

## Vaccine Equity

### Why in news?

The Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity has put out recent data that justifies the worrying core of the vaccine distribution programme.

### What is the Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity?

- The Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity is a joint effort by the
  - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - World Health Organization (WHO)
  - University of Oxford
- It combines the latest data on the global roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines with the most recent socio-economic information.
- It illustrates why accelerating vaccine equity is not only critical to saving lives but also to driving a faster and fairer recovery from the pandemic.
- It provides insights and possibilities for policy makers into the implications of vaccine inequity.
- **Findings** - Only one in four people has been vaccinated with at least one dose in low and middle income countries as of November 9, 2022.
- In high income countries, three in four people have got at least one dose of the vaccine.

### What is vaccine equity?

- Vaccine equity is a situation where everyone in the world has the same access to vaccines.

### Reasons for vaccine inequity

- **Increased demand** - In the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine production was insufficient to meet global demand.
- **Vaccine nationalism** - Many wealthy countries procured vaccine doses through exclusive bilateral deals for their domestic populations.
- Some of the manufacturing countries, such as India, imposed temporary export bans.
- **High expenditure** - The low-income countries would need to increase their health expenditure by a staggering 30-60% to vaccinate 70% of their population under the current pricing.

### Impact of global vaccine inequity

- **Vaccine Apartheid** - Widening gaps in global vaccine equity have led to a two-track pandemic with

- Booster COVID-19 vaccinations proliferating in high-income countries
- First doses not yet reaching all populations in low-income countries

*In 2021, WHO set the target for 70% global vaccination coverage by mid-2022. As of June 2022, only 58 of WHO's 194 Member States had reached the 70% target.*

### **What efforts were taken to reduce vaccine inequity?**

- **Intellectual Property Waiver** - Affordability alone doesn't determine availability of vaccines.
- Efforts were initiated to [waive the intellectual property protection](#) for the COVID-19 range of therapeutics and vaccines.
- **COVAX initiative** - The COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership (COVAX) was launched to intensify country readiness and delivery support.
- It aimed at accelerating COVID-19 vaccination coverage in 34 low coverage countries, along with their governments.

### **What lies ahead?**

*No one is safe until everyone is safe*

*- World Health Organization (WHO)*

- Strong leadership engagement and commitment to detailed and costed vaccination plans will be essential.
- National healthcare system capacity will need to be strengthened.
- COVID-19 vaccination services will need to be integrated with other immunization services and alongside other health interventions.
- Careful risk communication and community engagement plans need to be adapted to enhance demand for vaccination.
- There is also a need to coordinate domestic and international funding.

### **Quick facts**

#### **Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Program**

- COVAX is the vaccines pillar of the **Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator**.
- It is led by the
  - Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI)
  - World Health Organization (WHO)

- Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
- It is a collective international effort with 'One Country Team', 'One Plan', and 'One Budget'.
- **Aim**- Equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines
- It wants to vaccinate roughly 20% of the population in the 92 Advance Market Commitment (AMC) countries, which include middle and lower-income nations that cannot afford to pay for COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Funding** - The funding is partly coming from high and middle-income countries that will also receive a share of the vaccines produced for COVAX.
- **Ghana** has become the first country in the world to receive a shipment of coronavirus vaccines under the COVAX program.

## References

1. [The Hindu | Can vaccine distribution be made fairer?](#)
2. [WHO | Vaccine Equity](#)

