

NIHR Global Health Research Group on Vaccines for vulnerable people in Africa (Vanguard) Project

**Understanding the role of, and relationship between, structural,
social and biological determinants of vaccine response to improve
vaccine impact in Kenya and Uganda: a formative study**

What is the Problem/Background?

- Vaccination is a hugely important public health intervention.
- But not everyone benefits equally.
- Some vaccines give weaker protection in people from rural, tropical settings than in those from high income settings.
- Also, some people benefit less from vaccines for socioeconomic reasons, such as the social context of the communities they live in, including limited access to accurate information to aid vaccine choices.
- Social and biological factors can interact to make communities “vulnerable” in terms of vaccine impact.
- These need to be addressed, first, to promote health equity and second, to secure maximum global benefit from vaccines.

What questions are we trying to answer?

The goal of the proposed formative study is to understand **how communities can benefit fully from vaccines and vaccination programmes** in Kenya and Uganda.

The specific questions we seek to explore during this phase of the study are:

1. What is the relationship between biological, social and structural determinants that affect vaccine access, uptake and the development of protective immune responses?

(Structural determinants here mean factors that are the root causes of differences in health outcomes such as policies while the social determinants are the conditions around where people are born, live, work and in turn affect their health status).

What does the study involve?

- The study will be undertaken in Kilifi, Kenya and Koome Island, Mukono District, Uganda.
- In Kilifi, the study will be based in Ganze sub-county. We will select 1-2 locations from the sub-county then narrow down to two villages in each Location (if two locations are selected) or two villages in one location.
- The study will adopt an ethnographic approach which will involve
 - One/two study team members living in the selected villages.
 - At least 10 households selected and visited twice each month for 3 months.
 - Conduct in depth interviews (IDIs)/group interviews, observations and informal conversations at household and with community members.
 - Consultation of stakeholders through participation at consultative meetings.

What does the study involve?

- For each household visit we will cover a specific topic through IDIs, group interviews, observations and informal conversations.
- A short questionnaire will also be used to collect demographic details about each household.
- Those to be interviewed at household level will be the parent(s)/guardian or main caregiver(s) of children in the household, adult members of a household and/or household head.
- Assuming an average household size is 3 - 7 members, we anticipate involving a total of 30 – 70.
- We also anticipate to engage about 50 stakeholders.

What are the study benefits and risks?

Benefits

- We do not expect any immediate direct benefits for the study participants and key stakeholders.
- The findings from this preparatory phase will however contribute to data that will feed into the development of a survey questionnaire and the VAnguard qualitative study (Phase 2).

Burdens

- A major anticipated burden will be the perception among the households that are followed-up during the study that their personal space is being intruded.
- Additional inconveniences to study participants and key stakeholders may include time taken to attend to the home visits and attendance of and participation in the engagement activities.

How will the study benefit society?

- The study will help to provide an in depth understanding of modifiable structural, social and biological determinants that affect vaccine impact in the study communities,
- The information will be useful in informing development of integrated strategies to address the identified determinants and to drive health equity
- The study will also provide policy recommendations aimed at improving issues around vaccine access and uptake in the study communities.

When does the study start and finish?

- This first phase of the Vanguard study will begin in September 2023 and run for 12 – 18 months.