

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-eighth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 11–14 October 2021**

October 2021

**THE GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA:
SPECIAL FOCUS ON STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS TO ACCELERATE ENDING
TUBERCULOSIS IN COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
REGION, AND GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE AND IMMUNIZATION**

Objectives of the event

The objectives of the event are to:

- present opportunities offered by Gavi and the Global Fund to restore and sustain HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria and immunization services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region; and
- identify synergies in Gavi and Global Fund investments for the development of resilient health systems.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse the gains made in immunization and in the fight against HIV, TB and malaria. Although DTP3 coverage was 85% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in 2019, it dropped to 81% in the first half of 2020, with an increase of over half a million zero-dose children. In 2020, the TB notification rate in many countries in the Region dropped by approximately 35% compared with 2019. Some GeneXpert machines were dedicated to COVID-19 testing, limiting their usage for other tests. Lockdowns and travel restrictions have limited access to HIV treatment services and in some countries antiretroviral therapy centres were converted into COVID-19 treatment centres. Malaria-endemic countries experienced delays in the distribution of insecticide-treated nets and implementation of spraying campaigns, particularly in countries with humanitarian emergencies, such as Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

The response efforts of Gavi and the Global Fund have aimed to support countries in building resilient health systems that are able to protect and maintain essential services and better respond to emergencies, as illustrated by the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). Gavi has provided routine support, including health system support and targeted country assistance. Additionally, under the umbrella of the COVAX Facility, a large investment has been approved to provide eligible countries in the Region with COVID-19 vaccine and to strengthen health systems through the expansion of service delivery infrastructure, supply chain management systems, information management systems, health worker capacity-building, infection control and other cross-cutting functions.

These efforts need to be further aligned, sustained and built upon at the global, regional and, more importantly, country level. Improve efficiencies should lead to the better utilization of available resources for the building and sustaining of resilient health systems, which can protect and maintain HIV, TB, malaria and immunization services and reduce the impact of future emergencies on them.

Gavi and the Global Fund response to COVID-19: opportunities for synergies and alignment

The C19RM initiative provided US\$ 120 million in 2020 and 2021 to Global Fund-eligible countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. This is being used to bridge funding gaps in the three programmes and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on HIV, TB, malaria services. The C19RM's response pillars include several cross-cutting functions such as infection prevention and control, laboratory, community engagement, surveillance, and operational support and logistics, in accordance with national response plans. The C19RM allows systems support for vaccine delivery. Meanwhile, Gavi has approved US\$ 150 million for technical assistance and cold chain, US\$ 775 million for COVID-19 delivery support and US\$ 8.9 million in bridge financing. Gavi and Global Fund initiatives have excellent potential for synergies if recognized by high-level decision-makers in the Region.

Expected outcomes

- Stronger commitment by national authorities to implement HIV, TB and malaria strategies, as well as the Immunization Agenda 2030, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Opportunities identified to align the cross-cutting functions supported by Gavi and the Global Fund for the development of health systems.