

Empowering Teachers

to Drive HPV Awareness and
Vaccination in Northern Nigeria

A CASE STUDY



Background

The ubiquity of a variety of cancers with varying degrees of severity is already a serious dilemma for individuals across the globe especially in Low and Medium Income Countries (LMIC). This makes it imperative for people of various demographics to understand potential exposure to various diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cervical cancer, which is largely caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), is the [fourth most common cancer](#) in women worldwide. With an estimated 660,000 new cases and about 350,000 deaths in 2022, the need for early awareness has increasingly become mandatory. To them this tide and flatten the curve, there is need to go beyond promoting acceptance to create demand for the HPV vaccines. This informed the strategic collaborations by eHealth Africa with important stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, Health, major agencies and key community gate keepers in across various states. This not just ensures state backing but also ensures campaigns are structured across communities.

To address this challenge, eHealth Africa (EHA), in collaboration with UNICEF, the Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board, and the Ministries of Health and Education, implemented a community-centered strategy that combined co-creation, education, and edutainment. This approach positioned teachers and schools as trusted demand drivers, while leveraging state leadership and community gatekeepers to build legitimacy, trust, and scale.

This case study provides a succinct sagacity on how the ministry of education, key stakeholders in the education sector and most importantly the role of education and entertainment played in HPV vaccine coverage especially in Kano State, Nigeria. Working with both Parents, Teachers and School authorities, the intervention led an edutainment campaign to convey important health information in a more people-centered manner.

The edutainment campaign was preceded by a co-creation session which hosted parents, care-givers and school authorities for effective education and awareness about HPV vaccination. This not only increased acceptance but created immense demand for vaccinations in the selected locations. This strategy was an effective one as it targets girls within the ages of 9 & 14 years which were largely found in the school environment.



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Key Objectives of the HPV School Campaign

The overall goal of this campaign is to reach girls of vaccination age with HPV vaccines. The following are some specific objectives of the educational awareness campaign to promote HPV vaccination;

- To ensure proper education of key gatekeepers and stakeholders in the education sector in a bid to increase demand for HPV vaccination.
- Develop a sustainable structure within and around the educational sector and schools to boost demand and access to HPV Vaccine.
- Deliver age-appropriate, culturally sensitive HPV information to girls and their caregivers to improve understanding and informed decision-making.

Approach to Co-Creation and Community Ownership

Laying the Foundation Through Co-Creation

The edutainment campaign was preceded by a three-day Co-Creation Workshop, designed to place communities at the center of the solution. Parents, caregivers, teachers, community influencers, state officials, and nine-year-old girls—the primary beneficiaries were brought together in a safe, participatory environment.

- The first phase focused on building shared understanding. Participants received clear, evidence-based information on:
 - HPV and cervical cancer
 - Vaccine safety and eligibility
 - Why vaccination targets nine-year-old girls
 - The planned HPV intensification approach

For many caregivers, this was their first-ever exposure to structured health education on HPV. Baseline awareness was low, and misconceptions ranging from infertility fears to population-control narratives were openly discussed. Facilitated dialogue allowed participants to ask difficult questions, voice skepticism, and receive credible answers from trusted state actors.

The second phase centered on collective problem-solving. Stakeholders reflected on lived experiences, including prior vaccine stockouts, limited outreach, and distrust fueled by misinformation. These discussions produced locally relevant messages and mobilization strategies, grounded in Hausa language, cultural norms, and school-community dynamics.

By the end of the workshop, HPV vaccination was no longer viewed as an external program. It became a community-owned initiative, shaped by the voices of parents, teachers, and state institutions.



School-Level Edutainment Engagement

Why Edutainment?

Insights from the co-creation process highlighted a critical reality: *“If you want to reach a nine-year-old, you must speak their language.”*

Children respond best to play, music, drama, and storytelling. Traditional health talks alone were unlikely to hold attention or overcome fear of injections. As a result, UNICEF and partners adopted an edutainment model—combining education with entertainment—to make HPV messaging relatable, memorable, and non-threatening.

How the Edutainment Model Worked

Across participating LGAs, edutainment activities were conducted in primary schools, targeting girls primarily in Primary 3 and 4. Each session combined:

- Drama and role play illustrating HPV prevention
- Songs, rhymes, and call-and-response activities in Hausa
- Interactive quizzes reinforcing key messages
- Open discussions where students asked questions freely
- On-site vaccination, where feasible

Although 25 girls per school were initially targeted, attendance frequently exceeded expectations, sometimes reaching 40–60 girls per session. In several instances, students from nearby classes voluntarily joined after hearing the songs and drama.

One facilitator noted:

“It was because of the drama. They saw us dancing together, running together, and others started coming out of their classes to be vaccinated.”

Stakeholders Involved

- **Ministry of Education** – Policy backing, school access, teacher mobilization
- **Ministry of Health / PHC Management Board** – Technical oversight and vaccine coordination
- **State Immunization Officer (SIO)** – Central leadership, approvals, and supervision
- **Education Secretaries & Head Teachers** – School entry, mobilization, enforcement
- **Routine Immunization Officers & Vaccinators** – Vaccine delivery and outreach
- **Parents and Caregivers** – Consent, advocacy, peer influence
- **Girls aged 9–14 years** – Primary beneficiaries

Watching someone suffer from cancer showed me how important early protection is. No one should go through such pain when prevention is possible.”

- *Alvina Anyawu, Caregiver*



Results: Key outcomes and evidence

1. Increased Community Ownership and Vaccine Acceptance

Participatory learning sessions engaged 35 key stakeholders drawn from intervention LGAs, including nine-year-old female beneficiaries, parents, and school heads/teachers. These sessions measurably strengthened participants' understanding of the HPV vaccine and its benefits, resulting in increased commitment and visible local support for campaign activities. Community feedback during and after the sessions demonstrated improved trust in the vaccine and willingness to champion HPV vaccination within households and schools.

2. Strengthened LGA Capacity and Coordination for HPV Rollout

Targeted sensitization training significantly enhanced LGA-level knowledge of HPV vaccination, ensuring teams clearly understood vaccine purpose, eligibility, and delivery modalities. The training also improved coordination between state, LGA, and frontline teams, enabling smoother planning and execution of vaccination activities. As a result, LGA teams were better equipped to lead mobilization, advocacy, and implementation efforts across their jurisdictions.

3. Scaled School-Based Mobilization and Awareness

A comprehensive training initiative successfully equipped 2,288 personnel including 2,200 school teachers and 88 facilitators to support school-based HPV vaccination activities. Teachers were trained to drive student mobilization, support session logistics, and serve as trusted sources of accurate HPV information within schools and surrounding communities. This large-scale capacity-building effort played a critical role in reducing misinformation, increasing awareness, and driving uptake of the HPV vaccine among eligible girls.

4. The HPV Campaign successfully reached girls aged 9 years old, contributing significantly to reducing the potential burden of HPV-related disease in Northern Nigeria.

When the vaccination team came, the students took the vaccine successfully—and today, I am confident we made the right decision.”

- *Chidinma Anyigbo, School Teacher*

“I had my fears and questions, just like many parents do, but learning the truth helped me choose prevention. Protecting our children today means giving them a healthier and safer future.”

- *Chidinma Anyigbo, School Head Teacher*



Lessons Learned: What worked, what didn't, and recommendations.

Participation drives acceptance:

A key lesson learned is that participatory health campaigns are critical to improving vaccine acceptance, not only within communities but also in school settings. The co-creation workshop demonstrated that stakeholders show greater interest and commitment when they are actively involved in decision-making processes, particularly on issues that directly affect them.

Awareness must precede service delivery:

A clear understanding of the potential impact of health behaviors plays an essential role in the acceptance of preventive measures such as vaccination. Conducting awareness and edutainment activities before vaccine delivery ensured improved understanding of HPV and the importance of vaccination, thereby reducing hesitancy.

Safe spaces encourage openness:

Caregivers and teachers shared powerful personal experiences when engaged in respectful and inclusive environments. Interactions with teachers and caregivers revealed a strong willingness to share personal stories when provided with the right platform and a comfortable atmosphere. During these discussions, some caregivers recounted how relatives had been lost to vaccine-preventable diseases due to vaccine hesitancy, reinforcing the importance of timely immunization.

Demand can exceed supply:

Another important lesson is that effective awareness campaigns can generate demand that surpasses available vaccine supply. This underscores the need to ensure adequate vaccine availability and logistical preparedness before scaling awareness activities.

Scale is essential:

To achieve sustained impact and reach the last mile, awareness campaigns should be expanded to Local Government Area (LGA) and ward levels, ensuring broader access to HPV vaccination for eligible populations.

"I encouraged my students, especially the girls, because I believe every child deserves protection from diseases that can be prevented"

-Chidinma Anyigbo, School Head Teacher





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