Why develop a National Immunization Strategy?

Eric Laurent
Senior Immunization Specialist
Program Group - Health Program
UNICEF HQ

October 19, 2023
Strategic planning is essential for immunization

Global DPT3 coverage declined from 86% in 2019 to 81% in 2021 and 84% in 2022 (WUENIC)

- COVID-19 pandemic and consecutive disruptions put a strain on health systems
- In 2021, 25 million children missed one or more doses of DTP through routine immunization, 2 million more than in 2020 and 6 million more than in 2019
- In a context of economic crisis and limited resources whilst facing increased costs of immunization program due to C-19 but also to IA2030 ambitions

Strategic planning is essential as it allows

- Defining strategic priorities, objectives and interventions on all immunization components
- Prioritizing resources to achieve these goals and objectives
- Aligning with national, regional and global health and immunization strategies
- Advocating for resources mobilization
What is a National Immunization Strategy (NIS)?

• A National Immunization Strategy (NIS) defines the strategic direction that a country will take on immunization.

• NIS specifies country’s immunization priorities and objectives, identifies obstacles, and organizes sequence of interventions within a time-frame.

• NIS brings together national stakeholders, partners and donors to develop priorities, objectives and interventions, and determine amounts and sources of funding needed.

• By integrating resource mobilization discussions into NIS development process, a country can ensure that its immunization strategy is not only financially sustainable, but also politically endorsed.

• Along with the National Health Sector Strategy, a dedicated National Immunization Strategy helps ensure interventions are building towards agreed objectives and optimizes use of scarce resources.
Why is it important to develop a NIS?

- A well-designed NIS is comprehensive and streamlined. It reduces the fragmentation in immunization planning – a problem that continues to cause challenges and inefficiencies.

- A National Immunization Strategy is developed considering Universal Health Coverage and is aligned with both its National Health Sector Strategy, Immunization Agenda 2030 and its Regional Framework.

- The NIS provides the foundation for supporting other Primary Health Care (PHC) services. A strong immunization strategy is a mean to strengthen the health system more generally.

- Once finalized, the NIS will become an invaluable advocacy tool to hold stakeholders, partners and donors accountable for the commitments they have made towards immunization in a country.

- It also helps prepare countries for internal or external alterations in financing and funding, such as decentralization, new financing opportunities, transition out of GAVI, GPEI or COVID funding.
When a government wants to plan strategically for immunization and improve efficiency

When there is a need to ensure financial sustainability for the immunization program – either as a sole proactive decision, or in response to changes in the funding landscape

At the end of a period covered by the previous immunization strategic plan (e.g. cMYP)

At the time of any major change that requires a review and an update to priorities and available resources. As such it should be considered a living document

With the need to align with the National Health Sector Strategy, Immunization Agenda 2030 and Regional Framework
NIS, a key pillar for the success of IA 2030

- Designed as a tool to facilitate **national strategic planning and decision-making** between different stakeholders
- NIS development helps countries identify their priorities, objectives and main interventions
Why NIS has taken over cMYP?

- **Aligned**
  - Aligned to IA2030 global strategy, regional frameworks and Gavi 5.0

- **Strategic & streamlined**
  - High-level strategic document
  - Includes a streamlined costing approach that supports budget dialogue and financing

- **Realistic**
  - A negotiation process with Ministries of Health and Finance leads to an agreed resource envelope to fund key strategic priorities; framing realistic expectations

- **Owned**
  - Directional document based on national dialogue minimizes the need for external technical support

- **Integrated**
  - Better integrated into national health sector planning and adapted to in-country processes. Shaped through consultation with broader scope of stakeholders
Positioning NIS within national, regional, global planning environment

Global and Regional Strategic Framework

- Immunization Agenda 2030
- Regional IA 2030
- Gavi Strategy
- Partners Strategies (WHO, UNICEF, WB, etc.)

National Strategic & Operational Framework

- National Health Sector Strategy
- PHC Strategy
- RMNCAH Strategy
- National Immunization Strategy (NIS)
- Immunization Annual Operational Plan

Other Immunization Plans

- Full Portfolio Planning (FPP)
- HSS plan
- Polio & MR plans
- Covid-19 response plan
- CCEOP plan
- EVM improvement plan
- Data quality improvement plan
- New vaccine intro. plan
- VPD surveillance plan
- Communication plan

Global and Regional Strategic Framework

- National Health Sector Strategy
- PHC Strategy
- RMNCAH Strategy
- National Immunization Strategy (NIS)
- Immunization Annual Operational Plan

Other Immunization Plans

- Full Portfolio Planning (FPP)
- HSS plan
- Polio & MR plans
- Covid-19 response plan
- CCEOP plan
- EVM improvement plan
- Data quality improvement plan
- New vaccine intro. plan
- VPD surveillance plan
- Communication plan

Partners Strategies (WHO, UNICEF, WB, etc.)

Regional IA 2030

Gavi Strategy

Immunization Agenda 2030

National Immunization Strategy (NIS)

Immunization Annual Operational Plan

Full Portfolio Planning (FPP)

HSS plan

Polio & MR plans

Covid-19 response plan

CCEOP plan

EVM improvement plan

Data quality improvement plan

New vaccine intro. plan

VPD surveillance plan

Communication plan

Global and Regional Strategic Framework

National Strategic & Operational Framework

Other Immunization Plans
NIS development methodology and process

1. Preparation
2. Situation Analysis
3. Strategy Development
4. M&E Framework
5. Resource estimates
6. Budget dialogue
7. Approval and endorsement

- Indicative timeframe
- Countries may request technical expertise for their NIS development
- Remote support available for NIS.Cost
NIS resources package

1. **NIS Guidelines**: A step-by-step guide for country stakeholders on how to develop an NIS
2. **NIS FAQs**: Further details and descriptions, including definitions of key concepts and terms
3. **NIS Annexes**: Further supporting documents, including templates and country examples, regularly updated
4. **NIS Costing Application (NIS.Cost)**: Google sheet application to support the estimation of NIS resource requirements
5. **Annual Operational Planning (AOP) guidelines**: Guidance and tools to support transition from NIS into actionable tasks

**Full NIS Package accessible via below links:**

- NIS guidelines: [https://www.who.int/teams/immunization-vaccines-and-biologicals/vaccine-access/planning-and-financing/nis](https://www.who.int/teams/immunization-vaccines-and-biologicals/vaccine-access/planning-and-financing/nis)
- NIS.Cost App: [https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-niscost](https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-niscost)
- Annual Operational Planning (AOP) guidelines: [https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-national-planning-and-budgeting](https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-national-planning-and-budgeting)
New costing instrument “NIS.Cost App”

A structured and easy-to-use online costing instrument

**NIS.Cost App supports planning, costing, budgeting and financial analysis during NIS development**

- Easy to populate with the **NIS roadmap** including activities, timelines and unit costs
- Supports the **budget negotiation process** during the NIS development
- Enables country teams to work on **prioritization scenarios** aligned to different resource levels
- Could be **used on a rolling basis** when developing and costing annual operational plans
- Existing **service desk function** allows access to technical support in real time

[https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-niscost](https://immunizationeconomics.org/unicef-niscost)
• More than 2 years of practices on NIS development and use of online NIS.Cost App
• 22 countries already fully developed NIS – 21 ongoing NIS – 27 planned NIS for 2023-2024
• 4 NIS regional workshops (Cotonou, Pretoria, Dakar, Amman) held – 65 countries participated
• Regional webinars held in EAPRO and LACRO, and other regions’ webinar under planning
• NIS.Cost App with regular enhancements – will evolve into full web-based application
• Specific training on NIS.Cost App provided upon demand
• “NIS Regional Stewardship” within UNICEF RO and WHO RO for regular exchanges with countries
• Technical assistance provided to countries – pool of experts trained and long-term consultants in place
• NIS countries tracking:
http://worldhealthorg-my.sharepoint.com/x:/g/personal/fihmanj_who_int/EXkhlgM1Rm1EueolSXCYW6ABeuphwL2SNCeG-EZAMSIHyw?rtime=Rlk0-juG20g
Conclusions and take-away

• NIS promotes strategic planning and meant to reflect countries priorities for several years, with buy-in from relevant stakeholders
• NIS also gives opportunity to identify high-level strategic priorities that can be a game changer
• Budget dialogue component is essential to ensure that priorities are funded and implemented
• NIS is a living document and can be updated when there are major shocks affecting the priorities
• No «one size fits all» NIS – depends on countries specific context – peer learning and sharing country experiences is helpful

Technical assistance
• NIS development is extensive and complex – technical expertise should not be underestimated
• National consultants with good knowledge and experience in developing NIS are necessary
• Countries can also benefit from international technical expertise
• UNICEF and WHO are working in tandem to provide such a technical assistance
• Availability of NIS long-term experts within an existing UNICEF pool of experts
Thank You!

Eric Laurent
UNICEF HQ
elaurent@unicef.org