

Vaccinations for migrants during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic

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Issue:

Migrants have suboptimal vaccination coverage compared to the general population in destination countries due to several factors

- administrative barriers or lack of legal entitlements to health
- health system barriers (language, lack of cultural sensitivity and community engagement capacity, vaccination costs)
- lack of trust in the health system and misconceptions about vaccines due to misinformation or beliefs

Problem:

Countries should develop national policies and ensure an inclusive, free of charge and proactive vaccination offer to migrants, irrespective of their legal status; and to extend this approach beyond the current pandemic and the sole COVID-19 vaccine

Results:

To achieve COVID-19 global herd immunity all population groups, including migrants, needs to access vaccination. Tailored vaccination strategies, once devised, shall be applied to routine national vaccination plan to tackle health inequalities

Lessons:

The following actions shall be implemented at national level
Action 1. Develop tailored and equitable approaches for PH vaccination services targeting migrants through:

- free of charge access
- decentralization and outreach capacity of the health system
- innovative service delivery models (mobile clinics, combined health services, mass vaccination)
- health personnel and migrants participatory approach and engagement strategies

Action 2. Increase staff engagement through:

- increasing health personnel's difference sensitivity
- strengthening health personnel's communication capacities

Action 3. Increase migrants' health and vaccine literacy through:

- establishing vaccine literacy education programmes and strategies
- offering health promotion educational interventions

Action 4. Monitor progress of inclusive vaccination offer by:

- setting strategic goals, targets and indicators for national vaccination plans
- expanding immunization information systems to monitor vaccination coverage, with appropriate disaggregation by migration status core variables

Key messages:

- Explicitly and proactively include migrants and displaced communities in vaccination plans and set up, test and implement new approaches in primary prevention and vaccination services.

- Extend this approach beyond the current pandemic and the sole COVID-19 vaccine in order to enhance preparedness to present and future health threats.