2021 Economic and Social Committee
Humanitarian Affairs Segment

Fully Protecting All: Advancing access to COVID-19 vaccines for people on the move

Organised by Permanent Mission of Ecuador¹ to the UN in Geneva, Permanent Mission of Portugal¹ to the UN in Geneva, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Sponsored by the United Nations Migration Network

22 June 2021, 11:30 am - 13:00 pm (Geneva time)

This is one of the virtual side events to be convened on the margins of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS), which builds on this year's HAS theme: “Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”.

Background and objectives of event

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on people’s lives, livelihoods and well-being, exacerbating existing social and economic vulnerabilities. The ones in the most vulnerable situations have been hit the hardest, especially people on the move, including migrants, and those displaced by conflict or disaster, internally or across borders². Disparities among populations are also evident in access to COVID-19 vaccines where in many cases it remains unclear if migrants, especially those in irregular situations, have been included in national vaccination campaigns.

¹ Champion Countries of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)
² UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on COVID-19 and people on the move
The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement report, “Locked down and left out?” highlights the existing obstacles to basic services and the evolution of new challenges faced by people on the move during the pandemic. These populations are often excluded based on their legal status or unreachable due to language, structural and financial barriers. The report further found that policy and public health measures, including lockdowns and movement restrictions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, had unintended consequences for migrants. This includes increased economic hardship, worse physical health, increased protection risks, heightened barriers to health services and other social protection floors, and can result in insufficient access to shelter and poor nutrition, and compound mental health needs.

Consequently, the pandemic made clear that access to health coverage for people on the move is a human right and a humanitarian imperative, and reinforced the notion that if access to vaccination is limited, then we are all at risk of negative health outcomes. In addition, these populations play a crucial role on the frontlines in response and recovery to COVID-19 as health workers, as well as in other sectors deemed as essential, and we recognize the fundamental necessity of protecting them. Public health considerations need to be the first criteria when allocating vaccines, not migration status or nationality. The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) ‘Values Framework’ and ‘Roadmap For Prioritizing Uses Of COVID-19 Vaccines in The Context Of Limited Supply’ clearly recommend the prioritization of high risk populations, including elderly, frontline workers, those with co-morbidities, irrespective of legal status.

Recognizing immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good and considering universal access to safe, timely, effective, and affordable vaccines is, thus, the only way to end this pandemic. An inclusive approach to immunization will contribute to achieving universal health coverage and global health security. Such an approach will support sustainable and resilient economic and social recovery from the pandemic, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. “No one is safe until everyone is safe”. Therefore, we seek to catalyze this political momentum to encourage national immunization plans to include people on the move, reducing the future humanitarian caseload, delivering a people-centered sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The international community must consider synergies between implementing shared global commitments and operationalizing an inclusive, equitable vaccine rollout, which can be achieved through multi-level partnerships, including at the local and community levels, and coordinated international cooperation. Member States, UN partners, humanitarian actors and other stakeholders, including affected persons,
should work collaboratively in the spirit of shared responsibility and global solidarity to progressively include people on the move, especially those marginalized or in situations of vulnerability, in health services coverage and financial protection measures.

The objectives of the event are to

- Discuss how to effectively ensure the inclusion of people on the move, without discrimination, in national deployment and vaccination plans (NDVP), as well as highlight some operational challenges and opportunities to immunizing people on the move.
- Explore ways to ensure equitable access and “vaccine for all”, as well as the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, by facilitating an open dialogue among relevant stakeholders.
- Highlight the important role of migrants, refugees and IDPs in the COVID-19 immunization rollout, and that they are part of the solution to help end the pandemic, as co-developers and providers of people-centred health services in countries of origin and destination.
- Share good practices and challenges regarding advocacy towards, and in the design, implementation and scale-up of COVID-19 NDVPs with a migrant’s centred-approach.
- Propose recommendations to inform the work of policymakers and practitioners, influencing policies and contributing for future thematic reports.

**Discussion points or guiding questions**

The Panel discussion (fireside chats model) will be centred around three main themes:

A) Challenges to “fully protecting all”

What are the main challenges in the inclusion of people on the move in NDVPs – in the planning and in the implementation aspect? (How) do these challenges vary between migrants, refugees and IDPs?

What are the operational challenges for the identification of people on the move, especially those in irregular situation?

How can we advance vaccination plans and their implementation in humanitarian settings, especially in conflict areas or areas controlled by non-State armed groups?
B) Enablers to “fully protecting all”

What are the main enablers to ensure "vaccines for all" during this pandemic, despite the slow pace of vaccines' distribution?

What opportunities were created during the pandemic for enabling cooperation, peer learning and partnerships for vaccine equity?

How can we ensure that monitoring mechanisms in place, within and beyond COVAX facility, incorporate monitoring of vaccination of refugee, migrant and displaced population and identify and address barriers timely for action?

C) Looking ahead

What lessons do we take from the pandemic that should be applied worldwide for people on the move in the context of the control of preventable diseases?

How can we best use this momentum and renewed experience in resource mobilization to strengthen routine vaccination plans for preventable diseases, as well as health systems, making equitable access mainstream in the future of all countries?

Key concrete action points and recommendations/take away messages

A summary of the discussion and recommendations will be shared with all participants following the event, as well as with policymakers and key practitioners.

In addition, outlines from the discussion and key recommendations might contribute to:

- The first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), planned for May 2022.
- The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on equitable and universal access and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and the deepening inequalities between States (following resolution A/HRC/46/14).
- Ensuring that people in the move are considered in the next resolutions or treaties aiming to protect the world from future health crises, eventually including a convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response.
Agenda

11.30 Welcome Remarks

Chair, Jonathan Prentice, Head of Secretariat, UN Migration Network

11.35 Opening Remarks by GCM Champion Countries Co-conveners

- Ambassador Rui Macieira, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN in Geneva
- Minister Alejandro Dávalos, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the UN in Geneva

11.45 Panel discussion (fireside chats model)

Panel discussion will be moderated by Eric Reidy, migration editor-at-large of The New Humanitarian

- Mr. Lucas Gomez, Presidential Advisor for the Borders, Colombia
- Dr. Joel H. Buenaventura, Medical Officer, Division Chief of the International Relations Division, Bureau of International Health Cooperation, Department of Health, Philippines
- Mr. Abdellah Boutadghart, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Morocco in Geneva
- Ms. Sanne Wendes, Office of the COVAX Facility at GAVI
- Ms. Tiziana Bonzon, Manager, Climate, Migration and Resilience, IFRC
- Ms. Verena Knaus, Global Lead, Migration and Displacement, UNICEF
- Ms. Tristan Burnett, Deputy Director, Department of Operations and Emergency, IOM
- Dr. Santino Severoni, Director Health and Migration Program, WHO

12.30 Questions and Answers

12:50 Closing of the session by Moderator and Chair

Background Material

- Human Rights Council resolution on Ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic A/HRC/RES/46/14
- United Nations Security Council resolution 2565 (S/2021/195)
- United Nations Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on COVID-19 and People on the Move
- United Nations Network on Migration Statement “Striving for Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines to Leave No Migrant”
- ECOSOC Presidential Statement High-level Meeting on “A Vaccine for All”
- COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #67: Migrants’ access to vaccines
- Joint Guidance Note on Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for All Migrants
- The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement report “Locked down and left out? – Why access to basic services for migrants is critical to our COVID-19 response and recovery
- IFRC Report “Least Protected, Most Affected: Migrants and refugees facing extraordinary risks during the COVID-19 pandemic”
- IOM report: Migrant inclusion in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns
- IOM resource: Ensuring Migrants’ Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines
- UNICEF Advocacy Brief: Towards a migrant and refugee inclusive COVID-19 vaccine roll-out

**Connection details to join the event**

Please RSVP for the meeting using the following link:

https://unicef.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_01BjGE02RhSboAE_YY170Q

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