The NITAG Resource Centre (NRC): One-stop shop towards a collaborative platform

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A B S T R A C T
It has long been acknowledged that there is little interaction between National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) in the North and even less between those in the North and those in the South. Three international meetings of NITAGs recommended establishing an international network of NITAGs centred on a core functional structure and platform to facilitate future exchanges.

The SIVAC Initiative (as part of a WHO Collaborating Center) followed-up with this recommendation, and launched an interactive platform involving all NITAGs worldwide in an active network and open collaboration: the NITAG Resource Center (NRC), accessible at http://www.nitag-resource.org

The NRC offers NITAG members and secretariats a centralized access to NITAG recommendations from around the world, systematic reviews, scientific publications, technical reports, updates from partners, and upcoming immunization events. A dedicated network manager will proactively update all contents through a strong network of regional and national focal points.

The NRC is a first step towards a more fruitful and global collaboration between NITAGs.

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1. Why was the platform needed?

It has long been acknowledged that there is little interaction between National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) in the North and even less between those in the North and those in the South. The idea for a network to facilitate NITAG exchange was first discussed during international NITAG meetings from 2010 to 2012. Participants included many technical partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Supporting Independent Immunization and Vaccine Advisory Committees (SIVAC) Initiative, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and NITAGs of varying maturity. The meeting outcomes included a list of collaboration topics, the recommendation to establish an international network of NITAGs centred on a core functional structure and platform to facilitate future exchange and an agreement on the platform's operational terms.

Away with the passive database, here is an interactive platform

As recommended by participants, The SIVAC Initiative collaborated with partners to develop and launch an interactive and global platform involving all NITAGs worldwide in an active network and open collaboration: the NITAG Resource Center (NRC), accessible at http://www.nitag-resource.org

The innovative NRC interface is accessible by computer, tablet and smartphone, allowing it to reach the widest audience in the most convenient manner (Fig. 1).

2. What added value does the NRC provide NITAGs?

The NRC offers NITAG members and secretariats a centralized access to NITAG recommendations from around the world and the background documents used to issue them, systematic reviews,
Fig. 1. Access to all NITAG information and related documents.

Fig. 2. The search bar to access the media centre.
scientific publications, technical reports, updates from partners, and upcoming immunization events. A dedicated network manager, through a strong network of regional and national focal points, will proactively update all content. Information is shared through services such as technical newsletters and emails highlighting relevant new recommendations. In addition, the growing need for collaboration has raised the necessity to develop a network of NITAG members and a sustainable tool to facilitate their interaction. The NRC is the first step towards a more fruitful and global collaboration between NITAG members (Fig. 2).

3. What are the key features?

The interactive map displays NITAGs’ status according to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form indicators, and technical datasheets display additional information on each country. The NRC also provides a means by which NITAGs with little resources can disseminate their information online (Fig. 3).

Other important features include a dedicated series of services to keep the community informed, including lists of: upcoming events organized by all global partners/news about meetings and trainings devoted to NITAGs and vaccine stakeholders/“topics under review” that includes all topics being considered by various NITAGs and technical partners.

4. About the SIVAC Initiative

The host of the NRC is the SIVAC Initiative*, which is part of a WHO Collaborating Center* (WHO CC) on evidence-informed decision-making on immunization since 2012. It is the first WHO CC focused on strengthening immunization-related evidence-based decision-making at country-level, on a global scale, with specific terms of reference promoting south–south, south–north and north–north collaboration. This placed the SIVAC Initiative in a critical position to support the burgeoning network of NITAGs. Other partners involved include Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the ECDC, the US-CDC and ministries of health around the world. This supportive group of partners will work to make the NRC the central tool for all NITAGs and the main communication platform for the global network of NITAGs.

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