

Pupils in a Resistant, Non-compliant School Vaccinated

Madarasatul Anwarul Dinul is an Islamic school located in Layin Zawarawa settlement of Rigasa Ward in Igabi LGA of Kaduna state, a CORE Group Partners Project (CGPP) focal state. This Islamic school has an under-five target population of approximately 275 and an under-one target population of 11. The school has a population of approximately 1800 students comprising of women of child bearing age and children. With this large number of unvaccinated children under five years, the school poses a threat to the progress being made so far in the ongoing polio eradication activities in the state. This is due to the resistance towards polio vaccination by mothers and caregivers of eligible children in this school which is borne out of their religious beliefs. According to the head teacher, Adamu Umar, the view of the parents regarding immunization against polio is, "Only God protects and not the Vaccine". According to him, during previous Immunization Plus Days (IPDs), the collective view of the parents is, "We don't allow vaccination in our school, whenever the teams visit we don't welcome them".

Furthermore, the majority of parents and guardians of the pupils are also opposed to receiving immunization because they see it as foreign. Additionally, they also feel that there are other needs the government should be addressing - not only immunization that seems to be their main focus.

To address this challenge and bridge the gap, Volunteer Community Mobilizers (VCMs) of the USAID-supported CGPP, working with the LGA Social Mobilization Officers, conducted several advocacy visits and also held sensitization meetings with the parents and caregivers to highlight the importance of vaccination, Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) safety and general knowledge of the vaccination program.



Atine Tukur, the CGPP VCM working in the community, through her relentless and persistent efforts, visited the school before IPD implementation to sensitize the school authorities and parents, (most of the mothers also attend adult classes in the school) on the importance of vaccination, and the need to have their children in the school vaccinated.

On the 5th of September 2015, during the immunization campaigns (IPDs), the VCM, Atine Tukur, led the vaccination team to the school where she reminded the Head Teacher of his pledge to allow the team to vaccinate children in the school with OPV since the parents had given consent. A total of 243 children were vaccinated on that same day. The Volunteer who facilitated this remarkable achievement was elated by this accomplishment because it was the first time for over a year that immunization was allowed inside the school premises. The Head Teacher in his remark after the exercise stated that, "From now on the school will give warm reception to your teams when they visit for vaccination and the school will ensure that they sustain this uptake of vaccine through the sensitization of the caregivers and informed consent given". The number of children immunized that day will significantly reduce the number of missed children in the settlement, LGA, and ultimately in the state.