

Contextualized strategies to increase childhood and adolescent vaccination coverage in South Africa:

A mixed-methods study [protocol]

Draft Interview and Focus Group Topic Guide

Demographic information

Official title:

Organisation/Place of work:

Location:

Gender:

Part 1: Involvement in immunization programmes

1. Can you describe what your current involvement is in Immunization programme(s) in South Africa?

Probes:

- How long have you worked in the area of vaccination/immunization?
- Possible functions/roles?
- Are you involved/have experience with both childhood and pre-adolescent/adolescent vaccination programmes in the country?

Part 2: General views of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) in South Africa

2. What do you see as the central goals of the national Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in South Africa?

Probes:

- Have these goals changed over time?

3. What do you think is currently working well with the EPI programme?

Probes:

- Ask for specific example(s) of strengths nationally and in their local setting (where appropriate)
- What do you think have been the enabling factors underpinning these successes? (*Probes: Political, structural, ideological, financial?*)

4. Do think the national EPI programme is generally meeting its central goals?

Probes:

- Why/why not?
- If answered that EPI Programme(s) are NOT achieving set goals, ask the following:
 - Do you think the current performance of the EPI Programme is a serious national challenge?
 - Do you think managers and especially senior managers of the DOH (at all levels) view the poor/under performance of EPI as a serious challenge that should be urgently addressed?
 - If yes: Are their actions in line with this view?
 - If yes: Can you give us examples of these actions which demonstrate the urgency with which they view this situation?

Part 3: Specific challenges of and solutions for the EPI programme

I would now like us to talk about some of the challenges currently facing the EPI programme, and your thoughts about how these might be addressed.

Healthcare system

5. What are your views and experiences of the public primary health facilities where vaccinations are provided? What kind of challenges exist in these health facilities for the vaccination programmes?

Probes: ask for specific examples of their experience of the following nationally AND in their local setting (where appropriate)

- Management structures?
 - Management approach? The focus of managers and what they prioritise (and not)?
 - Health information systems (is vaccine recording and reporting maintained)?
 - Financial resources?
 - Availability of staff (shortages/high turnovers)?
 - Availability of vaccine education/information materials?
 - Availability of initiatives to advocate for immunization?
 - Availability of approaches to mobilise communities/public to vaccinate children e.g. social media
 - Existence of approaches that attempt to link EPI (services, planning and mode of operation) to other apparently more successful programmes or programmes that may have a wider coverage e.g. PMTCT?
 - Waiting times in the clinics?
 - Mixed queues?
 - Operating times?
 - Treatment and attitude of Health Care Providers (Vaccinators and other HCP)?
 - Attitude of non-Health Professionals such as clerks and others.
 - Others (specify)
6. What do you think could be done to address some of these challenges?

Probe:

- Who should be tasked with addressing these challenges?

7. Do you see shortages of vaccines as a significant issue nationally and in your local setting?

Probes:

- Why/why not?
- If yes: Can you provide a specific example of this challenge?
- If yes: Where do you think the problem lies (e.g. vaccine procurement, storage, distribution/delivery)?
- Are you aware of any attempts or intervention measures by the DOH (at any level: national, province or district) to address the challenge of vaccine shortages? If yes, how successful do you think these attempts have been?
- Do you have any ideas on how to overcome the challenge of vaccine shortages? Who should be tasked with addressing this challenge?

8. Who are the main role-players/stakeholders involved in EPI programme(s) in South Africa?

Probes:

- Is there sufficient communication/collaboration between stakeholders? Why/ why not? What could be done to improve this?
- Is there sufficient advocacy/social mobilization amongst stakeholders? Why/ why not? What could be done to improve this?

- Are community leaders/groups sufficiently involved in the EPI? Why/ why not? How do you think these stakeholders be more involved?

9. Can you tell me a bit about the relationship between the public and private health sectors in terms of the EPI programme?

Probes

- Is there any collaboration/interaction between them? Why/why not?
- Do you see this as a problem? Why/why not?
- If seen as a problem: what could be done to increase collaboration/interaction?
- According to your knowledge either in terms of policy or in terms of practice and experience: "Are Private or NGO vaccinators able to access state vaccines for their clients, free of charge?" If yes, do they provide feedback on data of doses given?

Healthcare providers

10. What are your views about health care providers (HCP) administering vaccines in public health facilities? Do you think there are any challenges in relation to HCPs for vaccination programmes?

Probes: ask for specific examples of their experience of the following nationally AND in their local setting (where appropriate)

- General attitudes and behavior of health care providers (*e.g. friendly/helpful/rude*)?
 - Knowledge about vaccines and vaccination?
 - Knowledge and experiences with the conditions that the vaccines prevent?
 - Perceptions of vaccines and vaccination?
 - Perceptions of multiple injections and the introduction of more vaccines?
 - Perceptions of the importance of communicating with caregivers about vaccination?
 - Use opportunities to assess the vaccination status of the child?
 - Sufficient skills/training?
 - Do they vaccinate their own children/grandchildren or take special interest to help ensure that children of close relatives are vaccinated?
 - How do they access vaccination for their own children/grandchildren or relatives? Through private or public institutions?
11. What do you think should be done to improve the attitudes and behavior of HCP?

Probe

- Who should be tasked with dealing with these issues?
12. What do you think should be done to improve the knowledge/skills of health care providers?

Probe:

- Who should be tasked with doing this?

Service users/public

13. What is your sense of the general level of knowledge amongst the public about childhood vaccines, immunisation services and the conditions that these prevent?

Probes:

- Are there gaps in knowledge? If yes: what kinds of gaps?
- Do you think people know about the benefits of childhood vaccines?

- What sources do people go to for information about childhood vaccination? *e.g. Internet; social media networks; health care workers; friends/family; schools; religious leaders?*
- Which sources do you think people perceive as being trustworthy/untrustworthy?

14. What do you think influences people' decision about whether to vaccinate their children or not?

Probes:

- What doubts, fears, concerns (if any) about vaccines and vaccination services do you think people might have that could prevent them from deciding to vaccinate their children? *(e.g. concerns about vaccine quality, safety, contra-indications, risks etc.)*
- What negative attitudes or beliefs (if any) about vaccines and vaccination do you think people might have that could prevent them from deciding to vaccinate their children? *(ask if they have heard any specific stories/rumours)*
- Where might these negative attitudes/beliefs/concerns come from? *(e.g. religion, cultural norms & practices, traditional leaders, anti-vac lobbying, media)*
- What role (if any) do you think a lack of trust in the health care system, healthcare providers and/or government might play in people's decision to vaccinate their children? *(e.g. lack of trust in providers' competence; perceptions of poor quality of care; manner in which providers treat them and their children etc.)*
- Do you think people face any practical challenges that could prevent them from choosing or accessing vaccination? *(e.g cost, travel, language or cultural differences, clinic opening hours, vaccine stock-outs etc.)*
- Are there any other factors, that we haven't already discussed, that you think might prevent people from accepting and taking-up childhood vaccination?

15. What do you think could be done to make parents more likely to vaccinate their children according to the EPI schedule?

Probes:

- How can vaccination services best enable, support and motivate childhood vaccination?
- What channels do you think would be most effective in promoting childhood vaccination?
- Who should promote vaccination? *(e.g. health care workers, teachers, community leaders, media)*
- What formats should be used? *(e.g. advocacy visits? dialogue meetings? Media- radio announcements, jingles on TV, information in newspapers/magazines)? education and communication materials- posters, billboards, banners, pamphlets)*
- What content should the information include? Should this content be the same across the country or different for different settings?

16. We have spoken about various different challenges facing the EPI programme in the country. In summary, what for you are the most pressing issues that should be prioritized? In other words, if you could change 3 things about the current EPI programme, what would these be?

Probes:

- Why do you perceive these to be the most important?
- Do you think there are different priorities for different Provinces?

Part 4: HPV Vaccine

I would now like to talk a bit about the HPV vaccine and vaccination in South Africa.

17. What is your overall impression of the school HPV vaccination programme?

Probes:

- Is the programme successful or not successful? Why?
- Who is involved with the programme? Is there collaboration between the stakeholders? Why/why not?
- Have you received any feedback about the programme (*e.g. from parents/girls? teachers? those delivering the programme? others?*)

18. What do you think is currently working well with the programme?

Probes:

- Ask for specific example(s) of strengths nationally and in their local setting
- What do you think have been the enabling factors underpinning these successes? (*Probe: Political, structural, ideological, financial?*)

Main challenges and potential solutions

19. Currently the HPV Vaccination Programme is delivered in a campaign like approach- vaccination teams visit schools twice a year and targeted children come at the same time to line up for this vaccine. What are your thoughts about this approach?

Probes

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? (*and probe for specific examples in local setting*)
- Do you think parents/girls/teachers are happy with this approach? Why/why not? (*and probe for specific examples in local setting*)
- What alternative delivery mechanisms (if any) do you think might be more effective?

20. Currently the programme does not include private schools and the HPV vaccine is not available at public health facilities. What are your thoughts about this?

Probes

- What kinds of problems, if any, do you think these absences might be generating?
- Should the programme be extended to private schools? Why/why not? If yes: how should it be incorporated in private schools?
- Should the HPV vaccine be made available at public health facilities? Why/why not? If yes: what would be needed to operationalize this?

21. What do you think influences parents' and girls' decision to take-up the HPV vaccine?

Probes:

- To what extent do you think parents and girls think that the HPV vaccine is necessary? Do you think they know about the reasons for/benefits of the vaccine? Why/why not?
- Do you think parents and girls trust the HPV vaccine to protect their health? Why/why not?
- What doubts, fears, concerns (if any) do you think parents and girls might have about the HPV vaccine? What do you think might be the sources of these concerns/beliefs? (*e.g. cultural norms, community practices/traditions, anti-vac lobbying, social media, internet*)
- What role (if any) do you think a lack of trust in health system, healthcare providers and decision makers might play in parents and girls concerns and beliefs about the HPV vaccines and vaccination?
- Are there any other factors, that we have not already discussed, that you think might influence parents and girls decision to accept the HPV vaccine?

22. Figures suggest that there is a significant drop in uptake from the 1st to the 2nd dose. Why do you think this might be so?

23. What do you think could be done to encourage parents and girls to consent to the HPV vaccine within the school programme?

Probes:

- Is information about the HPV vaccine and vaccination programme currently provided to parents of targeted girls and these girls? Do you think further information and communication channels are needed?
- Is information about the HPV vaccine and vaccination programme provided to parents on non targeted girls?
- What channels do you think would be most effective in promoting the HPV vaccination?
- What formats should be used? (*e.g. advocacy visits? dialogue meetings? media (radio announcements, jingles on TV, information in newspapers/magazines)? education and communication materials (posters, billboards, banners, pamphlets)*)
- What content should the information include? Should this content be the same across the country or different for different settings?
- Who should be involved with education and communication activities (*e.g. health care workers, teachers, community leaders, media*)
- What would help parents and girls complete the vaccine series i.e. return for the second dose?

24. What are your views about health care providers (HCPs) and the HPV vaccine and vaccination services?

Probes

- What are HCPs general attitudes and behaviours towards the HPV vaccine and providing vaccination for HPV?
- Do you think HCPs know about the HPV vaccine?
- Do you think HCPs know about the conditions the HPV vaccine prevents?
- Do you think HCPs vaccinate their own children/grandchildren for HPV or take special interest to help ensure that children of close relatives are vaccinated for HPV?

25. We have spoken about various different challenges facing HPV vaccination in the country. In summary, what for you are the most pressing issues that should be prioritized? In other words, if you could change 3 things about the current HPV vaccination programme in South Africa, what would these be?

Probes:

- Why do you perceive these to be the most important?
- Are there different priorities for different Provinces?

Part 5: Closing

This has been a very informative interview. Thank you so much for your time.

Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to add? Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

Do you know of anyone else who could provide important insights as a key informant and might be interested in participating in the study?

If yes: can you provide us with their contact details so we can get in touch with them?