



USAID/Senegal Building a Resilient Health System (BRHS) Project Doubles COVID-19 Vaccination Rate in One Month

Summary

In February 2022, the Chemonics-led Building a Resilient Health System (BRHS) project developed a strategy to design and support a **COVID-19 vaccine acceleration initiative (CVAI)** across nine of Senegal's 14 regions. BRHS worked with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Senegalese Ministry of Health and Social Action (MSAS) to pilot the initiative in the Kaffrine region, starting with Kaffrine district. With several partners involved, the CVAI built the capacity of health workers, addressed supply-and-demand factors affecting COVID-19 vaccination, addressed data integration and information system gaps, and implemented a results-based financing (RBF) mechanism based on a one-month vaccination campaign. As a result of the CVAI, one-dose COVID-19 rates in the Kaffrine district doubled in one month from 10% to 19%, and the coverage rate for full vaccination increased from 7.7% to 13%.

Success in Kaffrine demonstrates that a comprehensive, systems-based approach is necessary for Senegal's health system to achieve — and even exceed — an ambitious target in a brief period. Stakeholders credited the CVAI's RBF component with motivating regional and district managers and service providers to invest more time and energy into the campaign while maintaining the delivery of routine health services. BRHS will continue to share lessons learned from this initial pilot and its extension to nine regions of Senegal's 14 regions to further improve the design of and support MSAS' COVID-19 vaccination strategy in 2023.


BY THE NUMBERS



15,687
PEOPLE VACCINATED
achieving 127% of target



93%
OF FACILITIES ACHIEVED OR
EXCEEDED THEIR TARGETS
with the others achieving 89%
and 39% respectively



90%
INCREASE IN ONE-DOSE
VACCINATION RATES
with full vaccination rate
increasing from 7.7% to 13%

CVAI Prompted by Low Vaccine Coverage

One year after vaccines became available to the public, in February 2022 Senegal's COVID-19 vaccine coverage rate was among the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa, with less than 10% of the population having received only one dose. The MSAS developed a national-level vaccination coverage target of 50% of the eligible population (aged 18 or older) receiving at least one dose by the end of December 2022. To help achieve this, the Chemonics-led BRHS project developed and implemented the CVAI across nine regions.

BRHS selected the Kaffrine Region for the pilot because its vaccine rates were lower compared to the national average and due to the region's leadership's expertise and prior experience implementing RBF mechanisms in the health sector. Low vaccination rates in Kaffrine can be attributed to challenges in both vaccine supply and demand. Supply-side issues included stockouts of the vaccine when it was first available to the public and nurses being concerned about opening five-dose vials to prevent wasting any doses that might remain at the end of the day. On the demand side, misunderstanding about vaccines was widespread among the general population — including health workers. Misunderstanding arose due to poor communication and inconsistent messaging, varying opinions about the value and effectiveness of vaccinations being perceived as uniquely for children, and the country's relatively low COVID-19 incidence rate, leading people to believe that vaccination was unnecessary.



A community health worker completing a vaccination register in Kaffrine, Senegal. Photo Credit: USAID Senegal BRHS project. 2022

BRHS' Innovative Approach to Increasing Vaccine Access and Uptake

In late May 2022, the BRHS team held extensive discussions with Kaffrine's regional chief medical officer and his team and Kaffrine's district health team to jointly develop a district plan to implement the CVAI and to build consensus on the initiative's overall approach. The regional development committee, led by Kaffrine's regional governor, officially launched the CVAI in July 2022 through a ceremony that was attended by BRHS leadership, Kaffrine's regional leadership, United States Government Global VAX representatives, women's groups, youth groups, religious leaders, and community representatives.

CVAI activities sought to address a comprehensive set of supply-and-demand factors contributing to low vaccine coverage, as well as limited data availability and quality on COVID-19 vaccine coverage rates. The main activities consisted of the following:

Vaccine Supply Gaps Addressed

- Incentivizing regional- and district-level stakeholders to rapidly achieve campaign targets through an RBF mechanism.
- Retraining health workers on vaccine eligibility criteria, dosage schedules, and data monitoring and reporting expectations.
- Training health workers to facilitate constructive community dialogues on vaccine benefits, holding dialogues at all 30 of the Kaffrine district's health facilities to directly address rumors, false information, and vaccine hesitancy.
- Conducting supervision visits to facilities to observe health workers administering vaccines.
- Mobilizing seven "caravans," or mobile clinics, throughout the district to simultaneously increase community awareness of vaccine options and offer shots to the public.

Increased Demand for Vaccination

- Conducting a mass vaccination campaign during which regional/district leaders and health workers were challenged to double, over a one-month period, the number of people who had received at least one dose since vaccination began in February 2021.

- Organizing community-focused outreach practices, including house-to-house visits and mobile outreach to directly address and increase demand for community members who would not be able to access health facilities. Night vaccination outreach was organized to reach men, farmers, and herders who were not accessible during facility hours.
- Executing a contract with the Ussein FM radio station based in Kaffrine to deliver three broadcasts on the importance of vaccination.
- Meeting with religious leaders across the district to discuss the vaccine and encourage them to advocate for COVID-19 vaccination within their communities get vaccinated.
- Engaging journalists in Kaffrine to reinforce their capacities in communicating the importance of vaccination to the eligible population.

Data Integration Enabled Real-Time Data Use

- Tracking daily progress at regional, district, and facility levels using data reported into the district health information system.
- Using daily data updates to identify facilities that are not on track to achieve their targets. When lagging facilities were identified, BRHS contacted the district chief medical officer for immediate action and rectification.

Coordination for Efficient Implementation

- Coordinating with other implementing partners for a clear division of roles, responsibilities, and activities that address demand- and supply-side drivers of vaccination during the preparation/planning phase.
- Participating in weekly briefing and coordination meetings to monitor progress and adjust support as needed.

Targets and Rewards

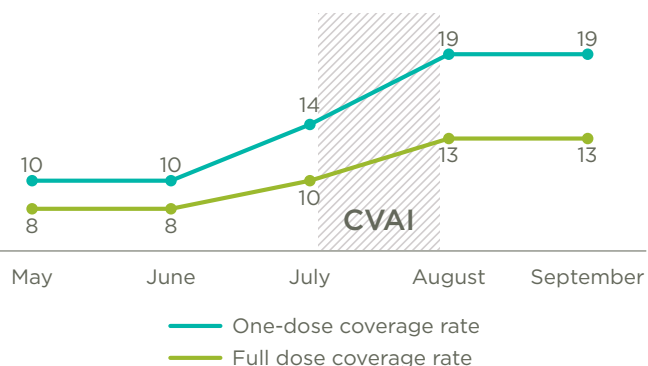
Each health facility was assigned a specific achievement target or a specific number of people to be vaccinated. For the Kaffrine district, participating health facilities had a goal of vaccinating 12,374 people who had received only the first dose of the vaccine by June 2022. Health facilities with a “starting point” vaccination coverage rate below 5% needed to achieve at least 10% vaccination coverage for eligibility for the financial reward at the end of the campaign. Results reported by the region to BRHS were validated by a team from MSAS, a supervisor from another region, and a BRHS staff member before any performance reward was paid.

CVAI Pilot Led to Increased Vaccine Coverage in Kaffrine

- The campaign was a success, with the district vaccinating 15,687 people and achieving 127% of its target.
- Twenty-eight out of 30 facilities (93%) achieved or exceeded their targets, with the other two achieving 89% and 39%, respectively.
- One-dose COVID-19 vaccine rates almost doubled from 10% to 19%, and the coverage rate for full vaccination increased from 7.7% to 13%.

Increase in Vaccination Coverage Rates in Kaffrine Before and During CVAI (%)

May-September 30, 2022



CVAI Pilot Scaling Up in Additional Senegalese Regions

Kaffrine was the first of nine participating regions to complete this initiative, and it showed promising results. The successful strategies that regional and district leaders deployed to increase vaccination uptake during the acceleration phase have been replicated beyond Kaffrine, leading to successful campaigns in other regions supported by the project. BRHS is currently implementing a second phase of CVAI campaigns throughout Senegal, which will officially end in 2023. The project is continuing to document results and share lessons learned from all 57 participating districts to inform Senegal’s strategy for COVID-19 vaccination, including on the impact of RBF on campaigns such as these.