

# Memorandum of the COVAX audit report in Algeria

The attached audit report sets out the findings of the audit of the support provided by the COVAX Facility and its implementation by the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform (MSPRH) of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, including the immunisation programmes supported by COVAX.

The audit work was carried out by Gavi's programme audit team in May 2023, and focused on the COVID-19 response activities implemented by the Direction Générale de la Prévention et de la Promotion de la Santé, the Direction Générale de la Pharmacie et des Equipements de Santé, and the Institut Pasteur d'Algérie from 1 January 2021 to 30 April 2023.

The main highlights of the summary of the audit report (pages 2 and 3), which are described in detail in the body of the report, are as follows:

1. Overall, the management of COVAX support needs significant improvement (page 2) which means that "internal controls, governance, and risk management practices have some weaknesses in design or operating effectiveness such that, there is not yet reasonable assurance that the programmes' objectives will be met." The audit identified nine weaknesses in the following areas: (i) Governance and organisational performance; (ii) Vaccine management; and (iii) Monitoring and evaluation.
2. The main findings included the following:
  - a. 223,200 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were wasted after remaining on hold at Algiers international airport due to the administrative authorisation not being timely secured;
  - b. No Effective Vaccine Management study was carried out ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
  - c. Around three-quarters of the COVID-19 vaccine doses sent by the COVAX Facility were wasted due to them shelf-expiring.

The findings of the programme audit were shared with the MSPRH in a letter dated 22 October 2024. Gavi currently awaits the commitment of the MSPRH to take the necessary steps to address the identified shortcomings and problems.

Geneva, November 2024

# COVAX AUDIT REPORT

THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MAY 2023

CEPI



## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1. Audit ratings by category

Section*	Finding	Risk*	Page
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Governance and organisational performance</b>		
4.1.1	Lack of a National Health development Plan	■	10
4.1.2	Insufficient coordination of COVID-19 vaccination activities	■	11
4.1.3	Administrative bottlenecks resulting in vaccine being wasted	■	13
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Vaccine management</b>		
4.2.1	No effective vaccine management study	■	14
4.2.2	Inadequate management of cold chain equipment	■	15
4.2.3	Absence of COVID-19 vaccine computerised tools at decentralised level	■	16
4.2.4	Significant losses of COVAX vaccine doses	■	17
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>		
4.3.1	Quality control of immunisation data was not evidenced	■	18
4.3.2	Inadequate supervision over the vaccination campaign	■	19

\* The audit ratings attributed to each section of the full report, the level of risk assigned to each audit finding and the level of priority for each recommendation, are defined on Annex 2 of the full report.

### 1.2. Overall audit opinion

**Needs significant improvement** which means that “internal controls, governance, and risk management practices have some weaknesses in design or operating effectiveness such that, there is not yet reasonable assurance that the programmes’ objectives will be met.”

So as to reduce the risks associated with the above findings, the team raised 9 recommendations of which 3 (33%) were categorised as critical.

### 1.3. Executive Summary

This report sets out the results of the COVAX audit conducted in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Algeria) in 2023, covering various aspects of the management of resources from the COVAX mechanism, provided to the country in its fight against the COVID-19 epidemic (in particular vaccines and cold chain equipment). The weaknesses identified during this audit call for corrective action and, in the areas concerned, the continuation of current efforts.

#### *Governance and organisational performance*

The COVID-19 pandemic, which called for a complex emergency response, highlighted certain vulnerabilities in the national healthcare system. In the absence of a national health development plan, the necessary framework for decision-making, coordination and operationalisation of the coordination and health response to the pandemic was not sufficiently defined.

In this context, coordination and communication between the various actors involved in the response were sub-optimal, reflecting silos and inadequate cooperation with international technical partners.

Finally, the audit team noted the loss of **223,200** vaccine doses, which had been held up at Algiers airport since 26 September 2022 due to the lack of a “temporary use authorisation”, which the Ministry of the Pharmaceutical Industry failed to issue on time.

#### *Vaccine management*

At the time of the COVAX audit, Algeria had not undertaken an effective vaccine management (EVM) study, covering the various aspects of the cold chain, as well as the logistics of vaccines and other ancillary items at each level of the supply chain (central, intermediate and operational). This gap therefore necessitated a country-wide inventory of cold chain equipment at a time when the national immunisation teams were already heavily engaged.

In addition, cold chain equipment acquired via the COVAX mechanism was not used optimally, to its full potential. For example, the five ultra-cold chain freezers (-80°C) were not operated at less than -20°C because no COVID-19 vaccines requiring ultra-cold temperatures were sourced by Algeria. Also, the walk-in cold room procured using COVAX delivery support funds had only just been put into operation at the time of the audit, and had therefore never been used to store vaccines. Furthermore, there was no plan in place in order to redeploy these equipment units.

Moreover, the lack of computerised tools for managing vaccine stocks outside the central level, and the absence of a systematic and rapid mechanism for reporting vaccine data from health establishments in the wilayas, meant that it was not possible to obtain a real-time overview of what vaccines were available and of future needs. As a result, subsequent orders from COVAX or other supply mechanisms could not be accurately determined based on reliable, up-to-date data, in order to limit overstocking and, ultimately the wastage of vaccines.

In this respect, the audit team noted significant losses of shelf-expired COVID-19 vaccines – a total of 12,003,565 out of the 16,149,600 doses received from COVAX expiring, i.e. an effective wastage rate of 74%. These losses were mainly explained by the fall in demand for the COVID-19 vaccine.

#### *Monitoring and evaluation*

The audit team noted the absence of systematic controls across the various levels where data points on COVID-19 vaccination were collected and aggregated, with the aim of strengthening the quality and reliability of this data.

In addition, there was a lack of supervision to monitor the handling, management and data quality practices at the various levels of the health pyramid, which were deficient during the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.