Community Engagement in Cancer Control

US-Nigerian Cancer Control Center for Research on Implementation Science and Equity (C3-RISE)

Capacity-Building

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About me

Prof. Benedict N. Azuogu
Director of Research, Grants & Partnership, AEFUTHA

- Son, Brother, Husband, Father, Uncle, Brother-in-law
- Friend, Teacher, Trainer, Mentor, Coach
- MBBS (2000); FWACP (2010); MPH (2015); Advance Cert. in Vaccinology (2017); MSc. in Health Policy & Health System (2020); Kofi Annan Fellowship in Global Health Leadership (2022)
- **Core Member:** Nigeria Immunization Technical Advisory Group (**NITAG**) 2015 to 2019
- **Research interests**: Clinical trials; Vaccinology, Health policy, Global health diplomacy
- **Current research**: Co-Principal Investigator in Lassa fever vaccine trial, and Lassa fever epidemiological research in West Africa

- **Contact:** bnazuogu@gmail.com; bnazuogu@ebsu.edu.ng
- **LinkedIn:** https://www.linkedin.com/in/benedict-n-azuogu-72993236

About me

Chisom Obi-Jeff
CEO, Brooks Insights

- Daughter, Sister, Wife, Mother, Sister-in-law, Niece, Auntie, Cousin

- BSc. in Microbiology (2006); MSc. in Public Health (2014); PhD in Epidemiology and Population Health (*in-view*).

- Research interests include **implementation research** to inform health policies, programs, and practice and **applying participatory approaches and behavioural insights** to address global health challenges and improve health-seeking behaviour, equity, and outcomes.

- Current research **builds evidence on implementation strategies to improve the uptake of evidence-based interventions** and outcomes in maternal, adolescent, and child health.

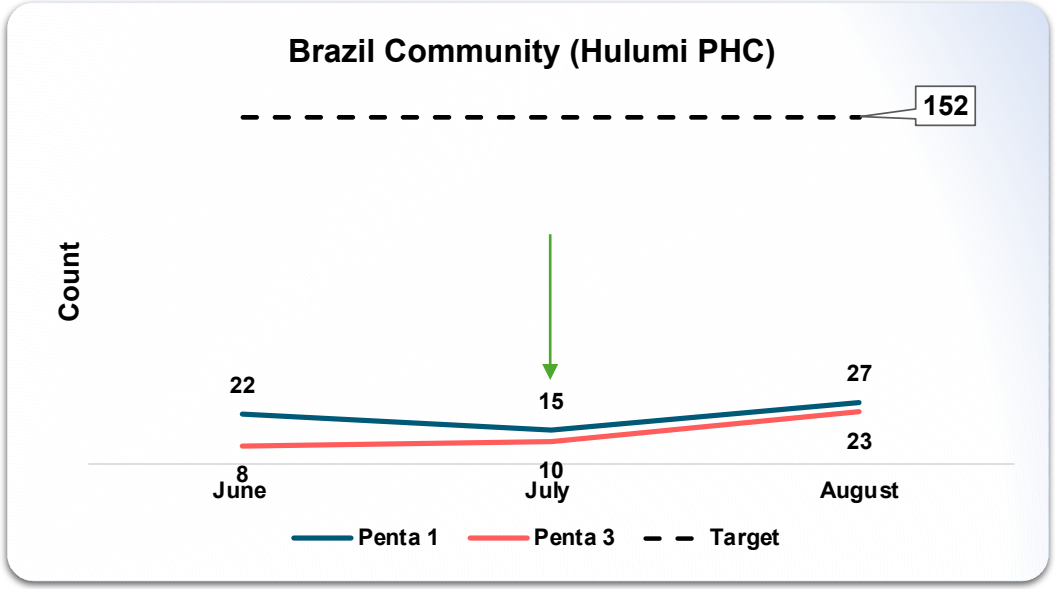
- **Contact:** chisom.obijeff@brooksinsights.org
- **LinkedIn:** https://www.linkedin.com/in/chisom-obi-jeff-36564363/

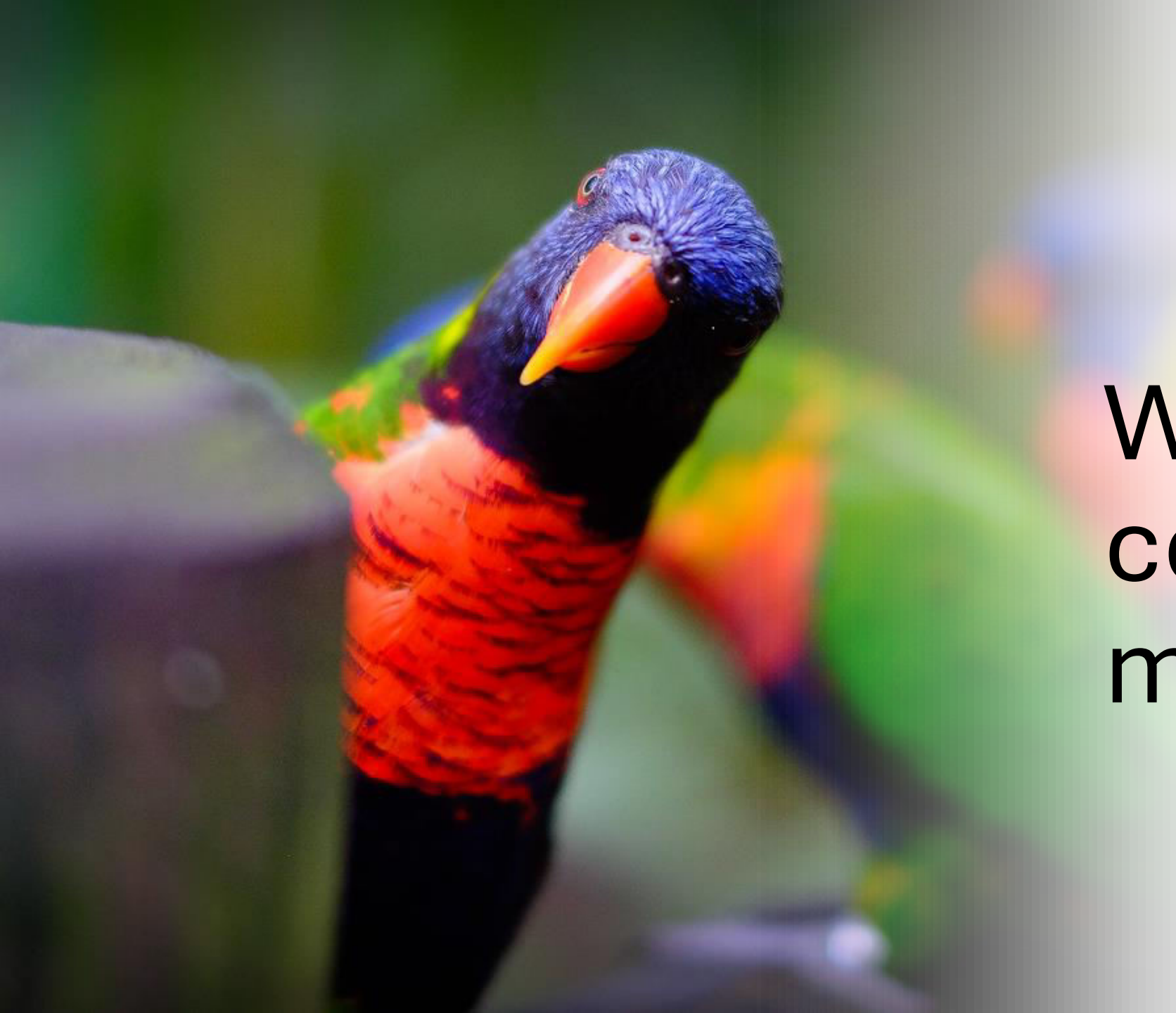
"*Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much*."

Helen Keller

“Operation Bring Vaccination to the Community” addresses the distance barrier to vaccination

- Brazil Community
- No transport fare to visit Hulumi PHC for vaccination
- “*Operation bring vaccination to the community*” field tested for 4 weeks (July 24-August 24, 2023)





What does a community mean to you?

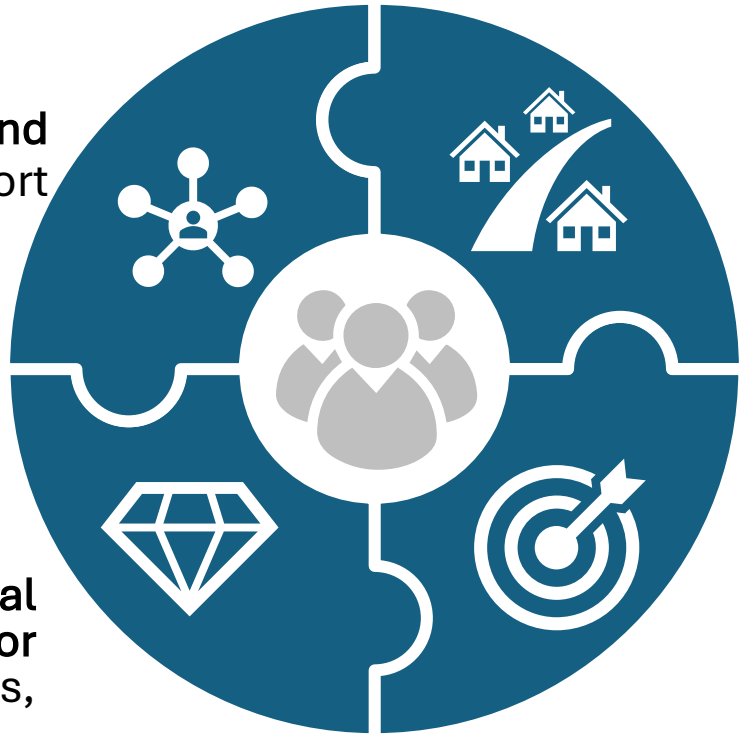
A community is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common

Network

People sharing the **same social and support network** (e.g., cancer support groups-Healing Circles)

Values and norms

People sharing the **same cultural background, traditions, religion, or belief** (e.g., traditionalists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Muslims, etc.)



Geographic

People **living in the same area** (e.g., a neighbourhood, town, village, street, or city)

Interest-based

People sharing a **common interest, goal, identity, or sense of purpose or belonging** (e.g., cancer survivors, health advocates)

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement involves purpose-driven interactions between communities and program implementers

- Community engagement involves "**working with communities**" other than **working for/in communities**.

- A people engagement that aims **to achieve a broad range of collective objectives**, such as health, economic, and social gains.

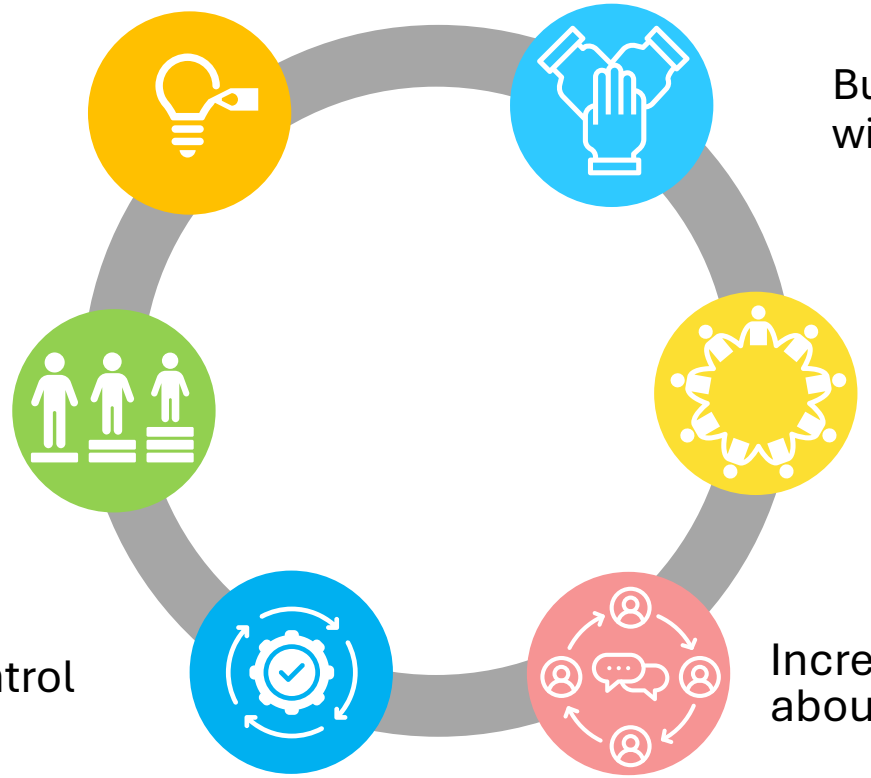
- We need an **in-depth understanding** of community members' lived experiences, local knowledge and leadership, existing community structures, values, and intangible community systems that influence behaviours.

Community engagement in cancer control enhances trust, equity, and sustainability

Ensures **culturally appropriate** interventions

Promotes **equity** in access to cancer control interventions.

Enhances **sustainability** of cancer control programs



Builds **trust, rapport, and collaboration** with community members

Encourages **community ownership** and **participation** in cancer control programs

Increases **communication and awareness** about cancer prevention and treatment

An effective community engagement ensures inclusiveness, mutual accountability, good governance, and sustainability

Participation ensures inclusiveness by engaging diverse community members

Participation

- **Inclusive process of giving voice to all persons** who have a stake and/or are affected by the outcome of the problem to be addressed.
- Conscious **identification and mapping of all target groups,** including policymakers, program implementers, vulnerable, marginalized, migrant groups, and the elderly.
- **Community-identifiable groups are involved in all stages of the intervention** to create a strong sense of ownership and felt responsibility for the community.

Accountability ensures transparency, openness, and honesty about goals and processes.

Mutual Accountability

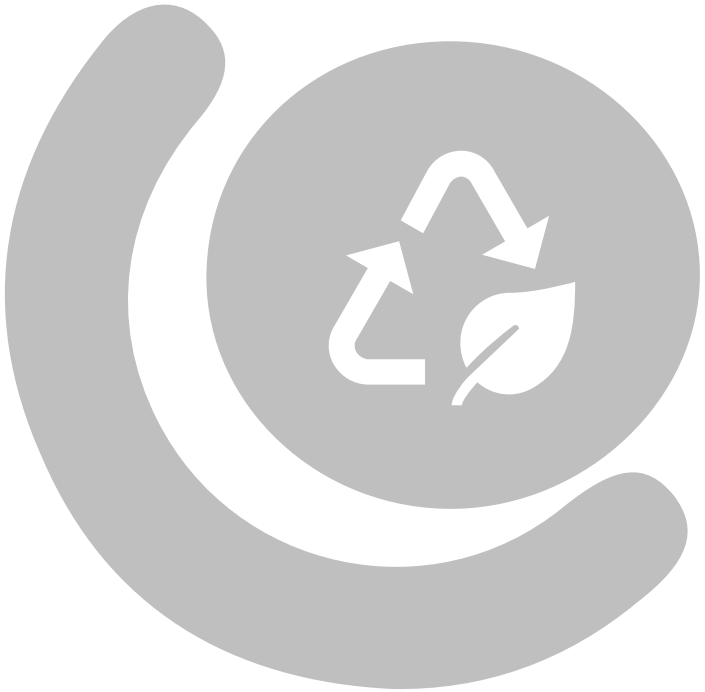
- Involves **sharing information about actions or intentions**.
- **Groups and individuals in partnership are accountable to each other** when they honour their commitment to communicate plans and are responsible for their actions.
- Ensuring **transparency**, a high **sense of responsibility,** and **trust** in their fellow citizens.

Good governance ensures respect and values the knowledge and experiences of the community

Governance

- The **structure of leadership for decision-making** and how those decisions are implemented.
- Good governance is characterized by **accountable**, **transparent**, **just**, **responsive**, and **participatory** leadership.
- Desired impacts of implementation research projects are highly sustainable if the governance structure is well considered.

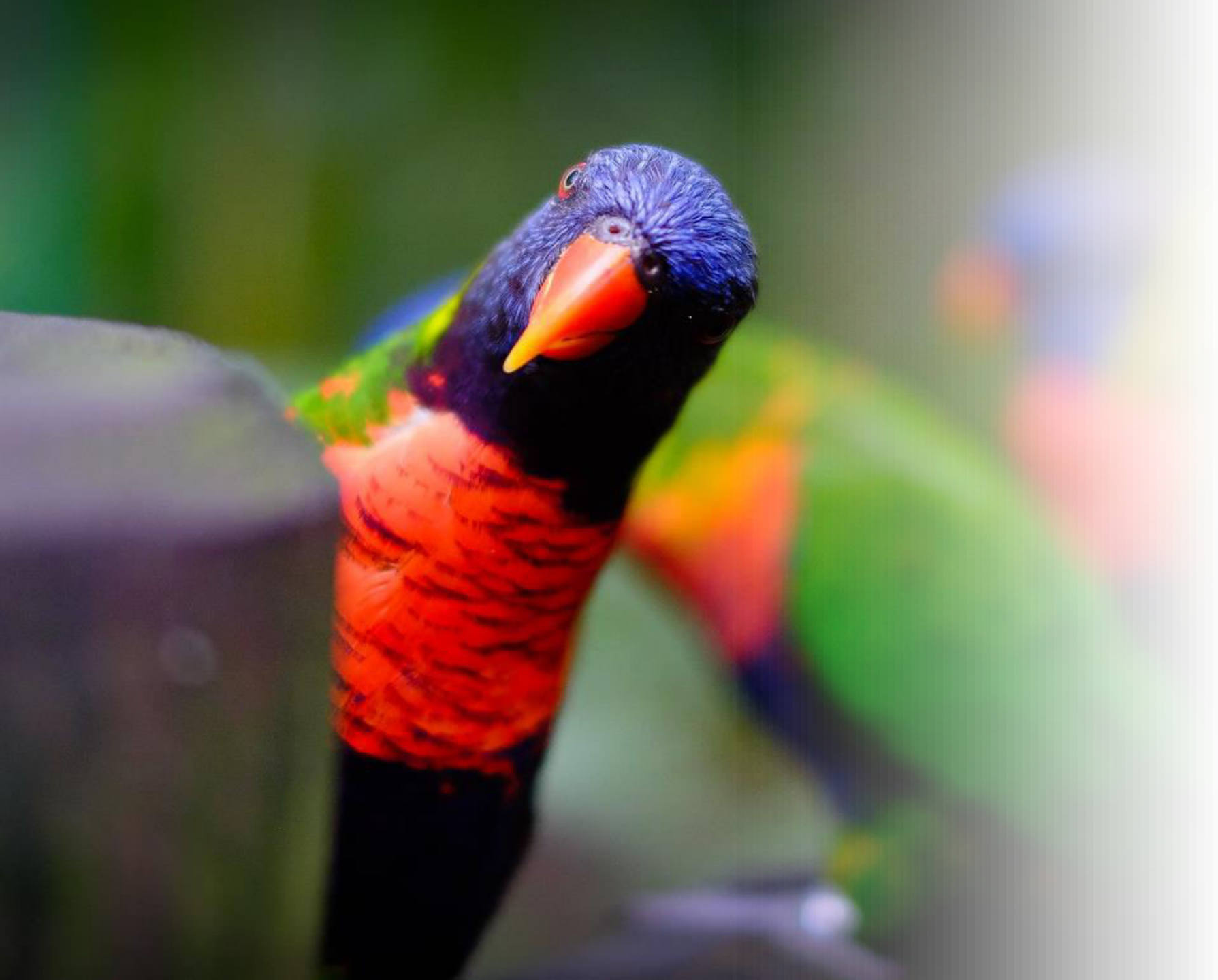
Sustainability of cancer control programs requires community ownership and active participation



Sustainability

- Sustainability is the ultimate vision of most public health interventions where the **local community sees the initiatives as their own** and is overtly committed to supporting them as part of their daily responsibilities.

- Therefore, it is imperative to ensure the application of the other three principles of community engagement to achieve a meaningful, sustained cancer control program.



Can you briefly explain how you did/would do your community engagement?

The process of community engagement in D&I is dynamic and needs a systematic approach to conduct it successfully (1/2)

❑ **Pre-Entry Preparation**

- **Desk/Literature Review:** For community's demographics, culture, needs, and past interventions
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** identify key stakeholders, including community leaders, organizations, and potential partners

❑ **Initial Contact:** Meet with community leaders, gatekeepers, and influential individuals to build trust

- **Attend Community Events:** participate in local events for familiarization and understanding their dynamics

❑ **Conduct Needs Assessments:** use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to identify their needs, strengths, and priorities

- **Asset Mapping:** identify resources, organizations, and infrastructure for your intervention

❑ **Building Partnerships and Collaborations**

- **Form Community Advisory Boards:** Establish boards or committees to guide the research process
- **Develop Collaborative Agreements:** Formalize partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

❑ **Engaging the Community in Planning**

- **Co-Design Interventions:** Work with community members to design interventions that are culturally relevant and acceptable
- Conduct small-scale pilot tests to refine the intervention based on community feedback

❑ **Capacity Building:** Train community members to build skills necessary for implementation and sustainability

- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure that the community has the resources needed for successful implementation

The process of community engagement in D&I is dynamic and needs a systematic approach to conduct it successfully (2/2)

❑ **Dissemination Strategies:** Create plans for disseminating information about the intervention, using effective channels

- Use existing community networks and organizations to spread information

❑ **Implementation:** Implement the intervention with continuous engagement and support from the community

- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Continuously monitor the implementation process and evaluate outcomes with community input

❑ **Sustainability Planning**

- **Build Local Ownership:** Ensure that the community feels ownership of the intervention to promote sustainability.
- **Plan for Long-Term Support:** Develop strategies for maintaining the intervention, including funding

❑ **Feedback and Adaptation**

- **Gather Continuous Feedback:** Regularly collect feedback from the community to identify areas for improvement
- **Adapt Interventions as Needed:** Modify the intervention based on feedback and changing community needs

❑ **Documentation and Reporting**

- **Document Processes and Outcomes:** Keep detailed records of the implementation process and outcomes.
- **Share Findings:** Disseminate results to the community, stakeholders, and the broader scientific community through reports, presentations, and publications

Community engagement and cultural adaptability of interventions are important in facilitating the acceptability of new innovations in Nigeria[1]

Yellow VIR band

Purple VIR band

Aqua VIR band

Overview

A Vaccine Indicator and Reminder (VIR) band was designed to serve as a reminder to improve demand for vaccine uptake in Kebbi State, Nigeria

Strategies Used

The strategies involved 1) intensive sensitization and mobilization of community gatekeepers to advocate for immunization; 2) training and engaging TBAs to refer mothers for vaccination and VIR bands; and 3) training facility-based health workers to secure the band on an eligible child.

Outcome

- Community members **likened it to a "wristwatch"** that constantly reminds mothers when they need to vaccinate their children.
- **Strong support from community leaders**, **TBAs**, and participating **health workers** increased the acceptability of the band.
- Similarly, the VIR band's aesthetics, ease of use, and perceived benefits contributed to its acceptability.
- However, there were concerns about wearing accessories on the ankle, the red indicator colour, and the malfunctioning of some bands.

1. Obi-Jeff, C., Rakhshani, N. S., Bello-Malabu, J. I., Nwangwu, C., Nwaononiwu, E., Eboreime, E., & Wonodi, C. (2020). Vaccine indicator and reminder band to improve demand for vaccination in Northern Nigeria: A qualitative evaluation of implementation outcomes. *Vaccine*, *38*(26), 4191-4199.

Community involvement and tailored strategies improved the uptake of cervical cancer screening in Ghana[2]

Overview

In Ghana, a community-based cervical cancer screening program was developed in response to the low uptake of the current hospital-based screening strategy.

Strategies

- Interactions with women and community members (gathering feedback and insights, understanding the social and cultural dynamics, and co-creating tailored solutions), requiring recruited women to report at a central location within their communities for specimen collection at convenient times
- Community health workers and volunteers engaged women and facilitated specimen collection within the communities.

Outcome:

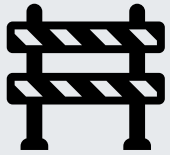
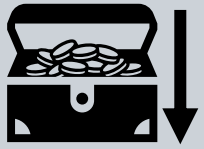
- The community-based specimen collection strategy resulted in a significantly higher response rate than the hospital-based strategy.
- Of the women invited to report at a specified location within the community, **95.1% reported for specimen collection**, leading to an overall response rate of 60.4%.
- There was high participation and engagement. Almost **89.7% of the women performed both self and health - personnel sample collection.**

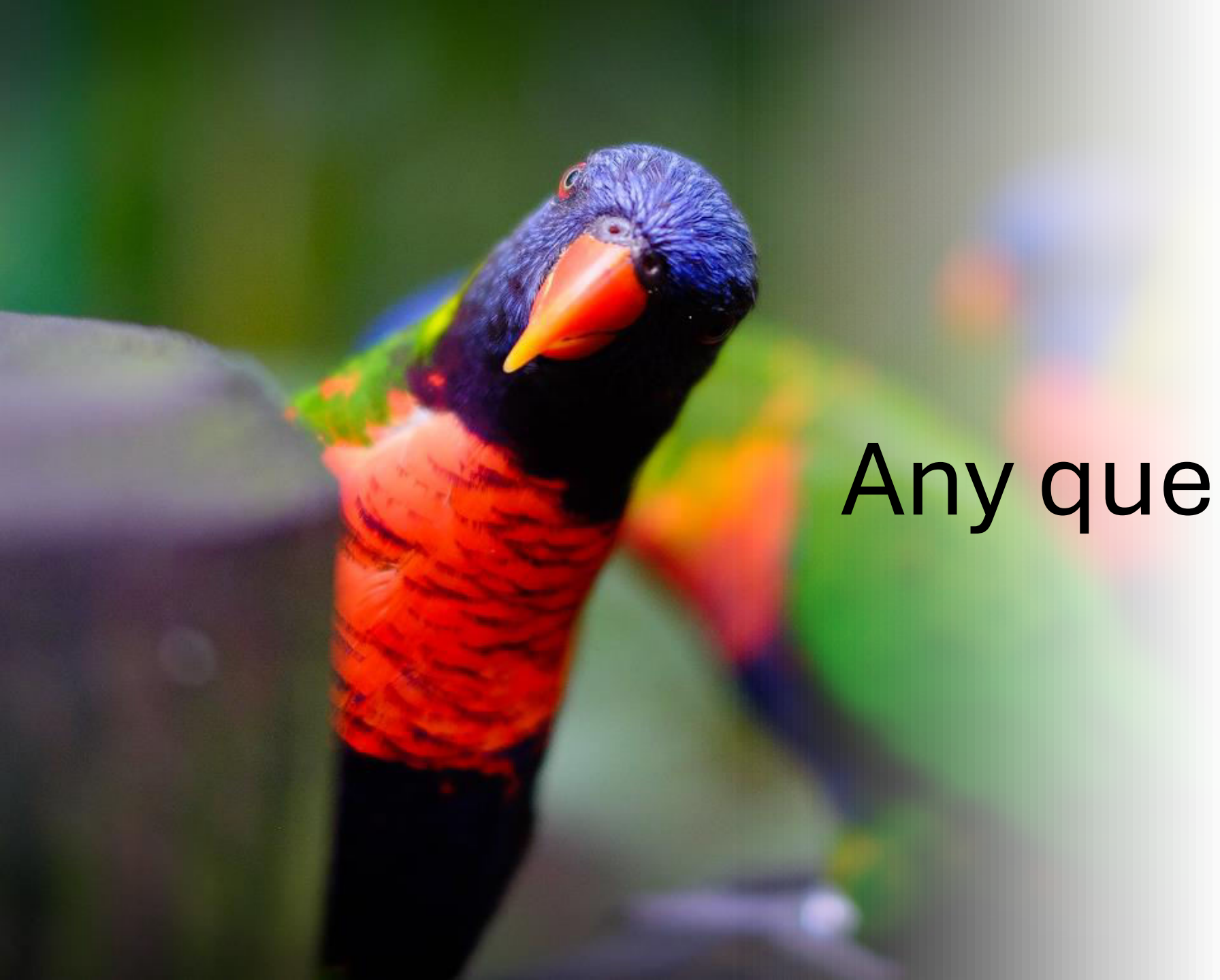
2. Awua, A. K., Wiredu, E. K., Afari, E. A., Tijani, A. S., Djanmah, G., & Adanu, R. M. (2018). A tailored within-community specimen collection strategy increased uptake of cervical cancer screening in a cross-sectional study in Ghana. *BMC Public Health*, *18*, 1-11.

Share your challenges with implementing community engagement

- What are some challenges that one could face when conducting community engagement activities?
- How could some of these challenges be mitigated?
- How would you effectively work in conflict-ridden communities?

Best practices to address challenges with community engagement toward the end-goal of cancer prevention and control

Challenge	Solution
Limited community ownership and trust	• Early engagement of community members • Include community members and their social networks in implementing the research activities • Maintain regular communication and engagement to build relationships • Build trust by being transparent about the project's goals, processes, and progress • Identify and develop community members' skills to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.
 Cultural barriers	• Implement culturally appropriate interventions and use communication strategies that resonate with the community's culture. • Work with existing community social support structures
 Resource limitations	• Partner with local/community-based organizations and leverage existing resources.



Any questions?