

VaxSocial Evaluation and Learning: Learning Summary #2

Trust-Building Through Localization

This Learning Summary is the **second** in a **five-part series** exploring key high-impact themes around promoting vaccine uptake, drawing on experiences from grantees and insights from wider literature. This summary centres on **trust-building through localization**, examining how locally tailored messages and trusted messengers can increase credibility, strengthen engagement, and drive positive behaviour change. This Learning Summary synthesises key insights across the grantees, on what's working, emerging thematic learnings, and challenges in addition to wider examples of best practice and findings from beyond VaxSocial.

One of the most surprising lessons from VaxSocial has been that content including **viral challenges**, context-relevant **memes**, and **local champions of vaccination messaging**, such as pharmacists and CHWs, have been able to do more to shift attitudes towards vaccine acceptance than polished videos and mass marketing.

It is clear that locally relevant messaging, delivered by **relatable messengers**, can be a powerful driver of engagement. This approach fosters **emotionally-resonant content** that feels like it truly **belongs to the communities it serves**.



What Grantees Are Doing

There are two key elements of trust-building through localization, **messengers** and **messages**. The following are examples of successful Grantees' strategies to tailor content and delivery channels to resonate with community values, to build trust and drive engagement:

Messengers

CISDI (Indonesia): Partners with local micro-influencers, as well as midwives and CHWs, to deliver credible localised messages

Upswell (Nigeria): Features community pharmacists as local influencers, who have been proven to outperform celebrities in relatability and impact

GHS (Indonesia): Leverages a blend of macro (e.g. influencers) and micro influencers (e.g. CHWs, local leaders, etc.), as well as healthcare professionals

NIVI (Nigeria): Engages healthcare providers and partners via onboarding and community events to support digital interventions

Group M (India): Trains ASHAs (community health workers) and local influencers to act as peer educators and content creators, enhancing authenticity and community trust

Messages

CISDI (Indonesia): Uses localized content (e.g. regional dialects) and relatable themes like child growth and development

Upswell (Nigeria): Emphasizes hope-based, social norming messaging (e.g., "Most families in your community...") and includes visual storytelling such as short-form dramas

GHS (Indonesia): Designs social posts with evidence-based information, and calls to action in local languages

NIVI (Nigeria): Uses memes and other content in Pidgin English, and chatbots to help address local concerns (e.g., social pressure)

Group M (India): Delivers informative storytelling content, like dialogue normalizing and contextualizing Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs) to reduce concerns

Key Emerging Thematic Learnings

Building on the implementation experiences and adaptive strategies of VaxSocial grantees, several cross-cutting themes have emerged that deepen our understanding of how localization can foster trust.



Local Messengers Are Trust Catalysts

People trust who they know. When guidance comes from familiar local figures like CHWs, it carries more weight. They can **bridge communities and institutions**, translating guidance into practical localised support, and **provide reassurance** at the same time.



Social Norms Spark Action

People don't just ask "Is it right?", they ask, "Is it normal?"

Messaging that shows vaccination as something peers are already doing activates a powerful social motivator. Localised campaigns that reflect **real choices**, move intentions closer to action.

Micro-influencers' credibility helps spread their message and drive action!

From GHS: Content from key opinion leaders (KOLs) had **more shares than posts from government or local media**, averaging **100k views**.

From VCF II: Peer champions of vaccine messaging increased **vaccine intention** by **45.5%**.



Micro-Influencers Outperform on Credibility

Influence is not just about virality, it's about authenticity.

While popular public figures increase reach, micro-influencers, like CHWs, carry more weight in terms of **perceived relatability**. Their presence in daily life makes their endorsements more persuasive.



Language Is More Than Translation, It's Recognition

Messages in native languages or dialects make people feel seen. Localised language is not just about boosting comprehension, but respectfully **signalling cultural awareness** too, reducing barriers to trust.



Community Co-Creation Enhances Authenticity

When communities help create and spread a message, they can feel like they own the outcome too. Messages **created with the target community** includes content featuring local voices (e.g. community leaders) or crowdsourced questions. This content creation gives communities **ownership of the message**, increasing chances of trust, uptake and peer sharing.



Listening First Unlocks Trust

Trust doesn't begin with persuasion, it begins with validation. It's important to address the **fears, doubts**, and **lived experiences** of communities, such as side effect concerns, or misinformation. Messages that **acknowledge concerns before providing information**, especially when delivered by empathetic, community-rooted voices, are more likely to shift perceptions.

Local voices do not need to be limited to leaders and health experts!

From VCF II: In Kenya, a **community influencer model** was able to successfully use hairdressers as trusted spokespeople for vaccines, indicating how effective community voices can come from anywhere.

Community-generated content can leverage existing trends!

From NIVI: Over **7,300** conversations about vaccinations were generated with minimal spending, by sparking interest through a video based on a **trending social media dance** about vaccines children typically receive in the first two months.

Wider context: Evidence from wider literature aligns with the key themes that have emerged throughout the Grantees' work. Studies show that community health workers acting as **local influencers** can boost vaccination rates by **47%** (Junghans *et al.* 2023). Involving community stakeholders as **"equal partners"**, including letting them **co-lead on material design** also helps increase vaccination rates (Zhang *et al.* 2024). This can be done by:

- Establishing community partnerships
- Building community capacity by delivering vaccination knowledge training
- Delivering interventions proposed by community leaders
- Conducting outcome evaluation with community involvement

Finally, actively **validating concerns about vaccines** can help people be more trusting and open when subsequently learning about vaccination. **For example:**

*Across multiple experiments, it was found that listening to concerns around vaccines and affirming them as legitimate worries, before presenting facts to refute misinformed beliefs, increased vaccine acceptance compared to control groups (Holford *et al.* 2024)*

Challenges in Trust-Building Through Localization

While localization is essential to building trust, its implementation comes with a unique set of challenges. These span both the content of messages and the individuals delivering them, revealing practical, strategic and structural gaps that grantees are continuing to navigate.

Messengers

Capacity of local messengers: CHWs and other local messengers often lack the time to deliver or moderate vaccine content consistently.

Example grantee solutions: GHS suggests clear content workflows with timelines and feedback loops helps to reduce burden on CHWs

Concerns about credibility: Content distributed solely by local messengers could raise concerns of credibility, without a national/institutional voice.

Example grantee solutions: GroupM has partnered with state government and GHS features the Ministry of Health on their content, to boost credibility

Wider context: Local messengers who are resource constrained find **toolkits** with a range of resources, such as training videos, helpful in delivering messages efficiently (Hemmat *et al.* 2025; Vaccine Resource Hub, 2023). By clearly backing **local messages with credible national sources** as well, trust in messages can be boosted significantly (Leblang *et al.* 2024)

Messages

Engagement vs behavioural conversion: Some emotional messaging can lead to engagement, but low conversion in terms of chatbot use/vaccine action.

Example grantee solutions: Nivi plan to prioritise behavior-driven creatives, to ground messages in relevant contexts and actions

Language coverage and inclusivity: Despite efforts to localise content, there is a risk of excluding audiences who speak other languages or have limited literacy.

Example grantee solutions: GroupM are creating hyper-local content in regional languages and dialects to ensure accessibility

Wider context: Emotional appeals with **relatable stories** and **clear next steps** (e.g. "others have read more about vaccinations through this link") can turn engagement into action (Conlin *et al.* 2022). **Visual interventions** (e.g. videos, comics, etc.) are also the most **inclusive** channel for this type of health-related messaging (Galmarini *et al.* 2024)

Across both messengers and messages

Attribution and measurement of trust outcomes: Linking content or messenger activities to measurable shifts in vaccine confidence or uptake through localization and trust-building remains methodologically difficult. Most current metrics (e.g., CPA, likes, video views) capture reach or intent, so identifying metrics to capture trust towards messengers and messages is a challenge.

Example grantee solutions: Upswell are monitoring comments online, which could indicate things like trust, and backing that up with implementing tracking polls and exit interviews at PHCs and vaccination outreach events to further assess motivation and intent to vaccinate.

Wider context: Many projects generalise “trust” as one single-item measure (*Larson et al. 2018*). To address this, there are some validated scales across studies for measuring trust more deeply, such as the **Vaccine Trust Gauge (VTG)**, and the **Vaccination Trust Indicator (VTI)** (*Masoud et al. 2023; Ellingson et al. 2023*). These are large **multi-item scales** that break down trust into components, including feelings on specific aspects of vaccinations and vaccine messaging. For example:

- General Attitude Toward Vaccination: *Overall support or opposition to vaccines as an idea*
- Trust in Vaccine Manufacturers: *Confidence in pharmaceutical companies making vaccines*
- Trust in Public Health Authorities: *Confidence in national health organizations*
- Understanding of Vaccine Mechanism: *Understanding of how vaccines aid immune systems*
- Perceived Importance of Personal Vaccination: *Belief in the necessity of vaccination*
- Vaccination as Part of a Healthy Lifestyle: *Viewing vaccination as integral to health*

By integrating more **granular trust metrics** into surveys, interviews, and other data collection, it is easier to see if localised messages and messengers have improved public trust, and the extent to which this has led to changes in attitudes to, and increased uptake of vaccinations.

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