

## **The National Policy on Vaccinations In the United Arab Emirates**

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



**Vision:**

This Policy aims to enhancing the health of individuals and the Emirati society within the framework of a healthy environment free from the risks of communicable diseases.

**Mission and Objective:**

To set a multi-sectoral national framework for combating vaccine-preventable diseases in the United Arab Emirates

**The Purpose of National Framework:**

The importance of adopting a more coherent strategic approach for bringing success and enhancing the communicable disease control efforts increases, along with emphasizing on the fact that effective disease control is the responsibility of all levels and sectors of various specializations inside the Country. Therefore, adopting a multi-sectoral national approach in some areas can lead to a more effective and efficient use of national resources.

There are significant advantages of nationally coherent approach by consolidating efforts to encompass all aspects of communicable disease control, allowing for focus on the Policy priorities and the optimal use of resources.

The national framework can achieve greater effectiveness due to the integration of efforts made without any change in the responsibilities of governments. It implies a commitment made by all parties to work better together in all areas of shared responsibility. It also implies a commitment to improve coordination of public health functions and communicable disease control services to avoid repetition, coordinate planning and implementation, and improve information sharing and innovation.

The national framework also provides an automatic opportunity to involve the non-governmental sector and the wider society at the national level, which leads to the desired objective of developing the health system to protect the UAE society from communicable diseases and control them and to promote healthy lifestyles to eradicate such diseases.

**Policy Axes**

Support Leadership and Governance	Partnership
Complete and Comprehensive Coverage	Equality
Innovation	Quality and Safety

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



### Guidelines

**Universal Access:** Achieving 100% of the targeted vaccination coverage for all targeted society members in all Emirates of the Country

**Equality:** Providing complete vaccination to all targeted society members in the UAE; citizens and residents.

**Quality and Safety:** Ensuring the provision of the best quality vaccination services that comply with the global and local safety practices.

Ensuring that the current active immunization programs are coherent, implemented and sustainable at the national level, along with monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Research, development and innovation in the field of immunizations and vaccinations

### Goals and Work Areas

The goals of this Policy revolve around reducing the incidence of illness, disability and deaths associated with vaccine-preventable diseases to a level where they no longer become a threat to the public health of the Country. The goals and work areas of the Policy are in line with the global action plan on combating communicable diseases of the World Health Organization and the Global Immunization Strategy. The goals and work areas are also based on the best practices worldwide to contribute to strengthening vaccination services for the society with the aim of raising vaccination coverage rates to achieve the health goals stipulated in the National Agenda 2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. This is based on the recommendations adopted in the workshop held in cooperation with the World Health Organization and the various health and non-health concerned authorities in the Country, and the meetings organized with various concerned authorities mentioned. These goals include the following:

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.





**Summarized Table of the Axes and Work Areas of the National Policy on Vaccinations**

<b>Axes</b>	<b>Work Areas</b>
1. Governance - supporting leadership and establishing partnerships	1.1 Building and supporting social, financial and administrative commitment to immunization programs; 1.2 Enhancing the leadership, management and coordination of vaccination at all levels, through effective national partnerships and networks and international cooperation; 1.3 Developing legislation supporting vaccination in the Country.
2. Universal coverage and equitable access to vaccination	2.1 Reaching high level of coverage of equitable access to vaccination at the national level and all over the UAE and its regions; 2.2 Building and strengthening capabilities for comprehensive vaccine-preventable disease control, supported by strong and reliable systems based on lab tests of public health; 2.3 Providing high-quality supply chains and effective vaccine management to facilitate equitable access to vaccination coverage and establish collaborations with health care supply chains; 2.4 Ensuring the availability of adequate and trained health workforce for immunization programs; 2.5 Increasing the coverage of vaccination services among the less vaccinated population.
3. Integration, awareness and effective communication	3.1 Promoting evidence-based prevention policies and developing an effective communication strategy for such policies; 3.2 Establishing supportive interventions and initiatives to raise awareness on vaccination across the life cycle to protect public health.
4. Controlling health conditions in cases of disease outbreaks and emergencies	4.1 Ensuring timely and orderly responses to disease outbreaks and epidemics that can be prevented through vaccines, antidote, and serums; 4.2 Establishing efficient vaccination services in acute emergencies, crises and disasters.
5. Sustainability, quality and safety	5.1 Adequate and appropriate funding and infrastructure to maintain sustainable coverage of all vaccines in the Country; 5.2 Maintaining timely access to quality-assured vaccines and ensuring their functional safety.
6. Information systems, innovation and research capacity	6.1 Generating vaccination data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making; 6.2 Enhancing research capacity, creating systems and managing innovation on various vaccination areas; 6.3 Developing new vaccines and technologies and improving current products and services for immunization programs.

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



## **1. The First Axis: Governance - supporting leadership and establishing partnerships**

This axis revolves around the State's commitment to fulfilling the right of society members to have vaccination, ensuring the protection of local communities from vaccine-preventable diseases, emphasizing on the importance of society involvement and building the confidence among its members, their acceptance and use of vaccines, along with focusing on the importance of dialogue, quality of service, commitment of health care providers and accountability, in addition to establishing new partnerships to ensure the efficiency of vaccination services in the Country.

### **First Axis Actions:**

#### **1.1 Building and supporting social, financial and administrative commitment to immunization programs**

- \* Ensuring that the concerned authorities, decision-makers and stakeholders call for commitment to support immunization programs, including their sustainable local funding;
- \* Encouraging leaders to prioritize vaccination in their strategic and operational planning, policies, and legislative systems;
- \* Promoting evidence-based decision making, along with technical inputs from groups such as the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs);
- \* Developing a better understanding of society attitudes, behaviors and social norms, using communication technologies and social media, changing social behavior and gender-responsive approaches to involve local communities and encouraging wider use of vaccination services; and
- \* Measuring the impact of the Policy on the happiness of society not only from the prospective of the health axis, but the comprehensive impact of the economic, social, environmental and educational aspects.

#### **1.2 Enhancing the leadership and management and coordination of vaccination at all levels, through effective national partnerships and networks and international cooperation**

- \* Supporting the role of MOHAP, health authorities and the concerned authorities in implementing, supervising and monitoring the National Immunization Program (NIP), each within the limits of its competence, especially through joint vaccination committees;
- \* Ensuring that the Policy document is disseminated to all concerned partners and that the Policy procedures are implemented;
- \* Establishing mechanisms for the coordination of concerned authorities and ensuring their engagement in planning, implementation and monitoring, including representatives of the private health sector in the Country, through developing action plans and a detailed work mechanism in this regard;
- \* Creating evaluation frameworks that include all concerned authorities at all levels, along with integrating platforms for participation and dialogue;
- \* Ensuring access to information and establishing frameworks for joint monitoring;
- \* Establishing effective partnerships at the regional and global level and relevant global organizations;

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.





- \* Creating a favorable environment for effective coordination, management and performance monitoring at each level of immunization programs by evaluating the implementation of the National Policy on Vaccination and its multi-year action plans.

### 1.3 Developing legislation supporting vaccination in the Country.

The main work areas include developing the Country's legislation on vaccination;

- \* Reviewing the works and achievements of regulatory units at the level of senior management and raising the efficiency of coordination mechanism that is concerned with vaccinations in the Country (the Higher Committees on Immunization);
- \* Raising awareness at all national levels of the policies set in this regard and providing recommendations on holding leadership skills development courses, along with the possibility of developing introductory brochures for the same;
- \* Reviewing the legislations related to controlling communicable diseases and vaccinations and all other relevant legislation to verify their response to the concept of vaccination for all targeted groups and updating them to ensure their compliance;
- \* Ensuring implementation of all legislation' articles and legal provisions related to vaccination and commitment to them in cooperation with the concerned authorities;
- \* Introducing new necessary legislation on vaccinations, as the case may be, if necessary;

## 2. The Second Axis: Universal coverage and equitable access to vaccinations

Alignment of the national strategies and plans to strengthen immunization programs along with enhancing broader health systems and developing primary health care to achieve universal health coverage by establishing partnerships between health actors in public and private sectors based on joint and coordinated efforts to promote immunization programs, including partners outside the health sector, in addition to giving directions regarding strengthening the immunization programs and improving their design and performance for universal health coverage supported by data, evidence, lessons learned and best practices

### Second Axis Actions:

#### 2.1 Reaching high level of coverage of equitable access to vaccination at the national level and all over the UAE and its regions

- \* Ensuring that vaccination is an integral part of national primary health care strategies and processes, and national strategies of universal health coverage;
- \* Using the experience gained from disease eradication and elimination initiatives to reach the highest coverage rates and integrating successful strategies into full immunization programs;
- \* Updating the vaccination schedule periodically based on the recommendations of the National Committee on Immunization Practices (NCIP) based on global and local research, introduction of a new vaccine, or upon the emergence of a new epidemiological pattern;

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



- \* Making a commitment for everyone to submit a Full Vaccination Card as a precondition for school admission at the primary stage and ensuring that the doses are fulfilled in each stage for each student;
- \* Ensuring that all target groups are vaccinated to cover the life cycle in line with the national immunization schedule, including directing immunization programs beyond childhood and ensuring the provision of vaccination for military personnel as one of the groups covered by vaccinations due to the nature of tasks carried out by this cadre;

## 2.2 Building and strengthening capabilities for comprehensive vaccine-preventable disease control, supported by strong and reliable systems based on lab tests of public health

- \* Enhancing the efficiency, responsiveness and comprehensiveness of disease surveillance and monitoring systems (including strengthening epidemiology and laboratory capacity) in order to: introduce vaccines, improve immunization programs, measure the effect of the vaccine, monitor and control communicable disease, detect and deal with disease outbreaks. These efforts must build on existing surveillance infrastructure, such as polio and measles surveillance programs;
- \* Ensuring that the efforts to control, eliminate and eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases are implemented in ways that strengthen national health systems;
- \* Ensuring linking between vaccination program, reporting program, and disease surveillance systems in the Country;

## 2.3 Providing high-quality supply chains and effective vaccine management to facilitate equitable access to vaccination coverage and establish collaborations with health care supply chains

Strengthening the supply chain and logistics through:

- \* Enhancing supply chains to ensure that vaccines are always available in sufficient quantity, on site, and in a timely manner;
- \* Enhancing integration with other supply chains to deliver more effective primary health care;
- \* Establishing standards for safe supply policy; and
- \* Setting a plan to update and develop the devices used in the cold chain according to their life span and the increase in the volume of vaccination doses received.

## 2.4 Ensuring the availability of adequate and trained health workforce for immunization programs:

- \* Developing health workers in order to have the skill and capacity supported by resources and knowledge to plan, manage, implement and monitor the performance of immunization programs at all levels and sites;
- \* Providing educational opportunities for health workforce;
- \* Ensuring the availability of a group of national experts on assessing and evaluating immunization programs.

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.





### **2.5 Increasing the coverage of vaccination services among the less vaccinated population**

- \* Identifying and addressing the low levels of coverage across the life cycle among the less vaccinated individuals and communities;
- \* Identifying barriers to access vaccination services based on age, location, and social, cultural or gender-based factors (for beneficiaries, health workers and health care providers) and using evidence-based approaches to overcome these barriers in order to achieve high equitable coverage;
- \* Using measles vaccination as a "primary aid" to immunization programs through identifying children with zero dose, poor immunization programs, and low vaccine absorption indicators;
- \* Developing, evaluating and expanding innovative locally designed, evidence-based and society-centered approaches to reach underserved populations;
- \* Addressing coverage and equity gaps, particularly among marginalized and disadvantaged communities, if any, through actively engaging local community representatives and local health service providers in designing interventions specifically designed for these groups;
- \* Implementing strategies to overcome vaccination barriers based on proven and innovative approaches and local research on effective ways to provide services to unvaccinated groups and consider the obstacles that prevent them from receiving vaccination;
- \* Expanding vaccination data systems to define and track unvaccinated populations to ensure they have access to the vaccination program;
- \* Enhancing the local capacity to conduct implementation research in order to identify factors affecting equity in vaccination coverage and encouraging the use of findings to develop context-specific interventions and innovations to address inequalities;

### **3. The third axis: Integration, awareness and effective communication**

Raising health awareness among all society members on the importance of immunizations and vaccinations against preventable diseases and raising awareness among health workers to provide vaccines integrated with health care services to meet the needs of different age groups.

#### **Third Axis Actions:**

#### **3.1 Promoting evidence-based prevention policies and developing an effective communication strategy for such policies**

- \* Improving communication and ensuring that the public, policymakers, and health workers understand the vital significance of vaccination for the health of all society members, in addition to the importance of training health workers on the means of communicating vaccination messages to parents and communities easily;
- \* Raising awareness of the benefits and general demand for vaccines even beyond childhood, especially during adolescence and the prioritized adult groups, such as pregnant women, health workers and the elderly;
- \* Implementing proven methods to reduce missed opportunities through integrating vaccination with primary health care planning, health records, and other record systems, and delivering society and facility services for all ages;

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.





- \* Promoting enabling changes in legislation or policies (vaccination and other programs) to expand the national focus beyond childhood vaccination. Developing new collaborations and partnerships with the private sector to mobilize additional funding to expand service provision for specific age groups;
- \* Developing collaborative initiatives to integrate age-appropriate vaccination and enrollment to health services at all levels;
- \* Establishing collaboration outside of health care sector to develop context-specific programs that include vaccination in some areas, such as education, nutrition, elderly care, and women's empowerment;
- \* Developing methods that enable coverage of vaccination for different ages and vaccines that are given throughout life;
- \* Evaluating new approaches to reach post-childhood populations, integrating services, sharing lessons learned to encourage broader adaptation and assimilation;
- \* Developing and periodically updating a strategic plan for communication channels and materials;

### 3.2 Establishing supportive interventions and initiatives to raise awareness on vaccination across the life cycle to protect public health.

- \* Collecting local and national behavioral and social research to be used in developing appropriate interventions locally and disseminating appropriate communication technologies to increase commitment and demand for vaccination services;
- \* Developing proactive plans to prevent and respond to negative events, rumors, false allegations and hesitation, and to enhance flexibility of such plans according to events.
- \* Addressing concerns and developing robust strategies to target sources of vaccine misinformation and reducing the risk of spreading such information;

## 4. The fourth axis: Controlling health conditions in cases of disease outbreaks and emergencies

Emergency preparedness and response through adapting interventions to meet the needs of all of society members and affected individuals and benefiting from local knowledge to adapt available interventions that are made through coordination of national efforts to address emergencies and disease outbreaks and provide basic vaccinations services using trained workforce.

### **Fourth Axis Actions:**

#### 4.1 Ensuring timely and orderly responses to disease outbreaks and epidemics that can be prevented through vaccines, antidote, and serums

- \* Enhancing coordination and implementation of preparedness, detection, response and vaccination activities within the context of universal humanitarian response, International Health Regulations, and health systems development programs, and the national authorities concerned with emergency, crisis and disaster management in the Country;

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



- \* Defining systematic methods for disease monitoring supported by central laboratories, methods for identifying high-risk areas, and reliable approaches to measure coverage of vaccine-preventable diseases;
- \* Establishing partnership for coordinated work to provide integrated set of health services, including vaccination, in a manner supporting ongoing health systems and surveillance strategies during disease outbreaks and emergencies;
- \* Ensuring that global, regional and national coordination and governance mechanisms can effectively support fair and timely decision-making regarding the allocation of essential supplies and vaccines and filling the strategic medical stocks as well as listing trained human resources to benefit from their full efforts;
- \* Promoting rapid intervention mechanisms in emergencies, epidemics, or disease outbreaks.

#### 4.2 Establishing efficient vaccination services in acute emergencies, crises and disasters

- \* Investing in and maintaining local health capacities and systems to ensure that disease outbreaks are detected and controlled in a timely manner, while identifying and addressing the underlying causes of disease outbreaks, ensuring that communities affected by disease outbreaks, other emergencies and humanitarian crises receive vaccination services, in addition to ensuring that recovery plans through vaccination are included in the plan of disease outbreak control and containment and emergency response;
- \* Conducting research and assessments to find evidence on new approaches for providing vaccines and health services during disease outbreaks and other acute emergencies and in humanitarian conditions;
- \* Rebuilding national, regional and local capacities to conduct comprehensive and rapid surveillance of priority diseases immediately after an emergency event, while increasing opportunities to monitor and identify multiple pathogens to ensure early detection of disease outbreaks;
- \* Prioritize two-way communication and contact with communities and health workers during disease outbreaks and emergencies to enhance participation in decision-making in order to ensure access to and use of services and to identify and address unmet health needs.

### 5. The fifth axis: Sustainability, quality and safety

The ability to plan to secure the required funding for vaccination programs in order to ensure long-term sustainable funding, along with defining clear roles and responsibilities for all partners, as well as strengthening cooperation between key concerned authorities to support vaccine markets while securing quality-assured vaccine sources.

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.





### **Fifth Axis Actions:**

#### **5.1 Adequate and appropriate funding and infrastructure to maintain sustainable coverage of all vaccines in the Country:**

- \* Expanding data systems to better allocate resources within National Immunization Programs, monitor the use of these resources, and better forecast vaccine demand, supply, and pricing;
- \* Building an understanding of individuals' choices and strengthening national analysis and forecasting capabilities to provide better forecasts of current and future vaccine markets;
- \* Ensuring that new vaccines are developed, supplied and accessed to meet the needs of the Country and that vaccines are provided in a timely manner and are reasonably priced in case they are not free of charge;
- \* Strengthening relationships with manufacturers to ensure supplying vaccines that meet the national needs;
- \* Supporting the national infrastructure to provide services through providing the best and most modern cold chain and storage system equipment;
- \* Encouraging national production and national industries of vaccines and innovative devices for the cold chain system to ensure the sustainability of the programs.

#### **5.2 Maintaining timely access to quality-assured vaccines and ensuring their functional safety**

Enhancing the organizational capacity to secure access to vaccines of assured quality and to allow for diversification of manufacturing sources.

- \* Ensuring good governance, oversight and accountability to fund the vaccination program in order to achieve high performance and best value for cost;
- \* Ensuring that National Immunization Programs are able to detect and respond to potential vaccine safety risks, through continuous surveillance and coordination between relevant stakeholders;
- \* Ensuring that all vaccines purchased or manufactured for vaccination services in the Country are registered at the Drug Regulatory Authority and have a valid market license and product registration certificate and products that are pre-qualified by the World Health Organization are preferred;
- \* Monitoring, reporting, investigating and appropriately managing adverse events following immunization (AEFI);
- \* Establishing a national communication plan to deal with cases necessary to be communicated with the public regarding vaccinations;
- \* Supportive periodic supervision of the performance of the National Immunization Program and vaccine cold chain at all levels (national and local government and private sectors)

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.



## 6. The sixth axis: Information systems, innovation and research capacity

Supporting need-based innovation, which is the ability to identify and manage innovation, including identifying, documenting, evaluating, and implementing innovations, as well as supporting evidence-based research leading to development, improvement and expansion on vaccinations.

### Sixth Axis Actions:

#### 6.1 Generating vaccination data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making

- \* Strengthening health information systems to enable decision-makers to use high-quality vaccination data in order to effectively manage immunization programs, as well as ensuring that they are linked to health care data systems in the Country, especially primary health care databases;
- \* Monitor violations and dropout rates, including data and statistics on the dropouts of vaccination or unvaccinated individuals, listing them and using such list in developing statistics, along with studying the causes and patterns thereof;
- \* Conducting national coverage assessment surveys based on actual vaccination statistics through health services outlets (classified by emirate);
- \* Generating data and statistics on side effects caused by vaccinations;
- \* Evaluating the quality of vaccination periodic data in the Country;
- \* Using a unified number to record every individual's vaccination data;

#### 6.2 Establishing and enhancing research capacity, creating systems and managing innovation on various vaccination areas

- \* Enhancing mechanisms for priority researches and innovation based on society needs and ensuring that they are guided by innovations in vaccination products, services, and practices;
- \* Evaluating the cost-effectiveness and impact on routine services for different vaccination strategies;

#### 6.3 Developing new vaccines and technologies and improving current products and services for immunization programs

- \* Supporting the development of new vaccines and technologies and improving existing products and services, along with ensuring continued progress of certain vaccine research, such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, novel coronavirus and other priority diseases;
- \* Increasing exchange of knowledge, innovations and experiences between the Country's institutions and other countries in this area;
- \* Local innovation of vaccines, serums, and antidote; and
- \* Introducing and expanding the use of new vaccines, technologies, services and improved practices in vaccination.

#Stamp of the Ministry of Health and Prevention, Department of Public Health Policies, UAE#

\*In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version of this legislation prevails.

