

A Success Story - Paediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign:

Primary schools in Punjab showed complete solidarity with the USAID-supported Paediatric COVID-19 vaccination campaign

USAID - JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.

In August 2022, the Government of Pakistan accepted USAID support to undertake a COVID-19 paediatric vaccination campaign. USAID's assistance included providing Pfizer vaccines under the COVAX facility; medical supplies, i.e., syringes; and the cost incurred for operationalizing the COVID-19 paediatric vaccination campaign. In phase 1, the campaign was launched in five districts of Punjab, eight districts of Sindh, and Islamabad Capital Territory. Selection of districts was determined by the disease burden in the area. The paediatric population included children with 5–11 years of age, and the campaign reached through schools, madrassas, informal educational institutes; street children were vaccinated by mobile outreach vaccination teams. This campaign provided protection to the future generation from the COVID-19 pandemic, who if left unvaccinated could act as potential carriers of infection. The campaign was conducted in two rounds: round 1 was rolled out from September 19 to September 25, and round 2 continued from October 31 to November 5, 2022.

During this paediatric vaccination campaign, the IHSS-SD Activity provided financial support for the human resources, including district coordinators, provincial coordinators, supervisors, social mobilizers, and vaccinators who participated as active health workers. The IHSS-SD Activity team also coordinated closely with the EPI office in Punjab and the designated EPI focal person to sort out the types and modalities of payments required for implementing the campaign.

Multan is one of the five districts of Punjab where the paediatric vaccination campaign was rolled out. It is Pakistan's seventh largest city and the major cultural, religious, and economic center of southern Punjab with a population of more than 1.9 million.

Government schools in Multan actively participated in the campaign and worked closely with the Department of Education and Department of Primary & Secondary Health, Punjab to inform teachers and parents about the campaign and counsel the children for COVID-19 vaccination doses. The campaign also reached out to one of the government's schools in a lower-income population area of Awan Pura; Madina Public School that is offering free

education to 950 enrolled students of grades 1 through 10. The school made a record by providing COVID-19 vaccination doses to all 530 students aged 5–11 years at school and showed complete solidarity with the government’s initiative.

The principal at school, Mrs. Zahida Iqbal, shared, “Before the start of the campaign, a first-level supervisor and social mobilizer from the Department of Health visited our school and handed over the information and education material with key messages about the COVID-19 pediatric vaccination to us.

After knowing the protective advantages of the COVID-19 paediatric vaccination, we further disseminated the messages to all the parents of eligible children and informed them about the campaign dates. Parents cooperated with us, and most of them willingly shared their consent for the vaccination. On the vaccination day, a Women Medical Officer and District AEFI Focal Person visited the children and provided counselling for vaccination. As a result of these mutual efforts by the Department of Health, school administration, and parents, the children were mentally and physically prepared for immunization without any fear. All children aged 5–11 were vaccinated in both phases of the paediatric vaccination campaign. I am proud that our school has been contributing free education and now has facilitated free COVID-19 vaccinations.”



Mrs. Zahida Iqbal
Principal, Madina Public School, Multan

By the end of the both phases of the COVID-19 pediatric vaccination campaign, more than 1,547,502 children have been vaccinated for COVID-19 in Multan District with 96 percentage of coverage.

Reaching out to children aged 5–11 for the COVID-19 vaccination is a sensitive work affected by literacy rate, awareness, access and cultural practices. The real educators, like the Principal, Mrs. Zahida Iqbal, are playing a supportive role in their communities, connecting health workers and end beneficiaries, and safeguarding the health of communities.



The plaque at the school offering free education



A child from a primary class is being vaccinated during the vaccination campaign at Madina Public School, Multan, September 21, 2022.