

*National Immunization Technical Advisory
Groups (NITAGs)*

Role and Mandate

Support and partnership in African Region

Outline



NITAG Mandate



Global framework



Status of NITAG Establishment in AFRO NITAG Basic functional indicators



NITAG Basic functional indicators and functionality in WHO African Region



Opportunity & Key challenges



Way forward for nitags strengthening

What is a NITAG?

- A body of **national experts** that provide **technical** and **scientific** guidance to the government (the MoH and/or the EPI) on immunization policy, norms, and practices.
- An **independent** scientific advisory group.
 - MoH officials/NIP specialists should **not** be *core* members. Rather should serve as *ex-officio* members.

NITAG mandate

- Conduct the best possible review of scientific evidence
- Bring credibility through expertise, minimize pressure from outside interest groups, and eliminate real or apparent personal conflicts of interest
- Provide timely, evidence-based recommendations on vaccine policy

NITAG mandate

- Create **standards** for vaccination schedules, vaccine procurement and storage, routes of administration, dosing, and contraindications.
- Review and provide **recommendations to improve NIP policies**, including data collection, quality of services provided, and vaccination coverage.
- Vaccine impact: **Advise on the monitoring of the impact** of technical recommendations including vaccine effectiveness and impact
- VPD vaccine preventable diseases surveillance: **Support the creation of standards for surveillance of VPDs, and standard operating procedures and protocols** for disease reporting and specimen collection.
- VPD vaccine preventable diseases elimination: **Support an independent process to document and verify evidence during the stages of VPD elimination**, e.g., measles, rubella, congenital rubella syndrome.
- Anticipation of the **National Immunization Programme's needs**: Monitor trends in VPDs, identify research gaps and guide the NIP in leveraging existing resources or creating partnerships to address the identified needs. Review the progress in the development of new vaccines and the potential for their inclusion into the NIP.

NITAG versus ICC

Domains	ICC	NITAG
Scope	Implementing body, mandated for operational coordination, financial resources management and fund-raising.	Gather, generate, and analyze evidence on all VPDs for policy and programme decisions.
Target	Mainly EPI-focused, may be extended to child health.	All vaccines and immunization topics including for adults, adolescents, and special groups.
Membership	Minister of Health is often the chair. Members from MOH departments, technical, and donor agencies.	MOH represented by the EPI Manager. National experts from technical and scientific disciplines related to VPDs and immunization.
Role in decisions	Executive role, makes decisions.	Consultative role (does not make decisions). Issue technical recommendations (advice) to national authorities.
Other	A coordination body.	Not a coordination, regulation, or implementation body.

WHO 3-level Immunization Policy Framework

NITAGs as key player and end users

- **National** Policies and Strategies
- **Prioritize** problems and define optimal solutions
- **Monitor national** programme and impact



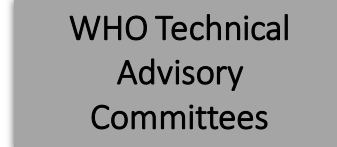
National



- Regional policies & strategies
- Identify and **set regional priorities**
- **Monitor** regional progress

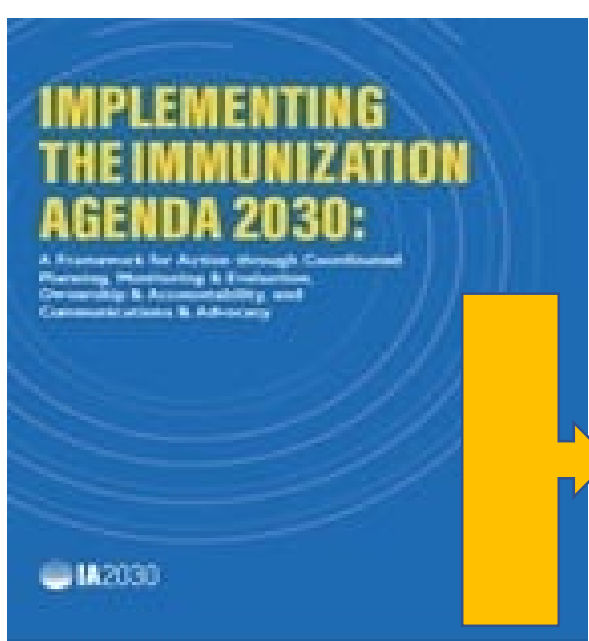
Regional

- **Technical** analysis and guidance
- **Standards**
- Global research
- Vaccine design






- **Global policy recommendations** and strategies
- Support regional/ national challenges

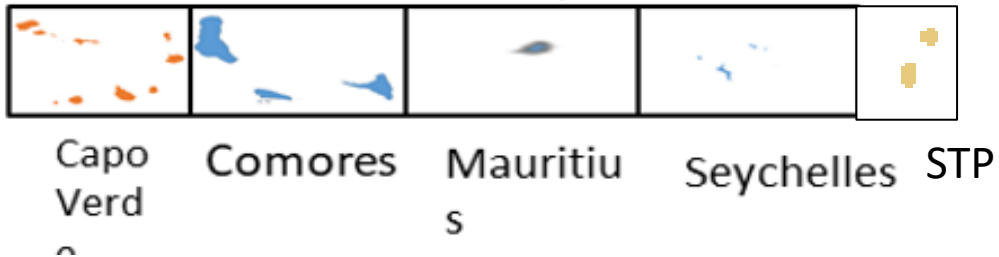
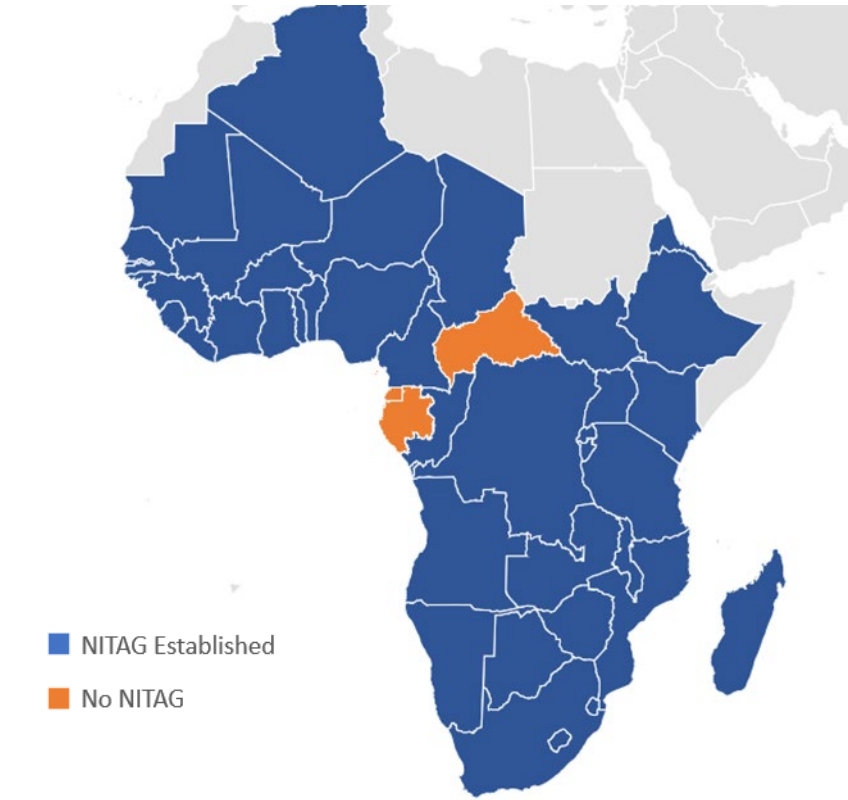
Global



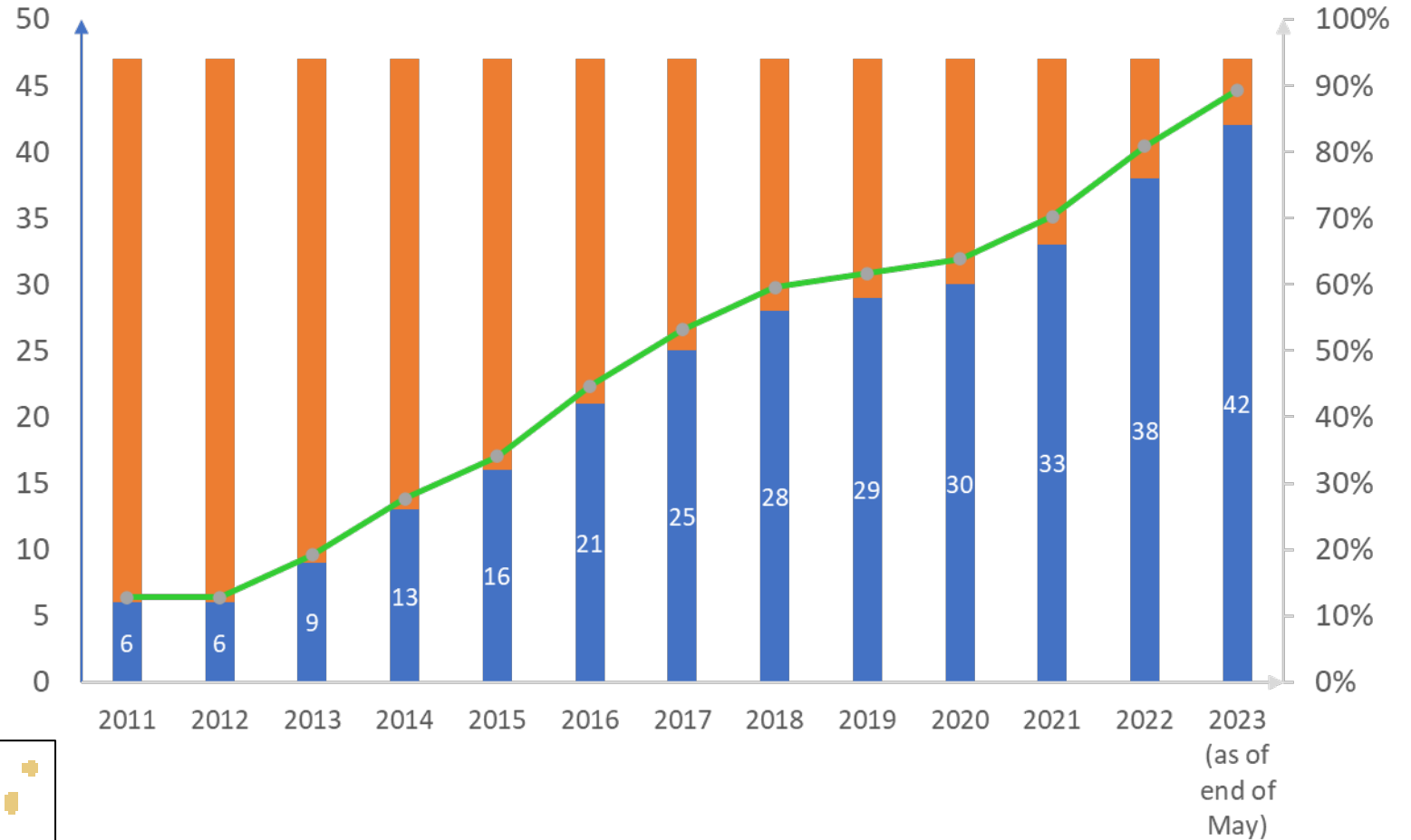
Tailored country support, coordinated through WHO and UNICEF regional offices, and leveraging national and regional technical advisory groups (e.g. NITAGs, RITAGs) will build upon guidance from SAGE to help ministries of health prioritize

COUNTRY IMPLEMENTATION OF IA2030		
Commitment	<i>To achieve and sustain national and regional immunization goals & targets</i>	
Differentiated IA2030 Priorities	According to country context (e.g.. coverage & equity, hesitancy, integration of services, outbreaks, quality assured vaccine supply, sustainability)	
Advocacy & Communications	National communication and advocacy platforms	
 Coordinated Operational Planning	 Monitoring & Evaluation	 Ownership & Accountability
Tools & Structures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Health Strategy National Immunization Strategy Prioritized operational plans informed by experts (e.g., NITAGs, RITAGs, SAGE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IA2030 IG indicators, Global and Regional SP Objective indicators, and additional SP Objective indicators selected by countries tailored to needs and context Scorecards or dashboards to measure national/ subnational & partner/CSO progress Monitoring frameworks (e.g., National Health Observatory; WHO-UNICEF JRF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHA representation Regional Committee representation NITAGs ICCs/ HSCCs Civil Society platforms
Processes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination through country structures with inclusion of CSOs (e.g. Stakeholder engagement groups, Gavi Joint Appraisal process, Health Sector Coordinating Committee) 	Monitoring, evaluation and action cycles (including effective feedback loops) at all levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor: measure and review IA2030 indicator data on a regular basis Evaluate: assess progress using tailored indicator scorecards and identify potential root causes of success and failure Act: recommend actions for implementation, resource allocation and policy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes to increase accountability of government, partners & CSOs (e.g., Joint Appraisal in Gavi countries, National Accountability Frameworks) Routine opportunities for consultative engagement organized by Working Groups

NITAG established in 42 WHO African countries, (as of June 2023)



Trend of NITAG establishment in AFRO



■ # Established NITAGS
 ■ No NITAG
 —●— Proportion

Indicators monitored annually by WHO

1 Legal or administrative basis

2 Formal terms of reference

3 Disclosure of interests

4 5 areas of expertise

5 One meeting a year

6 Agenda circulated one week before meeting

Added in 2021

One recommendation issued

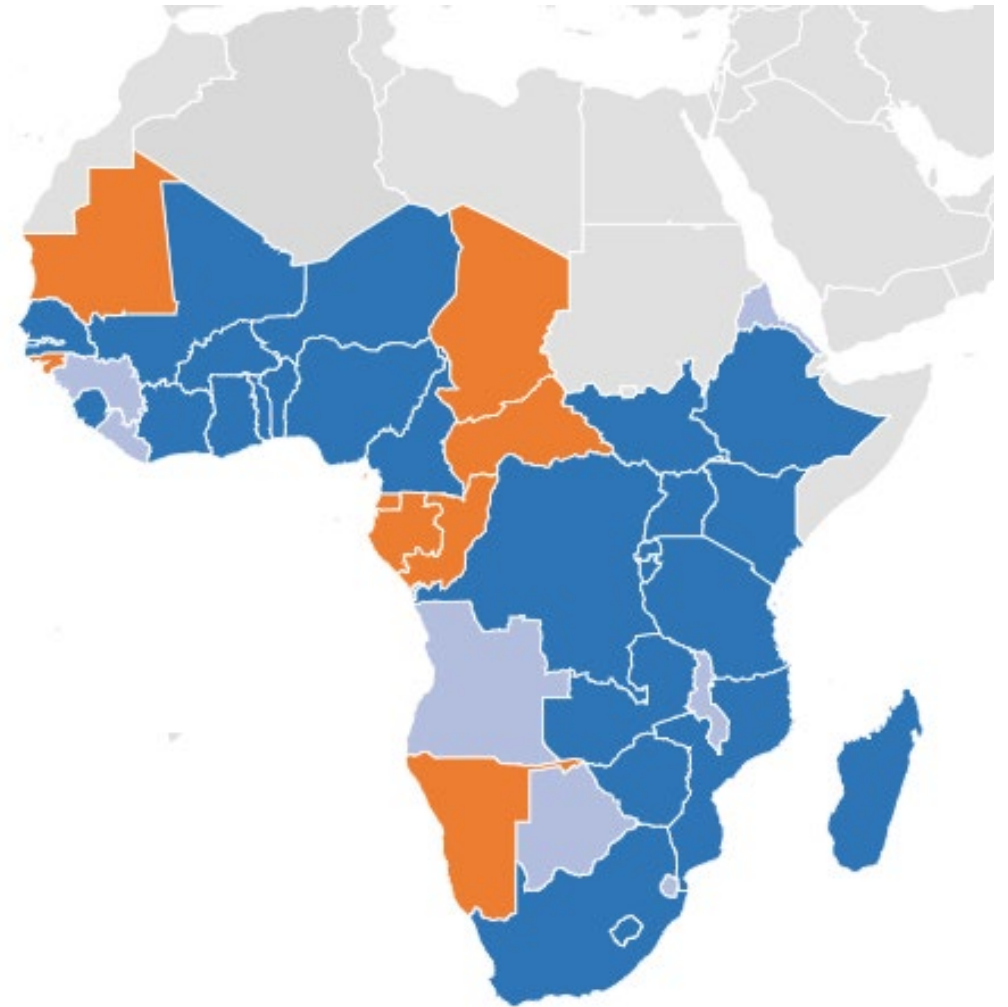
Recommendation adopted by the
MoH

*These indicators do not guarantee the functionality of the NITAG but are the minimum set of indicators to monitor progress at the global level.

*More in-depth performance evaluation tools for review of NITAGs process, functionality and output are [available](#).

NITAG Functionality in WHO African Region

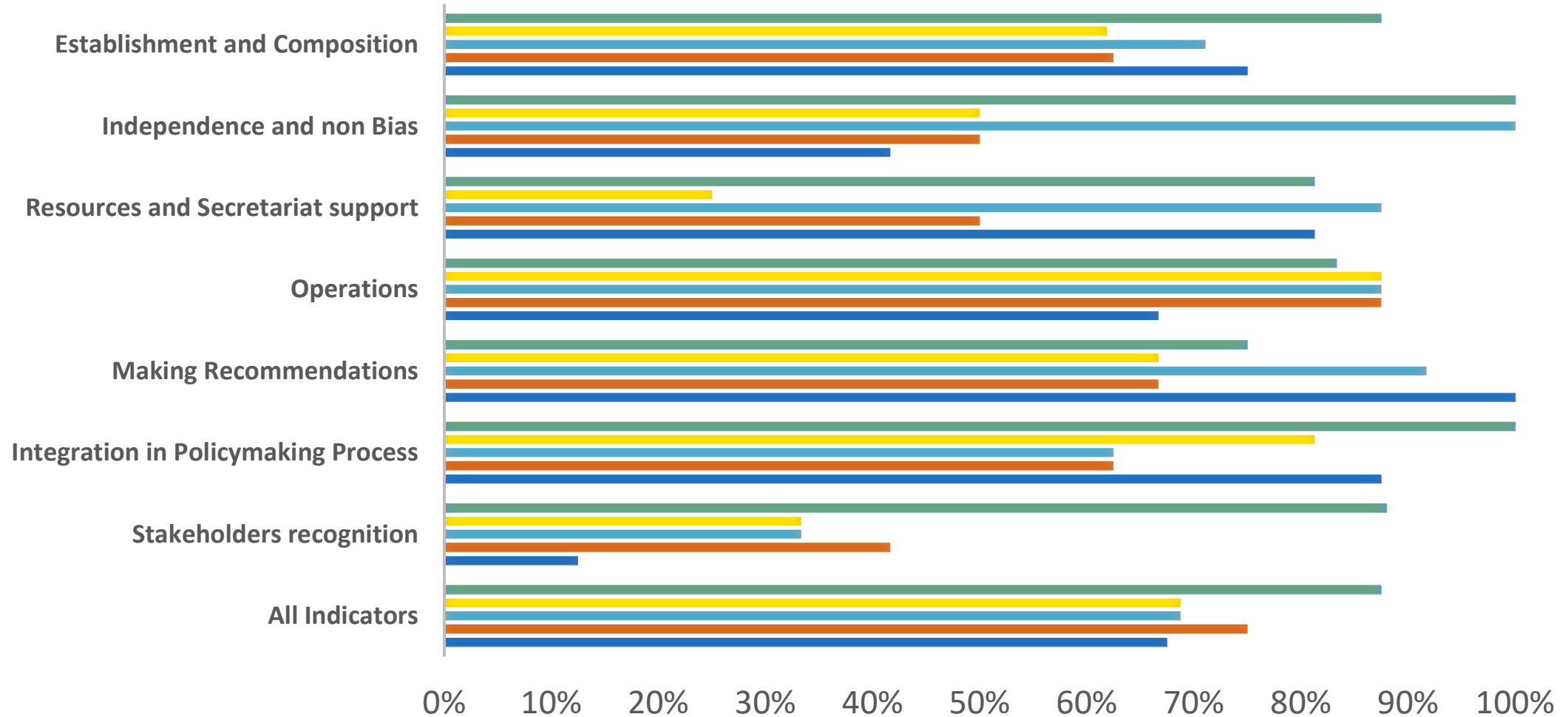
30 countries in African region met the 6 basic criteria in 2022;
72% of the population covered by a functional NITAG



- Met all six criteria
- No NITAG
- Six criteria not met
- No Data

NITAGs Maturity level for the 7 indicators in 5 AFR countries

■ Ethiopia ■ Uganda ■ Burkina Faso ■ Zambia ■ Tanzania



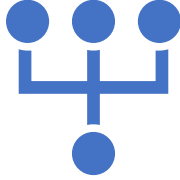
Opportunities & Perspectives



Multi Partner support synergizing efforts

TFGH, CDC, WAHOO, NISH for Capacity building and EIDM

Financial support (GAVI, CDC, WAHOO, WHO, Data Gathering: support of the librarian through the NISH help desk

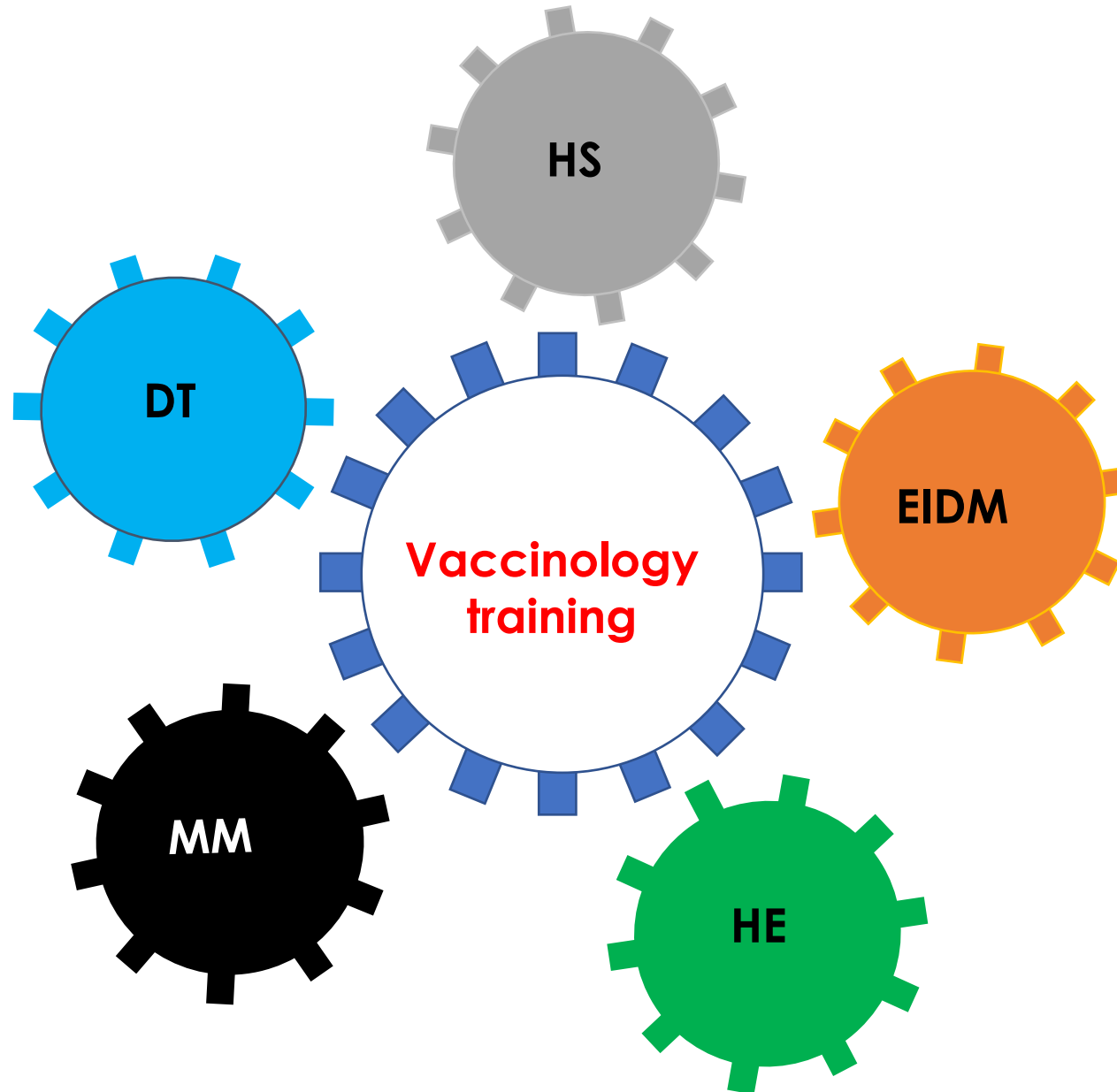


Assessment of NITAGs to identify improvement actions and pro-actively addressing support needed from partners



Formalize the networking

NISH support package to NITAG's



- HS: Health Systems
- EIDM: Evidence Informed Decision Making
- HE: Health Economics
- MM: Mathematical Modelling
- DT: Design Thinking

Complements

- Webinars
- Library guides
- EGMs
- Helpdesk
- Research stays
- Research

1st Annual Vaccinology Course for NITAGs 22-29 July 2022

- NITAG mode of Functioning and EtR training conducted for NITAG in:
 - Gambia (dec 21);
 - Ghana (july 21);
 - Burkina Faso (2022);
 - (Benin, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Congo) in Cotonou (may 2023)
- External assessment 12 countries, november 2021 (WAHO, WHO)
- SAGE attendance
- AFRO, NISH and GNN digest, Webinars on topics of interest
- External assessment using the NITAG maturity assessment tool (NMAT) in [Burkina Faso](#), [Algeria](#)



34 NITAGs members:
Madagascar
Sierra Leone
Niger
Kenya
Angola



2nd Annual Vaccinology Course for NITAGs 03 to 07 July, 2023

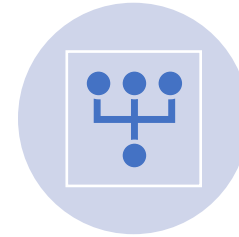
- 35 NITAGs members
- Benin
- Liberia
- Burundi
- Botswana
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia



Challenges



Limited expansion of NITAGs membership in certain domains: health economics, social sciences, Immunologist, modelling.



Sub-optimal support from secretariat



Funding of NITAGs highly dependent on partners



Lack of reliable local data availability



Insufficient visibility of NITAGs versus their importance in the decision making process

Ways forward for NITAG's strengtheni ng in the AFR region

- Involvement of NITAG in the National Immunization strategic planning process and monitoring the implementation
- NITAG workplan fully integrated in the to be in National Immunization Strategic plan for dedicated resources allocation (financial)
- Strengthen the NITAG secretariat for efficient implementation of NITAG workplan
- Promote the use of NITAG Maturity assessment tool (NMAT) to guide improvement
- Capacity strengthening of NITAGs through vaccinology, GNN, experience sharing
- Advocate with Senior management of the MOH on the role of NITAGs and their benefits
- Create visibility of NITAG within country (Web page etc...) to show case their work
- Setting an African NITAGs Network to strengthen experience sharing and peer to peer learning

Thanks Merci
Obrigado