

# CTAP Blog Post



## **ADE sets the agenda for strong and resilient health systems in Cameroon through the Covid-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP)**

Since 2021, Actions for Development and Empowerment (ADE) has been pushing for resilient primary healthcare centres under the Covid-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP) by documenting the state of health facilities, evaluating the Cameroonian government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, vaccine deployment and building synergy with national governance stakeholders to promote best practices in health sector management.

In view of better outcomes, ADE reinforced collaboration between Civil Society, the media and communities through discussions on findings also documented via the production of a video for better information sharing in an effort to advocate for public sector engagement.

Securing a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE) in 2022 speaks volumes to the quality of work done in healthcare management and governance which only took a better turn as we successfully launched the CTAP II country specific health sector accountability report in the presence of governance stakeholders in Cameroon ( Ministries, Embassies, civil society, influential individuals and the media) and started conversations on the Open Governance Partnership (OGP).

### **#SaveOneSaveAll in the West Region of Cameroon**

***West region: Health Care Workers raise concerns on citizens' perception, hesitancy towards vaccination.***

ADE commenced the CTAP #SaveOneSaveAll Campaign in June 2023 by organising a meeting with Health care personnels from all eight divisions of the West Region of Cameroon to initiate conversations on vaccine equity and the performance of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in strengthening immunisation coverage in the region and in Cameroon at large. This meeting held on Tuesday, 20th June, in the West regional capital; Bafoussam and brought to light the poor methods of vaccine conservation, long delays for vaccine procurement, lack of certain routine vaccines in the region, discriminatory distribution of vaccines to public and private health centres, little or no receptibility to vaccines by the population and so on.

However, the health workers outlined some recommendations and strategies to boost vaccine Equity and vaccination in the West region and Cameroon in general which included:

- PHC Centres capable of conserving vaccines should be Provided with adequate equipment



for conservation.

- PHC centres should be provided with alternative sources of electricity for best vaccine conservation methods.
- Routine vaccines currently unavailable in the region such as Cholera, Malaria, Pertussis, Hepatitis A and E amongst others should be made available.
- The government should evaluate and make sure that funds allocated for vaccination reach the right destinations without suffering on the way.
- Governments should ensure proper communication campaigns on vaccines prior to vaccination and when faced with conspiracy theories, they should counteract by disseminating the right information.

During our discussions, they outlined the issue of limited human resources during vaccination campaigns, unavailability of some vaccines in the region, Lack of Motivation of EPI nurses, vaccine hesitancy from the population, disrupted network channels and non-motorable roads in some areas.

However, some recommendations and strategies to boost vaccine Equity and vaccination in the South West region were brought forth to the Ministry of Public Health, its sponsors and donors as well as to EPI Focal points.



### Cameroon: South West Region hosts the #SaveOneSaveAll Campaign

*Health workers engage to Close Vaccination gaps in the South West Region*

In a bid to initiate conversations on vaccine equity and the performance of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in strengthening immunisation coverage, ADE organised a meeting with Health care personnels (EPI focal points) in Buea, South West region of Cameroon.

This meeting, held on Friday 28th July, 2023 brought to light some challenges these health care workers face on a daily basis in the region with regards to vaccination.



## Recommendations

To **the Ministry of Public Health**, it was recommended that they should ensure proper communication on vaccination prior to vaccination campaigns to avoid hesitancy from the population. Vaccines should be sent into the region promptly and in large quantities to avoid shortages, and they should financially motivate EPI staff in order for them to do their jobs efficiently.

Also, **the Sponsors and Donors of MINSANTE** should provide necessary gadgets adapted to various regions to ease immunisation coverage. For example; the South West region has a context of landslide and flood thus the





need for rainboots, umbrellas, protective materials etc needed for vaccination campaigns especially during the rainy season. Consequently, they should endeavour to respect budgets drawn by regional delegations of public health because they master their context better.

Lastly, to the EPI focal points, South West as per the different challenges they face in the field, the nurses should table their complaints on paper to their various districts and if they are not resolved, it should be sent to the regional level.

Also, the EPI workers working in a particular district should be assigned to vaccinate in that community to solve the problem of trust.



**Health sector accountability in the Muea and Molyko Communities, South West Region**

A Community town hall meeting was carried out at the Macedonia Baptist Church, Molyko to obtain citizens' perception on health care service delivery and to sensitise the population on the importance of vaccination.

The fact that some medical practitioners do not have a good mastery of their jobs lead to poor diagnosis and consequently poor treatment methods. The marginalisation of the vulnerable people like the poor, prisoners etc is one major discouraging factor that was mentioned.

As regards vaccination, it was mentioned that the population is hesitant towards vaccines and especially the Covid vaccine because prior to administration, proper education on its importance and possible side effects is not done.

Other persons boldly attested to the fact that they are not against vaccination for they are aware of their importance but they only doubt vaccines that have poor clinical trials and some conspiracy theories such as the Covid vaccine. Some reasons for vaccine hesitancy were; "I feel I will never contract Covid", "poor clinical trials and conspiracy theories."

Some of them stated that the reason for their hesitancy towards vaccines is because of the side effects they had after being vaccinated, especially with the covid vaccine. "I took the covid vaccine on a Sunday and by Tuesday they admitted me to the hospital and I had to stay there for one week. So I refused to take the second dose, if any vaccines comes again I cannot take it," Madam Ndi Elizabeth explained.

Also, a team made up of three ADE personnel, five community mobilizers, the head of the communication unit for EPI, South West Region, a publicity agent and ADE's brand ambassador for #saveonesaveall; Auntie Felicia, stormed the Muea market on Thursday 27 July to sensitize the vendors and buyers on the importance of vaccination while presenting to them vaccines available in the region.



In recognition of the fact that we all have a role to play in achieving vaccine equity and developing our health system, Actions for Development and Empowerment carried the #saveonesaveall and healthcare accountability messages to the Muea and Molyko communities of Buea, South West region of Cameroon. The events which brought forth challenges and recommendations from the population of Buea, held on the 26 and 27 July, 2023.

During discussions, the population raised concerns on access to healthcare services and vaccination. Some of which are; high cost of accessing healthcare services, poor patient care by health personnels, marginalisation of vulnerable people like the poor and prisoners and unqualified health personnel in most hospitals. As regards vaccination, their concerns were at the level of poor education on vaccines prior to administration, lack of trust in those administering vaccines due to unfamiliarity, vaccination side effects which prevent some from completing their doses while according to some; poor clinical trials and conspiracy theories linked to some vaccines, especially the Covid-19 vaccine and general lack of interest in getting vaccinated.



**Partnering with cultural influencers to push forward the #SaveOneSaveAll Agenda**

In an effort to engage the population and pass the message on citizens engagement in the development of the health sector and the importance of vaccination, ADE carried out this exercise with a cultural influencer known as Auntie Felicia and a publicity agent called “Papa Promo” who played publicity audios created prior to the activity.

In order to boost citizens engagement in the development of the health system in this region, the people of the Muea and Molyko communities urged the government to ensure that PHC centres have experienced personnel rather than young inexperienced health workers, to make provisions for more subsidies in order to incorporate all; permitting the poor to access healthcare services, to ensure proper communication of its policies and implementations and to boost vaccine coverage in the SWR, through the promotion of testimonies from persons who have been vaccinated and are living their normal lives, in order to counteract misinformation.

Lastly, EPI Focal points were encouraged to inform citizens of the side effects of specific vaccines before they are administered and ensure citizens are tested first before getting vaccinated.



**#SaveOneSaveAll in the Northwest Region of Cameroon**

**Enhancing Health Sector Accountability and vaccine equity in Bamenda Nkwen, community**

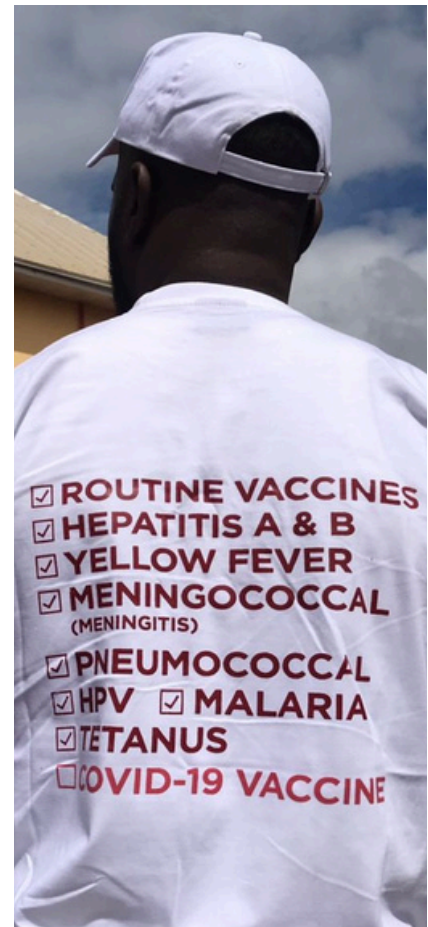


In a bid to obtain citizens' perception on health care service delivery and to sensitise the population on the importance of vaccination, Actions for Development and Empowerment (ADE) under the auspices of CTAP phase III organised a community meeting and market activation in Bamenda in the North West region of Cameroon on August 02 and 03, 2023.

During the town hall meeting which took place in Bujong community hall in Bamenda I sub division. The participants raised several concerns and challenges they go through as citizens. They expressed discontent at the unavailability of some vaccines in the region, and some which do not arrive on time. The covid vaccine was not an exception as it was unavailable during the 2nd coverage.

Also, some participants mentioned the fear of injections as a major factor to vaccine hesitancy, meanwhile others blamed health personnel for not sufficiently sensitising the population on the importance of vaccines, their side effects and all that go with vaccination in general.

As regards accessing health care services, the population is often discouraged by the poor reception of patients by medical corps upon arrival at the hospital. The citizens however brought forth some recommendations to strengthen PHC centres and boost vaccination coverage in the region. They noted that religious, traditional authorities and community leaders should be trained to educate the population on issues of vaccination. Also, peer to peer conversation on vaccination should be encouraged in gatherings such as church groups, and other social groups of the communities. Lastly, Important press statements from the ministry of public health should always be read in some local languages and pidgin English on radio stations to boost vaccine sensitization campaigns.



The #Saveonesaveall message was concluded in this region with a market storm activity which was carried out on August 4th 2023 at the Bamenda I Market. During the outreach, ADE sensitised over 3000 persons, men, women and youths inclusive on the importance of vaccination while presenting to them vaccines available in the region.





## Mfou, a Locality in the Centre Region Benefits from the #SaveOneSaveAll Campaign

In the face of lapses in healthcare service delivery and vaccine equity, a community meeting and a market sensitization was organised by Actions for Development and Empowerment (ADE) in accordance with the Panafrican project CTAP, in Mfou on Wednesday 22nd August and Thursday 23rd August 2023 to initiate conversation and gather citizens perception.

During the community meeting, discussions focused on difficulties encountered by the population of Mfou in accessing public health care and the reasons for vaccination hesitance. As concerns access to healthcare, participants raised concerns on the high cost of health services, poor reception of patients by medical corp, the marginalisation of vulnerable persons such as the poor, prisoners and little or no communication in localities (on ground) from the ministry of public health regarding health policies. "The lack of financial means for most of the population to access both public and private healthcare means that patients stop their treatment without being fully cured, leading to relapses," said Mrs. Nga among other interventions.

In line with encouraging citizens on the importance of vaccination, ADE gathered that the Mfou population is reluctant towards vaccination in general and the Covid vaccine in particular because there is no appropriate education prior to administration of vaccines and their possible side effects. Other reasons of hesitance included; reservations about the quality of the Covid vaccine, which they believe is mainly designed to sterilise and reduce the African population while other persons clearly stated:

"Since the Covid vaccine was introduced, there has been massive public reluctance, exacerbated by the advent of fake news on social media" Mr. Fouda Francis and Mrs. Mefoue Marie said "Many people are reluctant to take any vaccine. Some parents even go to their children's schools to forbid any vaccination."

As a result of discussions, ADE noted the uninformed nature of participants as regards healthcare policies put in place as its the case with the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) introduced by the Ministry of Public Health, which requires people to register before they can obtain a card entitling them to a 70% discount on healthcare at health facilities. The participants present were able to benefit from this information and registration within the district.

As measures to bring an end to the challenges faced by the population, participants designed recommendations to the government and to health care personnel. The government (Ministry of Public Health) was called to fight against fake news by disseminating accurate information via social networks and other means of communication, review the training of local healthcare workers, encourage and promote research and the production of local vaccines and medicines rather than those from the West, organise quarterly or even monthly education and capacity-building seminars for both health staff and the general public on health and vaccination issues and increase awareness in the field on a large scale, both in the city and on the outskirts, with healthcare workers and other stakeholders (civil society, traditional and religious leaders, etc.)





Healthcare workers were encouraged to break all conspiracy theories by sensitising patients and the population at large “Just because it’s free doesn’t mean it’s deadly” and to educate the population of new policies put in place by the Ministry of Public Health in order to effectively implement them; for example the Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The #SaveOneSaveAll campaign came to an end on Thursday 23rd August 2023 with a market storm activity wherein ADE called on people of all works of life to take active responsibility of their health and that of those around them by getting fully vaccinated. During the market sensitization, messages were passed to the population through caravane movement, flyers and mouth to mouth encouragement.



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