

Tripoli, 5 November 2020 – UNICEF and WHO are extremely concerned over severe shortages of critical vaccines in Libya that threaten the health of the country’s children. Over the past 7 months, unprecedented vaccine shortages in the country have disrupted children’s immunization schedules and put them at risk of disease and death.

There has been an alarming decline in the number of children receiving life-saving vaccines globally. In Libya, this decline is a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the closure of international borders, movement restrictions, and delays procuring and distributing vaccines. Many vaccination centres have been forced to close due to shortages of personal protective equipment for health workers.

A recent assessment of 200 of Libya’s 700 vaccine sites, carried out by the National Centre of Disease Control with the support of UNICEF and WHO, showed that all 200 sites had stockouts of BCG vaccine and extremely limited quantities of hexavalent vaccine. BCG vaccine protects children against tuberculosis (TB), the world’s top infectious killer. Hexavalent vaccine protects against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b and hepatitis B. The assessment also showed that polio and measles vaccines were expected to run out by the end of the year. Unless urgent measures are taken to replace these vaccines, the diseases they prevent are likely to spread quickly, with dire consequences.

UNICEF and WHO have urged the national authorities to secure the immediate release of funds to replenish the country’s vaccine supply. “Vaccines are one of the most critical public health interventions globally. Immunization protects children against serious vaccine-preventable diseases and reduces childhood mortality”, said Ms Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Libya. “WHO will spare no efforts to enhance immunization coverage for children across the country in order to ensure a healthy childhood and a prosperous future.”

“While the world is looking at the multiple avenues to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to ensure that the gains achieved through the Expanded Programme on Immunization in Libya are sustained. It is essential that all the vaccination sites receive an immediate supply of all vaccines to ensure uninterrupted implementation of the immunization schedule based on the national protocols,” said UNICEF Special Representative in Libya, Abdulkadir Musse. “Vaccines are crucial, and no child is safe from until every child is safe.”

UNICEF and WHO will continue to advocate for vaccination to save the lives of children, both in Libya and globally.

[Link to multimedia](#)

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in some of the toughest places in the world and across 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, with a special focus on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children everywhere.

Follow UNICEF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) . For more information about COVID-19 and guidance on how to protect children and families, visit www.unicef.org/coronavirus

About WHO

Under its vision of universal health coverage and the right to health care for all people, everywhere, WHO works worldwide to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. Its goal is to ensure that a billion more people have universal health coverage, to protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and well-being.

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