

# Integration: Leveraging Immunization for Health System Strengthening

**Effective immunization integration can help strengthen health systems, providing more efficient and accessible health care for women and children.**

Immunization programs are among the most successful and important public health programs across the globe, reaching an estimated 85% of the world’s children [1]. Vaccinations delivered in early infancy provide an opportunity for critical newborn developmental screening. The success of immunization programs means that they can also become an important platform for delivering additional health resources and services to address health issues such as malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies, malaria, access to family planning, and early infant diagnostics for HIV.

## The Integration Continuum

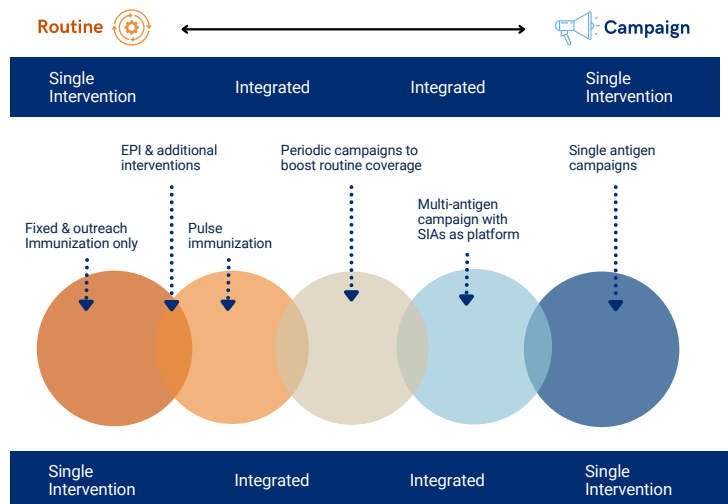
There are many possible permutations of integrated health services. The WHO recommends that integration be viewed as a continuum of potential options, rather than as zero-sum options of “integrated” and “not integrated.” [1]

There are many different factors that need to be taken into account to determine the optimal strategy for integration of immunization services such as:

- Selecting interventions that can be feasibly integrated;
- Coordination across program levels;
- Ensuring adequate training and workload for health workers;
- Ensuring the participation of community based organizations, leaders, and volunteers.

**Integration** – The sharing of all or specific campaign components or functions by a specific program addressing a disease or health need with the broader health system and ongoing delivery of interventions through general health services.

## Continuum of Immunization Strategies



## Integration and Community Acceptance of Vaccines

The co-delivery of immunizations with services that are prioritized by the target community can improve vaccine acceptability. With vaccine hesitancy becoming a rising global threat, community engagement should serve as a cornerstone to the implementation and planning of health services. Co-delivery of vaccines with priority services can also improve job satisfaction for frontline health workers by allowing workers to provide the range of services desired by community members.

In an investigation of 30 years of polio campaigns in Ethiopia, India, and Nigeria, researchers found that in all study countries, community hesitancy towards vaccines could be mitigated when health systems demonstrated responsiveness to the community's priorities and needs [2].

- Among pastoralist communities in East Africa, co-delivery of polio vaccines along with high-priority services like veterinary care, improved community acceptance of the vaccines [3].
- In Ethiopia and Nigeria, oral polio vaccine was increasingly delivered alongside Vitamin A, insecticide-treated nets, and deworming tablets, and CORE group volunteers engaged broadly in child health education.
- One of major challenges in the final years of polio elimination in India was resistance from vaccine hesitant groups. In Uttar Pradesh, polio vaccine acceptance was improved by co-packaging with other basic healthcare services, such as routine check-ups and essential medications, as part of India's 107 Block Plan.

## Evidence from the VoICE Compendium

Additional information and resources available at <https://immunizationevidence.org/>

**Immunization services can be integrated with family planning services to strengthen healthcare access for children and parents.**

The total number of **women accessing family planning services increased by 14%** when routine immunization for children and family planning services for parents were integrated across two rural districts in Malawi [4]

**Increased integration can improve both immunization coverage and uptake of child health interventions.**

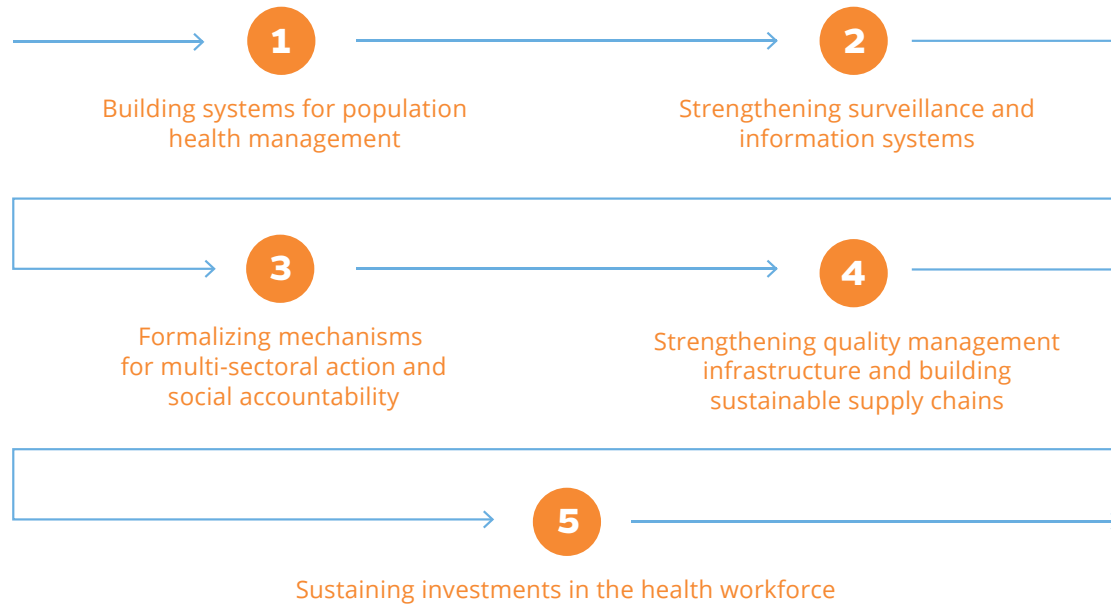
When vitamin A supplementation was integrated into polio vaccination campaigns in Angola, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo, **coverage exceeded 90% for uptake of both services** [5]

**Immunization programs provide opportunities for cost-sharing and external funding when used alongside other health interventions.**

When used as part of a treatment cluster **vaccination programs may improve the financial sustainability and affordability of healthcare programs in LMICs** [6]

# Integration in the COVID-19 Era: Opening New Doors

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may present an opportunity for new ways of working across health campaigns, including promising applications of integration [7].



## References

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