

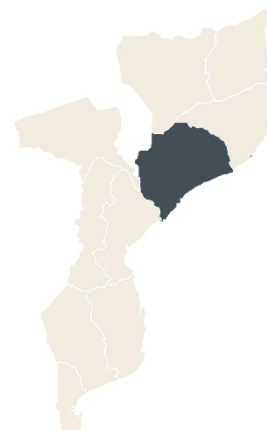
A qualitative, participatory research study to examine determinants of and potential solutions to immunization dropout among children below two years in Gilé and Namarroi districts, Zambézia



Every child deserves access to life-saving vaccines, but many children are still not fully vaccinated. Globally, the number of children fully immunized has plateaued over the last decade, leaving nearly 20 million children under-immunized.ⁱ Reaching these children is a global priority.ⁱⁱ Particularly as COVID-19 disrupts routine immunization, understanding how to improve full vaccination coverage is more critical than ever.

In Zambézia Province, Mozambique, only half of children were fully vaccinated in 2015.ⁱⁱⁱ The Ministry of Health's (MISAU) Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) aims to reduce vaccine dropout rates among children under two years by 10% by 2024.^{iv}

VillageReach and Zambézia DPS are conducting a participatory study that will engage health workers and caregivers of partially vaccinated children between the ages of 25-34 months to better understand the barriers to completing full vaccination and identify community-driven solutions to improve full vaccination.



Zambézia, Mozambique

Elevating community voices and perspectives in immunization research

Many studies have identified obstacles to immunization, but entrenched barriers persist. Caregivers and health workers know best what barriers they face and how to address them. To build truly people-centered health systems, their involvement is key. This study seeks to amplify the voices of caregivers and health workers and uncover new insights by using principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and human-centered design (HCD) to fully engage community members and health workers in generating new knowledge and solutions.

In this study:

- **Local caregivers from the community conduct the research**, empowering them with skills
- **Caregivers and health workers are involved in both collecting information and reflecting on it**, making them critical stakeholders in decision-making
- **Caregivers and health workers work together to co-create solutions** that work for them to improve immunization of young children, increasing ownership

Study objectives

- 1 Identify and describe the primary drivers** of why some children under two are not completing their full immunization schedule, including both pre-COVID-19 and during pandemic conditions
- 2 Identify community-driven solutions** to improve full immunization of all children below two years
- 3 Assess the extent to which using CBPR and HCD principles engaged participating health workers in active listening** about the barriers caregivers face when vaccinating their children

This study was approved by the Comité Nacional de Bioética Para Saúde (IRB 00002657) and received administrative approval from DPS Zambézia and the Minister of Health.

Research methods

This study will involve an iterative process of engaging community perspectives and collectively creating solutions, with community members involved in every part of the process.

Local caregivers trained as researchers in Gilé and Namarroi districts in Zambézia will:



Interview **30 other caregivers**, including asking caregivers to take and describe photographs that reflect their experience vaccinating their children under the age of two



Interview **health workers** and collect their ongoing observations via SMS over the course of a month of providing vaccinations to children under the age of two



Facilitate HCD **workshops** with caregivers and health workers to review the barriers identified and generate potential solutions

All participants will be asked for informed consent prior to participating.

Timeline

September 2020	●	Interview caregivers and request caregivers to take photographs
October & November 2020	●	Interview health workers and collect their observations via SMS
December & January 2021	●	Hold workshops to design solutions to improve full immunization
February & March 2021	●	Share findings with participants, government officials and broader research community
Ongoing	▼	Continued exploration of and advocacy for identified solutions

Insights generated through this study related both to research methods and potential solutions will be shared to expand the global knowledge base of new strategies to increase equity in immunization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact: **Emily Lawrence**, Co-Investigator, emily.lawrence@villagereach.org
Bvudzai Magadzire, Principal Investigator, Bvudzai.Magadzire@villagereach.org
Baltazar Chilundo, Co-Investigator, +258 84.315.8350
Aida Coelho, Senior Program Manager, aida.coelho@villagereach.org

ⁱ UNICEF and WHO. July 2020. Progress and Challenges with Achieving Universal Immunization Coverage.

ⁱⁱ Immunization Agenda 2030: A Global Strategy To Leave No One Behind; Gavi 5.0

ⁱⁱⁱ DPS Zambézia. (2019). Relatório anual de 2019 do Programa Alargado de Vacinação. Direcção Provincial de Saúde de Zambézia.

^{iv} Republic of Mozambique Ministry of Health National Immunization Program Comprehensive multi-year plan (cMYP) 2020 - 2024