

15 December 2020

Organizations in attendance

Care, DRC, FAO, ICAO, IMC, IOM, UN Secretariat, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO

Opening

- The co-chairs opened the meeting by providing updates on the current epidemiology status and development of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.
- WHO co-chair noted that although vaccination trials and prospective rollouts are foreseen in the first quarter of 2021, it would be far from offering widespread protection. It was stressed that countries would need to continue parallel use of preventive measures alongside vaccination for the short-term.
- Additionally, WHO co-chair indicated new and emerging issues to be discussed in the UNMCT. Particularly:
 - How the maritime industry personnel, a crucial in the transportation of critical items and for the economy, can be considered as front-line responders and receive vaccination with the first group, and
 - How a widespread and inclusive strategy will look like as the vaccine rollout begins.

Epidemiology update

- As of 14 December, the US, Canada, UK and some EU countries have cleared emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines.
- As the vaccines will target a small group of the population, however, it was reiterated that there may not be a significant decrease in infection cases in the short-term. A more comprehensive approach is needed to see a concrete shift.
- WHO indicated that the first week of December, witnessed a major increase of 40 million new cases and mortality of 75,000 since the outbreak of the pandemic. The Americas being the most affected.
- Additionally, an increasing trend of infection and death rates of up to 40% were registered in the African continent which was noted to be likely facing a second wave.
- Furthermore, a likely increase in Europe is expected post-Christmas holidays unless preventive methods are still adhered to.

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Updates (WHO, UNICEF, WFP, Consortia Leads)

Consortia

PPE

- To date, six organizations (IOM, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, PAHO and UNOPS) have been able to use the newly set-up LTAs under the PPE consortia serving 37 countries.
- The consortium is currently working on negotiating better prices under the LTAs with the intention of a contract extension until the end of 2021.

Clinical Care

- For the Biomed consortia, 60 million items have been requested thus far and 40 million of these delivered. A significant portion of these requests was allocated and delivered to the AFRO region.
- It was noted that there has been a steady increase in the demand of consumables, as the earlier batches are used up by countries.

WFP Common services

Passenger Service update

- Current passenger service operations stand at serving 10 different locations; where there still are in-consistent and intermittent flights. These include key destinations in the EMRO, AFRO and America's
- WFP noted that it has been seeing an increased demand in the frequency of passenger service from Eritrea by humanitarian workers due to the current civil unrest in the countries bordering southern Ethiopia.

Cargo services update

- The two set deadlines for the Emergency Service Market (ESM) place have now officially passed.
- Going into 2021, WFP mentioned that it will be focusing on moving and cleaning up the remaining cargo at hubs and conducting inventory count.
- Additionally, a cost analysis is underway to draw lessons from the operational model.

Update on the independent review of the CSCS

- The chair of the JSC outlined the progress of five key elements within the timeline of the CSC assessment:
 1. The desk review is almost completed,

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2. The collection and analysis of the survey (sent to 397 invitees with a response of 113) are underway.
 3. Interviews started mid-November: 47 were invited to obtain 30 plus response. Thus far, 28 have been interviewed including the Ministry of Health of several countries.
 4. The quantitative review, focusing on the supply portal, control tower, delivery by WFP (ESM portal), buyers' feedback is also underway,
 5. Analysis and assimilation of the data and the second draft of the report is expected for the first week of January 2021.
- Providing a snapshot of the analysis the chair indicated that an overall throughput of just over 1 billion dollars of goods through the various systems; the WHO Dashboard, the Supply Portal, buyers' information and data from WFP ESM portal. However, there was mention of some minor discrepancies in the reporting of the number of goods deliveries from the Supply Portal.
 - The analysis of the above systems further indicated that approximately 63% of partners used the supply channels more than half of the time to request COVID-19 critical items. This amounted to just a little over 50% of the volumes going through the system.
 - The review additionally revealed that 31% for PPE, 29% for Biomed, and 22% of Diagnostic items were sourced through other market mechanisms.
 - With the end of the assessment drawing close, the chair indicated that finalized recommendations from the analysis are still being consolidated from interviews and survey responses and the final draft report will be ready by the first week of January.
 - In response to participants questions of capturing lessons learned, the chair informed participants that the assessment is gathering recommendations and lessons learned from the entire exercise. Moreover, these details will be presented in the discussions and recommendation chapter of the final draft.
 - To respond to the question of capturing actual demand by countries, it was also indicated that identifying real demand from member countries was not straight forward. The chair and WHO noted that demand through the portal was the only source of data available to capture demand. However, as countries were also requesting items through their humanitarian partners capturing the entirety of the demand would not be an easy exercise.
 - Finally, the analysis of 'lead-time' from request-to-delivery is also underway. Data is being gathered from interview questions and triangulated with various system outputs and reports.

Update on the vaccines

- UNICEF gave an update on the vaccine rollout under the COVAX facility and its role in the procurement and equitable delivery to the 92 AMC countries.

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- Five organizations currently collaborate with the COVAX facility; CEPI on R&D and manufacturing, GAVI on advance purchase agreements, WHO on allocation and regularity approval, and UNICEF and PAHO on procurement coordination and delivery.
- UNICEF anticipates the delivery of the vaccine to commence by the first quarter of 2021. As such, alongside PAHO it has launched a rolling tender for COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers in clinical trial phases. A group of procurement reference experts are also supporting this process.
- Funds for the 92 AMC countries is to be sourced from COVAX with member countries anticipated to procure directly from the facility and not bilaterally from manufacturers.
- The vaccine will mainly be delivered by air to most of the 92 AMC countries. Accordingly, a partnership with IATA, global airlines and major freight forwarders are underway. Furthermore, UNICEF mentioned it is closely working with Pfizer to provide infrastructure for Ultra Cold Chain (UCC) vaccines.
- In response to questions raised on the preparatory work for the rollout, UNICEF indicated that it has prepositioned syringes, PPEs and other supplies needed for the vaccination campaigns in strategic locations. In addition, LTAs for UCC vaccines are being negotiated and industry-wide consultations being held, logistics. UNICEF is also working to also establish a charter and a Memorandum of Understanding with global carriers.
- UNICEF noted that it has been and continues to engage in supporting countries in receiving the vaccines and rolling-out the vaccination campaigns. Funding is being allocated by GAVI for this activity and humanitarian partners (WHO and UNICEF) are working with governments to ensure countries are ready to receive the vaccines.
- Country readiness assessment will be conducted and approved before the dispatch of vaccine to the country.
- As for countries in crises, a humanitarian buffer, currently with the GAVI board, has also been allocated and arrangements underway.
- Participants stressed that effort for the best use of assets already in place from various organizations such as WFP and UNDOCS should be considered for better coordination.
- It was suggested that, as vaccine discussions are important and being held in different fora, it would be appropriate to include vaccine rollout as a standing agenda item for the Task Force going forward .

AOB

- The next Task Force meeting will be held on 12 January 2021.