



5 April 2023 – The Minister of Public Health Dr Firass Abiad signed today a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Task Force for Global Health represented by PIVI Director Dr Joseph Bresee in the presence of WHO team lead Dr Alissar Rady and Dr Rania Attia. The MOU marks the start of Lebanon’s eligibility to become a PIVI (Partnership for Influenza Vaccine Introduction) partner country. It has become one of 21 countries that are benefiting from PIVI eligibility and support.

“After the COVID pandemic, we all learned the importance of preparedness with systems in place, with vaccines readily available, but unfortunately, because of the situation in Lebanon and the resource-limited environment, this support was crucial to us and we are very appreciative of the support,” said Dr Firass Abiad.

This support will allow for the availability of influenza vaccines ahead of the flu season every year for the next 5 years. The essence of the partnership is to provide technical support to the Ministry of Public Health through a workplan to improve vaccine availability and acceptability, as well as to decrease hesitancy and support and generate other information and evidence that will help integrate and sustain the availability of influenza vaccines. WHO is also supporting generating evidence to estimate the burden of influenza in Lebanon and the relative importance of the introduction of this vaccine at the national level.

“PIVI, based at the Task Force for Global Health, together with our partners at the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are committed to a long-term relationship with Lebanon to create a sustainable and impactful annual influenza vaccination programme that will also be a critical tool for the pandemic response. We are very excited about this collaboration”, stated Dr Joseph Bresee.

This partnership is going to be sustained and renewed for the next 3 to 5 years. The MoU highlights the fact that this is a long-term partnership with the Ministry. PIVI is donating the vaccines and providing technical support.

WHO's role is to provide technical support and expertise in terms of all the technical areas that will come with the agreement which will be funded by PIVI under Task Force for Global Health through the WHO Regional Office.

The formal partnership comes after intensive discussions involving the Expanded Programme on Immunization committee, with the chair of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) and other relevant immunization-related parties at the national level.

This MOU and the support of the Task Force for Global Health and CDC to Lebanon is an important opportunity to strengthen Lebanon's capacity to monitor influenza and foster preparedness for future pandemics. WHO support that started several years ago will continue to further expand national capacity for integration of the influenza vaccine at the level of PHC, and foster preparedness, prevention and response in Lebanon, within the overall national health sector strategy," said Dr Alissar Rady.

This important partnership falls under WHO's objective of working hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with global health entities to ensure regular access to vaccines and other health-related care to citizens.

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