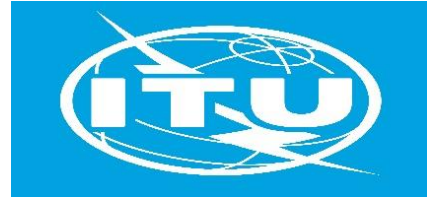


The logo for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in large, bold, blue capital letters.

Press Release

Thursday August 18th, 2022

PAHO ITU Communications ECC campaign a success!

Bridgetown, Barbados, 17 August 2022 (PAHO) - The first phase of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) communications campaign to address vaccine hesitancy in Eastern Caribbean Countries, has been a resounding success.

The campaign, which began in October 2021 and concluded in June 2022, was developed to address four key challenges: low COVID-19 vaccination uptake, due to misconceptions and distrust; Infodemic prevalence (false COVID-19 information which was disseminated mainly on social media and the Internet); the desire to achieve a 70% COVID-19 vaccination coverage by June 2022; and the appearance of new variants of concern due to high circulation of the COVID-19 virus.

PAHO and ITU worked on the campaign with telecommunications provider Trend Media / Digicel. The campaign leveraged the public-private partnership model pioneered by the WHO-ITU joint [Be H@lthy, Be Mobile](#) initiative to rapidly implement a content delivery channel that would be convenient and accessible (including to people who have limited access to the Internet). PAHO-curated awareness-raising and behaviour change information was packaged in engaging multimedia formats (infographics, posters, videos, etc.) and posted online. People received SMS messages with brief preventive health advice, along with links to the multimedia materials which they could access without any data-traffic costs. The information communicated aimed to raise awareness; debunk myths; provide guidance; and encourage people to vaccinate.

Phase 1 initially ran from October 2021 to January 2022 and targeted Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St. Lucia. When the project was extended to June 2022, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were included.

The PAHO ITU team deemed the campaign a success based on the following research findings. One in four people read the 5 million messages forwarded and opened the links. Additionally, approximately 81 percent of the mobile users receiving the messages described the content as useful, interesting or relevant; and just over 50 percent of mobile users said the information they received helped them stay alert about related risks.

Importantly, at least 5 percent of respondents reported that the communication campaign helped them decide to get vaccinated; while close to 14 percent said the information helped them to adjust their behavior.

Based on the outcome of this initiative thus far, PAHO and ITU are currently in discussions about phase two of the project. The second part of the project will target those countries which were not included in the first phase.

Representative for the PAHO/WHO Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Countries (ECC), Dr. Amalia Del Riego, described the progress to date as “very encouraging!”

Dr. Del Riego added: “Phase two of the campaign will provide PAHO and the ITU with an opportunity to raise awareness and reduce vaccine hesitancy in our other countries and territories.”

According to Mr. Bruno Ramos, Director of the ITU Regional Office for the Americas: “The campaign highlighted the feasibility of leveraging digital technology to support preventive health measures to contribute to better health and development.”

Mr. Ramos underscored that the ITU Regional Office looks forward to collaborating with PAHO and other partners to support the integration of cost-effective digital solutions in SDG-related projects and initiatives.