

## **A Behavioral Approach Reducing Vaccine Hesitancy: Community-led and Behaviorally-Informed Action for MMR Vaccination Uptake in the Philippines**

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### **Abstract:**

The Philippines is the second country in the East Asia and Pacific region and fourth in the world, with the most children who have zero doses of vaccination against measles, rubella, and polio (WHO, 2023).

Increasing immunization is a global challenge, but solutions must be localized. The project established close ties with communities to develop, test, and refine behavioral solutions for Filipino caregivers vaccinating their children, especially among pandemic-disrupted and born children (9 months to 3 years old). Moreover, it endeavored to complement current service-level initiatives and promotions by looking into primary caregivers' behavioral and decision-making contexts to further understand the drivers of vaccine hesitancy among this population.

The project covered 150 villages nationwide, onboarding 699 caregivers randomized to treatment groups with or without the interventions developed using behavioral design in difference-in-difference research with a 2.5-month observation period. Findings revealed two critical gateway behaviors that showed association and can influence vaccination uptake: caregivers' self-efficacy to plan around vaccination visits and proactively manage potential side effects of the vaccination. Furthermore, despite caregivers expressing high trust in vaccines, vaccination rates remained low in the baseline, indicating a gap between trust and action. This suggests leveraging the aforementioned gateway behaviors to bridge this gap.

Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing vaccination behavior and confidence, offering implications for the design of future interventions aimed at promoting vaccine uptake and confidence among caregivers.