



Implementing a Life-Course Approach to Immunization

Lessons learned from international best practice in policy and programming

Taking a life-course approach to immunization offers a valuable opportunity to improve health, support health system sustainability and promote economic prosperity

What do we mean by a life-course approach to immunization?

A life-course approach requires that immunization schedules and access to vaccination respond to an individual's stage in life, their lifestyle and specific vulnerabilities/risks to infectious disease that they may face.

Despite benefits and support at the global level, most countries have not yet implemented a life-course approach to immunization as per the recommendations in the Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011–2020 to maximize its benefits. While some progress has been made, many of the goals will not be achieved by 2020. There is an urgent need to redress this situation in the next decade.

The report **"Implementing a Life-Course Approach to Immunization"** aims to guide policymakers and other stakeholders to implement sustainable life-course immunization policies and programs. It provides valuable insights from six countries and their experience in implementing a life-course approach to immunization.



The
**Health Policy
Partnership**

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Pregnant women



Newborns



Infants



Second year of life



Older children



Adolescents



Adults



Older people



Above:

Examples of life-stages to be considered when taking a life-course approach to immunization

Benefits of a life-course approach to immunization

Immunization offers people a range of benefits depending on their stage in life and the risks they face;

- **Immunization during pregnancy** can benefit a woman and her baby including preventing complications from influenza, premature birth.
- **Adolescence** is the best time to immunize people against some diseases including human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine and meningococcal bacteria.
- Immunizing **older people** can prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- **People with some chronic conditions** (for example; diabetes, lung disease or cardiovascular diseases) are more likely to develop serious complications from vaccine-preventable illnesses such as influenza or pneumococcal disease.
- Immunizing **caregivers and healthcare professionals** prevents from spreading of diseases to more vulnerable people, thereby reducing pressure on health systems.
- **Migrant communities** may be particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, for which they have not been immunized in their home countries.

Population-wide health and economic benefits of Life-Course Immunization:

- **High vaccine coverage has the potential to protect whole communities through herd immunity** – including those who are unvaccinated or whose immune systems are compromised.
- **Comprehensive immunization across the life course may also offer sustainable protection against AMR.** Studies have found that increasing vaccine coverage in the population can limit the spread of infections, including those which are drug resistant, and reduce the demand for antibiotics.
- **At a health-system level, a life-course approach to immunization offers a platform to achieve global targets for universal health coverage.** It has been widely recognized that investing in immunization for all can support UHC by providing the infrastructure around which other primary healthcare services can be delivered.

Source: Working together: an integration resource guide for immunization services throughout the life course. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

- **Immunization beyond childhood is recognized as a cost-effective intervention** and has shown to be an effective use of resources and cost savings. In addition, wider benefits of vaccination to **people aged 50 years and older**, such as reduced mortality, work days gained and healthcare costs saved.

Policy framework for implementing a life-course approach to immunization



Key messages:

- 1 A life-course approach to immunization can improve health, support health system sustainability and promote economic prosperity
- 2 There is global recognition of the importance of a life-course approach to health in general and immunization specifically
- 3 Countries are at different stages of implementing a life-course approach to immunization with few doing so comprehensively
- 4 Successful and innovative approaches are being implemented with lessons that may inform immunization policies and programs in other contexts

About the report

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The views expressed by the experts in the report do not necessarily represent those of their organizations.

IFPMA represents research-based pharmaceutical companies and associations across the globe. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community find solutions that improve global health.

HPP is an independent research consultancy, working with partners across the health spectrum to drive the policy and system changes that will improve people's health.

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