

Terms of Reference

Implementation of Focus Group Discussions Regarding Barriers Impacting on the Acceptance of the COVID-19 Vaccine

Suriname

1. Background

The long-term success of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) public health response relies on flattening the curve and reducing the burden on health systems until an adequate proportion of the population acquires immunity against the virus (herd immunity). Achieving population immunity by natural means (whereby a significant proportion of the population needs to become infected) would result in an unprecedented burden on healthcare services and could lead to numerous unnecessary deaths worldwide. One key strategy to stop the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic is through vaccination.

Suriname commenced offering the COVID-19 vaccine on 23 February 2021 and despite a communications campaign which lasted over six months and the ongoing availability of doses which could cover the eligible population with at least two doses, the coverage has remained low at a current rate of 41% of the population. This is not in keeping with the World Health Organization's recommendation for countries to have achieved 40% population coverage by the end of December 2021 and 70% by the end of June 2022. Demand for the vaccine remains low including among priority groups such as healthcare workers, the elderly and other groups such as the indigenous and tribal populations.

Suriname has experienced all five of the variants of concern and cases, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and deaths continue to occur. This is of concern as the non-pharmaceutical preventive measures are no longer mandatory or being actively practiced.

The Pan American Health Organization will again support the Ministry of Public Health with a communication strategy and outreach activities with the aim to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase the COVID -19 vaccine uptake amongst the general population. To effectively do so, focus group discussions will be facilitated to better understand beliefs, fears, concerns and other barriers impacting on the acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine.

2. Scope of Services

The selected service provider is expected to complete the following Scope of Services:

1. Prepare a discussion guide including key questions targeting specific priority groups
2. Identification and selection of focus groups including priority groups (in close collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health).
3. Conduct 10 focus group discussions based on the identified target groups.
4. Prepare and submit a summary report based on the discussions held including specific key barriers for the demand and acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine.

3. Timeframe for consultancy

4 July 2022 – 18 July 2022 (two weeks)

4. Accountability, collaboration and working conditions

- The contractor will report to the PAHO Representative.
- The contractor will work from an independent space.

5. Deliverables and payment

Deliverable	Date
Discussion guide	July 7, 2022
Report on Focus group discussions	July 18, 2022

6. Qualifications and experience

- University degree in Health Education, Public Health or the social sciences
- Experience with facilitating and reporting on Focus Group Discussions
- Knowledge of the of the Suriname society
- Fluent in Dutch and Sranan