

## Current major event

### Integration of seasonal influenza vaccine delivery with routine immunization

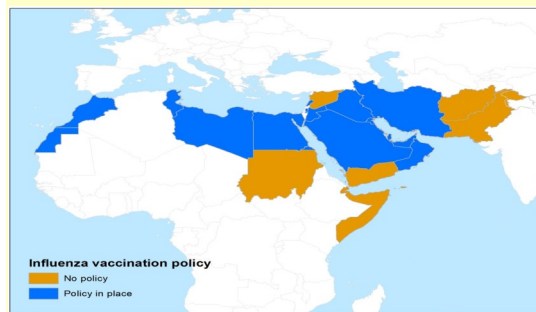
The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been working with the Member States to strengthen seasonal influenza vaccination policies and programs. This has included evidence gathering, consultations with national influenza focal points, immunization focal points, National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) and experts, both in the Region and globally, culminating in the development of a regional roadmap to help advance the seasonal influenza vaccination agenda.

#### Editorial note

While we know influenza causes considerable morbidity and mortality globally, the regional burden is not well documented. However, influenza surveillance data in most of the countries in the Region shows that there is a considerable seasonal influenza burden. Safe and effective influenza vaccines have been available for more than 60 years. Also, WHO's advisory group, SAGE, has recommended all countries to consider implementing seasonal influenza immunization programs, especially targeting high risk groups. In EMR, several countries have either policy or recommendations for influenza vaccination, inclusive of SAGE recommended target groups. However, information on influenza vaccination use and coverage is limited and incomplete. Of the available data from six countries, vaccination coverage among all high-risk groups is very low. Countries are facing many challenges, such as low perceived priority by policy makers, limited evidence, inadequate resources and vaccine hesitancy among target groups. However, there are existing and emerging opportunities to further the influenza vaccination agenda. Some of these opportunities include the existence of well-established immunization programs and platforms, functional influenza surveillance systems and recent experiences of COVID-19 vaccine deployment.

To improve the influenza vaccination situation in EMR, there has been a concerted effort to generate and document evidence, develop tools and strengthen partnerships to help countries implement and achieve their influenza vaccination targets. WHO in collaboration with the countries and partners developed a comprehensive regional roadmap to guide the introduction and expansion of seasonal influenza vaccination. The development of a regional roadmap is to address some of the above challenges, scale-up influenza vaccine uptake, ensure appropriate systems are in place and to accommodate for the countries with different

## Influenza vaccination policy and coverage for SAGE target groups (2015–2020)\*



9-37% Pregnant Women



11-12% Children



38-88% HCWs



2- 70% Immunocompromised



2.5-95% Elderly

\*Coverage data is limited and a new survey is in progress to collect the relevant information

### Key focus areas for integration seasonal influenza vaccine delivery with routine immunization by countries

- Developing and updating influenza vaccination policies with the goal of sustainability and life course immunization strategy.
- Developing influenza disease burden and current influenza vaccine use evidence package to support evidence-based decision making with NITAG and senior health ministry colleagues.
- Preparing for implementation of increased influenza vaccination uptake through capacity building of the health sector and strengthening of information systems to capture influenza disease burden and vaccination coverage.
- Developing strategic communication packages and activities to support advocacy, education and raising awareness of influenza vaccination policies and benefits of their use.
- Drawing on existing or building new partnerships to support and strengthen implementation of influenza vaccination policies and programs in countries.

state of implementing their programs. The roadmap goal for the next 5 years (2022-2026) is to enhance the availability, accessibility and utilization of seasonal influenza vaccine in EMR and to reduce influenza-associated morbidity and mortality among high-risk groups.

This work fits into the broader life course immunization and integration strategy, as described in Immunization Agenda 2030 under strategic priority 4. The goal of the life course and integration approach is that all people benefit from recommended immunizations throughout the life course and effectively integrated with other essential health services. Part of this is to establish integrated delivery points of contact between immunization and other public health interventions for different target age groups. This is relevant for influenza vaccination, as it sits outside of the standard childhood vaccination schedule that forms the basis of routine immunization. This work is ongoing with heavy consultation and support to countries in developing their workplans and helping them with implementation of priority activities.

## Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

### COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

#### Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

#### Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2022

Afghanistan	[1 78 981 (7684), 4.3%]
Bahrain	[572 082 (1477), 0.3%]
Djibouti	[15 631 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[513 846 (24 669), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 224 701 (141 165) 2%]
Iraq	[2 325 522 (25 213), 1.1%]
Jordan	[1 696 054 (14 066 ), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[631 929 (2555), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 097 492 (10398), 0.9%]
Libya	[501 919 (6430), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 165 206 (16 070), 1.4%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[657 193 (5657), 0.9%]
Oman	[389 273 (4626), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 528 738 (30 375), 2%]
Qatar	[365 058 (677), 0.2%]
Saudi Arabia	[755 076 (9099) 1.2%]
Somalia	[26 458 (1361), 5.1%]
Sudan	[62 161 (4936), 7.9%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[55 847 (3150), 5.6%]
Tunisia	[1 041 197 (28 575), 2.7%]
United Arab Emirates	[900 026 (2302), 0.3%]
Yemen	[11 819 (2149), 18.2%]