



Vaccination given by a nurse in Bangkok, Thailand. © IOM 2017/Benjamin SUOMELA

Pre-migration health activities (PMHAs) have been provided by IOM through its Migration Health Assessment Programme (HAP) at the request of receiving country governments since 1951. Vaccination within PMHAs is provided for refugees and migrants both routinely and in response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs).

Vaccination programmes prior to departure help ensure smooth settlement and integration, especially for children who need a smaller number of vaccines before they can enrol in school and offer better cost-efficiency and vaccination coverage than post-arrival vaccination. They also aid in the prevention of outbreaks and cancellation of movements for refugees in the resettlement pipeline and heighten individual protection – especially important in the context of recent outbreaks of VPDs worldwide.

IOM has worked with receiving country partners, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, to build a comprehensive vaccination programme, introducing vaccines against many VPDs early in the migration process.

This activity is expanding, with more vaccines being introduced into vaccination schedules and more receiving country governments recognizing the benefits of pre-migration vaccination each year.

With the increased global need to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines, IOM recorded and transmitted information to destination countries about COVID-19 vaccination availability for refugees. Where the national context allowed, IOM also explored opportunities to support COVID-19 vaccine administration for refugees and migrants as part of the pre-migration process. This service was successfully established in the IOM Migration Health Assessment Centre (MHAC) in Nairobi, Kenya.

From July 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM became a key contributor to the United Nations (UN) mechanism to provide essential health services to UN staff and their families, named the “First Line of Defence” (FLoD). As part of this initiative, drawing on its extensive experience delivering immunization programmes, IOM supported the UN System-wide COVID-19 vaccination effort and also provided vaccination to other beneficiaries, such as non-governmental organizations and members of the diplomatic community. In addition to direct vaccine administration, IOM also assisted with the coordination of country vaccine deployment teams, logistics, and provided staff and clinical premises for vaccination campaigns.

2021 KEY FIGURES



more than **200,000** doses of vaccine



against **22** vaccine-preventable diseases*



to over **75,000** individuals prior to departure



in **75** countries, including where services were provided by mobile teams



over **27,000** COVID-19 vaccine doses administered to UN staff and dependents across 8 countries

*COVID-19, diphtheria, haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, human papillomavirus, influenza, Japanese encephalitis, measles, meningitis, mumps, pertussis, pneumococcal infection, polio, rotavirus, rubella, tetanus, tuberculosis, typhoid, varicella, yellow fever, zoster.

In 2021, IOM vaccinated migrants travelling to Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

ELEMENTS OF IOM PRE-MIGRATION VACCINATION ACTIVITIES



1. Schedule appointments



2. Review medical records, including verified vaccination records



3. Provide counselling and health education, including information about VPDs and vaccines



4. Obtain informed consent



5. Conduct physical examination, including review of contraindications for vaccines



6. Conduct immunity testing for certain diseases



7. Administer vaccines and provide observation for adverse effects



8. Record doses provided for migrants and receiving countries



9. Additional doses for refugees may be provided after initial health assessment according to recommended vaccine intervals

OTHER ACTIVITIES



Vaccine stock management



Pre-departure surveillance and disease outbreak response

IOM's pre-migration vaccination activities aim to improve the health of migrants by increasing coverage rates of key vaccines. Refugees and migrants are counselled on the benefits and risks of vaccines, as well as risks of the relevant VPDs, and are provided with health education materials, in addition to records of vaccines received. The provision of immunization education improves the uptake of vaccines pre-migration, as well as post-arrival by encouraging refugees to complete catch-up schedules recommended in receiving countries.

Vaccination reduces the risk that refugees and migrants arrive in their destination countries with VPDs, which may cause outbreaks. By sharing vaccination records with receiving country partners, the potential for over-vaccinating or unnecessary immunity testing following arrival is reduced, and the confidence of receiving communities and health providers in the pre-migration health interventions is increased.

QUALITY AND SAFETY OF IOM'S PRE-MIGRATION VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Delivering vaccination services in many settings where IOM works – particularly in remote locations or in countries with weak infrastructure – requires a robust vaccine procurement and distribution framework to ensure that IOM can reliably source appropriate vaccines and make them available, while maintaining proper cold chain throughout procurement, transportation and storage.

In coordination with partners, IOM established such a framework supplying field operations with cold chain equipment, such as cold boxes, ice-lined refrigerators, digital thermometers, temperature data loggers and generators. Temperature monitoring and alert systems are in place in case of power outages, including standard operating procedures (SOPs) for emergency retrieval.

IOM procures vaccines for its PMHAs from reputable manufacturers and distributors, following local and international guidelines for vaccine procurement. The availability of vaccines for the programmes are determined by which vaccines are registered in each country by the national drug and pharmacy boards. IOM prioritizes the procurement of WHO pre-qualified vaccines for the programmes, as well.



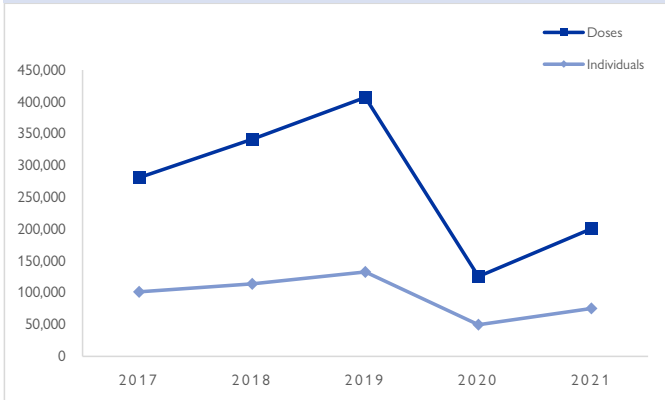
IOM staff in Bangkok, Thailand, stocks a cold box with vaccines. © IOM 2018

IOM has established a global inventory management system, MedStock, which monitors the procurement, consumption or wastage of every vaccine dose in each implementing mission. The ability to track the consumption of the vaccines allows IOM to monitor and ensure the quality of the vaccines that it administers. In addition to MedStock, IOM has developed quality control tools that monitor the doses provided to each migrant and assist in determining if recommended doses, time intervals and vaccine schedules are followed correctly. A global IOM immunization programme manual is also available for each country to use for developing SOPs adapted to their context.

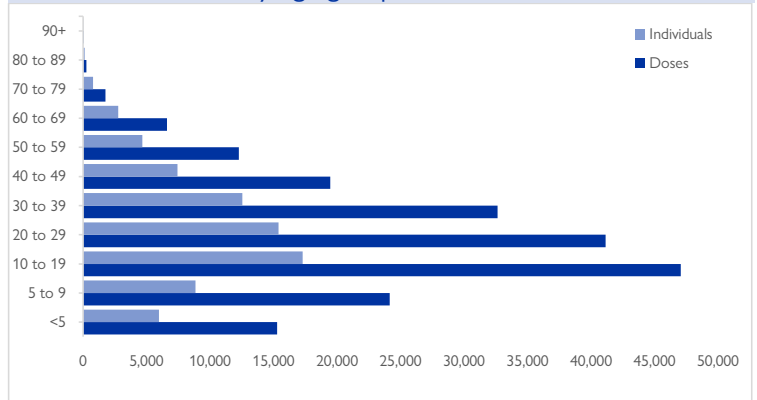
IOM staff are provided with ongoing training to deliver vaccination services in line with international standards. Training is an integral part of maintaining an international quality immunization programme. Staff are trained on vaccine handling, administration, management of adverse effects, maintenance of cold chain, vaccination-related health education and other topics. Trainings are provided by a network of international specialists, as well as global and regional coordinators.

KEY DATA TRENDS*

Vaccination services in IOM PMHAs, 2017–2021



Vaccination by age group in IOM PMHAs, 2021



*As of 31 May 2022

KEY FRAMEWORKS FOR ASSISTANCE

Vaccination services within IOM's HAP form part of the Organization's work to facilitate migration and promote the health of migrants and refugees by improving immunization coverage. In line with the Global Compact on Migration, the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant World Health Assembly resolutions, IOM works with governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and beneficiaries to ensure that migrants, including refugees, have proper access to vaccines. IOM's vaccination services within HAP support the realization of the call of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'leave no one behind' and contribute to achieving Targets 3.2, 3.3, 3.8 and 3.B which are related to good health and well-being, as well as Target 10.7 which aims to reduce inequalities through safe, orderly and regular migration.



IOM medical staff providing vaccination in Jijiga, Ethiopia. © IOM 2018



Vaccine being administered in February 2020, at the IOM Migration Health Assessment Centre in Istanbul, Turkey. © IOM 2020

For more information on the above activities please contact the Migration Health Division (MHD) at mhddpt@iom.int

