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News

Country Readiness and Delivery for COVID-19 vaccine introduction

[Shoshanna Goldin](#), WHO Headquarters

The Country Readiness and Delivery workstream (CRaD) is part of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator vaccine pillar. In CRD, WHO, UNICEF, Gavi, and partners are working together at the global and regional levels to: 1) develop programmatic guidance, trainings, tools, and advocacy materials and; 2) support all countries to be prepared for COVID-19 vaccine introduction.

CRD is focused on: coordination; communication, advocacy, and training; data and monitoring; acceptance and demand; financing; supply and logistics; and COVID-19 vaccine introduction. To facilitate a harmonized approach to country planning, CRD collaborates with other technical areas including regulatory and safety monitoring.

Notable highlights from CRD include:

- In August 2020, implementation of a regional needs assessment survey which identified the resources needed for the successful introduction of COVID-19 vaccine.
- In September 2020, dissemination of the COVID-19 Vaccine Introduction Readiness Assessment Tool (VIRAT), providing countries with a roadmap of milestones and a framework for self-monitoring progress in preparing for vaccine introduction.
- Estimated operational costs/dose of US\$ 1.5 billion for COVID-19 vaccine introduction in the 92 Gavi supported (AMC) countries during 2021.
- All regions have a COVID-19 vaccine introduction taskforce. Regions are coordinating stakeholders and providing support to countries in planning COVID-19 vaccine delivery, including use of the VIRAT and monitoring country readiness.

In the coming weeks, CRD will be releasing additional programmatic guidance and adaptable tools. One resource is the National Deployment and Vaccination Planning guide which will assist countries to develop an operational plan for COVID-19 vaccine introduction. CRD is developing training packages for key stakeholders such as health workers and national focal points for COVID-19 vaccine introduction. Other resources to be developed include guidance and tools for National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAGs), national policy-maker, and other implementers on: demand planning; community engagement; assessing social and behavioural drivers of vaccination; supply, distribution, and logistics; monitoring vaccination; and conducting a post introduction evaluation.

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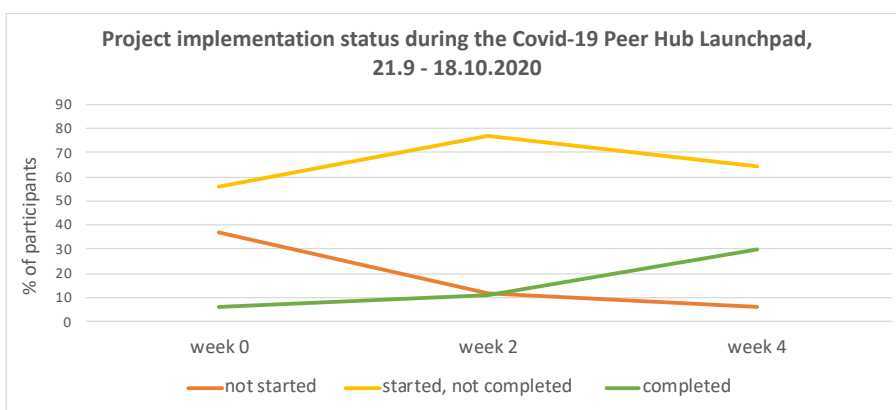
Peer learning and encouragement support health professionals to maintain routine immunization within the Scholar Covid-19 Peer Hub

[Ian Steed](#), The Geneva Learning Foundation (TGLF)

In July 2020, 3,900 immunization professionals from over 90 countries signed up for the Scholar Covid-19 Peer Hub. In August-September 2020, 700 of these professionals developed peer-critiqued action plans to maintain routine immunization, drawing on ideas and practices shared through an online Ideas Engine.

In September-October, 500 participants decided to join a four-week "Launchpad", designed to support early stage project implementation through peer encouragement and experience sharing, and using methodologies piloted by TGLF in July 2019 within the Scholar programme. Most projects focused on re-establishing demand for routine immunization, health worker safety, and catch-up immunization.

Participants defined an objective for the four-week Launchpad, and weekly actions to achieve this. By the end of week four, 94% of participants had started or completed their projects, compared to 62% at week zero, with a growth of 24% in those fully implementing during the Launchpad.



"My project is tallied ensuring that children who missed penta 3 vaccinations are listed and tracked down to the facilities to vaccinate them. So far I have listed 26 children with the aid of a health staff using simplified format provided to them. They went into their registers to look for all children who have missed penta 3 vaccinations. I was surprised to see that most of them were within the COVID-19 period. Lessons that I have personally learnt is that from time to

time we need to support our immunization staff to track defaulters else coverage will not improve." [Launchpad participant learning, week four Acceleration report]

The Geneva Learning Foundation is exploring with partners how to strengthen support to immunization professionals building on this unique, peer-to-peer collaboration, and in support of country COVID-19 continuity plans. To find out more, contact this [email address](#).

WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization (SAGE): Request for nominations

[Melanie Marti](#), WHO Headquarters

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. SAGE reports to the Director-General of WHO and advises on global policies and strategies, ranging from vaccine research and development and vaccination recommendations to delivery of immunization, its linkages with other health interventions and integration into health systems. Its remit is not restricted to childhood immunization but extends to all vaccine-preventable diseases for all age groups.

WHO is currently soliciting proposals for nominations of two new experts to serve on SAGE.

WHO is seeking nominations particularly from the WHO South-East Asia and Western-Pacific Regions. Nominations of women and persons from low- and middle-income countries are specifically encouraged. A track record of achievements on implementation research and social sciences would be of particular relevance.



Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization. Credit: E. Lewis, WHO.

Deadline for applications: 22 November 2020

For more information, please see this [link](#).

Experience on the use of virtual Emergency Operations Center (EOCs) to respond to polio outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia

Helen Atkilt and Mesfin Wossen Ethiopia Public Health Institute (EPHI), [Chukwuemeka Agbo](#) and Eshetu Wassie, World Health Organization

Ethiopia has experience in using physical National EOC meetings to coordinate the Polio Outbreak Response in a single room. Staff working in the lower levels of the health system implementing the campaign were contacted by telephone and emails and the team used a single screen to review data, monitor and direct activities.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the national EOC could not meet physically which posed a threat to the coordination of the planned polio campaigns.

To address this, the team decided to use virtual meetings linking national and lower levels in one platform to coordinate the polio campaign. Using Zoom, participants were able to carry out a joint review of real time data from google sheets, open data kit and dashboards. Actions were taken immediately during pre-implementation preparedness, vaccination, supervision, monitoring, evaluation and retrieval of vaccine vials.

The advantage of this approach was that the virtual EOC was more inclusive of national and lower levels to facilitate immediate decisions and actions. It also contributed to minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission among EOC members.

One major challenge was unstable internet connectivity but this did not affect operations. Overall, the EOC has remained fully functional during the COVID-19 outbreak and implemented a coordinated polio campaign in October 2020.

Nominations for the 2021 Albert B. Sabin Gold Medal and the Rising Star Award due no later than Friday 13 November 2020

Samia Kemal, Sabin Vaccine Institute

Sabin Vaccine Institute welcomes nominations for two of its major awards! Please see the nomination criteria for the [Sabin Gold Medal](#) and the [Rising Star Award](#). To nominate a colleague, kindly provide a one-page written explanation of the nominee's qualifications, including their contributions to the field, why you believe they are particularly qualified to receive the award, and how their efforts align with the Sabin mission. Narrative-style biographies and CVs are welcome as supporting documents.

Please email your nomination(s) to goldmedal@sabin.org. Nominations are submitted in strict confidence and will be reviewed by selection committees for the Sabin Gold Medal Award and the Sabin Rising Star Award. Multiple nominations for each award are welcome.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Brian Shaw, manager of meetings and events, at brian.shaw@sabin.org or 202-683-1887.

Thank you, and we look forward to welcoming another deserving health champion into the esteemed ranks of [Gold Medal recipients](#).

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Past Meetings/Workshops

National Virtual Workshop on Effective Vaccine Management

[Jazmina Umaña](#), Ministry of Health, Nicaragua

Managua, Nicaragua

Location 23 September-2 October 2020

Participants One hundred and ninety participants from the country's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) – from the central level, sub-regional level (SILAIS), and municipalities attended this meeting, including six representatives from the Ministry of Health/EPI-Colombia and three participants from PAHO's Department of Procurement and Supply Management (PRO). The PAHO/WHO Representative Ana Treasure and the General Director of Public Health Surveillance from the Ministry of Health, Dr Cris-thian Toledo also participated in the workshop.

Facilitators:

- Nora Lucía Rodríguez, regional advisor for the cold chain in PAHO/WDC.
- José T. Martinez, responsible for the cold chain in the Ministry of Health/Honduras.
- Alejandro Ortega, responsible for the cold chain in the Ministry of Health/Nicaragua.

Purpose:

- Introduce participants to the Evaluation of Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) Tool to strengthen knowledge, attitudes, and practices of health personnel in managing cold chain, supply chain, and logistics operations in the 19 SILAIS and municipalities of the country.
- For the participants to carry out an EVM evaluation using the nine criteria outlined in the tool.
- Develop and implement the EVM improvement plan.

Details:

The EVM is a tool from the World Health Organization (WHO) to evaluate the quality of a country's cold chain and its supply chain for vaccines, syringes, and supplies –essential elements of the immunization system.

Nicaragua last conducted an EVM assessment in June 2015, the results from which showed a score of 93% achieved across the different participating health services. Nicaragua was ranked first among the countries being evaluated at that time.

In order to maintain this achievement, PAHO conducted, for the first time, a virtual EVM course to accommodate limitations for in-person workshops due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A combined training methodology was used: prior to the virtual workshop, participants familiarized themselves with the criteria to be evaluated and pre- and post-tests were administered to ascertain the amount of knowledge acquired during the workshop. Participants scored correct answers between 70 and 90% when comparing the results of the pre-tests and post-tests which confirms an improvement in the knowledge of the evaluation criteria, as well as in the management of key components of the cold and supply chain, such as the adequate preparation of ice water packs, distribution, among other components.

The workshop participants committed to carrying out self-evaluations, as well as to develop and follow up on the EVM improvement plans that were developed.



Photos of pre-pandemic EPI vaccine management trainings in Nicaragua. Credit: Ministry of Health, Nicaragua.

Resources

PAHO's "Immunization in the Americas: 2020 Summary" is Published

[Comprehensive Family Immunization Unit](#), Pan American Health Organization

The ["Immunization in the Americas" brochure](#) is published annually by PAHO's Comprehensive Family Immunization unit. It highlights some of the achievements in immunization and summarizes key regional data in the Americas from the previous year. This year's edition presents coverage data for all vaccines in immunization programmes of the Region of the Americas, by sub-region and country, and focuses on the importance of maintaining routine immunization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the preface, PAHO Director Dr. Carissa Etienne encourages governments to ensure that universal health care should protect all people's health, beginning with the most vulnerable. She also encourages countries to maintain the high commitment of health workers to national immunization programmes, to design and implement innovative immunization strategies that involve the participation of communities and have political support at all levels.

New Issue of PAHO's Immunization Newsletter is Published

[Comprehensive Family Immunization Unit](#), Pan American Health Organization

In this [edition](#):

- Vaccine Development, Distribution, and Supply
- What I Have Learned as an Immunization Advisor during the COVID-19 Pandemic...By Marc Rondy, PAHO/WHO Immunization Focal Point in Guatemala
- Summary of the Status of National Immunization Programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Guidelines to Plan for COVID-19 Vaccine Introduction



If you would like to subscribe to PAHO's Immunization Newsletter, read past issues, or find out more information about this publication, please visit this [page](#).

Strategic considerations in preparing for deployment of COVID-19 vaccine and vaccination in the WHO European Region

[Catharina de Kat](#), WHO EURO

It is widely recognized that development and rapid deployment of one or more vaccines against COVID-19 will be essential to ultimately help contain the pandemic.

While specific characteristics of the COVID-19 vaccines are still unknown, there are immediate actions that countries can take to prepare for eventual deployment. To support this process in the European Region, the WHO Regional Office for Europe established a Working Group on COVID-19 Vaccination, which engages a broad group of stakeholders including experts from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office and the Supply Division of the United Nations Children's Fund, representatives of national public health agencies, regulatory authorities and academia.

This [first in a series of guidance documents](#) outlines the key strategic considerations for Ministries of Health, their agencies, National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups/Committees and relevant public and private sector authorities in the WHO European Region to address in preparing for deployment of COVID-19 vaccine and vaccination in their countries. The objective is to allow Member States to identify any critical gaps in national planning and preparation for effective deployment of COVID-19 vaccines.

Health in Europe Podcast: The fight to eradicate polio

[Catharina de Kat](#), WHO EURO

As the world marked World Polio Day on 24 October 2020, WHO/Europe used the opportunity to congratulate the WHO African Region for eradicating wild poliovirus and to celebrate the countless volunteers and professionals who continue to work throughout the world to reach every child with life-saving polio vaccination.

The [podcast](#) captures the voices of individuals with experience working in Africa and Europe. It highlights some of the lessons learned from the polio eradication effort, including the need to sustain trust in vaccination among influencers and communities. It reiterates that very high immunization coverage and surveillance are necessary to sustain eradication in these regions, including when health services in many countries are overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Need to Know - Gavi Country Update

[Reme Lefevre](#), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance in [English](#), and [French](#).

Subscribe to "Need to know" country updates.

The Gavi Secretariat has recently launched "Need to Know - Gavi Country Update", a digital newsletter available in English and French. Aiming to streamline communications to countries and partners, it contains the latest on Gavi policies, guidance and other programmatic topics. Previous editions of the newsletter are available through the [Need to Know archive \(scroll to the bottom of the web-page\)](#). To be put on the mailing list, please send an [email](#).



PATH's new Vaccine Cost Calculators support immunization decision-making

[Frédéric Debellut](#), PATH

The number of globally available options for rotavirus vaccines, pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCVs), and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines has been increasing as new, lower-priced vaccines become available for country introduction or switching between products. While having more options is beneficial for countries, figuring out which product is the right choice from a cost perspective can be confusing for country decision-makers.

[PATH's new Vaccine Cost Calculators](#) provide an easy way to assess and compare costs of certain vaccination programmes over a period of ten years with each vaccine product available in the global market. These Excel-based tools are currently available for [rotavirus vaccines](#) and [PCVs](#) in English, French, Russian, and Spanish, and a calculator for HPV vaccines is coming soon. The calculators can be used by **any** country interested in comparing different vaccine costs, whether or not the country is eligible for co-funding from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Users input a limited set of local data and can then compare products and estimate vaccination programme costs for different vaccine products and presentations, exploring multiple vaccine options at a time. The calculators are meant to provide insights into the potential costs of alternative product choices and should not replace detailed, comprehensive budget planning once a product has been selected.

Read the [article](#) for more information.

For questions or support, contact PATH's [Health Economics & Outcomes Research team](#).



Vaccine Cost Calculators

Resources to inform decision-making for rotavirus and PCV immunization programs

HPV coming soon!

PATH
1000+1100



Excel-based tool with simple user inputs



Allows comparison of all available vaccine products

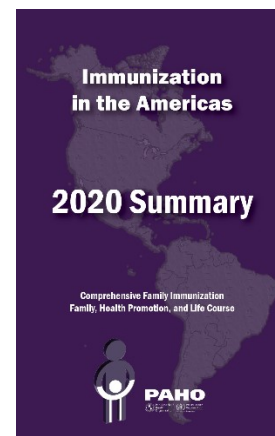


Available in English, French, Russian, and Spanish

Highlights of the October 2020 Meeting of WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization are now available on the SAGE web pages.

[Highlights](#) from the October 2020 SAGE meeting are now available and the final report will be published as usual in the Weekly Epidemiological Record ([WER](#)) which is scheduled for 4 December 2020.

All the background material and slides of the meeting are available [here](#).



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Organizations and Initiatives

American Red Cross

[Child Survival](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Polio](#)

[Global Vaccines and Immunization](#)

Johns Hopkins

[International Vaccine Access Center](#)

[Value of Immunization Compendium of Evidence \(VoICE\)](#)

[VIEW-hub](#)

JSI

[IMMUNIZATIONbasics](#)

[Immunization Center](#)

[Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program \(MCHIP\)](#)

[Publications and Resources](#)

[Universal Immunization through Improving Family Health Services \(UI-FHS\) Project in Ethiopia](#)

PAHO

[ProVac Initiative](#)

PATH

[Better Immunization Data \(BID\) Initiative](#)

[Center for Vaccine Innovation and Access](#)

[Defeat Diarrheal Disease Initiative](#)

[Vaccine Resource Library](#)

[Malaria Vaccine Initiative](#)

[RHO Cervical Cancer](#)

Sabin Vaccine Institute

[Boost – A Global Community of Immunization Professionals](#)

UNICEF

[Immunization](#)

[Supplies and Logistics](#)

USAID

[USAID Immunization](#)

[USAID Maternal and Child Survival Program](#)

WHO

[Department of Immunization, Vaccines & Biologicals](#)

[ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer](#)

[National programmes and systems](#)

[Immunization planning and financing](#)

[Immunization monitoring and surveillance](#)

[National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups Resource Center](#)

[SIGN Alliance](#)

Other

[Coalition Against Typhoid](#)

[Confederation of Meningitis Organizations](#)

[Dengue Vaccine Initiative](#)

[European Vaccine Initiative](#)

[Gardasil Access Program](#)

[Gavi the Vaccine Alliance](#)

[Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#)

[Immunization Academy](#)

[International Association of Public Health Logisticians](#)

[Immunization Economics resource](#)

[International Vaccine Institute](#)

[Measles & Rubella Initiative](#)

[Multinational Influenza Seasonal Mortality Study](#)

[Network for Education and Support in Immunisation \(NESI\)](#)

[Stop Pneumonia](#)

[TechNet-2I](#)

[Vaccine Safety Net](#)

[Vaccines Today](#)

WHO Regional Websites

[Routine Immunization and New Vaccines \(AFRO\)](#)

[Immunization \(PAHO\)](#)

[Vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization \(EMRO\)](#)

[Vaccines and immunization \(EURO\)](#)

[Immunization \(SEARO\)](#)

[Immunization \(WPRO\)](#)

UNICEF Regional Websites

[Immunization \(Central and Eastern Europe\)](#)

[Immunization \(Eastern and Southern Africa\)](#)

[Immunization \(South Asia\)](#)

[Immunization \(West and Central Africa\)](#)

[Child survival \(Middle East and Northern Africa\)](#)

[Health and nutrition \(East Asia and Pacific\)](#)

[Health and nutrition \(Americas\)](#)

Newsletters

[Immunization Monthly update in the African Region \(AFRO\)](#)

[WHO/Europe Vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization \(VPI\) news \(EURO\)](#)

[Immunization Newsletter \(PAHO\)](#)

[The Civil Society Dose \(GAVI CSO Constituency\)](#)

[TechNet Digest](#)

[RotaFlash \(PATH\)](#)

[Vaccine Delivery Research Digest \(Uni of Washington\)](#)

[Gavi Programme Bulletin \(Gavi\)](#)

[Immunization Economics Community of Practice](#)