

Global vaccine action plan

Draft immunization vision and strategy: “Immunization Agenda 2030”

Report by the Director-General

INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Board at its 146th session considered and took note of the report on the global vaccine action plan¹ and underscored the urgent need to develop a new global vision and strategy for vaccines and immunization in order to accelerate progress and ensure a smooth transition away from the global vaccine action plan, building on its success and lessons learned.
2. The Board adopted decision EB146(7) (2020) on strengthening global immunization efforts to leave no one behind, in which it requested the Director-General, inter alia, to finalize, in consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders, a draft immunization vision and strategy (“Immunization Agenda 2030”) for consideration by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly, in order to maintain the momentum and sustain the gains in respect of vaccines and immunization.
3. The Board also requested the Director-General to take note of ongoing discussions on the draft resolution contained in the Annex to decision EB146(7) and to encourage Member States to finalize this work, in order for the draft resolution to be duly considered by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

4. At the end of 2020, the global vaccine action plan (2011–2020) will come to an end. Despite significant progress made during the past decade, most of the global and regional immunization goals set out in the action plan will not be achieved by 2020, and one in five children will still lack access to all life-saving vaccines recommended by WHO. Although vaccination coverage has increased, it remains well below target levels, and the benefits of immunization continue to be shared unevenly both among and within countries. In recent years, inadequacies in coverage have led to multiple disease outbreaks, particularly of measles and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus.
5. With the worldwide battle against infectious diseases still not won, a successor global immunization strategy – the “Immunization Agenda 2030” – was developed through a broad

¹ Document EB146/8; see also the summary records of the Executive Board at its 146th session, sixth meeting, section 2.

consultative process. Technical consultations on the successor strategy, gathering world experts in immunization at the international, regional and country levels, were held in 2019 through a global forum and six regional consultations. In total, over 750 people at the global, regional and country levels were consulted through face-to-face meetings, and more than 4500 comments were received through established online consultative processes.

6. The results of those technical consultations led to the development of an agreed framework for action towards 2030 that:

- maintains the momentum created by the global vaccine action plan and ensures that the lessons learned during the past decade enable the global community to make even greater advances in immunization in the next 10 years;
- effectively responds to new and emerging challenges and a changing global context;
- provides a holistic framework to tackle key issues related to vaccines and immunization and to guide operational frameworks to drive impact at the country level.

7. In February 2020, more in-depth consultations with Member States were held during the 146th session of the Board. The Board took note of the report on the global vaccine action plan¹ and adopted decision EB146(7), on strengthening global immunization efforts to leave no-one behind.² In response to decision EB146(7), the draft Immunization Agenda 2030 was finalized through face-to-face and web-based consultations with Member States and other relevant stakeholders.

8. This report presents the key elements of the draft immunization vision and strategy of the Immunization Agenda 2030.³ The Immunization Agenda 2030 positions immunization within the wider context of primary health care and as a key intervention for achieving universal health coverage. It also emphasizes the common interests with other global health agendas, including global health security, defeating meningitis, cervical cancer elimination, and the battle against antimicrobial resistance.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

9. The Immunization Agenda 2030 draft vision and strategy have been shaped by the changing immunization landscape, key challenges and global shifts, as described below.

10. **Sustaining community trust for vaccines.** Uptake of immunization services is affected inter alia by the spread of misinformation about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. These considerations need to be understood and dealt with in order to enhance and sustain trust in vaccines and immunization services within communities, to build resilience against misinformation about vaccines and to tackle the harm being caused by anti-vaccination messages.

¹ Document EB146/8.

² See paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

³ The full draft document on the Immunization Agenda 2030 is available at https://www.who.int/immunization/IA2030_draft_4_WHA.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 21 April 2020).

11. **Inequities.** The benefits of immunization are not spread equally, either among or within countries. In 2018, 70% of unvaccinated children lived in middle-income countries.¹ Reaching all people will require higher national vaccine coverage but also fewer subnational inequities – in addition to interventions that take into account poverty, education, socioeconomic and cultural factors, and gender-related barriers hindering access to immunization.

12. **Population movements.** Continuing **urbanization** will pose a major challenge as it results in large and dense urban populations at high risk of infectious disease. Migration and **cross-border population movements** have the potential to generate communities of unprotected individuals at risk of infection.

13. **Ensuring immunization for all age groups.** Expanding the benefits of vaccination to all age groups offers tremendous opportunities, but more effort is needed to do so effectively. As more vaccines become available for older age groups, new methods are needed to reach populations other than infants and to deliver integrated and people-centred health services. The world is also experiencing significant **demographic shifts**. These shifts will have a major impact on the need for and design of immunization services for different age groups.

14. **Climate change and natural disasters.** The world's changing climate will have significant implications for infectious disease. New populations will be exposed to vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue, and increased risk of flooding will boost chances for the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera. Climate change also disrupts seasonal disease patterns, potentially shifting the timing, duration and pattern of their transmission. In addition, it can alter the endemicity of infectious diseases. Climate-informed surveillance and response systems will be an essential part of national preparedness for outbreaks of infectious disease.

15. **Conflict and political instability.** Civil conflict can rapidly lead to loss of health service infrastructure and shortages of trained health workers, often for extended periods, thereby disrupting delivery of immunization services. Affected populations are frequently also at higher risk of infectious diseases because of the breakdown in national infrastructure and mass displacement into temporary settlements.

16. **Outbreaks.** The world continues to experience outbreaks of measles, yellow fever, diphtheria and other vaccine-preventable diseases, as well as of emerging infections such as Ebola. Immunization and **disease surveillance** will be critical for preventing, detecting and controlling outbreaks of infectious disease. Disease surveillance provides insight into the effectiveness of immunization programmes, informs their optimization and serves as an early warning of potential outbreaks. Comprehensive preparedness and response strategies, including the capacity to carry out research during outbreaks, will limit the impact of outbreaks on people's health and national finances.

17. **Optimizing and sustaining supplies of vaccines and immunization products.** Achieving the Immunization Agenda 2030 draft vision will require a **reliable global supply of appropriate, affordable and innovative vaccines and other immunization products of assured quality**. Every year, many countries experience disruptions in the supply of vaccines, often because of a mismatch between global production levels and the combined needs of countries. Attention must be given to achieving and sustaining healthy market dynamics for vaccines and immunization products over the

¹ Progress and challenges with achieving universal immunization coverage: 2018 WHO/UNICEF estimates of national immunization coverage (data as of July 2019). Available at https://www.who.int/immunization/monitoring_surveillance/data/en/ (accessed 4 March 2020).

long term, both globally and regionally. Reliable forecasts of national vaccine needs and priorities will continue to be important enablers in improving healthy market dynamics and improving and sustaining supplies. The price of vaccines is another key barrier to access and can delay the introduction of new vaccines in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, there are regulatory, financing and procurement barriers to ensuring sustainable vaccine supplies. For instance, countries have markedly different procurement processes that may need adjustments in order to respond to changes in the vaccine market and in quality assurance requirements.

VISION AND IMPACT GOALS

18. The draft global Immunization Agenda 2030 sets a vision for 2030 of **“A world where everyone, everywhere, at every age fully benefits from vaccines for good health and well-being”**.

19. This vision aims to achieve the following outcome goals:

- Reducing mortality and morbidity due to vaccine-preventable diseases for all age groups across the life course.
- Decreasing the disease burden by increasing equitable access to and uptake of the use of new and existing vaccines.
- Ensuring good health and well-being for everyone by strengthening immunization within primary health care and contributing progress towards universal health coverage and sustainable development.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

20. The strategic framework of the Immunization Agenda 2030 is organized around **seven strategic priorities** and **four core principles**.

- **Strategic priority 1 – Immunization programmes for primary health care and universal health coverage.** This strategic priority is overarching to emphasize a health systems-based approach to national immunization programmes integrated within primary health care systems and contributing to progress towards universal health coverage.
- **Strategic priority 2 – Commitment and demand.** The focus of this strategic priority is on maintaining the highest level of political commitment to immunization efforts and the highest public demand for vaccines and immunizations, as well as on increasing the resilience of communities to anti-vaccination messages.
- **Strategic priority 3 – Coverage and equity.** This strategic priority focuses primarily on bridging coverage and equity gaps and reaching populations that are under-immunized or not immunized so that geographical location, age, socioeconomic status, gender-related or any other barriers to full vaccinations are removed.
- **Strategic priority 4 – Life course and integration.** The focus of this strategic priority is on extending the benefits from recommended vaccines throughout the life course and delivering them with other essential health interventions.

- **Strategic priority 5 – Outbreak and emergencies.** This strategic priority focuses on building, strengthening or sustaining national capacities to prepare for, prevent, detect and rapidly respond to vaccine-preventable and emerging disease outbreaks and to maintain immunization services for people affected by conflict, political instability, acute emergencies and humanitarian crises.
- **Strategic priority 6 – Supply and sustainability.** This strategic priority focuses on ensuring a reliable supply of appropriate, innovative and affordable vaccines of assured quality as well as adequate and predictable financing for immunization.
- **Strategic priority 7 – Research and innovation.** The focus of this strategic priority is on ensuring continued research into new and improved vaccines, technologies and vaccine manufacturing platforms, as well as innovations in immunization service delivery and programme management.

21. These seven strategic priorities are anchored by four core principles that will shape the nature of actions undertaken to achieve each strategic priority objective and goal:

(1) **People-focused** – Ensuring responsiveness to populations needs.

The design, management and delivery of immunization services should be shaped by, and be responsive to, the needs of individuals and communities, including a specific focus on addressing barriers to accessing immunization services based on age, location, and social, cultural and gender-related factors.

(2) **Country-owned** – Driving progress from the bottom up.

Countries should establish targets that are shaped by local contexts and be held accountable for achieving them.

(3) **Partnership-based** – Aligning efforts to maximize impact.

Immunization partners shall align and coordinate actions to increase efficiencies, build on complementarities and reach out to sectors beyond immunization for mutual benefit.

(4) **Data-guided** – Promoting evidence-based decision-making.

Reliable and timely data shall be used to track progress, drive improvements in programme performance and underpin decision-making at all levels.

OPERATIONALIZATION

22. The Immunization Agenda 2030 is an overarching strategy intended to establish a shared vision and strategic priorities on immunization in order to guide the activities of countries and stakeholder organizations over the next 10 years as a successor strategy to the global vaccine action plan.

23. The Immunization Agenda 2030 does not, however, exist in isolation. It is backed by technical analyses and documentation, with complementing strategies of stakeholder organizations, disease-specific initiatives, and other global health and development programmes. It is designed to steer the progress of national strategies and plans for immunization.

24. Furthermore, the creation of the Immunization Agenda 2030 is planned as a multi-step process that entails agreement on a vision, strategic priorities and high-level goals as a first step. Equally important is the second step: translating the strategy into concrete actions. This will take place through

the development of regional and national operational plans, an Immunization Agenda 2030 governance mechanism and a monitoring and evaluation framework.

25. The Immunization Agenda 2030 is designed to be adapted to regional and national contexts. Countries will be able to prioritize their efforts towards the focus areas of each strategic priority under the Immunization Agenda 2030, depending on their local situation. It is also designed to enable partners and stakeholders at all levels to align their work, ensuring that all efforts are mutually reinforcing in pursuit of common goals.

26. A governance mechanism will be established to ensure implementation and accountability, defining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders delivering the Immunization Agenda 2030 draft vision and strategy. This will be a key objective of the second phase of the Immunization Agenda 2030 development process.

27. Drawing on the lessons learned from the global vaccine action plan, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to measure progress towards the draft vision and goals of the Immunization Agenda 2030. It will be closely aligned with operational plans to promote the greatest transparency and accountability possible.

28. The approach to achieving the Immunization Agenda 2030 draft vision will be dynamic and responsive. While the draft vision and strategy document will serve as a constant framework throughout the next decade, operational plans at the national, regional and global levels will evolve as circumstances change. Just as the battle against infectious disease requires agile and flexible immunization programmes, so too must a global immunization strategy be sensitive to rapid shifts in disease epidemiology, technological advances, community needs, political environments and financial realities, constantly adjusting to changing needs and opportunities.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

29. The Health Assembly is invited to note this report and provide guidance on next steps.

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