

Key Messages

UNDP support to COVID-19 vaccine equity

16 June 2021

COVID-19 vaccine inequity will prolong the pandemic, costs lives, and deepen the negative development consequences of the pandemic.

- The pandemic has disproportionately impacted women and girls, setting back important gains in gender equality.¹
- Vaccine inequity is undermining recovery. It could cost an already damaged world economy up to US\$1.2 trillion per year. This amount is enough to provide basic social protection, including health care, to all (estimated in 2020 at US\$ 1,12 billion).²
- UN Secretary General has noted that the richest countries and regions are getting vaccinated more than 30 times faster than those with the lowest incomes. The vaccination gap is not just unfair; it is deadly and it is a threat to everyone.
- At the current pace, many low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) would only achieve widespread vaccination coverage by 2024-2025, prolonging the pandemic and potentially causing as much as US\$9.2 trillion in global economic damages.³
- All countries would benefit economically from more equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Developed countries would get back US\$4.8 for every US\$1 spent on supplying vaccines.⁴

The world can only recover from the COVID-19 crisis if there is fairer and faster access to vaccines for everyone, both between and within countries.

- The current inequity of COVID-19 vaccination is impeding a just and sustainable recovery, exacerbating inequalities, and further delaying progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in high income countries one in four adults is vaccinated as compared to less than one in 500 adults in LMICs (as of April 2021).
- Over 80% of vaccines have been administered in high-income countries as compared to less than 2 per cent in LMICs (as of April 2021).
- Urgent efforts are needed to step up the pace of vaccination. Variants of concern are emerging and causing new COVID-19 surges. Such variants could potentially render first-generation vaccines [ineffective in less than a year](#).
- Vaccine inequity could leave marginalised populations even further behind. Marginalised populations are often hard to reach and vulnerable and frequently encounter supply-related barriers to vaccination.

¹ [Studies show](#) that the pandemic will push 47 million more women and girls below the poverty line, reversing decades of progress to eradicate extreme poverty (www.unwomen.org). In addition, a [surge of domestic violence](#) against women have been reported globally (www.sixthtone.com/news).

² ILO (2020). Financing gaps in social protection. Global estimates and strategies for developing countries in light of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_758705.pdf

³ <https://iccwbo.org/publication/the-economic-case-for-global-vaccinations/>

⁴ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA769-1.html

As the UN's lead development agency, UNDP is working with government, UN, civil society and private sector partners to support national deployment and vaccination plans under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

- UNDP's support to vaccine equity is part of its COVID-19 response, our role as technical lead of the UN's socio-economic response framework and the overall UN response on COVID-19.
- UNDP support to vaccine equity contributes to national deployment and vaccination plans under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, UN Country Teams, WHO, UNICEF and other partners such as International Financial Institutions, private sector, and civil society.
- UNDP support to vaccine equity focuses on strengthening systems and governance to promote equity, resilience, and sustainability in COVID-19 vaccination.

UNDP is working with government, UN, civil society and private sector partners to support COVID-19 vaccine equity in three areas: digital solutions for vaccine delivery and systems strengthening, data for vaccine equity, and greening COVID vaccination.

- Over 50 UNDP Country Offices are already supporting vaccine equity efforts as a contribution to national deployment and vaccination plans led by WHO and UNICEF

Harnessing the power of digital technologies for COVID-19 vaccination is essential for achieving universal health coverage. Vaccine equity is reliant on resilient systems and requires investments in strengthening systems for health.

- UNDP is supporting countries to implement digital solutions for vaccine delivery and health system strengthening, as part of national efforts to use digital tools to address development challenges.
- UNDP is supporting countries to use open source tools such as software platforms and applications, including strengthening systems and capacities for the use of these tools.

Granular, multidimensional, and real-time data can support better decision making for vaccine equity.

- UNDP is supporting countries to use hyper-local and multidimensional vaccine analytics to inform and drive greater equity in implementing national deployment and vaccination plans led by WHO and UNICEF.
- UNDP is working with WHO, the University of Oxford and other partners to build and deploy multidimensional analytics using Artificial Intelligence and machine learning through a global dashboard.

For a just and a sustainable recovery, COVID-19 vaccination efforts must address the health of people and planet, which are bound tightly together.

- UNDP is supporting countries to develop integrated solutions for both health and the environment to manage COVID-19 healthcare waste, in partnership with WHO, UNICEF, and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) among others.
- Energy is key to healthcare services and access to renewable energy can be a critical enabler for accelerating equitable COVID-19 vaccination.
- UNDP is working with its COVID-19 private sector facility and partners such as DHL to link Smart Facilities and Solar for Health solutions with COVID-19 vaccination efforts.