



Joel TOGUYENI Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

#EAWA

How FHI 360 #EAWA and their Local Partners are Winning Hearts and Minds in Burkina Faso for COVID-19 Vaccination

Have confidence! Take the lead! The power is in your hands to protect yourself, your family, and your country.

FEBRUARY 2024

Joel Toguyeni, 32, dearly loves his wife and four-year-old daughter. To keep them and others safe, he accepted vaccination against COVID-19 and campaigned to persuade his family and friends to do the same.

What motivated Joel was a campaign to increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake implemented by FHI 360's *Ending Aids in West Africa (#EAWA) Project*. He was deeply affected by the empathy driving the campaign.

Joel's acceptance signals the success of #EAWA's community strategy — based on ongoing research on local needs — to motivate people to request COVID-19 vaccination.

A native of the capital city of Ouagadougou, Joel is a civil engineer with an advanced university education. So he approaches important decisions with the scientific bent of an engineer's mind. What drove him to explore COVID-19 vaccination was the emotional shock of seeing his uncle and aunt hospitalized for two weeks, followed by several weeks of convalescence.

"I became worried by my uncle's experience because I'm a sports-loving person and playing football is my favorite enjoyment. I would not like to be sick for so long," Joel

explained. "Like most people in Burkina Faso, I was suspicious about vaccination against COVID-19. In any case, I knew very little about it."

"But I was won over by the #EAWA campaign because of its insights on the concerns of ordinary people like me in our country," he said.

There are many misunderstandings in Burkina Faso about vaccination to prevent or reduce the effects of COVID-19 infections so the campaign is aimed specifically at increasing vaccine uptake. The #EAWA project was selected for this campaign in recognition of its expertise in gaining people's trust through community engagement and behavioral change activities, as demonstrated by its work toward ending AIDS.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) awarded special funding to #EAWA for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. It was implemented through FHI 360 partner



sites in regions of intervention affiliated with the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The #EAWA project is a cooperative agreement funded by USAID and PEPFAR through 2026.

There are several barriers to COVID-19 vaccine uptake in Burkina Faso, including people who think that COVID-19 no longer exists or is simply a flu so they feel vaccination is unnecessary. Concerns about safety include distrust of the pharmaceutical industry and clinical trial results; insufficient promotion of vaccines and conflicting information; misinformation or rumors from social media suggesting it might cause infertility; and fear of getting sick or experiencing complex side effects.

The recent resurgence of coronavirus mutations in many countries underscores the importance of promoting interventions for immunization in Burkina Faso.

Vaccination remains the best way to prevent severe COVID-19 infections and reduce illness and death.

The campaign uses innovative approaches for community mobilization to encourage the general population to get vaccinated. It is supporting communication activities specifically aimed at addressing vaccine hesitancy and creating demand for COVID-19 vaccines.

Joel was systematic in his approach to deciding whether to trust vaccination. "I did some research on the internet which allowed me to better understand the importance of vaccination. Then I visited a health center where I saw a poster that influenced me deeply. It emphasized protecting my family, myself, and my country."

"I went to a community theatre to see a short play about COVID-19 and vaccination. There was a team there from an FHI 360 partner. After the performance, my wife and I made an appointment to be vaccinated," he said. "Now, I spread correct information to those around me, my family, friends, and work colleagues. Many have already accepted vaccination."

The campaign emphasizes discussions in partner site health centers, theater performances in markets, schools and public places, and advocacy with religious leaders and traditional chiefs. Key messages are broadcast on radio and television, and posters are placed in strategic locations on roads, like red lights or stop signs. Information is disseminated on the social networks and

websites of #EAWA partners and Burkina Faso's Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene. Other activities include outreach to social media influencers and the press.

Samples of posters displayed in Burkina Faso in 2023



For more information about the #EAWA project, please email eawainfo@fhi360.org

Suggested citation: How FHI 360 #EAWA and their local partners are winning hearts and minds in Burkina Faso for COVID-19 vaccination. Durham, NC: FHI 360; 2024.