## Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on health systems globally as routine programs competed with the pandemic for limited resources.
- Health workers are a high priority population for COVID-19 vaccination, both because they are regularly exposed to the virus, and because they are key to vaccinating the general population.

## Specific Aims & Objectives

The Knowledge SUCCESS project led this assessment to:

- Document overarching lessons learned and effective practices in COVID-19 vaccination of health workers (HWs), with a focus on Africa.
- Document recommendations to inform the next emergency response and general health systems strengthening efforts.

## Methods

- In-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 24 USAID-funded COVID-19 vaccine implementing partners (IPs) and USAID Mission staff representing over 14 countries in Southern Africa and Asia.
- Participants were recruited via email using purposive sampling.
- Conducted virtually via Zoom, lasting approximately one hour, and conducted in French or English.
- IDIs and FGDs were recorded, translated and transcribed.
- Data was coded and analyzed using grounded theory to identify common themes.
- Secondary data sources included findings from two Learning Circles® workshops in which COVID-19 IPs discussed what works and what doesn’t regarding vaccination of high priority populations.
- Two three-day in-person regional Learning Circles cohorts were conducted — one in English and one in French — with 57 participants, including vaccine IPs and USAID Mission staff, from 29 countries in Africa.

## Results

HWs experience vaccine hesitancy due to:

- Knowledge gaps about the COVID-19 virus and vaccine, COVID-19 stigma, cultural elements, myths and misconceptions, political and religious influence, perception of vaccine safety and efficacy, social media misinformation, and the ‘swift’ vaccine development period.

### Lessons learned and Recommendations for future emergencies:

- Provide continuous training of HWs throughout roll out of vaccines or other interventions.
- Create partnerships between government, non-governmental organizations and private sector.
- Ensure availability of national database of HWs for better vaccine tracking data.
- Prepare health systems for emergencies and build on existing health mechanisms.
- Identify and utilize community influencers for SBC.
- Develop quick/clear communication with and among HWs including providing open feedback channels, treating HWs as an audience, use of digital media such as WhatsApp to provide information, develop rumor tracking mechanisms.
- Sensitize the population on adult vaccines.
- Involves HWs in the early stages of communication campaign design.

## Conclusions

This information will support COVID-19 vaccine implementing partners, host country governments, and institutions to identify, document, and apply lessons learned to inform the current COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen future emergency response and health system strengthening efforts.

## Acknowledgements

USAID, USAID implementing partners, Knowledge SUCCESS, Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

## References


2. Learning Circles. [https://knowledgesuccess.org/learning-circles/](https://knowledgesuccess.org/learning-circles/)

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