

Report of the Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Deployment Workshop

Washington DC, United States of America, 5–7 February 2019



**World Health
Organization**

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Contents

<i>Acronyms</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Policy issues</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The PIP Framework and the global availability of pandemic influenza vaccine</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Pandemic preparedness planning</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Influenza in the Americas – regional mechanisms and lessons learned from 2009</i>	<i>5</i>
NDVP: Structure and components	11
PIP Deploy board game: simulating the vaccine deployment cascade	12
a) The games approach	12
b) Mission 1: National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP)	14
c) Mission 2: Legal and regulatory planning	14
d) Mission 3: Management of vaccine deployment and operations	14
e) Mission 4: Public communication in pandemic situations	14
f) Mission 5: Human resources and security	15
g) Mission 6: Supply chain and waste management	16
h) Mission 7: Post-deployment surveillance system and management of AEFI.....	16
<i>Evaluating PIP Deploy and improving national capacity on pandemic influenza deployment and vaccination activities</i>	<i>17</i>
Hot Wash: Sharing thoughts and learning experiences from PIP Deploy	17
Moving forward towards an updated and effective NDVP	19
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Annex 1: Agenda</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Annex 2. PIP Deploy game evaluation</i>	<i>25</i>

Acronyms

AEFI	Adverse event following immunization
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
IHR	International Health Regulations
GISRS	Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System
NDVP	National Deployment and Vaccination Plan
NRA	National Regulatory Authority
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PIP	Pandemic Influenza Preparedness
SMTA-2	Standard Material Transfer Agreement 2
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
WHO	World Health Organization

Policy issues

Pandemic influenza vaccines are a key means for supporting the control of an influenza pandemic and protecting vulnerable populations. Consequently, strengthening countries' capacities to deploy vaccines and implement immunization campaigns in a timely and efficient manner is imperative for the success of a pandemic response.

To support this process, WHO designed a training workshop which simulated critical aspects of planning for the deployment of pandemic vaccines – a table-top exercise in the form of a board game called PIP Deploy. Through an interactive and educational approach, workshop participants were invited to reflect on and learn about the main activities, the stakeholders involved and the main components of pandemic deployment operations.

Participants from nine countries of the WHO Region of the Americas attended the Pandemic Vaccine Deployment Workshop in February 2019. Together, they discussed challenges foreseen in pandemic vaccine deployment activities, suggested how the lessons learned during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic could be incorporated into national systems, reflected on the learning aspects of the simulation exercise, and discussed how to move forward after the meeting.

Key recommendations based on lessons learned from the H1N1 pandemic influenza in 2009

- Include immunization as an integral part of pandemic planning as countries will benefit from having general pre-established operational and logistical protocols for pandemic influenza vaccination (Pandemic Preparedness Plan and National Deployment and Vaccination Plan).
- Increase efforts to streamline future processes for the donation of pandemic influenza vaccines by various donors in order to ensure timeliness and equity of such endeavours.
- Ensure the training (including communication skills) of health-care workers and strengthen social communication regarding the benefits of influenza vaccination.
- Pandemic preparedness plans need to include open and effective communication strategies to build public confidence.
- Encourage the establishment of active systems for reporting adverse events following immunization (AEFI) after pandemic vaccination.
- Establish systems to facilitate the assessment of vaccine effectiveness and the impact of pandemic influenza vaccination campaigns.
- Strengthen regulatory systems, which are critical for ensuring the timely deployment as well as the quality and safety of influenza products.
- Leverage Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) systems that are already in place to support deployment operations and activities for both seasonal and pandemic influenza.

PIP Deploy: Strengthening capacities and acquiring knowledge

One of the main components of the workshop was the PIP Deploy table-top exercise – a simulation exercise in the form of a board game – which participants played on the second day of the meeting.

According to participants, the game was an excellent tool for expanding knowledge on pandemic influenza deployment operations and their components. Participants highlighted that the game enabled them to reflect on their own systems and to identify gaps.

It was stressed that the exercise stimulated critical thinking, teamwork and the exchange of experience among players. PIP Deploy was also referred to as an outstanding method for integrating technical knowledge into practice.

Participants provided valuable feedback to further refine the game and requested that it be made available in different languages for use at national and local levels.

Next steps

The meeting was an opportunity for participants to consider specific actions that they could take to advance pandemic deployment and vaccination planning.

Together, they identified key actions that could be implemented following the meeting.

For WHO:

- Identify national gaps in pandemic preparedness plans.
- Strengthen understanding by Member States of requirements for vaccine donation, as set out in the terms of the Country Recipient Agreement.
- Obtain feedback from countries to revise some of the existing documents and guidelines making them more user-friendly.
- Update the guideline on the use of antivirals.
- On the basis of the evaluations from the workshop in the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), finalize PIP Deploy for use in other regional workshops.
- Translate PIP Deploy into all six official United Nations languages, plus Portuguese, and make it available to WHO regions and countries.
- Set up a pool of subject matter experts who will be available to support countries to develop/update their national deployment and vaccination plans (NDVPs).

For PAHO Revolving Fund:

- Analyse the feasibility of using the Revolving Fund to help countries enter into advanced purchase agreements for influenza pandemic vaccines.

For countries:

- Develop/update NDVPs on the basis of lessons learned in the workshop.
- Strengthen collaboration between different sectors and stakeholders involved in pandemic influenza deployment operations.
- Identify roles and responsibilities across sectors.
- Strengthen regulatory systems to ensure timely allocation of pandemic supplies.
- Conduct simulation exercises to test the plan.

Introduction

Pandemic influenza is a major threat to global health security. In 2009, when the most recent influenza pandemic occurred, it was estimated that between 105 000 and 395 000 people worldwide lost their lives.¹ Additionally, due to its large impact, pandemic influenza can cause economic disruption and difficulties in sustaining essential services at national and global levels.

Vaccines are a key measure for controlling and preventing the spread of influenza virus. Countries should have mechanisms in place to rapidly access, allocate, deploy and administer such vaccines in order to ensure optimal usage and no wastage.

To help countries in their efforts to build the necessary capacity for efficient vaccine deployment in the event of a pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) is undertaking several training activities, including a series of regional workshops, in order to create a forum for sharing best practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses in current deployment plans and discussing future deployment preparedness needs.

The meeting on Planning for Effective and Efficient Deployment of Pandemic Supplies was held on 5–7 February 2019 at the headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in Washington D.C., United States of America.

Sixty delegates participated, including delegates from nine countries (Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay and Suriname), representatives of WHO headquarters, PAHO, WHO country offices in the Americas, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The overall objective of the meeting was to provide an engaging and interactive environment for countries to obtain a better understanding of critical components of a pandemic vaccine deployment plan, as recommended by WHO in *Guidance on development and implementation of a national deployment and vaccination plan for pandemic influenza vaccines*.²

Other objectives of the meeting included:

- to reinforce the importance of pandemic influenza vaccines deployment in

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