

Vaccination facts

- **687 065** Total number of people vaccinated by all types of vaccines in **government-controlled areas and northeast** by 6 November 2021.
- **176 360** Total number of people in **northwest Syria** vaccinated by 6 November 2021.
- **4.2 %** Total population in whole of Syria who has received at least one dose.

Summary

On 15 August 2021 Syria received the second batch of COVAX-facilitated AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccines with support from Sweden, amounting to 174 720 doses, 79% of which will be administered by the national immunization programme in Government-controlled areas and northeast Syria, and approximately 21% in northwest Syria through Gaziantep.

This follows the allocation criteria used for the distribution of the first batch of COVAX AZ vaccines (256 800) The first dose vaccine campaign in northwest Syria started on 1 May 2021 and is still ongoing with 49 130 people covered so far, while the campaign in the rest of the country was completed as of 30 June with 101 751 people vaccinated with the first dose.

The campaign for the second dose was launched on 13 July in Government-controlled areas and on 25 July in northeast Syria. In northwest Syria, the second dose vaccination campaign will start on 21 August.

VACCINATION IN NORTHEAST SYRIA

- Northeast Syria received 22 500 doses of vaccines from the first COVAX batch, airlifted to Qamishli airport for Hassakeh, Der-Ez-Zor governorates and by road for Raqqa governorate.
- The vaccination campaign reached target population groups in all regions of northeast Syria, irrespective of areas of control.
- The first dose campaign in northeast Syria was completed by 30 June with a total of 11 012 people vaccinated, including 2222 health care workers and 8790 people aged 55+ and people with co-morbidities. The second dose campaign started on 25 July and will last until 23 August.

Vaccination strategies

Two different vaccination strategies are applied in various parts of the country. In northwest Syria, the first batch of vaccines was used for the first dose vaccination, while in Government-controlled areas and in northeast Syria (where vaccination is administered as part of the national immunization programme) the total quantity of available vaccines from the first batch were equally split into two parts to roll out the first and the second dose vaccination accordingly. The second batch of the vaccines is going to help expand the coverage and high-risk target populations.

Priority groups

As per the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan, the vaccination priority groups include high-risk population groups such as: 1) health workers; 2) the elderly; and 3) people with co-morbidities.

Challenges

As in all countries, COVID-19 vaccination has been a novel process in Syria and several challenges were faced since the onset of the vaccination campaign.

As of August 2021, vaccines supplied under COVAX ensures the vaccination of less than 1% of the population of Syria. In addition, bilateral donations add a further 2% to the vaccination rate, still Syria risks not reaching the national target of 20% by December 2021.

Due to lack of knowledge and public trust in the COVID-19 vaccine coupled with limited demand creation efforts, initially there was a visible hesitancy among the target population – even among health workers - to accept a COVID-19 vaccine. While the national promotional campaign was suspended at the start of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, with more vaccines becoming available, with community-level efforts for demand generation, with more people receiving vaccines without severe side-effects, public confidence in vaccines has gradually increased.

Joint efforts and way forward

WHO and partners reached out to health care workers at health facilities and through medical syndicates to increase vaccine uptake and confidence.

WHO and its partners – GAVI and UNICEF – worked together to secure the second batch of COVAX-facilitated vaccines in August and expecting consequent batches in the near future, with the estimated COVAX vaccines available to cover approximately 6% of the population.

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