



UNICEF Support Vaccination Campaign for Immigrant in Iran: A Country of EMRO Region

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(Received 10 Sep 2023; accepted 19 Sep 2023)

Dear Editor-in-Chief

Access to vaccination against a health threat is essential among all people even immigrants. This is important for the following reasons; the right to health of all people, humanitarian need of migrants, who are sometimes vulnerable and living in precarious situations; and the need to ensure health security globally and nationally (1). Immigrant vaccination especially in communicable disease pandemic is necessary for disease control (2).

According to the WHO reports, in the first two months of 2022, measles cases increased by 79 percent compared to the same period in 2021 (3). In this regard, the WHO and other international organizations have put a lot of emphasis on improving the level of vaccination coverage.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) of Iran, universities of medical sciences and health services and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, supports the supplementary immunization campaign for under-15-year-old Afghan refugee children. According to the information of MoHME, 214 cases of measles were reported in Iran in 2022, and more than half of these people were non-Iranians (4).

The vaccination campaign, conducted from December 31, 2022, to January 30, 2023, aimed to enhance vaccination coverage for measles and

rubella (MR) diseases among the refugee population under 15 years old. Supplementary measles and polio vaccination of non-Iranian nationals under 15 years of age was carried out in all comprehensive health service centers, health house, and health centers of Iran. To support this campaign, UNICEF provided 600,000 doses of MR vaccine and syringes to 27 Universities of Medical Sciences and Health Services across the country (4). Sistan and Baluchistan as the largest province of Iran with 1300 kilometers border with Afghanistan and Pakistan also had carried out immigrants' vaccination in health network by mobile teams in different parts of the province (5). According to statistics, the target population in this region was about 94,000 people, of which 70,000 people have been vaccinated (0.74) (6).

The success of immigrants' vaccination depends on several factors. In this regard, Ayash et al found that vaccination uptake among immigrant were more likely among those with higher education, with more years in the destination country, and with higher household income (7). In addition, community-based organizations played a role in connecting participants to vaccines (8). Salib et al reported the vaccination experience was often positive among immigrants; however, they described language inaccessibility, often relying on family members for interpretation. Unvac-



cinated participants expressed fear of side effects and belief in natural immunity (8).

Although part of the measles vaccination costs was paid by the international organization such as UNICEF, (cost of vaccine < 1\$ for each person), carrying out the vaccination campaign brings many costs to Iran's health system. The most important of which is the exhaustion of human resources, the imposition costs, and the reduction of time spent on providing service to Iranian citizens etc.

In general, the following factors are suggested for success and increasing the effectiveness of the vaccination campaign for foreign nationals; increasing population knowledge, provider recommendation, and providing culturally/religiously responsive (7), Increasing vaccine access, improving language accessibility, and building trust (8).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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