



Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab Region: Vaccine rollout programs and the inclusion of migrants and refugees

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Key messages and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic created a health, social and economic crisis that affected various aspects of life, especially among vulnerable populations including migrants and refugees. The pandemic highlighted the vital role of migrants and refugees in their countries of origin and destination, but it also demonstrated existing vulnerabilities and structural challenges that limit migrants and refugees' ability to contribute to the cycle of development and increase their resilience to disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also clarified the interdependence of the world in which we live in today, emphasizing that no one is safe until everyone is.

As a reflection of this reality, the dialogue held during the webinar between State representatives and representatives of the League of Arab States, United Nations agencies and international, regional and national organizations has shown many promising practices in the Arab countries. The dialogue also resulted in the following key messages and recommendations that could guide the efforts of States in the next phase, which will also be submitted to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) scheduled for May 2022.

Below are the key recommendations presented throughout the Webinar:

- 1- Include migrants and refugees in the national response plans and provide them with socioeconomic and health care support.
- 2- Achieve balance in access to vaccines within and between countries to avert the catastrophic effects of the fourth wave of the pandemic.
- 3- Expedite the process of vaccination especially to the most vulnerable groups as there is a discrepancy in the vaccination rates in the Arab states from 1% to 80%.
- 4- Ensure that the access to healthcare is inclusive to all migrants and refugees regardless of their legal status with safeguarding mechanism in place so migrants in irregular legal status can safely come forward to get vaccinated.
- 5- Ensure decent living conditions for migrants and refugees including housing and access to food, water, and other services as a means of combating the spread of the pandemic.
- 6- Address key problems that limit access to vaccines for migrants and refugees, including but not limited to: Limited availability of vaccines in countries, logistical difficulty in providing vaccines, documentation, legal status, the need to access electronic platforms that can be difficult for migrants and refugees due to language barriers, and lack of



awareness which must be addressed, taking into account the psychological dimension of the pandemic on migrants and refugees.

- 7- Ensure that the response plans for the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccination plans, take into account the needs of different groups of migrants and refugees, including women, children and persons with disabilities, regardless of their legal status.
- 8- Ensure that migrants and refugees have access to necessary health care and vaccination programmes.
- 9- Raise awareness and outreach through communication campaigns targeting migrants and refugees to address vaccine misinformation, limit myths about the potential side effects of the vaccine and enhance trust building and two-way communication as part of an effective behavioral change strategy.
- 10- Find innovative solutions for migrants and refugees that are in hard-to-reach areas such as domestic workers, residents of remote camps, undocumented migrants and refugees, through mobile screening clinics, vaccination teams in camps, and assistance to migrants and refugees to register on electronic platforms.
- 11- Ensure that accurate and updated data is available on migrants and refugees regardless of their legal status including their health situation and their vaccination status.
- 12- Support Arab countries' efforts to produce and distribute vaccines fairly among the countries of the region, especially for low-income countries.
- 13- Encourage peer-to-peer learning among countries and share promising practices from the region, particularly in the provision of vaccines to migrants and refugees.
- 14- Strengthen cooperation globally, regionally and nationally and adopt a whole of government and a whole of society approach to ensure the health of migrants and refugees and their access to the vaccine.
- 15- Encourage States to use the Arab Strategy on Access to Public Health Services in Asylum and Displacement Contexts in the Arab Region adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of Health in the League of Arab States.