

# Promoting Research Equity and Participation Through Community Engagement: Lessons Learned from the PREVAIL InVITE Study in Liberia

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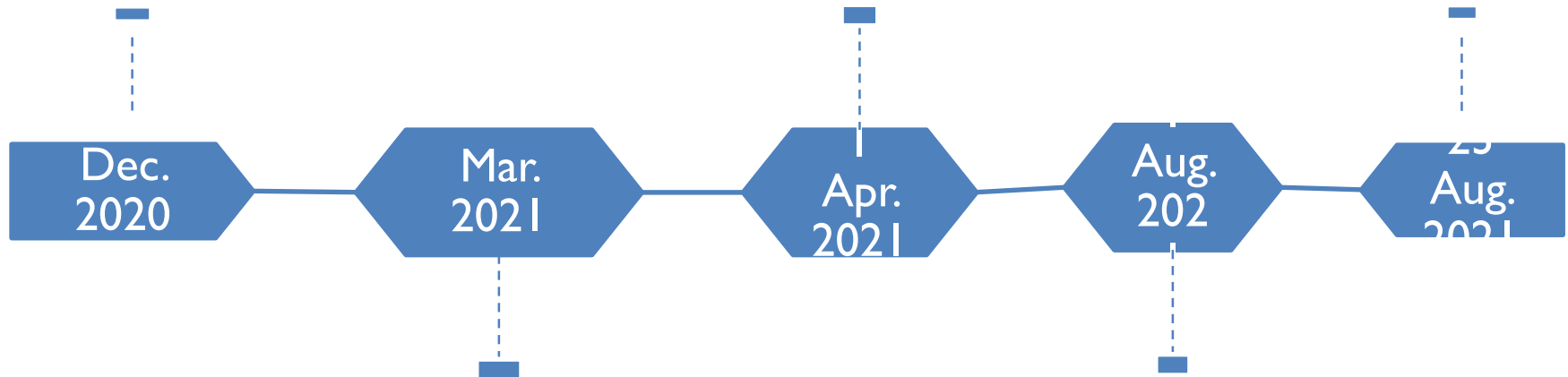


## Background

WHO issued  
first emergency  
use validation for  
a COVID-19  
vaccine

Liberia officially  
launched  
COVID-19  
vaccination  
campaign

Participants  
enrollment  
commenced



Liberia received the  
first consignment of  
COVID-19 vaccines  
- 96,000 doses  
received through  
the COVAX  
initiative

PREVAIL  
launched the  
InVITE study

## Background

- **InVITE** is the international study on COVID-19 vaccines to:
  - Assess immunogenicity and vaccine durability in people who received an initial or booster COVID vaccine regimen based on local guidelines
  - Detect SARS-CoV-2 infections post vaccination (breakthrough infection)
  - Conducted across multiple sites in the following countries:
    - Indonesia
    - Guinea
    - Mali
    - Democratic Republic of the Congo
    - Mexico
    - Mongolia
    - Liberia
- In Liberia, the study is implemented by PREVAIL
- PREVAIL is a Liberia-US joint partnership established in 2015 during the 2013-2016 Ebola epidemic

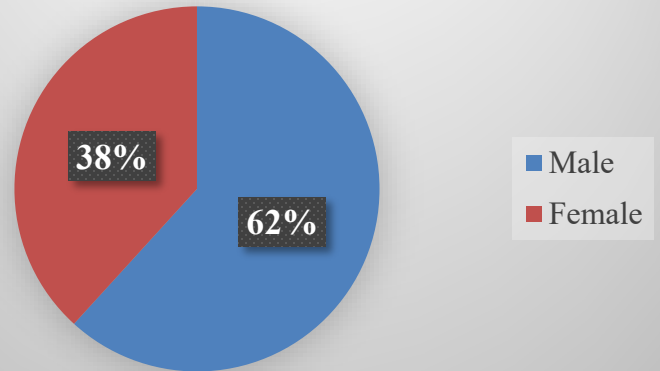
# Gender Discordance in Enrollment Rates

## **PREVAIL** InVITE Study

### **Early enrollment rates (Liberia): August – October 2021**

- Male 147
- Female 91
- National data also showed discordance in COVID-19 vaccination rates across Montserrado County

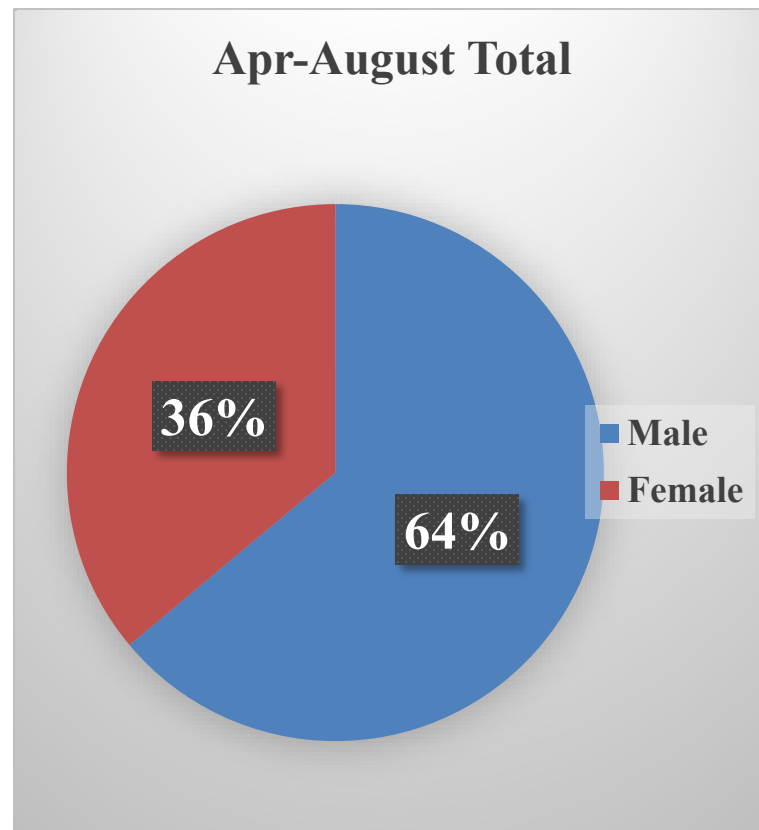
### **Enrollment Rate: August – September 2021**



# National Vaccination Data (Montserrado county)

## April – August 2021

Period	Number of persons vaccinated	
	Male	Female
21-Apr	1633	840
21-May	3377	2182
21-Jun	2608	1507
21-Jul	522	320
21-Aug	21353	11810
Apr-August Total	29493	16659



## Methods

### **PREVAIL Intervention to Address Gender Discordance**

#### **Advocacy & Community Engagement Meetings:**

- Meeting with local leaders and community influencers to solicit buy-in
- Community leaders and PREVAIL/MOH team organized small group meetings in identified
- Over 200 community members (mostly women) participated in these engagements

#### **Media Engagements:**

- Radio talk shows on community radio stations to provide public education on the importance of the PREVAIL InVITE study
- Engagements focused on enhancing community knowledge and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines in general and recruitment for the PREVAIL InVITE study
- **These activities were implemented from October to November 2021**



## Methods



## Results and Conclusions

### **Perceived Barriers to Women Participation:**

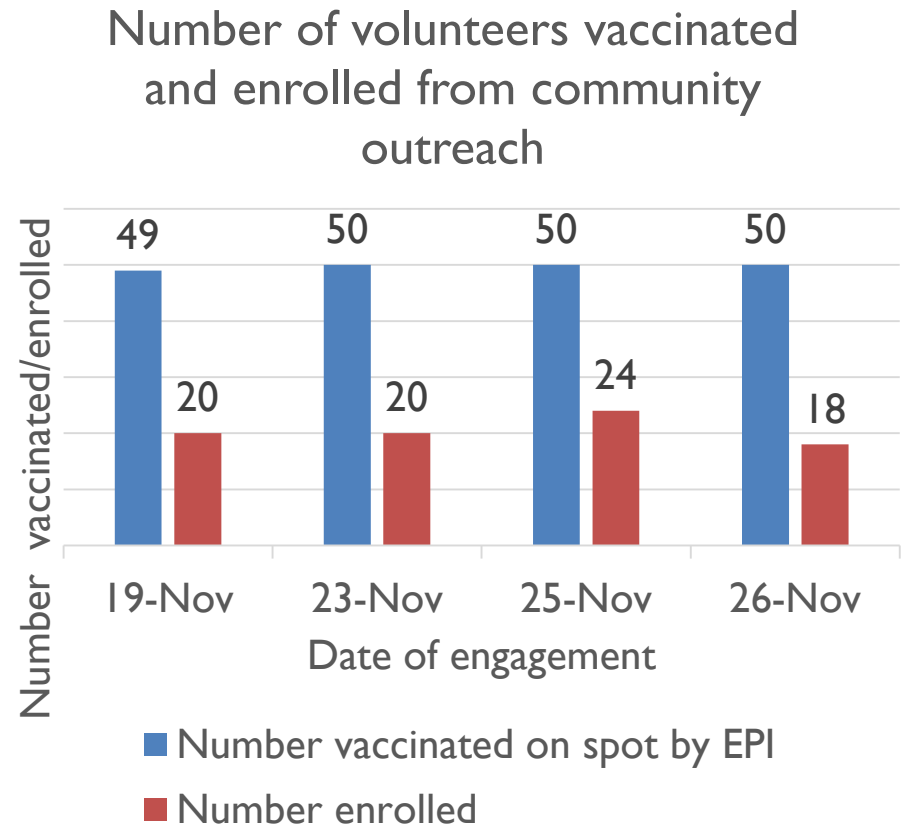
- Lack of access to COVID-19 vaccination information
- Inadequate education/awareness on the risk (if any) and benefits of taking the vaccine
- Health concerns
- Lack of active community involvement in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines
- Family responsibilities
- Limited mobility to reach health facilities or vaccination sites



## Results and Conclusions

### Outcome of Stakeholders Engagement & Community Outreach

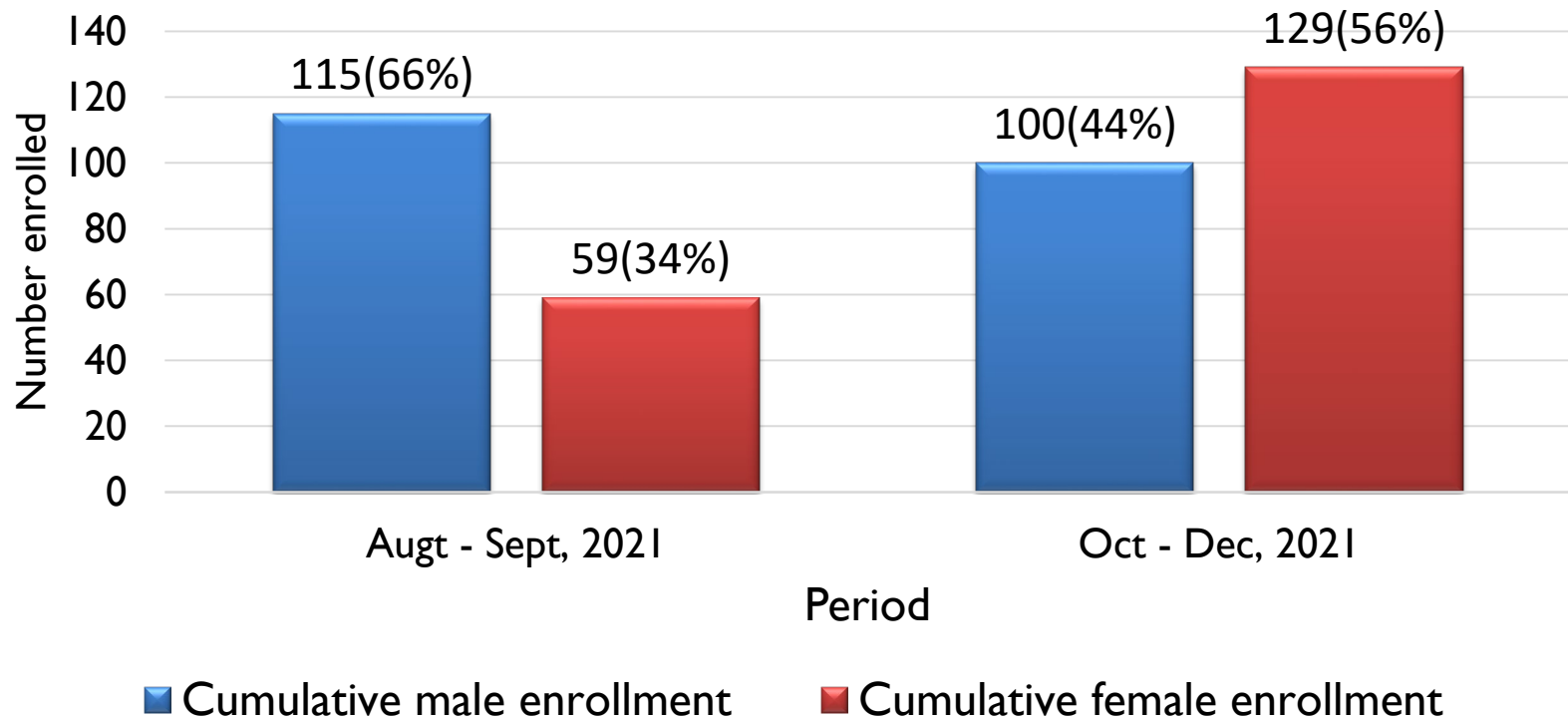
- During the community outreach activities, 199 (95%) community members received the COVID-19 vaccine on spot
- 82 vaccinated individuals enrolled in the InVITE study (76% female)



## Results and Conclusions

### Direct Impact on Enrollment

#### Enrollment by gender: August - December 2021

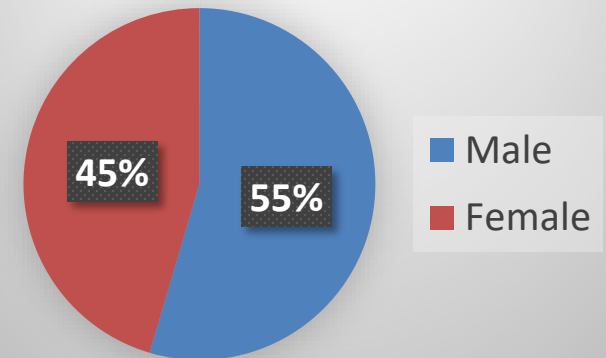


## Results and Conclusions

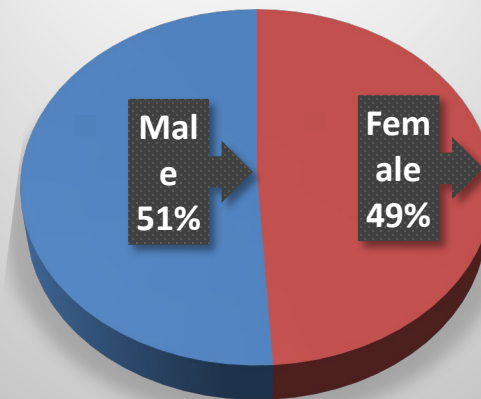
### Overall Impact

- Helped to increase community understanding and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines in Liberia
- Improved recruitment and retention for the PREVAIL InVITE study
  - **Total enrollment – 700 participants (August 2021 – April 2022)**
- Enhanced inclusion and equal participation across gender
- Strengthened local partnership, participation and ownership

**InVITE Study: total enrollment**



**National C-19 Vaccination Data: Gender Disaggregation**



# Recommendations

- Gender-based barriers must be addressed in the planning and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines; planning and implementation of COVID-19 vaccine research
- Women have special needs - listen to their concerns and seek to understand how vulnerabilities could become barriers
- Research and public health interventions must adopt a gender lens, one size does not always fit all
- Pandemic response must consider gender-context-specific channels and sources for trusted health information – the message and messenger are equally important
- Low uptake is not necessarily the product of hesitancy, uptake measures must be contextualized

# Recommendations

Community engagement must inculcate the concepts of:

- **RESPECT**
  - Respecting the views and interests of stakeholders
- **LEARNING**
  - Provides rich insights into people's experiences, views and concerns
  - Opportunity to reflect on what was/was not working, and why
- **ACCOUNTABILITY**
  - Identifying and engaging the right stakeholders improves accountability with host communities
- **TRUST**
  - Participatory stakeholders engagement is critical to building lasting credibility and trust – in research team(s), products and interventions

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