



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

INSIGHT INTO THE COVID - 19 VACCINATION PROCESS IN 11 DISTRICTS IN UGANDA AS AT AUGUST 2021.

Since May 2021, Uganda has been affected by a resurgence of COVID-19. Between March and April 2021, the country registered an 81% increase in the number of COVID-19 cases¹

Unlike the first wave where a high level of vaccine hesitancy was recorded, the second wave brought about a “rush” for the vaccines. With the limited number of vaccines available, it was crucial that principals of equity in distribution are adhered to, and that priority groups, remain first in line for vaccination. Such high levels of demand, combined with varied mechanisms for managing and monitoring the rollout of vaccine delivery, opens the door to corruption, which if left unchecked, will seriously reduce the impact that a COVID-19 vaccine is intended to have on protecting those most at risk.

It is upon this that TIU with funding from the TI-UK is implementing a project titled “Enhancing Equitable Access to Covid-19 Vaccines.” This project is aimed at ensuring that the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines is conducted in an equitable and transparent manner, ensuring that the right people are vaccinated, and there is no corruption in the delivery of the vaccine.

This project is being implemented in 11 districts that is; Kampala, Lira, Arua, Moroto, Soroti, Jinja, Kyotera, Masaka, Mubende, Hoima, and Kabale. TIU has had engagements with some of the members of the district task forces as well as some of the CSOs representatives operating in those areas. It is from these engagements that TIU documented the following feedback as an insight into the vaccination process in these districts as at August 2021.

1. Beneficiary fatigue in search for the vaccine.

TIU recognises the efforts by Ministry of Health and other partners in sensitizing citizens to turn up for the vaccines. In all the districts that TIU is operating, it was noted that the numbers of eligible priority groups turning up for vaccines vis a vis the vaccines received were overwhelming. Some of the beneficiaries that TIU interviewed reported that there was lack of clear information on where to go for the vaccination and as such they were being referred from one vaccination centre to another and in a day one would move to a minimum of four vaccination centres all in vain. In other scenarios, there was lack of information on the number of the available vaccines for that particular day at a given vaccination centre thus people waiting for long hours with no luck in obtaining the vaccines. This to a larger extent may discourage some persons from obtaining the vaccines. TIU recommends that the in-charges for the vaccination centres should adopt the first come first serve approach and only admit the number of people that can be vaccinated on that particular day. In addition, people should be informed before hand on the availability of the vaccines at a given vaccination centre to avoid the up and down movement.

¹<https://www.health.go.ug/cause/update-on-the-covid-19-pandemic-situation-and-vaccination-program/>

2. Inadequate number of cards vis a vis the number of doses delivered.

In most districts, it was reported that the number of cards that were received were not tallying with the number of doses delivered. In most instances, the cards were way less than the delivered doses. This brought about scenarios like; people being vaccinated but with no proof; people having cards with the same serial numbers as the vaccination team had to photocopy the available cards; while in other areas people were recorded in the register and advised that they should return to the same vaccination centre for the second dose in order to receive their cards. Such scenarios limit such persons to only obtaining that service at that particular vaccination centre which creates a risk of those person not turning up for the second dose or being denied the second dose from another vaccination centre because of lack of proof.

TIU recommends that Ministry of Health ensures that the number of cards distributed are adequate to cover the number of doses so as to rule out cases that people were holding cards when they are not vaccinated yet those that were vaccinated did not have cards.

3. Limited human resource at the vaccination site.

The vaccination process involves a number of activities including uploading the beneficiary data onto the Ministry of Health portal. In most of the districts, it was reported that because of the limited human resource, this data is usually uploaded a number of days after the vaccination. As such, because of the overwhelming data at some of the vaccination centres, this data is prone to errors and also people being missed out yet they had been vaccinated.

4. Limited observance of SOPs at the vaccination centres.

It was reported that although most of the persons at the vaccination centres endeavour to wear masks, other SOPs are barely followed. For example; social distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands. This exposes the persons at the vaccination sites to Covid 19 virus. TIU recommends that there should be a compliance officer at each vaccination site to ensure that the SOPs are duly followed.

5. People receiving cards without being vaccinated.

TIU recorded a few reports of people receiving the cards and being uploaded onto the Ministry of Health portal without being vaccinated. This poses a big risk to the communities in which they reside. TIU encourages the health workers to be more ethical and have integrity while conducting their work.

6. Suspected cases of bribery were also reported in some of these districts

There were reports among the population that the health officers were selling the vaccines to people who were due for their second dose and since the vaccines were very few. Though such reports did not have concrete evidence, TIU advised that the Ministry of health together with other partners should continue to sensitise the public that the vaccines are free of charge and that people should not pay to access it.

In conclusion, TIU will continue to document covid - 19 related issues that are reported through its toll free lines and those that are observed by the different beneficiaries and follow them up with the different duty bearers to ensure that equity in distribution of vaccines are adhered to.

TIU will continue to supplement onto the Ministry of Health efforts in the fight against Covid - 19.