

## VALIDATING SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LISTENING INSIGHTS FOR POLIO VACCINE HESITANCY IN TANZANIA

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### **Context:**

Social and Community Listening (SCL) in Tanzania identified instances of circulating vaccine hesitancy on social media before the late September 2023 national polio vaccination campaign. To understand the breadth of the challenge, identify specific information gaps, and explore vaccine hesitancy narratives circulating amongst the public, a SCL Validation Survey was conducted in the first week of October 2023.

The survey was conducted using a commercially available tool called Premise which allowed for rapid and remote mobile phone app-based surveys. These capabilities were essential to the survey to ensure that data can be swiftly collected from various parts of the country, given the public health emergency status of the polio program.

### **Social and Community Listening (SCL):**

Social and community listening is the process of collecting and analyzing publicly available information from online, offline, and on-ground sources. SCL is an upstream SBC data source that supplements primary research and provides teams with rapid community level insights that inform SBC action.

### **Premise – rapid survey tool:**

Premise is a research tool that uses mobile phone apps and a screened panel of 5 million respondents in 140 countries to conduct rapid surveys. It rewards or incentivizes respondents to answer survey questions or complete data collection tasks such as photographing a health facility. It allows geographically targeted surveys with standard or custom sampling methods, including representative, quota, or convenience sampling, and post-stratification weighting.

### **Polio Vaccine and Misinformation:**

Polio is a vaccine preventable viral disease that causes permanent paralysis and can lead to death. It mostly affects children under the ages of 5 and polio vaccine is the only way to protect children from this deadly disease. Since 1980s, there has been a 99% reduction in polio cases globally thanks to the efforts of Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), a consortium of partners including UNICEF and WHO. Polio is deemed a global health emergency, and the world has never been closer to eradicating this virus as it is now.

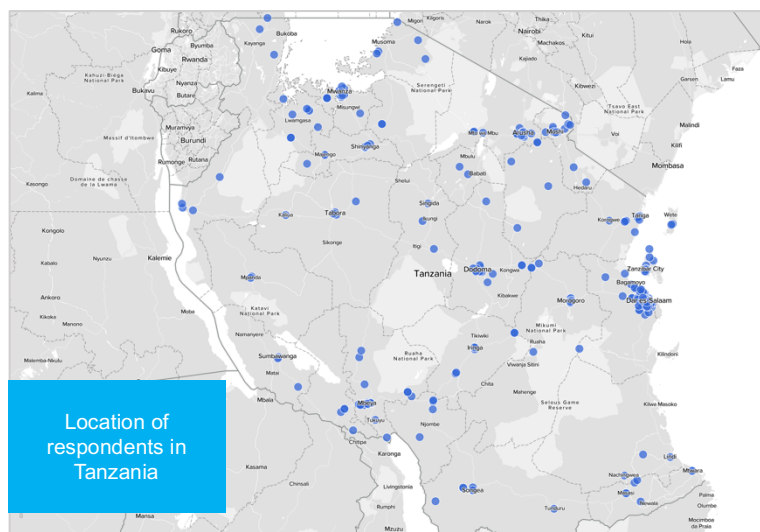
Misinformation has always affected polio vaccination, but the spread and breadth of polio vaccine related misinformation has increased with greater access to social media, and after wider vaccine hesitancy in the wake of COVID-19 vaccine introduction. Vaccine misinformation can erode trust in public health systems, cause communities to refuse vaccines, lead to loss of lives, and undo billions of dollars invested in polio eradication.

### **Objective of the survey:**

Explore polio related campaign awareness, vaccine awareness, circulating misinformation, sources of misinformation, and misinformation narratives in Tanzania.

## Key Findings:

- **Response Rate and Language Distribution:** The rapid survey collected 400 valid responses within a 48-hour window. A majority (287) of these responses were in English, while the rest (133) were in Kiswahili. The rejection rate of collected responses was 4%.



- **Awareness Levels:** The recent polio communication campaign appeared to be successful, with 87% of the respondents being aware of the vaccination campaign and an even higher 92% of the total respondents being aware of the polio vaccine.
- **Influence of Social Media:** 88% of the participants indicated that their intent to vaccinate was positively influenced by the information they encountered on social media. Additionally, 26% self-reported active engagement in the conversation by posting or reposting about polio.
- **Operational Efficiency:** The respondents applauded on-ground operations, with 93% of the people that were aware of the campaign finding the vaccination process seamless and 95% felt that the vaccination teams were adequately skilled.
- **Vaccine Safety Concerns:** Despite the campaign's success, only 58% of the respondents held a very positive perception of vaccines, and 61% expressed concerns about potential side effects. The primary concerns were related to fever and pain post-vaccination.
- **Misinformation:** 23% of the participants had come across misinformation which suggested that polio vaccine has potential risks. Social media was highlighted as the leading channel for such misinformation, with 37% encountering false narratives in the past 2 weeks.

## Recommendations:

1. **Educational Content:** Short TikTok style videos that demystify common side effects and emphasize their mild, temporary nature can reassure the public and mitigate concerns.
2. **Testimonials and Endorsements:** Using testimonials from trusted community figures, healthcare professionals, or individuals who have been vaccinated can serve as persuasive social proof.
3. **Digital Engagement:** In response to the misinformation spreading online, implementing a digital engagement strategy that promptly addresses false narratives is crucial.

4. Expert-led Initiatives: Hosting online Q&A and live-stream sessions with health professionals can provide real-time solutions and ease public anxieties.

5. Leveraging Influencers: Given the influence of social media, collaborating with influencers can amplify the reach of positive and factual information.



### Learnings:

1. Validation can be powerful:  
Validating SCL insights is a powerful tool to highlight community voices and demonstrate the need for on-ground SBC action or program modification.
2. Validation surveys can demystify misinformation:  
SCL insights can highlight potential misinformation narratives, and validation surveys can delve deeper into specific behavioral concerns that emerge from misinformation.
3. Rapid surveys are a core SCL function:  
Swift access to data collection from a wide but geographically targeted sample bolster confidence in SCL insights and recommendations.
4. SCL and Digital Engagement are intertwined:  
Majority of SCL data is collected through online mediums and closely integrating SCL with Digital Engagement could bolster the outcomes for both.

### Conclusion:

The SCL validation survey provided valuable insights into the Tanzanian public's perceptions of the polio vaccine and the vaccination campaign. While the campaign achieved significant success in many areas, addressing misinformation and vaccine safety concerns is crucial to ensure ongoing vaccine acceptance. The recommended strategies can bolster public trust and improve future vaccination campaigns' efficacy. SCL Validation Survey are highly recommended as a part of SCL frameworks and workflows.