

UNIVERSITY-INITIATED HEALTH CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING STUDENT VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATORS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO SELECTED SDGS IN OSUN AND OYO STATES, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored the efficacy of using university-initiated students as communicators in health promotion interventions. Also, the study examined how such a project can assist in meeting some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Osun and Oyo States. The study adopted a qualitative narrative and documentary research design and reviewed relevant literature from academic journals and UN-WHO policy documents on Osun and Oyo States in Nigeria. The study revealed that university-initiated volunteer students serve as intermediaries who communicate the complex nature of health issues to members of various communities and debunk myths. Also, they mobilize communities to participate in disease prevention and promotion of mother and child-care health services. The findings further revealed students' contributions directly towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10, and 17). Following the revelations, it was recommended that there should be establishment of a more institutionalised protocol/policy frame, adequate training/capacity enhancement for the student volunteers. Also, there is a need for more funding and better co-operation with other external partners to surmount the obvious constraints encountered during the volunteer operation.

Keywords: Campaigns, Development, Education, Hygiene, Immunization, Mobilization, Sensitization.

Introduction

Community-based health campaigns by universities are one of the areas where university students take their education, knowledge, skills, and resources from academic institutions to the general public for the benefit of the local communities (Wordlaw & Vilme, 2024). Such health campaign activities range from health education to a target audience on how to prevent particular diseases, screening and preventive awareness of, and on a certain condition in a target population, raising awareness of vaccinations/immunizations for relevant age groups, raising awareness on hygiene, environmental protection, maternal and child welfare, and sexual and reproductive education, as well as the sensitization programmes towards certain specific and critical health issues that directly affect the community (Oluodo et al., 2025; Gupta et al., 2024). In other words, there are other anticipated societal benefits in addition to education and research, such as direct involvement in the development of a society through participating in various kinds of interventions, which aim to improve social welfare (Tam et al., 2024). As a consequence, these kinds of campaigns provide indirect or direct contributions to the welfare of the public.

What makes a university significant for community development is having people such as the academic cadre, health staff, researchers, students, facilities, and partnerships with others. Universities that have community engagement in their outreach programmes can contribute to the local community goals (Almoraie et al., 2025). Universities can address social and health issues through the competence of their staff and students; the health campaigns initiated by the university enhance community health awareness. They complement existing government and local health programmes by providing information and services to more people (Grijalvo-Cabrera et al., 2026). This encourages greater participation in university-led community engagement activities and enhances health promotion and prevention activities, as well as strengthening the links between universities and the community. Therefore, the university-led community engagement programmes are a major component of the university's contribution to the community.

Student volunteers may prove instrumental in building community participation in university-run health campaigns, in roles such as education, sensitization, mobilization, peer-to-peer communication, information distribution, and outreach support (Plessas et al., 2024). For example, the additional communication channels that student volunteers enable a university to use can be utilized to reach out to the community and can also deliver the information in a user-friendly mode through peer-to-peer communication (Esan et al., 2024). Furthermore, involving student volunteers to engage in community activities would cultivate the students' sense of responsibility, leadership, socialization

skills, and experiential learning while giving the communities access to the resources and the knowledge from the university.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are also achieved due to the volunteer role students played in creating health awareness. Health campaigns in universities address SGD3: Good Health and Well-being by raising awareness of diseases and contributing to disease prevention, health promotion, health education, and health awareness (Maoela et al., 2024). The general community work may also link to SDG 4, Quality Education; SDG 5, Gender Equality; SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 17, Partnerships to achieve the goals (Niemi et al., 2025). Through linking university health campaigns to students' voluntary activities in the community, universities can transmit knowledge, increase students' involvement in the community, achieve community empowerment, and collaborate on development with the community members. Therefore, student volunteer communicators are vehicles by which the universities' health campaigns achieve both good health and well-being in a community and sustainable development for others.

The significance of health campaigns being managed by Universities is even more relevant in the target locations where a number of diverse communities and Universities (Osun and Oyo State) are situated with particular social, behavioural, and health needs (Orok et al., 2024). The presence of both human and social resources within universities in the areas offers a significant potential for promoting community health (Faleke & Tella, 2025). These can include programmes run by students (volunteerism) so that basic health messages and information can reach many community members (often through schools, religious and community associations and youth organisations) and play a role in enhancing community health by supplementing the existing formal health services and by addressing areas like primary health care education, nutrition, immunization and sexual and reproductive health. This can only have a positive impact on community development throughout the region.

While the significance of the nexus between university outreach initiatives and various engagement endeavours, including student voluntarism, health promotion, and the SDGs are being gradually acknowledged, scholars have rarely brought together these seemingly disparate areas to explore the specific function of student volunteer information dissemination within university-sponsored health campaigns and community development in Osun and Oyo States in Nigeria (Oladele et al., 2026). Currently, applied research has largely focused on analyzing issues such as engagement activities of universities, students' volunteerism, health communications, or sustainable development separately, as academic topics. Therefore, the paper highlights a lack of the broadest conceptual framing of student volunteers' agency as well as their position in universities' health projects for addressing community development issues, and

thus attaining the strategic SDGs. The research paper gives valuable perspectives for authorities, health departments, organizations, health insurance companies, development organizations, and academics' reflection.

In this context, health campaigns initiated by universities will be a means of channeling knowledge and personnel to advance community health development in the study community. Nevertheless, the performance of university-initiated health campaigns will depend on who volunteers their time to advocate and mobilize the community: Student volunteers who serve as a link between the universities and the community. The impact of the effectiveness of the student volunteer communicators on health consciousness, community participation, and community development. There has also been a need to examine the degree of contributions of university-initiated health campaigns by the universities to realise some relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Against this background, the paper aimed at accomplishing two objectives, which include: To examine the contribution of student volunteer advocates in university-initiated health campaigns towards the growth of community health in Osun and Oyo States; and to determine the positive impact of university-initiated health campaigns on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals in the study area.

Literature Review

The university-based health awareness programme projects involve the use of academic knowledge, professional know-how, human resources, and institutional capacity of the university to facilitate health education promotion within the local community (Olubunmi et al., 2025). Usually, the scheme becomes achievable through sensitization on health matters, medical screening, immunization drives, disease prevention and control, dietary plans, sanitation and personal hygiene, reproductive health education, and related health issues (Ogundipe et al., 2026).

Hence, they (such programmes) provide a university with the opportunity to use their roles of teaching and learning in an institution to fulfil the role of making contribution to society by being active in the community's health issues. The institutions contribute to the community by supplying it with information about health issues, thus satisfying their needs and solving their current social problems (Abdulkareem et al., 2026). The university health campaigns thus need to be participatory, culturally relevant, and responsive to the local health issues and problems so as to attain maximum effect on them.

Student volunteer communicators are students who volunteer in health education activities, Information sharing, community mobilization, and community sensitization (Oke et al., 2026). In a university-based campaign, these volunteers can act as the communication vehicle between the university, health professionals, and the community, delivering information on specific

health issues in simple language (Gbaja-Biamila et al., 2026). Students might be involved in peer education, spreading health literature, community sensitization, mobilizing the community on screening and immunisation, and promoting health preventive behaviours (Aja et al., 2025). Student involvement is also important for interpersonal communication, since student volunteers will likely talk to community members in a context where students and community members are on equal terms, where people ask questions and talk about their concerns. Volunteering is mutually beneficial; besides helping a community, volunteers receive skill-based training in Communication, Leadership, teamwork, and civic engagement.

In terms of health, information and ideas can be communicated to groups and individuals strategically to persuade them to modify health behaviour and their health knowledge, health perceptions, choices of treatment or health services (Talabi & Oko-Epelle, 2024). Communication is relevant at the community level, in terms of health promotion and community empowerment; health communication, including health literacy, behavioral communication change, and participatory processes of health-related activity, can strengthen people's capacity to identify their health problems, participate in the process for community improvement, and decide what options to provide for themselves regarding health service providers (Abah et al., 2025). In community development, university-led campaigns may involve blending theoretical knowledge and applied practice when student volunteer work directly with communities in establishing dialogue that dispels fear and rumor, and also builds capacity (Ogunyemi et al., 2025).

The concept of university-community engagement (UCE) conceptualizes the assigned role of the university and the community, coupled with the function which, amongst other things, addresses social, educational, economic, and health challenges (Adanlawo & Nkomo-Asare, 2025). University-Community Engagement (UCE) is basically the outreach, extension, community-based research, health-related projects, and volunteer activities through which the university disseminates knowledge and expertise to non-campus communities (Noah, 2026). In health development, UCE is one way through which government and primary healthcare services could be complemented by targeting health information and health services to the target community, which would include, but not be limited to, health screening and assessment, prevention and control of disease, community mobilisation and health education/promotion, and referral services to existing health facilities (Ajibola & Wonuola, 2025).

Real engagement means offering services and/or working with people instead of insisting on services offered. Such flexible working is capable of creating continuous and ongoing conversation and sharing of useful information over the

long run, which, at times, can earn the trust of not just the local community but others involved too (Adeyeye & Elbadawy, 2025). These participants are volunteers who serve as the avenue through which they effectively serve as participants in the programme by communicating on the university's behalf with the community. The inclusion of sincere mutual relationships and active participation will result in sustainable partnerships between the university and the community, which will promote community health development and empowerment.

University-based health awareness initiatives can see to the actualization of a number of Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing health growth, medical education, community engagement, and institutional partnerships (Adegboire et al., 2025). Their most evident connections are with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) through disease prevention, health education, screening, immunization, and promotion of healthy habits; Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) via community health education and student involvement; Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) by targeting women's health issues; and Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by increasing access to health information (Yisa et al., 2025). Furthermore, collaboration between institutions of learning and government, Medicare providers, and societal bodies can contribute to the surge of Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) (Anekwe et al., 2025). Therefore, university health campaigns may play important roles as community health promoters. This would also effectively connect health promotion efforts with the sustainable development agenda.

Health programmes within a university setting can be the way through which higher institutions of learning can participate actively in community health promotion through the provision of infrastructure for the realization of goals of the government and other agencies (Onyike, 2025). Nigeria's universities have resources of students, teachers, health care workers, researchers, and networks that could be mobilized to raise awareness and inform the populace, screen, and identify solutions to health problems (Achudume, 2009), especially within the South-West, Nigeria, where the urban and semi-urban communities and rural localities have varying health and developmental concerns. The volunteer service that the students offer to the universities in health promotion schemes is to sensitize, mobilize, and make the services accessible to the community. Several issues that may hinder this work include issues that may affect the effectiveness of these programmes both in the community and the country, such as cost, training, sustainability, community participation, and other issues (Oladayo et al., 2025). Thus, health policy schemes have to be put into practice by governments, communities, and higher institutions of learning to ensure the actualization of SDGs.

Methodology

This study utilized a narrative documentary research methodology with the use of a non-empirical conceptual review to investigate university-based health campaigns, student volunteer communicators, community development, and a few chosen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Osun and Oyo States of Nigeria. Some relevant recorded activities were considered in the study; these were: a public health promotion campaign by Osun State University (UNIOSUN) students in Oosa community, health awareness activities by IFUMSA (Obafemi Awolowo University Student Medical Association), and Health Advocacy/World Heart Day campaign activities by the University of Ibadan Medical Students Association (UIMSA). Osun and Oyo States were chosen due to the existence of university-based records on students' activities on health promotion and university-community interaction. Information was gathered through journal articles, books and other texts, student/university official texts and periodicals, some relevant Nigerian Government official records and policy documents, the World Health Organization (WHO) documents, United Nation's documents and SDGs' documents, and recorded campaign documentation which includes WHO's World Health Day document, United Nation's SDGs reports, UNIOSUN/OAU/UI official report, and others. Relevant information was extracted, critically appraised, thermalized, and consolidated according to the aims of the study.

Student Volunteer Communicators and Health Programmes Developed By University for Community Development

As disseminators of information from school to people, their activities as peer educators may be relevant for the dissemination of information in health education activities, especially in communication of information to disease protection, immunization, nutrition, maternal child health and diseases, sanitation, reproductive health, and healthy lifestyles (Abah et al., 2025). Since they have close contact with the community, they make it easy to make sometimes complicated health information easy to understand, and they act as health educators who believe in two-way interaction and also feel that messages through personal contact with someone the community likes and believes in, either through language or in another way, are more easily received (Khatrri et al., 2024). In Osun and Oyo States, student volunteers can complement universities' health campaigns in schools, religious institutions, youth organizations, and local communities.

Student volunteers are instrumental in community health education as they are better equipped to carry out instructions on how to apply medical knowledge. During university-organized campaigns, student volunteers can help people learn the symptoms of various diseases, prevention methods, treatment strategies, dietary requirements, and the need to seek health care (Mogaji et al., 2025). In

addition, when interacting with laypeople, student volunteers can help recognize biases, rumors, and myths about health and illness (Aja, 2025). Besides, by answering questions and facilitating discussions, student volunteers can help people increase health literacy and critically assess health information (Olugbogi et al., 2026). That is why students can play a meaningful role in promoting health education and engagement in communities where access to health information may be limited in any way. In this context, student volunteers can facilitate community members' involvement in health promotion and education activities and enhance their knowledge about health issues.

Beyond Health Information Delivery, student volunteers can assist in community mobilisation through motivating stakeholders and groups to join health interventions which are spearheaded by universities. These students or student groups could mobilise people to take part in health screening, immunisation, health promotions/education activities, health promotion activities, sanitation campaigns, disease control campaigns, and community-based interventions (Aja, 2025). Mobilisation efforts could improve linkage between universities and community leadership, school leadership, and religious leadership; community-based organisations and local institutions, thereby increasing community outreach (Obun-Andy, 2025). The rationale behind the need for community mobilisation is that the success of several public health actions necessitates the participation of the entire community rather than of informed individuals only. Where volunteers make direct connections with community members, they may motivate these members for participation, provide prompt assistance, and address fears about such engagement, thereby enhancing community ownership of health issues and sustain community development (Ojeka-John et al., 2024). Student volunteers are capable not only of giving knowledge about a health issue but also of changing certain attitudes and behaviour in interpersonal communication, demonstration, and responding to problems faced by members of the community, which could lead to prevention practices towards diseases, such as hand-washing, good nutrition, immunisation, seeking care, and sanitation. (Abdulsamlam et al., 2025). Attitudinal change is more likely to occur if information is related to their everyday lives and includes potential positive and negative outcomes of their behaviour (Babajide, 2026). This is the reason why student volunteers have a role in closing the knowing-doing gap; they can assist in addressing an array of community needs, help promote the prevention and control of disease, and enhance community productivity and participation while developing their community through enhancing health-seeking behaviour and encouraging them to adopt healthier lifestyles (Olajubutu et al., 2026).

Students who volunteer to communicate may face some difficulties, such as Lack of training for students and volunteers, insufficient funding and financial backing from institutional structures, weak coordination between volunteers'

organizations and health institutions, motivation of students, cultural context between student volunteers and health service or campaign context, and the lack of continuity (Ojuroye, 2024). Volunteers can face similar difficulties when communicating information about health issues, particularly sensitive matters, or when confronted with rumors or misinformation without being adequately supervised by professionals, which significantly lowers the impact and sustainability of their contribution (Abdullahi-Abiodun et al., 2024). The success of student volunteers is, therefore, more likely where their activities are well designed, in coordination with and by health institutions, and student volunteers are properly trained and sufficiently motivated, and their work is recognized and supported. Logistics needed for using digital communication tools will extend campaign outreach and sustain engagement beyond traditional health outreach activities (Saint Udeh et al., 2024).

University-Led Health Campaign and Sustainable Development Goals in Osun and Oyo State

University-initiated health campaigns are useful in addressing several targets of SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, by bringing disease prevention, health promotion, health information, and medical advice within the reach of communities (Ogundele et al., 2024). Some examples of universal health campaigns in the university context could be disease-based campaigns (like the ones for HIV/ AIDS, TB, HIV/AIDS awareness and campaigns), mass immunization, medical screening programmes (like breast and prostate cancers, diabetes), nutrition talks, information on good hygiene, and promotion of maternal care (Aliyu et al., 2024). Between the two states, universities would be able to ramp up this effort to outlying communities that would otherwise not have access to any structured school- or church-based health intervention by leveraging academic staff and student volunteers (Haruna et al., 2025). These kinds of university-based health education initiatives that seek to modify behaviors such as seeking early treatment or presenting oneself early to health facilities and increased use of prevention services can raise awareness of health in the local communities, leading to healthy lifestyle practices.

Health Campaigns within communities via universities: in terms of SDG 4 (Quality Education), students within health campaigns provide an educational opportunity for knowledge transfer, and as well also provide hands-on experience (Okeke et al., 2026). Therefore, students are able to develop skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership, negotiation, problem-solving, and community-service skills that students can acquire through hands-on engagement in a variety of activities within a health campaign (Nwankwo, 2025). In addition to the students' growth, community members are also provided with significant education concerning disease prevention, hygiene and sanitation, nutrition, healthy

lifestyle, and the optimal use of healthcare facilities. Thus, health campaigns can turn the connection of universities and communities into a symbiotic education and advantage and go beyond classroom walls for a broader social obligation (Ogunbode & Awolola, 2026).

Health education campaigns at university level have the potential to promote SDG 5 and 10 when addressing the current health issues faced by women, men, children, persons with disabilities, and other target groups (Omoge et al., 2026). Gender-specific campaigns that focus on the health and wellbeing of women, reproductive health, and adolescent health could address the demands of these target groups and reduce inequality by supplying easily digestible health information and encouraging uptake of appropriate health services (Olufadewa et al., 2025). As well, providing health campaigns to all hard-to-reach and local people with possibly limited access to health services allows health promotion to reach them (Aroge & Aroge, 2025). Student volunteers will be essential to helping with this work in the study area, where there is no access to health campaigns. Incorporation of campaign initiatives by the Universities is very relevant to attaining Goal 10 of the SDGs, which focuses on social inclusiveness. Unlike the other goals, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 talks about partnerships for the other goals. Under the university health campaigns, there could be opportunities to improve community health through collaboration and partnerships (Onasanya et al., 2025). The various partners could include the Government, community groups, health professionals, NGOs, and families. The universities can give technical advice, health human resources, and volunteers from students, and the government organizations like the Ministry of Health can offer resources, health systems, institutional support, and political will. Community members can provide knowledge and networks to the community, in addition to offering a way to access the community. The non-governmental organizations can offer resources and experiences to the partner group (Awoniyi et al., 2026). Hence, working with other bodies would guarantee sustainability, effectiveness, and efficiency of the health-related programmes of the universities. It would also guarantee a cumulative effect rather than being dispersed in various activities with no impact.

The significance of the health campaigns of the universities is to ensure the formation of a link that lasts long between the universities and the community development in Osun & Oyo State, Nigeria. However, for these health campaigns to have the desired effect, the health campaigns should be structured into ongoing programmes with sufficient financial resources, manpower, and professional volunteers, as well as community monitoring to determine their effect and effectiveness on the community (Ologbonori et al., 2026). The programmes should be part of the existing community structure by involving the volunteers and other government agencies that are ready to provide policy and

financial support so that the programmes will be sustainable (Elechi et al., 2026). The integration of health campaigns into the community development plans will enhance the communities' capacity and knowledge base, as well as promote sustainable development in the South-West region of Nigeria in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

Health campaigns initiated by the universities are a crucial way through which institutions can demonstrate the application of academic and professional skills and student volunteering in community development in Osun and Oyo States, Nigeria. Student volunteer communicators can be instrumental in articulating health problems, providing health education, advocacy, mobilization, and inspiring community members to adopt healthy lifestyles and seek appropriate healthcare services (Shonubi & John-Akinola, 2026). Beyond the clinical benefit of health status improvement, student volunteers will also contribute to community empowerment through health promotion, community education and practice, culture of inclusion and community partnership, citizen participation, and social responsibility. University health campaigns can also contribute to sustainable development by making relevant contributions towards the achievement of some SDGs (3, 4, 5, 10, and 17) through health promotion, community education and empowerment, community engagement and partnership. The limitations of community health campaigns to yield expected success range from inadequacy of resources, training, partnership, collaboration, and culture to lack of sustainability of the health campaign (Chima-Oduko & Odeyemi, 2025). Community-Institution partnership and student volunteers will therefore enable universities to make meaningful contributions to the development of Osun and Oyo States.

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