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MAF pilots' vaccines are rejected in remote East African communities

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PILOTS with the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) have reported [Covid-](#)vaccine hesitancy and refusal among remote communities in East [Africa](#).

Nomadic communities in the South Maasai region of southern [Kenya](#) and northern Tanzania rely on MAF flights to access [health care](#) and basic supplies. But trips by pilots to bring vaccines have been greeted with resistance and hesitancy, the charity says.

Andrew Parker, a pilot, flew a medical safari flight out to three remote locations in the Maasai region to offer vaccinations and antenatal and prenatal checks to women and babies. MAF has been offering medical flights to the region since 1977.

“The general impression seems that people are quite sceptical of the [coronavirus] vaccine itself,” he said. “From my experience in [Uganda](#) and

Tanzania, some people seem to believe that you can't have children if you've had the vaccine; so it really makes people hesitant.

“The Lesirwai clinic was under a tree, and maybe 40 or 50 people attended. Towards the end of the clinic, I went to chat to the staff and a handful of local people. The medical team were talking about coronavirus, asking if they knew people who had it, what did they think about it, and whether they were scared of it.

“A team member had a little cooler box which had some Covid jabs — they were trying to get an idea of whether people were open to it. No one accepted [a coronavirus vaccine] on this occasion. Certain diseases are kept under control because of these clinics, but it seems there is a lot of misinformation about coronavirus.”

Throughout the pandemic, MAF has transported more than 10,000kg of coronavirus vaccines, PPE, and education materials about the disease to isolated locations in Timor-Leste, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, and Lesotho.

Emily Davies, of MAF, said: “Andrew's account shows that sometimes getting the vaccines to an isolated location is only half the battle. There are many complex reasons behind vaccine hesitancy, some of them rooted in misinformation and fear that needs carefully unpacking.

“More time and education are needed before vaccines make it into arms — something MAF is willing to support alongside health-care providers, and is already delivering in various rural locations.”