

INTRODUCTION

Vaccine delivery and uptake in Vietnam is reportedly very high (WHO, 2022). However, sporadic outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, diphtheria, and neonatal tetanus reveal that uptake is not uniform across the country (An *et al.*, 2016, Nguyen *et al.*, 2019, Vo *et al.*, 2019). Outbreaks in rural areas have predominantly been amongst ethnic minority communities. Oxford University Clinical Research Unit has worked in Dak Lak province, Central Highlands, Vietnam in partnership with the provincial Centre for Disease Control (CDC) since 2014 to conduct research on zoonotic infections, sero-surveillance, qualitative and quantitative research on vaccine uptake, and evaluation of community engagement interventions.

Our research shows that local healthcare workers play an essential role in encouraging and maintaining the community's vaccination behaviours. However, the village health collaborators are often low-paid volunteers with little training about vaccines or communication skills, and yet they are required to communicate about complex issues, often with community members of another ethnic group and language.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FRONTLINE VACCINATION STAFF

In response to these findings, we have collaborated with Dak Lak CDC to develop a training programme to enhance the capacity of commune vaccine staff, with a particular focus on supporting their communication about the vaccines and vaccination process. The outputs are a five-module training course, a training manual and a training of trainer (TOT) course for district-level and village-level health staff who deliver this training.

This course, 'Capacity Building for Frontline Vaccination Staff', and the TOT course have been piloted with health collaborators from 17 communes of CuMgar district, Dak Lak province, and with 26 district and village-level vaccine & health staff (2022-23). The participatory training programme not only enhances self-confidence by creating an active learning space for commune vaccine staff, but also ensures sustainability through capacity building for the trainers. Feedback from the pilot trainings show that the programme is suitable for local health staff to deliver it, and helpful for the commune vaccine staff to build their confidence and capacity.

“I feel more confident now, after being the trainer for the first time in my life; I think I just made the impossible possible!”

- Commune vaccine staff, Dak Lak province -

“This new training method focuses on the commune staff; it has them actively learn how to do their communication tasks”.

- Head of a Health Station, Dak Lak province -

It is our hope that this programme will be used widely throughout Vietnam to support health workers involved in vaccinations in rural areas, and thereby increase the well-being of the communities they serve, especially the disadvantaged and marginalized.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FRONTLINE VACCINATION STAFF

TRAINING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The training aims to enhance the capacity and impact of health collaborators in communicating about vaccination through the local health program. The main objectives of this training program are:

Objective 1: Health collaborators are more knowledgeable about vaccines.

Objective 2: Health collaborators gain a deeper understanding of the local community they are working with, including any local power dynamics and gender issues.

Objective 3: Health collaborators better understand engagement processes within the local context, and how to work effectively and cooperatively with cross-cultural community contexts.

Objective 4: Health collaborators are confident, persuasive and empathetic, and have strong communication skills for communicating about vaccination.

TRAINING PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The training contains five modules. Each module refers to different aspects of skills and knowledge in communicating about vaccination. They can be arranged flexibly, depending on the specific context of different communities and the needs of participants and trainers.

- *Module 1: **BUILDING TRUST***
- *Module 2: **PERSUASION SKILLS***
- *Module 3: **LANGUAGES***
- *Module 4: **LOCAL SUPPORT NETWORK***
- *Module 5: **VACCINES AND THEIR BENEFITS***