SAGE Assessment Report 2016

Key messages

Closing the immunization gap
• As highlighted in the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization (SAGE) Assessment Report 2016, we must act now to ensure that all children, in all communities have access to immunisation and other essential health services.

• In 2012, the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) was endorsed by Ministers of Health from all 194 Member States at the World Health Assembly, committing to more equitable access to immunization for all people in all communities.

Major concerns
• At the midpoint of the Action Plan, SAGE and WHO are gravely concerned that progress toward the GVAP goals and to increase equitable access to lifesaving vaccines is too slow.

• Progress toward the GVAP goals to eradicate polio, eliminate measles and rubella, eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus, and increase equitable access to lifesaving vaccines is too slow.

• Despite improvements in individual countries and a strong global rate of new vaccine introduction, there has been only a marginal overall improvement in vaccination coverage and equity.

1. Global average immunization coverage has increased by only 1% since 2010.

2. In 2015, 68 countries fell short of the target to achieve at least 90% national coverage with the 3rd dose of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine.

3. Not only that, 26 countries reported no change in coverage levels.

4. And 25 countries reported a net decrease in coverage since 2010.

• These countries are being left behind which means that children, particularly from poor households, certain ethnic groups, those living in neglected areas and affected by conflict and emergencies continue to be missed and are not being immunized.

There is cause for hope
• 111 countries entered the decade with high immunization coverage and sustained it through 2015 are already setting their sights on more aggressive goals, additional vaccines and more equitable coverage.

• The increasing rate of pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines introduction in low and middle income countries has an impact in reducing under-five morbidity and mortality due to pneumonia and diarrhoea.
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• Substantial progress was made in vaccine research & development particularly toward HIV, malaria, dengue and tuberculosis vaccines. The expanding pipeline of new vaccines underscores the need to build health systems that can reliably reach new target age groups.

Immunization matters now more than ever

• Immunization plays a key role in global health and development. Some countries are taking the power of immunization to heart and are reaping the benefits. They show us that achieving the GVAP is possible and that the impact is worth the investment and commitment, especially as the world now moves towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Immunization is of paramount importance in ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all ages.

• Immunization is an underused platform that can be leveraged to deliver other critical health services along the life course — from controlling viral hepatitis to curbing antimicrobial resistance — to providing a platform for adolescent health and improving antenatal and newborn care.

• Health systems need to be resilient and able to withstand — and even facilitate the control of — emerging diseases, outbreaks and other threats to health security. Also, strong and resilient immunization systems can more easily recover from health security threats.

Key SAGE recommendations

For countries to:

1. Demonstrate stronger leadership and governance of national immunization systems
2. Prioritize immunization system strengthening
3. Secure necessary investments to sustain immunization during polio and Gavi transitions
4. Improve disease surveillance capacity and data quality and use

For immunization partners to:

1. Enhance accountability mechanisms to monitor implementation of global and regional vaccine action plans
2. Achieve elimination targets for maternal and neonatal tetanus, measles and congenital rubella syndrome
3. Resolve barriers to timely supply of affordable vaccines in humanitarian crisis situations

For vaccine research and development partners to:

1. Support vaccine R&D capacity in low- and middle-income countries
2. Accelerate the development and introduction of new vaccines and technologies

Related links
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