DIGITAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strategy 2025-2026

POLIO | GLOBAL ERADICATION INITIATIVE

unicef

DIGITAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Acknowledgements

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A special thanks to McCann Global Health for their collaboration and support in coordinating efforts, gathering diverse perspectives, and synthesizing key information.

Collectively, these contributions have been instrumental in ensuring that the strategy is well-informed and responsive to the latest challenges, trends, and opportunities within the polio eradication and digital communication landscapes.

Adnan Shahzad
Global Lead, Digital Community Engagement
UNICEF Polio Eradication Team, NYHQ

Executive Summary

Since its launch in 2021, Digital Community Engagement (DCE) has achieved impressive results, analyzing millions of pieces of digital content to identify misinformation circulating about polio and reaching over 100 million people with accurate information through online platforms. As the spread of misinformation and disinformation continues to grow and reach an ever-expanding population of social media users, amplified by the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and ongoing political and social polarization worldwide, the role of digital engagement in eliminating polio has become increasingly critical.

Alongside an evolving digital landscape, polio outbreaks are expanding to new geographies and populations. This presents an opportunity for DCE to consider its strategy for the next 2 years to ensure it is built to respond and deliver amidst these changes. The new strategy presents DCE's role in supporting the goals of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), in particular its communication priorities, and outlines how DCE will continue to serve as the critical "online" complement to UNICEF Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) interventions in the field to support vaccine acceptance.

Key priorities for the new strategy are to ensure DCE remains agile to match the urgency of eradication efforts while developing messaging and approaches that are evidence-based, highly tailored to the needs of communities, and responsive to the latest narratives and misinformation reaching target audiences. The strategy also outlines approaches for ensuring digital engagement efforts are in line with field realities and ultimately owned and implemented by field teams.

The strategy is built around 5 key pillars that outline the objectives and sub-objectives that DCE will seek to achieve over the next 2 years. The pillars are grounded in the DCE Framework and a set of key enablers that outline values and priorities that underpin all of DCE's efforts and ensure its work is responsive to local insights, culturally relevant and respectful, and

well-poised to influence vaccination narratives, behaviours, and outcomes on a global scale. These key enablers, outlined later in this document, are intentionally built for the future and can be applied to digital engagement for any public health programme. This flexible and open-ended approach is intentional to envision greater integration with public health programmes and to ensure the relevance of polio investments in a post-polio world.

DCE's KEY PILLARS

COMPLEMENT: Foster an online ecosystem that sustains educated acceptance for polio vaccination by leveraging digital platforms to supplement SBC initiatives

ANTICIPATE: Utilize social and community listening tools and techniques to improve proactive detection and analysis of misinformation and disinformation, enabling tailored counter-narratives to manage vaccine hesitancy effectively

MOBILIZE: Develop and implement a dynamic digital social mobilization programme that harnesses the power of locally relevant micro and macroinfluencers to reinstate polio immunization as a global priority

EMPOWER: Implement a comprehensive DCE capacity-building programme, providing innovative digital learning resources and tailored training opportunities for staff, frontline workers, and partners to enhance their ability to engage communities effectively

COLLABORATE: Work closely with field teams to design and implement targeted digital campaigns that address community information needs promptly and drive efficient engagement, reinforcing confidence in polio eradication efforts

Background

In the face of expanding polio outbreaks and rising WPV1 cases, the role of digital community engagement has become increasingly integral to eradication efforts. The digital landscape is rapidly evolving, with a significant surge in online populations, particularly in developing countries where social media users are growing fastest.[1] This digital expansion, while offering unprecedented opportunities for engagement and information dissemination, also poses challenges, notably the rampant spread of misinformation and disinformation through platforms like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). This challenge is further amplified by rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), blurring the lines between fact and fiction. According to a 2024 World Economic Forum report, the spread of misinformation and disinformation is the most severe global risk anticipated by global leaders over the next 2 years, as it threatens to infiltrate public discourse on various issues, including public health.[2]

Polio immunization efforts have already experienced the devastating impacts of mis/disinformation. There are numerous examples of how false rumours, negative information, and adverse advice about polio vaccination circulating online have caused panic and mistrust and contributed to vaccine hesitancy. In the most recent report by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), misinformation is cited as a critical threat to eradication efforts.[3]

This makes it more critical than ever to ensure that polio teams are well-positioned to rapidly detect and manage misinformation about polio vaccination. Teams also need to be proactively engaging online communities about polio, providing them with accurate information through trusted digital voices and establishing digital
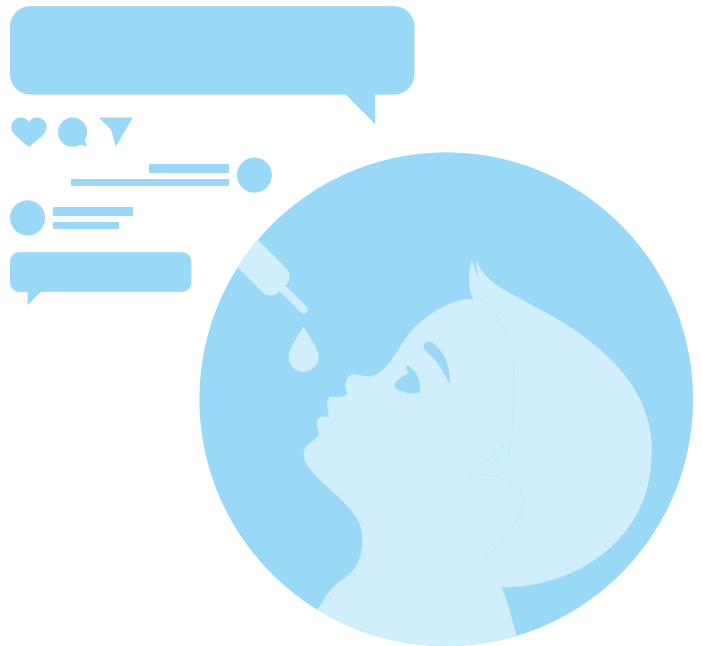
connections through innovative approaches. Studies show that digital mediums can have a positive impact on vaccine demand, with 88% of respondents in a recent UNICEF survey[4] expressing that their intent to vaccinate increased because of information about vaccination they encountered on social media.

The need for enhanced digital engagement around polio eradication is aligned with UN 2.0 objectives. UN 2.0 is the United Nations' strategic initiative to harness digital technology to create a more inclusive, agile, and impactful organization. It emphasizes building digital capacity to support accessible, ethical, and scalable digital solutions that address global challenges while safeguarding human rights. Aligning the DCE strategy with UN 2.0 Digital is essential because it ensures that DCE's digital engagement practices not only support polio eradication but also contribute to the broader UN mandate of inclusive and equitable digital transformation.

[1] Digital 2023: Global Overview Report
[2] World Economic Forum: Global Risks Report 2024
[3] GPEI IMB: 23rd Report September 2024
[4] UNICEF ESAR Case Study - Validating SCL Insights for Polio Vaccine Hesitancy in Tanzania

AGILE DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT BUILT ON SBC PRINCIPLES

Digital Community Engagement (DCE) is a global team that tracks polio misinformation online, develops accurate messaging for digital channels, and supports digital volunteers and UNICEF country offices in responding to communities' information needs. It leverages the latest social and community listening technology to identify real-time community challenges and deploys evidence-based digital interventions to support continued polio vaccine acceptance.

DCE is implemented under the broader Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) strategy to eradicate polio and is closely aligned with UNICEF Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) interventions and vaccination efforts. Since its inception, DCE has been systematically expanded to over 40 countries affected by polio, scaling to meet the growing needs for digital support and innovative strategies to eliminate the disease. Although DCE is built for agility to match the emergency nature of polio response, providing immediate support to field SBC teams and turnkey interventions that promote vaccination campaigns, the underlying principles and models can be scaled to any public health programme.

Key strategic outcomes for DCE to date include training over 600 health professionals, reaching over 100 million people with accurate information about polio, and establishing a digital social mobilization network with over 77,000 volunteer social media micro-influencers in almost 90 countries. DCE's bi-weekly newsletter provides timely alerts to field teams on high-risk misinformation and other relevant digital trends, and is actively used by field teams in their strategic planning. Its network of digital volunteers continues to effectively counter misinformation about polio and build trust within communities. Targeted digital ads placed by DCE have also proven to be effective, leading to significant changes in knowledge and attitudes about polio among the target audience.
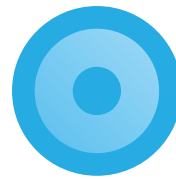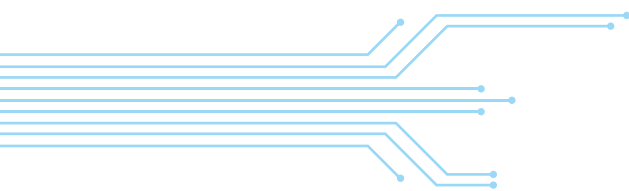
Over 100 million
people reached

77,000
volunteer social media micro-influencers recruited

600+
people trained on specialist subjects in digital communication

STRATEGY FOR 2025-2026

For the DCE initiative to maintain its momentum and impact, a forward-looking strategy for 2025-2026 is essential. The strategy provides a clear framework for DCE's efforts over the coming years, while leaving flexibility to explore and incorporate new approaches and tools in digital engagement as they emerge and evolve. It builds from the vision and objectives laid out by the GPEI's 2022-2026 strategy, in particular the communication strategic initiatives set forth by GPEI, and is grounded in DCE's core framework and UN 2.0. It also reflects lessons learned from recent campaigns focused on polio, as well as broader global health initiatives that target misinformation and information gaps.

The new strategy identifies innovative ways to ensure DCE's efforts are responsive, contextually relevant, and scalable. It presents DCE's role in the global polio response by aligning with the urgency of eradication efforts, remaining responsive to the dynamic digital communications sphere, and empowering communities by involving them directly in the narrative.

Pathway to Success

ALERTING FIELD TEAMS ABOUT MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION, AND INFORMATION GAPS ONLINE

DCE's media monitoring technology provides real-time visibility and ongoing analysis of global media and public narratives about polio. This gives field teams critical insights on current and upcoming risks to vaccine acceptance. 85% of technical specialists who receive these insights say that they are beneficial for their strategic planning. In the same survey, a majority of respondents also reported that they used these insights to inform others about trending polio misinformation and disinformation, and to support internal and external programme decision-making.

LEVERAGING DIGITAL INFLUENCERS THROUGH "UINFLUENCE"

DCE leverages the power of social networks and digital influencers through its "uInfluence" programme, which is a global network of digital volunteers that disseminate evidence-based, trusted messages about polio, health, and vaccines across their personal social media profiles. These volunteers have seen significant engagement from their communities; 70% of the participants in the programme reported that other people reached out to them about the polio vaccine after seeing their posts on social media.[5]

In 2024, DCE held its first in-person uInfluence event in Pakistan, one of the endemic countries, bringing together public health professionals, mega social media influencers, government representatives, and over 40 digital volunteers to learn firsthand about polio eradication efforts and digital health communications. The event provided an opportunity for volunteers to enhance their knowledge and motivation for sharing polio-related content. It also empowered local teams to leverage uInfluence and digital volunteers to support immunization campaigns.

TARGETED DIGITAL ADS THAT PREBUNK AND DEBUNK TRENDING MISINFORMATION

Another key way that DCE supports polio eradication is through digital advertising that is tailored to local parents and caregivers, and responsive to misinformation themes circulating in a given country. Last year, DCE implemented ad flights on Facebook and Instagram reaching community members in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Indonesia, Kenya, and other countries. Surveys showed that the messaging positively impacted awareness of the need for vaccination, the importance of multiple doses, and the perception of community risk. Significant improvements in knowledge and attitudes were observed in Indonesia, Kenya, and Ghana, highlighting the impact of pairing real-time media monitoring with rapid community outreach.

Improving readiness for vaccine campaigns; over 8 million caregivers reached in 13 days

In 2024, DCE mobilized digital volunteers to raise awareness about an on-the-ground subnational immunization campaign in Pakistan. Through social media outreach, targeted digital content, and 2 activation emails, the campaign sought to improve readiness for, and trust in, polio workers administering vaccines. Working closely with the UNICEF Pakistan SBC team to align on campaign timing, content, and creative approach, the digital activation reached over 8.3 million caregivers in 13 days.

[5] UNICEF-PGP DCE Evaluation Report 2024

The DCE Framework

The DCE Framework is a systematic approach to listen, understand, contextualize, collaborate, and respond to community information needs. This proactive approach is based on global best practices in digital engagement and misinformation management, especially for vaccination programmes. The framework ensures that polio misinformation is addressed with well-tailored digital interventions that are also agile and evidence-based.

ONLINE SOCIAL LISTENING	CONTENT HUB	POLIO AD NETWORK	DIGITAL SOCIAL MOBILIZATION
(Misinformation and Rumours Identification, Gap Analysis, Community Sentiment)	(Risk Anticipation, Evidence-Based Messaging and Designs, Rapid Response Capacity)	(Reach Amplification, Risk Mitigation, and Response Deployment)	(Community Engagement, Misinformation Response, Influencer Engagement)

DATA AND ANALYTICS

(Digital Data Collection, Audience and Targeting Segmentation, Reporting and Analysis)

The Bigger Picture

SUPPORTING GPEI OBJECTIVES

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is a public-private partnership led by national governments with 6 partners—the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. As a core initiative of UNICEF's Polio SBC team, DCE efforts are designed to support the GPEI mission to eradicate polio worldwide.

The GPEI *Polio Eradication Strategy 2022-2026* recognizes communication as a critical part of the enabling environment needed to support polio immunizations, with a key role in reinforcing social norms around vaccination, increasing vaccine uptake, and managing public narratives in the context of mis/disinformation and vaccine hesitancy. Digital communication in particular is highlighted as critical to ensure that GPEI is "listening" to understand what polio mis/disinformation is circulating on digital and social media platforms, assessing how and when to respond to mis/disinformation and information gaps, and proactively addressing them.

DCE's strategic pillars are built around the key communication priorities outlined in the GPEI strategy and provide a clear set of objectives for how DCE will support GPEI in achieving its goals.
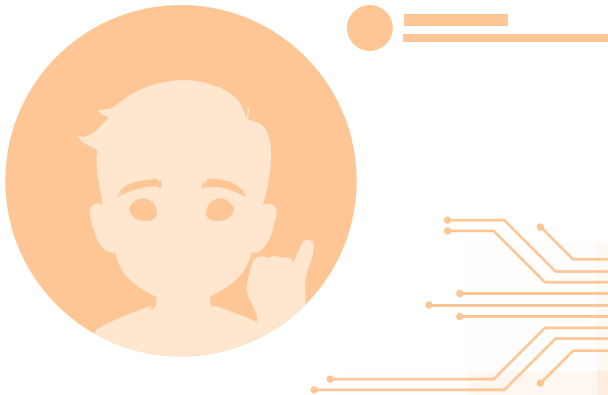
Goal One: Permanently interrupt all poliovirus transmission in endemic countries

Goal Two: Stop cVDPV transmission and prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries

GPEI COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES
Source: GPEI Strategy 2022-2026

- Addressing social and behaviour barriers, mitigating risk to the programme and leveraging opportunities for polio vaccine delivery and acceptance;

- Developing and implementing GPEI crisis communication strategies for early detection and response to vaccine infodemics, informed by continuously improved social listening data, research tools and communications interventions;

- Engaging social influencers, programme advocates and other prominent public figures to help reframe polio immunizations as an apolitical public health agenda and a global priority;

- Building capacity and strengthening coordination efforts across communication partners and staff, as well as frontline workers and other personnel, to navigate the complex public immunization space, use interpersonal skills for community engagement and hone digital skills to expand reach, influence and capacity for timely and targeted action; and

- Continuing to help shape and manage global, regional and country narratives on the polio programme and polio vaccines by ensuring the availability of clear, accurate information to mitigate communications-related risks and maintain confidence in polio eradication.
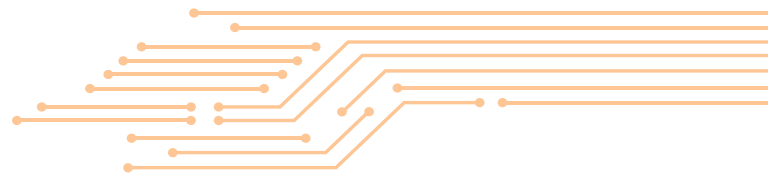
ALIGNING WITH UN 2.0
DIGITAL IMPACT VISION

The table below illustrates the alignment between the UN 2.0 digital transformation principles and the actions within the DCE strategy. This alignment underscores DCE's commitment to fostering digital inclusivity, agility, and ethical practices that are integral to supporting polio eradication. Each UN 2.0 principle is paired with corresponding actions from this strategy, demonstrating how DCE's approach integrates these core principles to enhance reach, resilience, and impact in the communities it serves.

UN 2.0 DIGITAL PRINCIPLES	ALIGNED ACTIONS IN DCE STRATEGY		
Digital Inclusivity and Accessibility	Use of digital platforms to engage marginalized communities and overcome barriers to information access in low-resource settings.	Localized content and community-specific messaging to ensure information reaches diverse audiences effectively.	Partnerships with local influencers to bridge cultural gaps and promote accessibility.
Data-Driven and Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Deployment of social and community listening tools to monitor and analyze real-time misinformation trends.	Collection of data insights from campaigns to refine approaches and inform subsequent digital engagement strategies.	Use of KPIs and data analysis to track impact and adjust messaging to meet community needs and perceptions.
Agility and Responsiveness	Rapid response mechanisms through social and community listening to address misinformation and adapt to emerging risks quickly.	Decentralized DCE operations, empowering local teams with the autonomy to implement responsive strategies aligned with field realities.	
Human-Centered and Culturally Relevant Solutions	Tailored content creation and messaging approaches that reflect community needs, cultural values, and local languages.	Engagement of trusted community figures and digital volunteers to foster trust and ensure message resonance within communities.	
Capacity Building and Digital Literacy	Implementation of a comprehensive capacity building programme for local teams, volunteers, and health professionals on digital engagement.	Provision of digital learning resources and e-modules for ongoing knowledge enhancement and community engagement skills.	
Collaboration and Partnerships	Cross-functional partnerships with local SBC teams and public health professionals to coordinate digital engagement efforts.	Support for locally-led DCE campaigns, encouraging collaboration with regional stakeholders to enhance community outreach.	
Resilience and Ethical Digital Engagement	Application of DCE's "anticipate" objective to proactively manage misinformation risks ethically and responsibly.	Commitment to safe digital spaces by training teams on handling misinformation and protecting against harmful narratives.	

Strategic Pillars

At the core of DCE's strategy are its strategic pillars. The strategic pillars outline the objectives and sub-objectives that DCE will seek to achieve over the next 2 years to support the overall GPEI objective of polio eradication. The objectives will be achieved through a set of activities that will evolve in response to identified needs and opportunities for optimization and measured against a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress (see Annex 1 for reference activities and KPIs). The strategy is also guided by a set of priorities and values that demonstrate alignment with SBC principles and serve as key enablers.

COMPLEMENT

Foster an online ecosystem that sustains educated acceptance for polio vaccination by leveraging digital platforms to supplement SBC initiatives

ANTICIPATE

Utilize social and community listening tools and techniques to improve proactive detection and analysis of misinformation and disinformation, enabling tailored counter-narratives to manage vaccine hesitancy effectively

MOBILIZE

Develop and implement a dynamic digital social mobilization programme that harnesses the power of locally relevant micro and macroinfluencers to reinstate polio immunization as a global priority

EMPOWER

Implement a comprehensive DCE capacity-building programme, providing innovative digital learning resources and tailored training opportunities for staff, frontline workers, and partners to enhance their ability to engage communities effectively

COLLABORATE

Work closely with field teams to design and implement targeted digital campaigns that address community information needs promptly and drive efficient engagement, reinforcing confidence in polio eradication efforts

Objective 1: Complement

FOSTER AN ONLINE ECOSYSTEM THAT SUSTAINS EDUCATED ACCEPTANCE FOR POLIO VACCINATION BY LEVERAGING DIGITAL PLATFORMS TO SUPPLEMENT SBC INITIATIVES

Since its inception, DCE has achieved broad reach through robust audience engagement, social media analysis, influencer recruitment, content creation, and training initiatives. Its efforts will continue to be a critical part of social mobilization for polio as online mis/disinformation amplifies global polarization, mistrust, and suspicions of public health authorities and institutions. DCE will continue to ensure that online misinformation around polio is being actively monitored and that teams and partners are well-equipped to swiftly respond with clear, accurate messaging that quells rumours and responds to concerns.

It will continue to ensure its efforts are aligned and integrated with broader SBC programming, serving as the critical "online" complement to SBC's on-the-ground interventions and engagement with communities to support vaccine acceptance. This will include ongoing alignment with SBC priorities to enhance community trust and maximize outreach efforts. DCE will work alongside SBC teams in incorporating new opportunities, such as digital messaging on other essential health interventions (e.g. routine immunization, maternal and child health services) and outbreak response (e.g. mpox) alongside polio. These approaches will be especially relevant in the most vulnerable regions where it is critical to provide communities with a more context-specific support package.

Lastly, DCE will ensure its efforts are driven by, and contribute to, analytics, evidence, and learnings from across digital engagement and public health. It will collect and analyze data and insights from its work and rapidly adapt content and approaches to ensure they are responsive to community needs and effective. It will disseminate findings to both internal and external stakeholders, building the profile of the polio programme as an effective example of digital engagement to drive positive health behaviours.

SUB-OBJECTIVES:

- Establish DCE as an essential pillar within the SBC framework for polio campaigns, ensuring seamless integration of digital strategies into broader community engagement activities

- Build a robust evidence base showcasing the positive outcomes of digital engagement on polio vaccine acceptance, utilizing data, insights, and metrics to highlight its effectiveness

- Position DCE as a sustainable framework for addressing future infodemics and enhancing public health crisis communication

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Polio teams understand the importance of digital community engagement and integrate it into their campaigns

Polio practitioners have a strong evidence base that demonstrates how digital engagement supports polio vaccine acceptance

Polio programme is seen as an example and thought leader on how digital engagement supports immunization and broader public health outcomes

Objective 2: Anticipate

UTILIZE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LISTENING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE PROACTIVE DETECTION AND ANALYSIS OF MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION, ENABLING TAILORED COUNTER-NARRATIVES TO MANAGE VACCINE HESITANCY EFFECTIVELY

Outbreaks of polio and mis/disinformation both spread quickly and require rapid detection and response. Misinformation monitoring will continue to be a key part of DCE's efforts. DCE will deploy advanced social and community listening and media monitoring rapid-response mechanisms to detect and counteract spikes in misinformation and disinformation. It will use proven tools to collect and analyze millions of pieces of content and alert country offices and programme managers when online content is likely to pose a risk to vaccination efforts.

DCE will also advocate for digital interventions to be a part of outbreak response procedures, as they have been in endemic countries. This will increase opportunities for safe polio vaccine delivery and acceptance. DCE will also serve as a resource to other polio crisis communication efforts as needed, leveraging its expertise to support SBC and UNICEF Communications teams in digital responses to polio outbreaks in rapidly evolving and vulnerable contexts, such as conflict zones.

SUB-OBJECTIVES:

- Provide continued technical support to endemic countries in enhancing existing and new digital community engagement interventions

- Establish social and community listening as a pivotal source of near real-time insights, enabling evidence-based behavioural interventions that directly inform and accelerate polio eradication strategies

- Integrate digital community engagement into outbreak response, ensuring rapid, coordinated responses to emerging threats and misinformation during polio outbreaks, enhancing overall programme effectiveness

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Polio teams have real-time visibility on community narratives and ongoing analysis to support proactive field-led action

Polio teams respond to misinformation and disinformation in a timely and effective manner based on evidence-based insights

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - TODAY AND TOMORROW

In its current operations, DCE cautiously leverages artificial intelligence (AI) primarily through advanced social and community listening tools that enable real-time detection, tracking, and analysis of misinformation and community sentiment. These AI-powered tools help DCE monitor vast amounts of online content, allowing teams to quickly identify misinformation patterns, emerging narratives, and influential sources, which supports agile responses to safeguard vaccine trust and acceptance. Recognizing the ethical implications of AI, DCE is committed to using these technologies responsibly by ensuring transparency, data privacy, and respect for local contexts. DCE's planned ethical AI framework will emphasize clear consent protocols, prioritize user data protection, and actively work to prevent biases in AI-driven insights to ensure that interventions are culturally sensitive, accurate, and uphold the principles of community trust. This responsible use of AI is in alignment with UNICEF's broader commitment to ethical digital engagement, ensuring that AI supports health and community outcomes without compromising ethical standards.
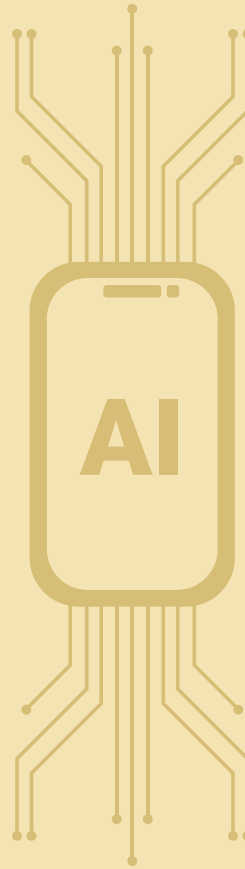
Objective 3: Mobilize

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOCIAL MOBILIZATION PROGRAMME THAT HARNESSES THE POWER OF LOCALLY RELEVANT MICRO AND MACROINFLUENCERS TO REINSTATE POLIO IMMUNIZATION AS A GLOBAL PRIORITY

A significant part of UNICEF's SBC work for polio eradication involves engaging local community mobilizers from villages and towns who continuously listen to concerns about vaccines, clarify doubts, and encourage parents and caregivers to vaccinate their children. DCE's digital social mobilization is the digital implementation of UNICEF's proven success in social mobilization. DCE's uInfluence programme recruits digital volunteers, who are everyday social media users and active in their communities, to promote evidence-based polio and vaccine information. This ensures that accurate information is delivered by trusted community voices, through online channels and networks where communities are already engaging.

DCE will continue to maximize the efforts of the uInfluence network by increasing their knowledge and motivation to address misinformation, and sharing factual information. DCE will also expand efforts to equip country teams with tools and training to engage digital volunteers in local campaigns. In addition, DCE will explore opportunities for partnership with an expanded set of influencers who are credible and impactful within their communities.

SUB-OBJECTIVES:

- Maximize the impact of the uInfluence network by strategically mobilizing volunteer social media microinfluencers to drive vaccine acceptance and counter misinformation at the community level

- Strengthen country office teams' ability to leverage the uInfluence network, providing them with tools, training, and support to optimize influencer-driven campaigns tailored to local contexts

- Expand engagement with influencers beyond the uInfluence network, identifying and collaborating with high-impact voices who are committed to spreading credible, compelling polio messaging and reinforcing community trust

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

The impact of the uInfluence network increases as micro-influencers are more engaged and active in shaping and delivering messaging

UNICEF actively leverages the uInfluence network in digital strategies and overall campaigns

Teams are partnering with an expanded set of digital influencers to drive additional impact

UINFLUENCE IN PAKISTAN: ACTIVATING DIGITAL INFLUENCERS TO ERADICATE POLIO

In March 2024, uInfluence organized a landmark in-person event in Lahore, Pakistan, underscoring its pivotal role in harnessing social media for public health advocacy. The event brought together public health professionals, social media influencers, and over 40 uInfluencers, creating a dynamic forum for collaboration and learning. The event highlighted uInfluence's commitment to leveraging digital platforms for societal impact, with volunteers participating in a workshop focused on crafting compelling content to combat misinformation about the polio vaccine in Pakistan.

Through an immersive agenda, attendees explored critical efforts to eradicate polio, gaining firsthand insights from frontline workers and technical experts. Social media influencers and technical experts trained uInfluencers on how to create compelling user generated content for polio eradication. uInfluence's approach not only enhances professional growth and community involvement but also galvanizes collective action against polio, reaffirming its crucial role in digital community engagement.
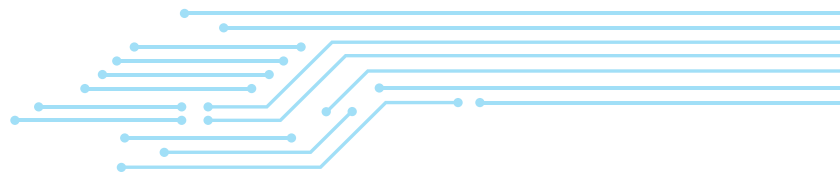
Dynamic Feedback Loop

The DCE Strategy is designed to be interactive, placing communities at the center of its interventions. With multiple touchpoints in every campaign across Social and Community Listening, Content Development, Digital Advertising, and Digital Social Mobilization, DCE ensures that its actions are continually informed by and responsive to community needs. This model creates a dynamic feedback loop where community insights shape DCE's messaging and outreach efforts, while the strategy's tailored content and mobilization activities directly address the community's information and trust needs.
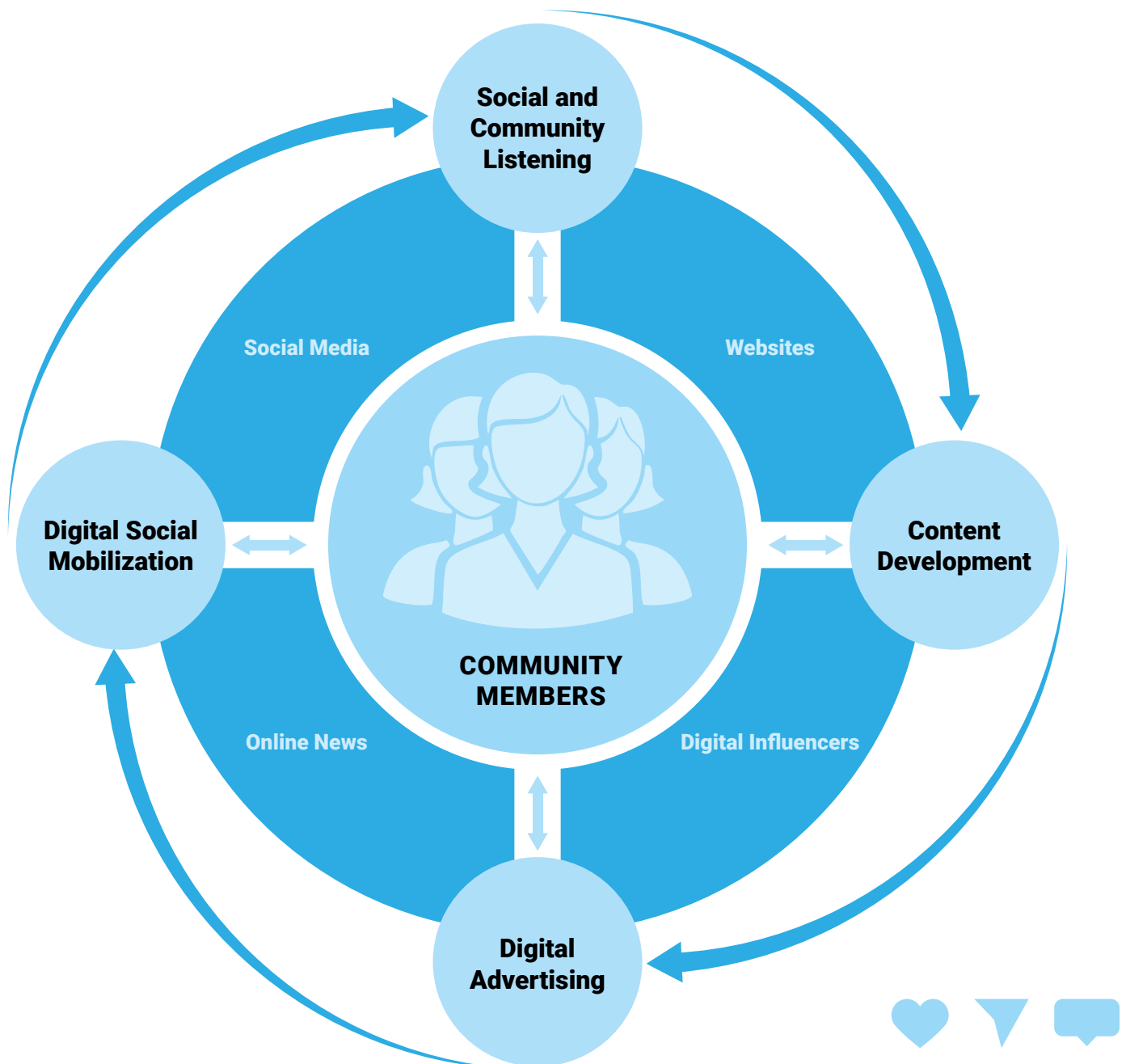
Objective 4: Empower

IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME, PROVIDING INNOVATIVE DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCES AND TAILORED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF, FRONTLINE WORKERS, AND PARTNERS TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES EFFECTIVELY

As the epidemiological landscape of polio evolves, both endemic and outbreak countries are reviewing and enhancing their SBC capacities, which offers a prime opportunity for country teams to also strengthen their understanding and capacity for using digital engagement. The DCE team will therefore undertake efforts to expand and enrich resources available to country teams and make them easier to access and use. This will enable country teams to effectively leverage digital communication in their engagement with local communities.

DCE will design and deliver capacity-building initiatives, including e-learning modules and real-time support, to ensure field teams can implement high-quality digital engagement efforts. To facilitate peer learning, DCE will also seek to identify digital engagement ambassadors within country teams who can serve as champions and resources for peers in designing local digital engagement strategies.

SUB-OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the accessibility and usability of DCE resources for country teams, ensuring they are intuitive, relevant, and actionable in the field

- Expand and enrich the DCE resource toolkit, providing country teams with cutting-edge tools, training materials, and guidance to enhance digital engagement effectiveness

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Polio teams have access to digital engagement training and capacity-building technical resources that are easily searchable, accessible and usable

Digital engagement resources are responsive to country office needs and in line with field realities

Country office teams champion DCE resources and recommend them to other teams

Objective 5: Collaborate

WORK CLOSELY WITH FIELD TEAMS TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT TARGETED DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS THAT ADDRESS COMMUNITY INFORMATION NEEDS PROMPTLY AND DRIVE EFFICIENT ENGAGEMENT, REINFORCING CONFIDENCE IN POLIO ERADICATION EFFORTS

For digital community engagement to be effective, it must be driven by an in-depth understanding of target audiences and their social environment and local context. Digital content and messaging around polio must be backed by behavioural science, but also responsive to local community needs and norms. It should be tailored and targeted for specific audiences and tied to specific behavioural objectives.

Over the next 2 years, DCE will enhance its efforts to tailor content to specific audiences and contexts and bring strategies closer to the "digital ground" by working intensively with country teams to design and develop interventions. DCE will work with these teams to pinpoint target audiences and develop behavioural objectives and tailored digital approaches to respond to unique audience needs. DCE will support teams in utilizing targeting tools like audience personas, which enhance strategies by segmenting and articulating audience objectives (e.g. fatigued acceptors, vaccine refusers, vaccine hesitant, etc) and decision-making roles (e.g. male household heads, primary caregivers etc). DCE will also support teams in mapping and identifying key digital influencers and channels to leverage in disseminating messaging, leading to digital interventions that are highly localized and poised for impact.

This enhanced tailoring will also include consideration of gender dynamics in developing content and approaches, ensuring that digital engagement initiatives effectively reach and resonate with both men and women. It will also recognize the role of women and mothers as key decision-makers in vaccine decisions and therefore actively seek to reach them. This represents an especially powerful tool in contexts where in-person engagement of women may be difficult.

SUB-OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance the precision and localization of digital advertising efforts, tailoring content and approaches to meet the unique cultural and informational needs of high-priority communities

- Boost direct support for field-based teams, equipping them with advanced tools, training, and resources to efficiently execute data-driven, adaptive digital campaigns that respond to real-time community feedback

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Digital community engagement efforts are owned and implemented by field-based teams

Polio digital engagement approaches are tailored, efficient, effective, and measurable

Polio digital engagement approaches are responsive to field realities and local contexts

DECENTRALIZATION OF DCE

A key priority for DCE during the 2025-2026 strategy period is increased local ownership. The ongoing decentralization of DCE is a strategic step toward embedding post-polio sustainability into our digital engagement efforts.

Key to this is enhancing the team's capacity at the regional level through new digital engagement roles embedded in endemic and outbreak response teams. These team members are responsible for coordinating, reporting, implementing, and leading the digital agenda in coordination with local partners, SBC teams, and the broader DCE team. They will keep ensuring that teams are closer to the "digital ground" and can respond promptly and effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities in their communities.
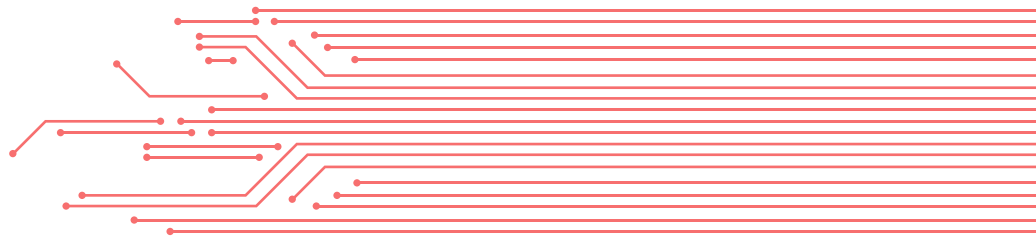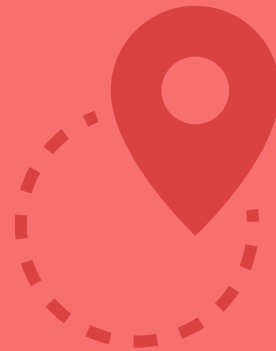
Key Enablers

DCE's success will be built upon a set of values and priorities that underpin all of its efforts and ensure its work is grounded in local insights, culturally relevant and respectful, and well-poised to influence vaccination narratives, behaviours, and outcomes on a global scale. These enablers function as a set of over-arching principles that allow the DCE Framework and the DCE Strategy to be customized and applied to any public health emergency. This flexible and open-ended approach is intentional to envision greater integration with public health programmes and the relevance of polio investments in a post-polio world.

TAILORED AND LOCALIZED CONTENT

- Develop localized content that resonates with specific community needs and contexts

- Identify and segment target audiences, including caregivers, healthcare workers, community leaders, and youth

- Use demographic, psychographic, and behavioural data to tailor messages for each segment

- Collaborate with local influencers and trusted community figures to validate and amplify messages

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY

- Ensure the strategy respects cultural norms and values of the communities

- Include diverse voices and perspectives, particularly from marginalized groups

- Encourage community members to share their stories and experiences

- Create channels for community feedback and engagement to understand their concerns and preferences

- Use local languages and dialects to improve accessibility and understanding

SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Utilize a mix of digital platforms (social media, messaging apps, websites, etc) to reach scale across diverse audiences

- Consider both online and offline integration to maximize reach and impact

- Ensure that successful tactics and tools can be scaled up or adapted for use in other regions or contexts

Strategic Platform

GPEI COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES	DCE OBJECTIVES	DCE SUB-OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Addressing social and behaviour barriers, mitigating risk, and leveraging opportunities	**COMPLEMENT**	• Establish DCE as an essential pillar within the SBC framework for polio campaigns • Build a robust evidence base showcasing the positive outcomes of digital engagement on polio vaccine acceptance • Position DCE as a sustainable framework for addressing future public health infodemics	Active use of digital engagement within polio campaigns, supported by a strong evidence base
Developing and implementing GPEI crisis communication strategies for early detection and response	**ANTICIPATE**	• Provide continued technical support to endemic countries • Establish social and community listening as a pivotal source of near real-time insights • Integrate digital community engagement into outbreak response	Proactive, field-led responses to mis/disinformation based on evidence-based insights
Engaging social influencers, programme advocates and other prominent public figures	**MOBILIZE**	• Maximize the impact of the uInfluence network • Strengthen country office teams' ability to leverage the uInfluence network • Expand engagement with influencers beyond the uInfluence network	Engaged and active network of influencers delivering impact
Building capacity and strengthening coordination efforts across communication partners and staff, as well as frontline workers and other personnel	**EMPOWER**	• Improve the accessibility and usability of DCE resources for country teams • Expand and enrich the DCE resource toolkit	Easy-to-access digital engagement resources that are in line with field realities
Continuing to help shape and manage global, regional and country narratives on the polio programme and polio vaccines	**COLLABORATE**	• Enhance the precision and localization of digital advertising efforts • Boost direct support for field-based teams	Polio digital engagement approaches that are led by field teams and tailored to local contexts

KEY ENABLERS

TAILORED AND LOCALIZED CONTENT	CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY	SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Annex 1: Reference Activities and KPIs

DCE OBJECTIVE	REFERENCE ACTIVITIES	REFERENCE KPIs
COMPLEMENT Foster an online ecosystem that sustains educated acceptance for polio vaccination by leveraging digital platforms to supplement SBC initiatives	Develop customized DCE strategies for high-risk regions in alignment with local SBC strategies	Percentage of polio outbreak and endemic countries with local DCE strategies
	Evaluate digital community engagement interventions to further inform evidence-based SBC action.	Percentage of parents and caregivers that report learning about the polio vaccine on digital platforms
	Participate in global SBC forums and other relevant events to promote the work of DCE, receive expert feedback, and compile lessons learned	No. of technical SBC forums where DCE action was presented and reviewed
ANTICIPATE Utilize social and community listening tools and techniques to improve proactive detection and analysis of misinformation and disinformation, enabling tailored counter-narratives to manage vaccine hesitancy effectively	Teams swiftly detect misinformation and disinformation narratives about polio	No. of misinformation and disinformation narratives detected in collaboration with global teams
	Polio teams are able to rapidly respond to misinformation and disinformation narratives	Percentage of high-risk misinformation and disinformation narratives responded to in collaboration with global teams
MOBILIZE Develop and implement a dynamic digital social mobilization programme that harnesses the power of locally relevant micro and macroinfluencers to reinstate polio immunization as a global priority	uInfluencers are recruited and trained in the highest priority geographies	No. of active uInfluencers in high-priority geographies
	uInfluencers actively support polio vaccination campaigns online	No. of people reached online through uInfluencers
	uInfluencers are provided with quality information and learning resources about polio	Percentage of uInfluencers reporting satisfaction with polio learning resources
EMPOWER Implement a comprehensive DCE capacity-building programme, providing innovative digital learning resources and tailored training opportunities for staff, frontline workers, and partners to enhance their ability to engage communities effectively	Train polio teams and partners on digital misinformation management	No. of public health professionals trained on digital misinformation management
	Teams are provided with learning resources and tools to deepen DCE knowledge	Percentage of polio team members satisfied with DCE learning resources
	Polio Teams are provided the latest updates and developments in global Digital Community Engagement	No. of webinars, newsletters, and reports circulated to report on DCE updates
COLLABORATE Work closely with field teams to design and implement targeted digital campaigns that address community information needs promptly and drive efficient engagement, reinforcing confidence in polio eradication efforts.	Empower local DCE teams to effectively implement the DCE Model for polio eradication in collaboration with internal and external partners	No. of locally led DCE campaigns implemented
	Support teams in developing locally relevant audience personas that reflect key factors such as audience objectives, e.g. fatigued acceptors, vaccine refusers, vaccine hesitant, etc, and decision-making roles (e.g. male household heads, primary caregivers)	Percentage of DCE campaigns implemented with localized audience persons and customized content
	Provide hands-on technical support to the highest priority teams to design and implement digital engagement interventions	No. of countries provided technical support