

# Identifying and engaging trusted voices in communities as behavior change agents can improve public health outcomes by building confidence in recommended behaviours, especially during emergencies.

## Building Vaccine Confidence within Communities through Religious and Traditional Leaders: An Example from Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Authors: Olayinka Umar-Farouk, Omolara Oyinlola, Sarbyen Sheni, Mukhtar Gaya, Isah Fakai, Luba Bello  
Affiliations: USAID Breakthrough ACTION - Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

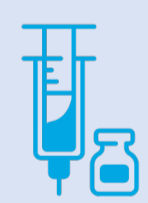
### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's goal is to vaccinate 70 percent of the eligible population, in every state, by December 2022. Daily call-in data for COVID-19 vaccinations presented by the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) showed Sokoto was the least-performing state in Northern Nigeria, with only 1.58% of the eligible population fully vaccinated, as of December 31, 2021. The low uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine in the state is due to mistrust of vaccines and the entire COVID-19 response, given that the state has only officially recorded 817 cases and 28 deaths since the pandemic's onset.

### METHODS



Collaborated with Sokoto state health officials and the Sultanate Council to adopt the 5M approach; Map, Mobilize, Model, Mitigate, and Monitor



Identified revered religious and traditional leaders, known as critical social influencers to correct misinformation, provide accurate information and encourage vaccine uptake in their communities



Co-developed key messages, with religious leaders that address COVID-19 concerns within a religious and traditional context



Facilitated conversations with religious and traditional leaders through events such as Town Hall meetings to address religious and traditional concerns impacting COVID-19 uptake



Traditional and religious leaders went on to disseminate messages, addressing these concerns, among their followers

### RESULTS

Over a period of two months, this approach contributed to a steady increase in the number of fully vaccinated persons in Sokoto from 47,919 reported on 27th January 2022 to 257,710 reported on 17th March 2022.

**In the last one week, Sokoto State has increased its fully vaccinated persons by 30%**

As at November 20, 2022, Sokoto state has attained 70% fully vaccination coverage.

### DISCUSSION

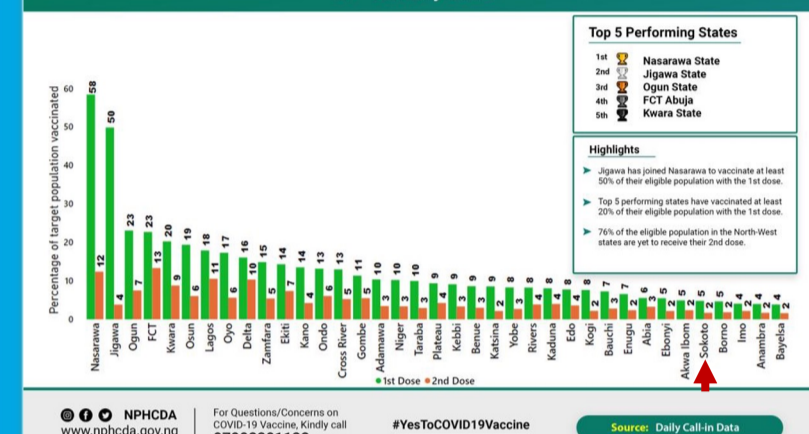
Religious and traditional leaders across the world have been acknowledged as great allies as they played vital roles in previous health threats like Polio, HIV/AIDS, Ebola. In Nigeria, religious and traditional leaders through their networks within communities continue to supplement and complement the health institution by reaching out to diverse populations. Their engagement, as champions, in their communities is critical to improving public health outcomes, especially during emergencies, as this helps to build confidence in recommended behaviors.



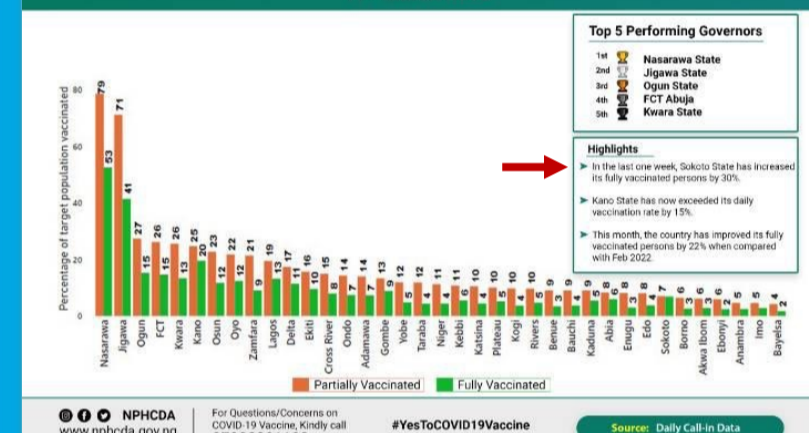
Alh. Kabiru Cigari Alhassan  
Sarkin Sudan Wurno

### HIGHLIGHTS

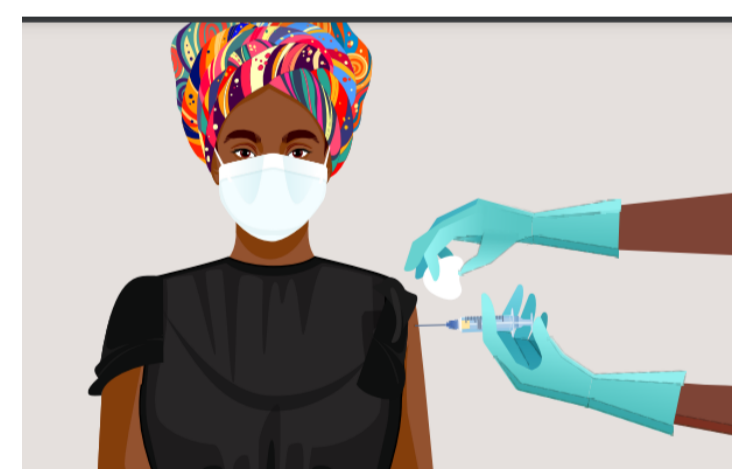
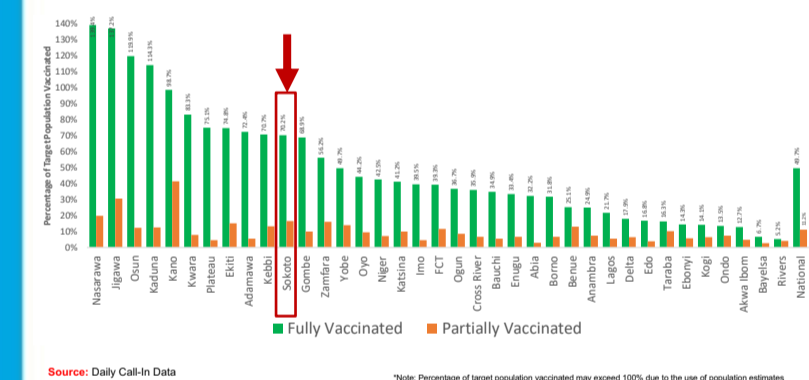
#### Summary of COVID-19 Vaccination Progress towards vaccinating 50% of eligible population in all States by 31-Mar-2022 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022



#### Summary of COVID-19 Vaccination Progress towards vaccinating 50% of eligible population in all States by 31-Mar-2022 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022



#### Summary of COVID-19 Vaccinations as at 20th November 2022



**KEY MESSAGES FOR RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS ON COVID-19**

### For More Information

Please contact:

**Name:** Olayinka Umar-Farouk  
**Email:** [olayinka@ba-nigeria.org](mailto:olayinka@ba-nigeria.org)



This poster is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.