

Summary report on the

# Twenty-second meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Working Group on Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

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Amman, Jordan  
7–8 December 2016



**World Health  
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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## 1. Introduction

The Twenty-second meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean regional working group on Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, was held from 7 to 8 December 2016, in Amman, Jordan. Working groups coordinate support for country programmes working through a core group of partners usually led by WHO and UNICEF. They serve as an important and necessary bridge for the flow of information between countries, regional partners and other management and governance bodies at the global level, both to ensure adherence to GAVI policies and principles and the effective implementation of resources and to allow countries and regions to provide input into their policies and principles.

The regional working group meetings are held regularly and are considered by those countries which receive GAVI support and the partners as an important platform to discuss country-related issues, identify possible solutions to problems and receive updates on GAVI policies on improving immunization coverage and strengthening immunization systems in countries.

The objectives of this meeting were:

- to review country progress in implementing GAVI processes related to the different windows of support;
- to identify weaknesses and gaps and recommend corrective measures;
- to harmonize and coordinate partner support in the context of accelerating progress towards implementation of the *Global Vaccine Action Plan* and GAVI's strategic objectives;
- to develop and agree on the new terms of reference of the regional working group and its modus operandi;

- to review country performance and prepare to deliver on 2017 priorities in the development of coordinated workplans.

The meeting was attended by staff from UNICEF headquarters and the Middle East and North Africa region and country offices of participating countries, the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, the Gavi Secretariat, and WHO staff from headquarters, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and country offices in Gavi-eligible countries.

In his opening remarks, the Chair noted how instrumental GAVI support had been in strengthening health systems and immunization and in ensuring equity. He highlighted the remarkable progress achieved in GAVI-supported countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region in utilizing the different windows of support, including in the introduction of new vaccines. He emphasized the importance of revising the terms of reference of the group in the light of Gavi's new 2016–2020 strategy and outlined the new system for coordinating partner support and the partners' engagement framework.

## **2. Summary of discussions**

### *Global Vaccine Action Plan and the Gavi Strategy 2016–20*

Participants were briefed on progress in implementation of the *Global Vaccine Action Plan* in countries eligible for Gavi support and on adoption of the *Eastern Mediterranean Vaccine Action Plan*. Routine immunization was discussed, in addition to regional disease elimination and control targets for measles/rubella, maternal and neonatal tetanus and hepatitis B, and the introduction of new vaccines.

In 2016, Gavi launched a new strategy for 2016–2020. The strategy sets out an increasing role in outbreak preparedness and response and also new support to the cold chain through the cold chain equipment optimization platform, which offers countries access to modern, high-performing equipment capable of making their cold chains more efficient. Data quality was highlighted as a major concern, particularly in relation to routine immunization coverage, surveillance data and vaccine safety. Changes to Gavi's engagement with countries and partners were explained. Gavi provides funding to partners through the partners' engagement framework which allows partners to support countries' immunization programmes. The Vaccine Alliance coordination and technical teams represent a new body for monitoring. Important deadlines for 2017 are 30 June for reporting on targeted country assistance milestones and 30 November for countries to submit their reports against milestones and for submission of targeted country assistance proposals for the following year.

### *Accountability framework*

Participants discussed the generic terms of reference of the regional working group, including roles and responsibilities, in addition to detailing the generic functions of the working group and the structure and function of its secretariat. Information on meetings, telecommunications and funding was shared.

### *Sustainable coverage and equity in 2017*

Participants discussed key priority actions to be taken in 2017 with a timeframe for implementation together with any risk associated with activities and suggestions for possible mitigation measures. Country groups shared planned activities for 2017. Improved collaboration and planning for the joint appraisal process was discussed, in addition to

submissions for new applications and work with Vaccine Alliance coordination and technical teams, as well as planning for visits related to monitoring activities.

### *New applications*

Planning ahead for technical support and the convening of workshops with partners is imperative to ensure applications are submitted on time. Lead partners for support should be clearly identified to ensure the quality of their inputs and encourage accountability. Gavi will share new guidelines with partners in a timely manner to ensure that countries are aware of their content and know where to seek guidance. Terms of reference for consultancies need to be shared with other stakeholders for input to ensure sufficient days are allowed to complete different parts of the application, including responding to queries from the independent review committees.

### *Joint appraisal process*

To improve the quality of the joint appraisal process, partners need to be closely involved in analysis of reported results and supporting the evidence base for decision-making. Greater time needs to be provided in the process to ensure quality input by all stakeholders in the final report. Reporting should be timely and all related evidence included in the report. Alignment and coordination between partners at country level will be improved. The joint appraisal process should begin earlier than previously to ensure consensus between partners and the timely submissions of new applications.



### *Country reporting*

Partners will be well informed on reporting requirements to provide support, including on the performance framework. Financial and programmatic reporting should be completed at the latest one month prior to the joint appraisal process. Support for reporting and feedback on performance, including subnational performance frameworks, is to be improved.

### *Country visits, regular monitoring and reporting*

Meeting agendas and terms of reference need to be shared in a timely manner in order that relevant stakeholders can participate and provide support. The shared calendar should be updated frequently in order to keep stakeholders informed about relevant events in regions and countries.

### **3. Next steps**

The WHO Regional Office has chaired the GAVI regional working group since 2001 and will continue to do so in 2017. UNICEF will assume this role from 2018 onwards subject to final agreement from the UNICEF MENA immunization team.

Two regional working group meetings will be held in 2017. The first one is to take place before July 2017 and the second one will be held in the second half of the year. One of the meetings will be linked to the regional intercountry meeting of Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) managers organized by the Regional Office to ensure participation of national EPI teams.

The terms of reference for the regional working group were finalized after detailed discussion and consensus was reached between participants

In 2017, the time frame for the joint appraisals process is as follows:

- Somalia: mid May
- Yemen : early June
- Pakistan: 14–30 July
- Afghanistan: July
- Sudan: August
- Djibouti: September.



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