

# Community Testimonials: Using Trusted Sources to Share COVID-19 Vaccine Information with Indigenous Farmworker Communities

## Outreach Promising Practice

Mixteco/Indigenous Community Organizing Project (MICOP) gathered and shared testimonials from members of Indigenous communities who received the COVID-19 vaccine as a means to share important health information and encourage the adoption of the COVID-19 vaccine among Indigenous farmworkers.

## Organization:

Mixteco/Indigenous Community Organizing Project (MICOP)

Location: Oxnard, CA



## About:

MICOP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been a pillar of the Indigenous farmworker community in Central California since 2001. MICOP is a self-governing Indigenous empowerment group. For more than two decades, this team has built a foundation of support and trust for the Indigenous immigrant worker communities it serves in Central California through culturally and linguistically informed programs and outreach. In addition to outreach, MICOP operates a wide range of programs to promote the health and well-being of migrant workers, including community organizing and policy advocacy, immigration services, and research and evaluation. Annually, MICOP's programming serves approximately 15,000 people.

MICOP keeps its community safe and informed by providing information in Mixtec, Zapotec, Purépecha, and Spanish.

## Unmet Need Addressed:

California is home to some 170,000 Indigenous immigrants from the southern states of Mexico, including Mixtecs, Zapotecs, Purépechas, among other peoples. These communities speak their own Indigenous languages and have deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices. Because many programs and resources fail to account for this cultural and linguistic diversity among immigrants, many Indigenous immigrants cannot access health resources and information. MICOP's outreach programming has ensured equitable language access to accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccine to combat misinformation and increase confidence in the vaccine in Indigenous farmworker communities through radio, social media, and face-to-face conversations.

## Description of the Practice:

MICOP has collected testimonials from members of Indigenous communities in their respective languages who have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Testimonials are captured verbally and then shared widely during meetings, social media, and through one-on-one interactions between advocates and community members. Some testimonials are recorded during community meetings, where people share their experiences and reasons for getting the vaccine in their languages. Testimonials are then edited for clarity and shared via social media and broadcast on indigenous and Spanish-language radio.



Radio Indigena 94.1 staff in the radio's production space.

## Key Strategies:

### Formal Recorded Testimonials

The idea to focus on community testimonials came from MICOP's Indigenous language radio program, [Radio Indígena 94.1 FM](#). Radio Indígena 94.1 FM offers programming on a wide range of topic areas ranging from farmworkers' rights and community organizing to domestic violence and mental health, and the station began providing educational information on COVID-19 during the pandemic. Members of the MICOP outreach team began to hear from community members who called the radio station about their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine.

Building upon the personal stories being shared on the radio, MICOP started to collect testimonials and information from farm workers and community members regarding their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine during meetings and one-on-one interactions. These testimonials were shared with other members of the community through outreach events, Radio Indígena 94.1 FM, and online platforms such as Facebook. It was the decision of the radio producer and the community outreach team to choose which testimonials to highlight. The testimonials were accompanied by data from the county public health department. An example of a testimonial shared on Facebook can be found [here](#).

The sharing of testimonies helped the MICOP outreach team address concerns in larger community settings as well as one-on-one.

### Informal Testimonials

Outreach meetings were an opportunity for farmworkers and their families to share information and receive resources on public benefits and health resources, such as CalFresh (SNAP). These monthly informational meetings, coupled with MICOP's foundation of support and trust with the community, have provided outreach workers with a platform to encourage open communication between MICOP, public health agencies, and Indigenous farmworker communities. This open discussion style was born out of a need to dispel widespread misinformation about COVID-19 and increase community members' confidence in the vaccine.

Providing a safe forum for community members to discuss their experiences with vaccines stimulated community dialogue about the benefits of vaccines and helped answer questions quickly while correcting any misinformation. Community members could hear from their peers why they chose to be vaccinated, allowing for dissemination of these informal testimonials about the COVID vaccines.



*“Giving space for community members to share their experiences allowed information to come not only from MICOP health promoters, but also created an avenue for dialogue from the community to the community.”*

*- Griselda Reyes Basurto*

*Manager of the COVID-19 Rapid Response Team*

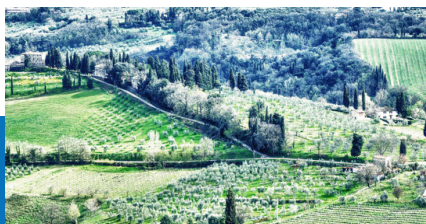
### Language Access

Recognizing that language is one of the significant barriers for the Indigenous farmworker population, MICOP prioritized the translation of all English and Spanish materials into Indigenous languages, including Mixtec and Zapotec. During meetings, MICOP provided live interpretation into Mesoamerican languages for all who needed it. Additionally, MICOP's efforts to promote COVID-19 vaccinations and dispel misinformation depended on communication that was consistent, transparent, and culturally and linguistically appropriate.

### Results:

For 16 months (November 2020 to February 2022), a total of 73,000 people attended the face-to-face and online meetings. Participants may have attended more than one meeting and may be counted in this estimate more than once.

Between November 2020 and February 2022, Radio Indígena 94.1 FM made more than 7,300,000 “impressions”. “Impressions” refers to the number of times the audience listened to the radio. This does not refer to unique listeners.



## Key Challenges and How to Address Them:

A key challenge for MICOP during the COVID-19 pandemic was combating misinformation that spread among the farmworker community. Like many communities, the misinformation circulating included misunderstandings that the COVID-19 vaccines were unsafe or untrustworthy.

While many materials were made available by other organizations to combat misinformation, very few were translated into Indigenous languages or made available in offline formats. MICOP was able to address misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine by sharing testimonials with members of the community, which provided information on how to stay protected against COVID-19 and the benefits of getting vaccinated. Furthermore, collecting these testimonials from the community and sharing them allowed MICOP an additional avenue to keep a pulse on community attitudes about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines.

## Resources Needed and Expenses:

The largest expense was staff time. The number of staff dedicated to this project included two staff members working on gathering testimonials, two staff working on social media management, their radio producer, and their community outreach worker. MICOP also purchased small gifts such as insulated water bottles and face masks to distribute to participants at the monthly meetings.



## Partnerships:

The following organizations supported MICOP by providing information related to the COVID-19 pandemic, training for supervisors and community health promoters, and resource sharing:

- [The Center at Sierra Health Foundation](#), provided funding to MICOP
- [California Department of Social Services](#)
- [Together Toward Health](#)
- [The Labor and Workforce Development Agency](#)
- Local public health agencies of [San Luis Obispo](#), [Santa Barbara](#), and [Ventura](#) Counties collaborated on vaccination clinics and COVID-19 prevention.

## Learn More:

- [MICOP's website](#)
- [Radio Indígena 94.1 FM](#)
- [Radio Indígena 94.1 FM Horario del programa](#)
- [Immigration Resources](#)
- [Interpretation Services](#)
- Artículo: “A Day of Pandemic-Style Work at Radio Indígena”

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### *Pro Tip:*

*Be creative about ways to deliver messages about vaccines and other health issues (i.e. use of social media/digital platforms). While there may be challenges with this approach due to low digital literacy in the community, this can also be an educational opportunity and increase access to digital resources, as well as provide additional avenues to stay connected to the community.*

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