CENTER FOR INNOVATION AND IMPACT
USAID | Global Health

Leveraging the Private Sector for the COVID-19 Response Concept Note
Vaccine Information & Community Engagement through Facebook and WhatsApp

Summary
Leverage the network, reach, and influence of Facebook and its associated 1:1 communication channels like WhatsApp to improve the distribution of accurate COVID-19 information, spark demand for the COVID vaccine, and create positive information campaigns to reduce vaccine hesitancy.

Problem Statement
Many countries are facing a high level of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, rampant mis or disinformation about COVID in general, and related to its vaccines, cures, treatments, or the origins of the virus, and mistrust in public health agencies or governments. In many places, these issues are resulting in insufficient demand for the COVID vaccine, improper use of masks, limited social distancing, and low levels of testing, reporting, or quarantining. Combined, these challenges can significantly impede a sub-national, national, and global response to COVID.

Proposal
Use Facebook's COVID Vaccine Information Center, ad campaigns, Data for Good program, and WhatsApp chatbots to disseminate accurate and timely information regarding COVID at the sub-national level, promote positive ad and media public health campaigns, and conduct robust M&E on the success of these efforts. These tools can help Ministries of Health and other government departments leverage the power of Facebook's multiple platforms and wide audience to enhance community engagement, generate demand for the COVID vaccine, and distribute information that can lead to appropriate action.

Main offerings
Facebook has engaged in many activities to combat COVID-19 and further the spread of accurate and timely information about the disease. One initiative included making the WHO website accessible to users in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) without incurring data charges. Other initiatives that Facebook offers or can offer LMIC governments include:

- **Connecting people to reliable information about COVID-19 vaccines, through:**
    - Use of the COVID Information Center, which is live in over 200 countries and has been translated into over 70 languages. This center enables Facebook users to get local information at scale by showcasing information from local, national, regional and global health authorities.

- Delivery of ad credits and media space to Ministries of Health or other public health organizations that are putting out health messaging. So far, Facebook has given more than $30 million in ad credits to help governments, NGOs, and other organizations reach people with COVID-19 vaccine information and other important messages. These information campaigns resulted in an estimated 10 billion ad impressions globally.
    - A sample COVID-19 vaccine campaign structure for a country can include several stages, beginning with awareness:
        - Phase 1: Build vaccine confidence amongst the general public by distributing the national vaccine rollout plan, facts about vaccine safety, ingredients, and population prioritization
        - Phase 2: Alert high-risk group 60+ in four regions by sending information about vaccine availability, registration sites, and vaccination locations
        - Phase 3: Register priority group for vaccinations by driving registrations on MoH or other website
        - Phase 4: Remind and reinforce behavior by sending reminders about registrations, vaccination dates, and locations
- Facebook can work with a country to tailor messages for the citizens of that country, such as encouraging vaccine registrations, social distancing, wearing masks, etc. This approach is similar to what Facebook has done in the past for certain countries by reminding individuals in a country to vote around the time of elections.

- **Conducting M&E to help drive decision-making and policy-making in LMICs:**
    - Facebook can support ad evaluations to help decision-makers see how effective their advertisement campaigns and messages are at encouraging individuals to display health-seeking behavior such as mask-wearing or vaccine registrations.
    - Facebook'sData for Good program has been implementing a COVID survey for over a year now with over 200 countries, collecting incredibly valuable information around the key drivers of vaccine hesitancy, mask usage, and uptake of behaviors. See visualizations here.
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- **Leveraging WhatsApp for push messaging:**
    - Given the ubiquity of WhatsApp in LMICs, Facebook has worked with the WHO and governments to access their API, working with developer partners to create chatbots for governments to promote health-related content.
        - For example, Facebook worked with the Ministry of Health in Buenos Aires, Argentina to create a chatbot around COVID testing availability and COVID vaccines, so users receive a notification that gives them a phone number to get MoH information on WhatsApp and a number to text to receive information. This approach enables user-initiated messaging and empowers citizens to take control over their own health in a secured and end-to-end encrypted platform.

- Since the start of the pandemic, WhatsApp has partnered with more than 150 national, state, and local governments, and with organizations like WHO and UNICEF, on COVID-19 helplines to connect over 2 billion users to accurate information and resources. Over 3 billion messages have been sent across these global helplines in the past year.

- As the pandemic enters a new phase in many countries, governments are using these helplines to connect citizens privately to accurate vaccine information and registration, in countries such as Indonesia, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and India. In Indonesia, 500,000 medical workers registered for their vaccine appointments on this service in its first 5 days.

- WhatsApp wants to help governments and international organizations connect as many people around the world to vaccine information and services as possible, especially those in hard-to-reach places or in marginalized groups. They have also waived the fees that come from sending messages through the WhatsApp Business API.

Timeline and Cost

Most of these activities are self-serve and can begin anytime. At this time, Facebook does not have an inbound request service.

Additional Resources

Tools for Governments to Respond to COVID-19
COVID Ad Messaging Findings
WhatsApp Use for Governments and Nonprofits