



Community outreach: meningitis education and vaccine take-up in northern Uganda

Meningitis remains a serious health threat in Uganda, with over 37,000 cases a year*. Limited knowledge and misconceptions often delay treatment, increasing the risk of severe complications. Recognising this gap, **Jimmy Obol**, CoMo member and meningitis advocate, led a campaign funded by the CoMo World Meningitis Day 2025 Advocacy Fund focusing on schools and communities in four catchment areas. The aim was clear: raise awareness, promote vaccination and empower communities to act early against meningitis.



Name

Jimmy Obol



Background

Public health expert and meningitis advocate



Location

Uganda

The project

Running from 5 to 16 October 2025, the campaign targeted primary schools and surrounding communities. Jimmy worked closely with the District Health Educator, Health Assistants and village health teams to deliver

potentially life-saving messages. Thirty health team coordinators were trained to identify symptoms and educate households, while teachers reinforced messages during school meetings.

The project included school outreach sessions in fourteen primary schools which engaged over 2,800 learners. Two radio talk shows were broadcast across ten districts, with a combined potential reach of over two million people.



* Meningitis Research Foundation (2024). Meningitis Progress Tracker - <https://tracker.meningitis.org/>

In addition, 4,000 educational posters were distributed across five health facilities to ensure consistent meningitis messaging. The campaign had longer-lasting effects within the local communities as Jimmy identified an existing outreach program and convinced them to help him distribute unused meningitis vaccine stock. He worked with the local Ministry of Health to issue catch-up vaccinations to strengthen preventive health measures alongside awareness efforts.

Impact and outcomes

The numbers tell a compelling story:

- 44,641 people were reached through school and community outreach.
- 897 individuals were vaccinated according to Health Management Information System records.
- Eight direct community engagements and 670 households were visited by trained village health teams.
- Two radio talk shows sparked interactive discussions with 22 call-ins from across Gulu and neighbouring districts.

Community members reported feeling empowered to distinguish meningitis from other illnesses like malaria, which should reduce delays in seeking care, a vital step in reducing death and disability from meningitis.

Stories of change

A science teacher shared:

“This awareness now makes our learners know that meningitis is very deadly yet can be prevented through vaccination. It is always good to have health workers come and talk with children [...] about some of the vaccine-preventable diseases in the country.”

One community member reflected:

“I used to hear about meningitis; in most cases I always thought that the seizures people with epilepsy had were the same. Now I know, meningitis can lead to stiffness of the neck and body and even result in death in a short time.”

Looking ahead

Jimmy plans to continue awareness-raising efforts during community gatherings and improve vaccination outreach for infants and under-fives. Future activities will include creative approaches like poems and drama during parents' meetings to keep the conversation alive.



Further resources

Contact Jimmy Obol:

✉ oboljimmy@gmail.com

Contacts

Meningitis Research Foundation
and the Confederation of
Meningitis Organisations:

🌐 meningitis.org

✉ como@meningitis.org

“The Advocacy Fund may seem small but its impact is huge. Rural communities are vulnerable and lack knowledge. Your ideas can bridge that gap.”

Jimmy Obol

