

Background

- Culturally diverse population, millions who identify as Indigenous Maya BUT the health care system does not serve this population well.
- As of February 2022, the country's COVID-19 **vaccination rate is less than 30%**; rates are especially low among Indigenous populations in Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez and, Suchitepéquez.
- We aimed to understand why these groups are not accessing the vaccines.

Project Description

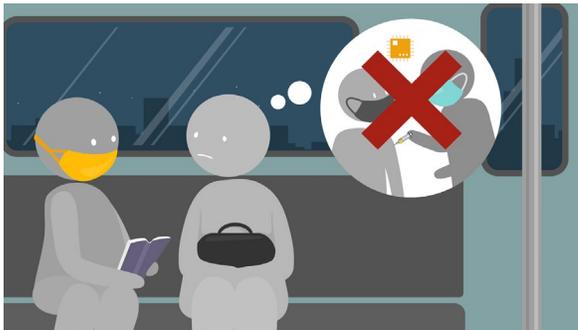
- In order to: 1) understand **COVID-19 vaccine perception**, 2) determine local COVID-19 **myths/misinformation**, 3) identify **trusted sources of messaging for Indigenous community members**, and 4) understand **how people prefer to receive health information**, including language, format, platform.
- Our collaborative team held **8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with community members and **16 in-depth Interviews (IDIs)** with community health workers (CHWs), nurses, and physicians.
- Our ultimate goal is to develop targeted media campaigns that help increase vaccine uptake in these populations.

Lessons Learned

- The Indigenous Maya population in the Central Highlands of Guatemala is **at high risk for vaccine myths and misinformation** due to their historical and current context.
- The **lack of information available in local languages** and **confusion** over changes to vaccine availability/prioritization **increases fear and mistrust** in the vaccine and public health systems.
- This makes the population especially vulnerable to myths and misinformation.

Community Partner

Wuqu' Kawoq | Maya Health Alliance is committed to **providing high-impact, collaborative, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health and development programs** for Maya populations.



Example of media material developed for the campaign

Outcomes

- Significant access barriers & confusion over eligibility/ vaccination dates is causing vaccine mistrust.
- Fear over side effects is common.
- 4 Common Myths: Vaccines 1) cause death, 2) implant tracking microchips, 3) cause infertility, and 4) are "against the will of God" or "will cause you to become marked by the Devil".
- Respondents prefer health messages that promote vaccine safety, promote members of the local community who are safely vaccinated, and encourage vaccination as a right and responsibility for the community's health.
- Respondents noted a need for messages in K'iche' and Kaqchikel - **the lack of health information in the Maya languages were a barrier for many community members!**

Recommendations

- Myths and misinformation must be understood within local cultural, political, and historical circumstances.
- Increasing vaccine acceptance requires integrating local understanding, cultural contexts, and languages into messaging.
- Campaigns would benefit by providing information in Indigenous languages.

Acknowledgements

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