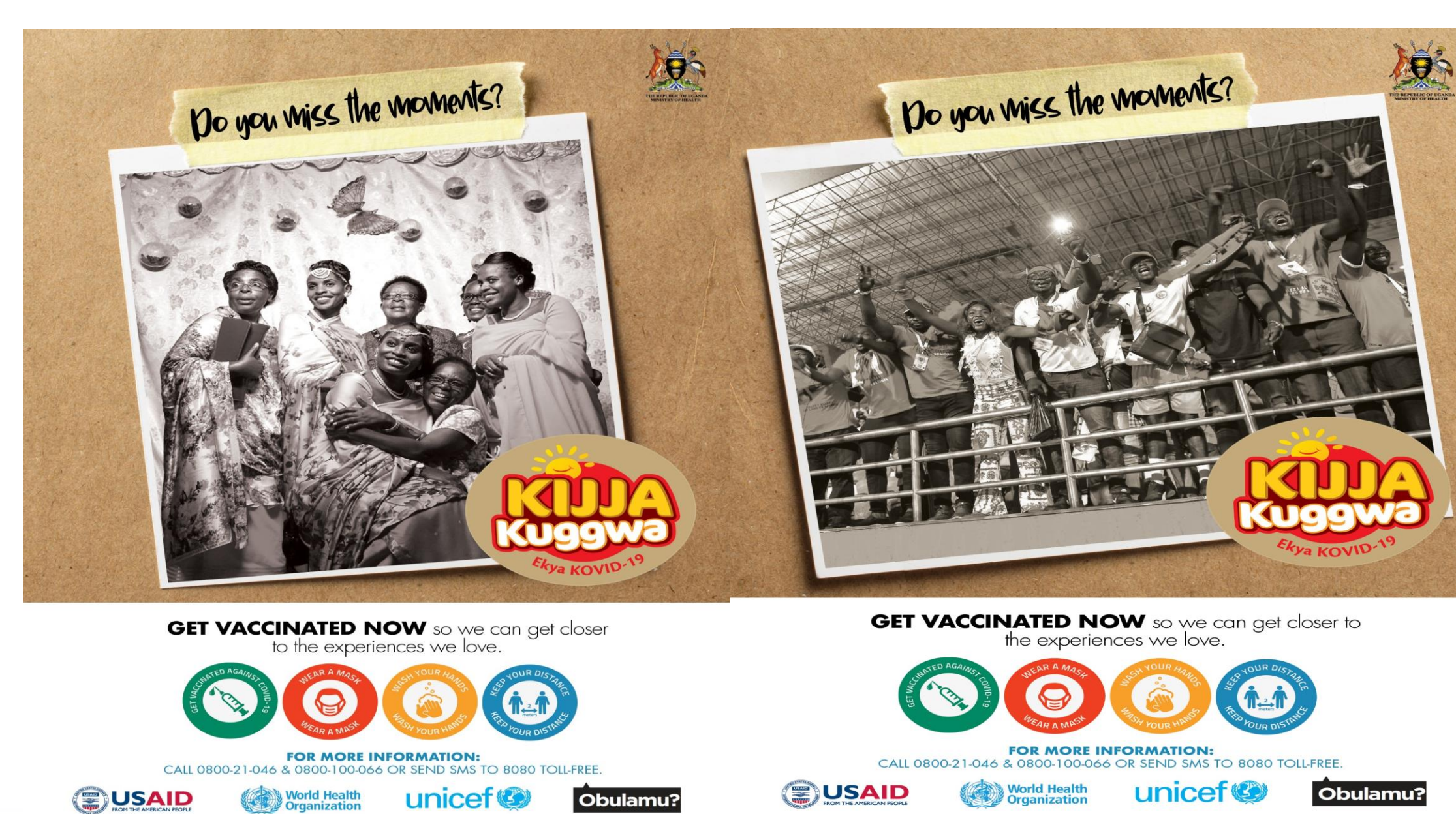
MORE INFORMATION / REFERENCES

USAID Social and Behaviour Change Activity -Kijja Kuggwa Campaign

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1GAi02CCx12KUN5At5qRO58uvFyCchs6e>

CONTACTS

For more information about this research contact the Research Monitoring and Evaluation Team Lead at USAID SBCA nalukwagoj@jhccpug.org or GHSA Specialist at natufub@jhccpug.org and about SBCA, contact the Chief of Party, mkandawireg@jhccpug.org



Presented at the Inaugural ONE HEALTH Conference

1 - 3 November 2021

sbs.co.za/AfricaCDC2021



List of Authors

- **Barbra Natifu**, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Leonard Bufumbo, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Emma Kayongo, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Paul Odeke, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Brian Asiimwe, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Arthur Kiconco, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Mabel Naibere, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Nanah Claren Nanyonga, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Denis Mujuzi, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Abdulaziz, Tugume Ministry of Health, Uganda
- Gessa Simplicious, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda
- Elizabeth Kaniwabo, Conservation Through Public Health
- Venansio Ahabwe, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Ruth Musekura-Kwizera, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Glory Mkandawire, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda
- Jen Orkis, Johns Hopkins University, USA
- Dr. Arzum Ciloglu, Johns Hopkins University, USA
- Leanne Wolff, Johns Hopkins University, USA
- Bashir Hangi, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda
- Dr. Richard Kabanda, Ministry of Health, Uganda
- Dr. Gladys Kalema Zikusoka, Conservation Through Public Health, Uganda
- Dr. Judith Nalukwago, Johns Hopkins University, USAID SBCA, Uganda