



**MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)
VACCINE PROCUREMENT PRACTITIONERS
EXCHANGE FORUM (VPPEF)**

**19 & 20 OCTOBER 2022
AMMAN, JORDAN**

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION AND MAIN OBJECTIVE

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to protect the rights of every child. It operates in more than 130 countries, supporting governments to achieve a situation where no child dies from a preventable cause, and all children reach their full potential in health and wellbeing. To maximize results, UNICEF Supply Division (SD) partners with or acts as a procurement agency for over 100 countries and other organizations, procuring of over 2 billion doses of vaccines, medicines and health products annually.

Strengthening the national procurement systems involves addressing gaps on its different components such as needs planning, forecasting, quantification, strategic procurement, financing, registration and legislation. Although, over the years, governments and the global health community have invested in improving the functionalities of essential medicines & vaccine procurement and supply management systems in LMICs, shortages of vaccines, medicines and related supplies are still happening globally.

With the above, SD began supporting Regional Offices (RO) to implement regional Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Exchange Forums in 2019. This year, SD collaborated with the Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Office (MENARO) to co-host the MENA VPPEF in Amman, Jordan, which saw participation of delegates from 12 countries in the region. The outcome of this collaboration resulted in an event that focused on supporting countries on new vaccine introductions (i.e., PCV, HPV and Rota) via plenary and group discussions. Countries shared best practices and learned experiences from introducing new vaccines, as well as discussed how to leverage COVID-19 vaccine introduction activities, to lay the groundwork for future introductions of new vaccines. There were also deep dive sessions on leveraging market intelligence and vaccine security. Overall, the Forum aimed to provide a platform for country representatives to contribute to deep-dive discussions on programmatic implications for new vaccine introductions with a focus on the planning cycle, including how to access financial resources to ensure sustainable, timely access to vaccines.

AGENDA AND KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

KEY OBJECTIVES

- TO SHARE EXPERIENCES & LESSONS LEARNED AROUND NVI
- TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL INFORMATION & OPPORTUNITIES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO VACCINES
- TO REVIEW THE CURRENT SITUATION & CHALLENGES FACED IN THE REGION DURING INTRODUCTIONS & DEVELOP ROADMAPS TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES
- TO FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTINUE THE CONVERSATIONS ON THE VPPN AND IN THE REGION
- TO SHARE RELEVANT RESOURCES AND TOOLS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT COUNTRIES & IDENTIFY ANY ADDITIONAL NEEDS

DAY 1 | WEDNESDAY

OPENING & WELCOME

INTRODUCTIONS, OBJECTIVES &
SECURITY BRIEFING

OVERVIEW OF THE REGION'S
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMATIC STATUS

GOVERNMENT PARTNER UPDATES

UPDATE ON THE CURRENT STATE OF
GLOBAL VACCINE SUPPLY

LEVERAGING MARKET INTELLIGENCE

VACCINE SECURITY

UPDATE ON UNICEF PROCUREMENT
STRENGTHENING INITIATIVES

DAY 2 | THURSDAY

OPENING & RECAP

GOVERNMENT PARTNER UPDATES

NVI: PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS &
IMPLEMENTATION

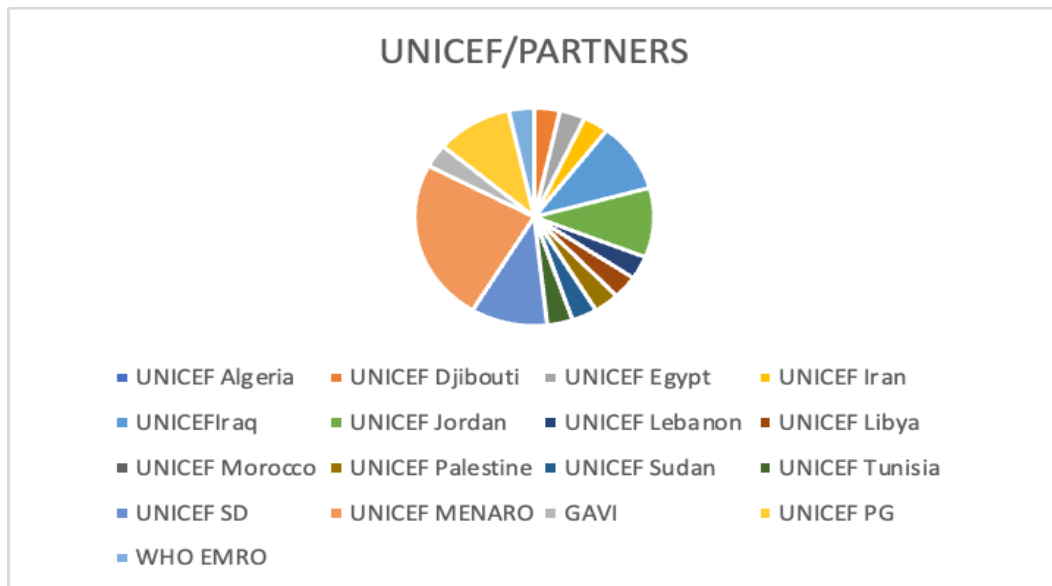
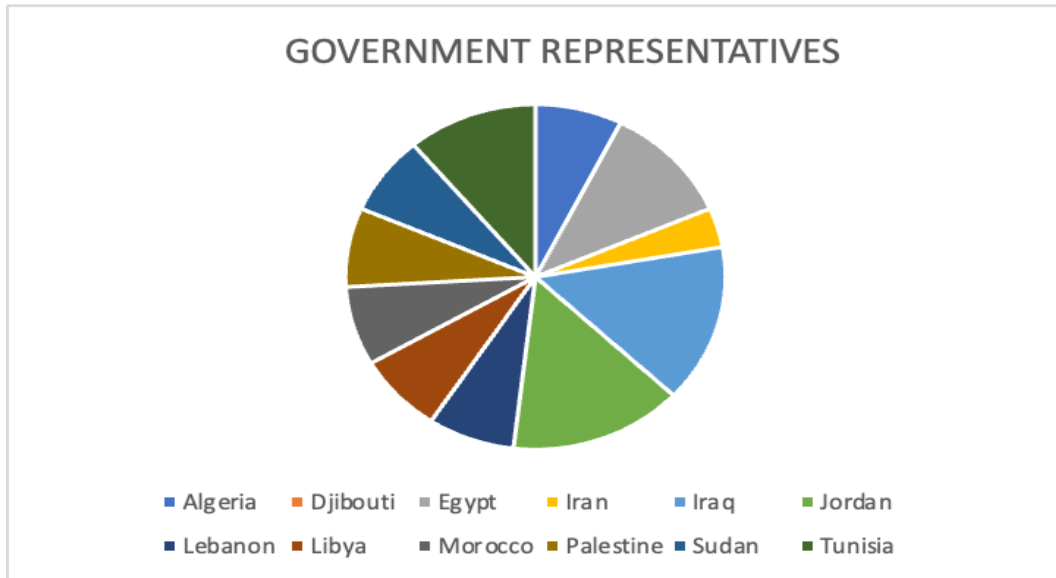
SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR NVI IN
MENA

ROADMAPS: DEVELOPMENT OF
COUNTRY ACTION PLANS

NEXT STEPS & CLOSING

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 56 participants from 12 MENA Middle Income Countries and partners participated in the two day event. Participants included government representatives (50%), UNICEF staff from HQ, RO & CO (49%) and other partners (1%). UNICEF MENARO and SD facilitated the entire process, including the overall facilitation of the event itself.



DAY 1

Overview of the immunization programme in MENA Region

This session aimed to provide a high-level summary of the immunization programme performance in the MENA region, with a focus on the coverage levels of key antigens, challenges to access and equity, and the status of new and underused vaccine introductions in the region, including routine immunization vaccine stock visibility system.

Over 4 million children have been unprotected against measles in 2021. Targets for vaccine-preventable diseases eradication, elimination, and control may differ across countries and are currently reflected in the vaccination agenda. Updates on cold chain equipment inventory and vaccine stock and reported vaccine-preventable diseases VPD outbreaks in EMR, 2022 were provided, including mid-term priorities for 2023-2025.

The presentation also gave an update on the effective vaccine management initiative implementation and EMV composite – including overall criteria – as well as key areas of the ISC strategic intervention for four Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (henceforth “Gavi”) eligible countries in 2022-2023.

Update on the current state of the global vaccine supply

This session provided an overview of each of the key vaccine markets for human papillomavirus (HPV), pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCV) and Rotavirus. This overview provided UNICEF’s perspective on the current status of each of these markets, including challenges that exist, such as some supply constraints, as well as the proposed mitigation measures that UNICEF has put in place looking forward to ensure access to sustainable supply, with the presentation focusing on a middle income country (MIC) perspective.

The presentation included updates on the pipeline supply status, an overview of the supply evolution per vaccine market, including expected supply constraints and the outlook for future supply, as well as a deep dive into the PCV market evolution.

Overall, some of the key challenges that were identified during the discussions was around limited visibility for suppliers on the demand need from MICs, limited competition and the challenges associated with decision-making in-country around these vaccine portfolios. Looking forward, in order to support access to supply for these vaccines, it is recommended for countries to provide multi-year commitments, as this in many cases can give assurance to suppliers, which in turn may support in lower pricing over multiple years. There also was discussion around demand generation and the role that pooling needs could play in a region, as well as the constraints that financing plays on limiting access in-country. Another aspect that was flagged was around ensuring regulatory considerations were taken into account, to ensure the vaccines are registered in country. UNICEF recognized the challenges, particularly around funding, noting that there is the MICs Financing Facility (MFF), which can in some cases provide pre-financing to support governments to introduce these vaccines.

Leveraging market intelligence

This session focused on providing a high-level overview of market intelligence, with a focus on how it can be leveraged when considering a new vaccine introduction. The key aspects emphasized focused on how market intelligence is used to inform procurement strategies, including (i) product selection, (ii) which procurement channel to use, (iii) tendering and contracting processes, (iv) ensuring regulatory harmonization and (v) to support the planning and budgeting exercises in country. For new vaccine introductions, market intelligence specifically can be leveraged to understand how a country’s individual demand fits within the global demand scenario, as well as provide an overview of pricing to thus support planning processes. It also can understand



which vaccines are currently available on the market and background on potential suppliers. All of this information will provide a background for decision-makers to use when developing the overall procurement strategy for these vaccines.

Two government representatives – Jordan and Palestine – provided a more in-depth overview on how their respective governments leverage market intelligence. Jordan provided information on their vaccine decision-making process when considering vaccine introductions, with a focus on the forecasting process. The government representative shared their challenges around getting a more precise demand, given there are many internal government stakeholders that are involved in the process. The government representative noted how market intelligence was used to support this work. For Palestine, the government representative shared how the government relies on market intelligence to inform their procurement strategy, by using it to understand the products available on the market that would meet the NIP needs in country.

Further discussion focused on some of the challenges countries faced, including around financial obstacles and inaccurate data (e.g. inaccuracies in reporting the pneumonia burden in country), which were also identified as areas where market intelligence could be in fact leveraged.

Vaccine security

This session provided an overview of the key aspects of vaccine security: (i) available financing, (ii) accurate forecasting and planning and (iii) appropriate contracting. A vaccine security approach aims to achieve the best value for money, to ensure a sustained, uninterrupted supply of quality assured vaccines so that the NIP is able to achieve its overarching immunization goals.

Government representatives from Jordan, Iraq and Morocco participated in a panel discussion, where each highlighted their country's experience around the three vaccine security pillars. Iraq provided the example of working with a private contractor in the country that supplies vaccines, sharing some of the benefits (i.e. regulatory control) and challenges (i.e. HR turnover) of this system. Jordan discussed the role that planning played within their procurement processes, as this supports the overall needed budget and provides a platform for advocating for a larger annual budget within the government. Morocco discussed about the importance of readiness for new diseases, seizing opportunities and budget savings amid the vaccine development center in Morocco.

Update on UNICEF-led procurement strengthening initiatives

The session provided participants with an update on the various activities that UNICEF SD manages to support government partners strengthen their procurement processes. There were four initiatives that were shared: (1) the Vaccine Procurement Assessment Toolbox, (2) the e-course on strategic vaccine procurement, (3) the Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Exchange Forum (VPPEF) and (4) the Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Network. The Assessment Toolbox is an online resource, that provides a methodology for governments or partners to assess their own national vaccine procurement processes, whereas the e-course is an online learning course that focuses on the key procurement processes, including the importance of developing a strategic vaccine procurement approach. It is set to launch early Q1 2023. The VPPN is the online continuation of the VPPEF, which provides further opportunities for vaccine procurement practitioners to share their best practices, lessons learned and other knowledge sharing opportunities. Participants are encouraged to sign up for the VPPN, as all materials from the event will be uploaded to the Network.

DAY 2

Government partner updates: Overview of national immunization programs.

The day started with Government partners from Iran, Sudan, Morocco, State of Palestine and Tunisia presenting their vaccine decision-making processes and organigrams, as well as recent and planned vaccine introductions, key challenges, and how these challenges were managed.

Among key challenges highlighted by countries:

- Problems related to vaccine shelf life, and supplying VVM for domestic vaccines, and Anti-vaccination groups (Iran).
- Accessibility and limited supply of some new vaccines (Rota, HPV-IPV) and the difficulties in providing evidence for the introduction of some vaccines (Sudan, Morocco)
- Financial Challenges, Human resources, vaccine session time, Acceptance of Vaccine and Cold chain capacity (Palestine)
- Vaccine planning, management and forecasting and coordination between central and peripheral levels (Tunisia)

Different mitigation strategies were employed, including:

- Local production and working on system sustainability (Iran)
- Working on developing vaccine forecasting, and working with academia and research centres to provide evidence on vaccine burden, and cost-benefits analysis (Sudan)
- Working on minimizing vaccine costs, and new training for health professional (Morocco)
- Implementing social mobilization and HW trainings for new vaccines (Palestine)
- Diversifying purchasing mechanisms

New vaccine introductions: Programme implications & implementation

This session explored the experience of countries in the region to develop and implement new vaccine introduction initiatives. Participants reviewed and discussed the programmatic implications of new vaccine introductions and their relevance in vaccine procurement decisions and implementation.

Participants were divided into three groups to discuss their specific country experiences on how new vaccines are introduced. Participants have been requested to share their experiences in NVI preparations, implementation planning and how their countries ensured successful introductions, including drivers of new vaccine introductions, parameters considered for the decision making, planning or implementation phases in countries, key challenges faced and/or opportunities during the appraisal and implementation of these activities, practical solutions, opportunities and lessons learned on how to address the challenges and future plans of action to ensure smooth NVI.

Representatives for each group presented main takeaways of their brainstorming session, summarized below:

- Introduction of new vaccines is a lengthy process involving multiple stakeholders and should be thoroughly planned;
- The importance of surveillance and accurate data for decision making and NVI implementation;
- The importance of emergency planning (e.g., as in COVID-19 situation);
- Some of the key considerations for planning of NVI: determining which vaccine presentation is best for the NIP, logistics of the interdictions, storage conditions and cold chain capacity requirements, with all that entails such as increasing fuel supplies and maintenance of equipment, human resources, expansion of capacity building, planning the advocacy and communication strategy, vaccine acceptability, etc;
- Advocacy is very important for NVI, including advocacy among medical workers (public and private sectors), general and target population;
- The vaccination calendar should be dynamic and regularly revisited based on national circumstances;

- It is important to have rigorous monitoring and Post Introduction Assessment “Impact & Evaluation”;
- The timing of the NVI is very important and can influence the final outcome;
- Understanding the global overview of the disease burden and vaccine market is important for planning routine vaccination planning, as well as for NVI planning and implementation.

The following challenges and lessons learned have been highlighted:

- Securing sustainable financing for NVI, including for vaccines and related supplies, is critical;
- Challenges in the population dynamics, especially in the mobile populations, migrant workers, refugees that leads to challenges in retrieving accurate data and therefore influence correctness in planning and implementation;
- Long-term contracting supports the NVIs and securing vaccines;
- Retrieval of nearly expired vaccines;
- Data quality “collection of data” & information systems;
- Affordability/cost of new vaccines;
- Vaccine acceptance;
- Legislation readiness (e.g. registration of vaccines).
- Delays in approval due to legislations issues such as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Risk Communication challenges (negative media, rumours, etc).

Update on Gavi’s MICs approach

In this session Gavi presented on its new MICs strategy. Gavi highlighted that MICs are lagging behind in introducing critical vaccines, presenting a threat to inter-country equity. So, their MICs strategy is aiming to drive the sustainable introduction of PCV, rotavirus, and HPV vaccines in former- and select never-Gavi eligible countries by providing funding via a vaccine catalytic financing grant. 8 never- before Gavi MENA countries are eligible under the Gavi MICs strategy (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia). Gavi aims to achieve the MICs approach objectives by working at two levels 1) foundational building blocks aiming to strengthen the enabling environment for NVI in countries, and 2) targeted and catalytic tools.

Sustainable financing

It has been highlighted that MENA’s economy has been significantly affected by the global demand shock that led to a collapse in oil prices in 2020. The accumulated cost in 2019-2020 was estimated at US\$ 319 billion, ~12% of GDP which led to the decrease in Government expenditures. Most countries were slow to adopt the newer, more expensive life-saving vaccines due to financial constraints and the socioeconomic context. Additional supply financing solutions and systems strengthening have been discussed, including UNICEF procurement services; UNICEF’s Vaccine Independence Initiative (VII); technical assistance and the middle-income countries MICs Financing Facility (MFF).

Developing a roadmap

In this session, participants identified 3 to 5 important priorities for their country’s respective immunization programmes, as well as devised a path forward in terms of next steps to implement the learning from this in-person Forum in the course of 2023. Country participants also highlighted what types of support is required from partners, including UNICEF, to achieve these goals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS

Key takeaways

The main bottlenecks and requests for support from countries have been concentrating around 3 major areas:

- **High level advocacy**
- **Sustainable supply financing – advocacy, options to increase domestic resources, financing**
- **System Strengthening (multi-year planning and forecasting, staff capacity, stock management, cold chain, surveillance, data collection, digitalization (management information system, incl. cold chain inventory and vaccine stock *management system*))**

Suggested UNICEF MENARO priorities

- Ensuring sustainable financing, including the need for advocacy, and building an investment case
 - o Multi-country regional advocacy (ministerial level) to strengthen commitments for new vaccine introduction
 - o Building procurement capacity, specifically for planning, forecasting, budgeting, procurement practices that leverage economies of scale and best value for money and regulatory considerations.
- Supply chain strengthening considerations related to NVI
- Coordination, monitoring & periodic follow up
- NITAG capacity and evidence for decision-making processes

Proposed Support from Partners

- Technical assistance & follow up
 - o EPI reviews
 - o Joint support missions
 - o Strengthening capacity
 - o Training needs assessment
 - o Sharing sessions (e.g., VPPN webinars, regional discussions, etc.) focused on specific procurement topics
 - o ecourse on strategic vaccine procurement
 - o Forecasting guidance (*coming soon*)
 - o SC strengthening support, building on existing country initiatives
 - o Supply Chain Maturity assessment
- Coordination, review & monitoring at regional level

The way forward/actions

- UNICEF MENARO:
 - o Finalise with countries the Roadmaps and concrete steps of UNICEF support
 - o Identify existing advocacy materials and platforms, sources and partners for generating evidence and support the countries in building the business cases
 - o Support MENA MICs to develop multi-year forecasting and costing of vaccines incorporating new vaccines
 - o Implementation of EVM initiative, including EPI reviews in identified countries as needed
 - o Targeted trainings for COs and Governments
 - o Support to build the investment case for NVI in selected countries

- Technical assistance to undertake analysis of budgeting and financing of health for mobilizing and advocating for additional domestic resources for new vaccines
- Review of budgeting for health of selected countries

- UNICEF SD:

- Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Network (VPPN) webinars on specific topics, including:
 - Forecasting, focus on HPV, Rota, PCV
 - Pooled procurement (opportunities and challenges)
 - Investment case for sustainable financing
- Tools
 - ecourse on strategic procurement (to be launched in Feb 2023)
 - UNICEF's Supply Chain Maturity Model
 - Vaccine Procurement Assessment Toolbox
 - Forecasting guidance (to be launched in Q1 2023)



LINKS TO FORUM'S MATERIALS

1. [Multimedia from the MENA VPPEF](#)

2. **DAY 1**

- [Agenda](#)
- [Presentations](#)

3. **DAY 2**

- [Agenda](#)
- [Presentations](#)