

National Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group – October 7, 2021 - Meeting Minutes

Date:	October 7th, 2021	
Location:	WEBEX	
Participants:	Ioanna Kotsioni - Babel Day Center; Lefteris Konstantopoulos - UNHCR CBI Unit; Athina Vrakatseli - KEM; Lydia Bolani- UNHCR, Protection Unit; Verónica Lopes da Silva - Khora Asylum Support Team; Maro Verli- IRC-Refugee Info; Pisti Xanthakou- MFC Athens- HRC; Theodora Koustoumpardi- Caritas Hellas; Maria Zygouri- Hellenic Red Cross; Ioannis Mameletzis- WHO; Vangelis Tsilis- UNHCR; Marco Notarbartolo di Sciara- UNHCR; Marina Tomara- ACCMR – CNI; Yakinthi Menoudakou - ICRC; Magdalena Tosheva- IOM,	
Chairs:	Alexandra Zavvos (Solidarity Now); Valia Gkeka (UNHCR)	
Agenda	<p><u>Agenda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Minute Meetings • COVID-19 Vaccination Update; COVID-19 vaccination Communication for children • Developments in relation to the Cash assistance programme (CBI) • CwC Group Updates • AoB <p>***Minutes from the Vaccination Taskforce Meeting on 2 November 2021 are included in the end of the document</p>	
Talking points	Discussion	Action Points
Review of last meeting Minutes	Last meeting minutes were reviewed with no comments/edits from partners.	Minutes reviewed
Vaccination/HwG Update	<p>UNHCR Public Health Focal Point gave the group an update on Vaccination Campaign overall</p> <p>Ongoing Vaccination of PoC Rate of vaccination is Sites is increasing; however no official data of the numbers of vaccinated POCs is available. Actors participating in the Health WG advocate with EODY in order to receive more data on vaccination of asylum seekers and refugees.</p>	Please share any issues accessing PAMKA with CwC coordinators or

	<p>A new Law passed on 29.09.2021 in the Parliament (Law 4839/2021) regarding the vaccination of vulnerable social groups. The Law foresees (Article 31) the competence of NGOs and Municipalities to be included in the National Programme for Vaccinations against COVID-19. A joint ministerial decision (JMD) specifying the details will be issued by the Ministers of Health, Digital Governance, Labour and Social Affairs, and Migration and Asylum. In addition, the Law (Article 32) provides for the protection of undocumented migrants from deportation and forced return during their participation in the vaccination exercise. Undocumented migrants will be issued a Temporary Social Security Registration Number (PAMKA) for the exclusive use of the vaccination for COVID-19, the receipt of the relevant certificate and for the receipt of COVID-19 self-tests.</p> <p>For asylum-seekers and migrants in Pre-removal detention centers (PRDCs) a PAMKA will not be issued and vaccinations will be carried out by special EODY teams.</p> <p>Vaccination Certification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Those residing and vaccinated in RICs and sites will receive the vaccination certificate from the management of the accommodation facility (the technical details are expected to be provided through an official document, pending) 2) Those residing and vaccinated in urban areas but not holding an AFM and Taxisnet can now receive their certificate, not only in KEPs (Citizens’ Service Center) but also in KEMs (Municipal Centers for the Integration of Migrants) and other offices. <p>Vaccination of children</p> <p>Children above 12 years old are also eligible for vaccination. According to the National Vaccination Plan, people between 12-18 years old, will be vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine which requires two doses. All children, regardless of whether they live in Sites or in the urban environment will be referred to general vaccination centers.</p> <p>Ioanna Kotsioni from Babel noted that they are running an information campaign to address vaccine hesitancy as rate of vaccinations remains still quite low. Vangelis Tsilis, UNHCR Public Health Associate, suggested that the COVID-19 Taskforce of the CwC WG prepares an information campaign targeting children and their parents and encouraging them to get vaccinated. Babel’s team working on psychosocial support has already designed a messaging campaign and is willing to contribute to a joint relevant campaign.</p>	<p>directly with PH coordinator</p> <p>The Taskforce to have a meeting in order to discuss components of a</p>
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	<p>Dr Mameletzis from WHO noted that the new Head of EODY, Dr Theoklis Zaoutis, is a Pediatrician, Professor of Pediatrics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania, so he is very sensitive and knowledgeable in children’s health. In addition, Dr Mameletzis proposed that an EODY representative specializing in pediatrics is invited in the preparation of the messaging/ campaign for the children.</p> <p>Maro Verli from Refugee.Info added that they continue collecting testimonies of vaccinated asylum seekers and refugees while they are also working on a post with Q&As shared by Dr Mameletzis, which is expected to be shared at the end of October/ beginning of November. Moreover, Maro informed all participants that new measures for the prevention of COVID-19 were announced the previous days, separating the country in different zones (red, orange, yellow and green) based on epidemiological indicators used by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The epidemiological map will be updated weekly reflecting each Region's risk level. The relevant information with all recently announced measures is available at the Refugee.Info website here.</p> <p>Ioanna Kotsioni from Babel added that their team has noticed a COVID-19 fatigue among people which they link to the continuous changes in the preventive measures and the discourse concerning vaccination hesitancy. Maria Zygouri from the Hellenic Red Cross reported tensions among the communities in relation to the vaccination and the compliance with preventive measures.</p> <p>Magdalena Tosheva, IOM SMS Deputy Coordinator, informed participants that IOM teams in Sites work very closely with EODY teams in initiatives relevant both to general information provision as well as procedural specificities. Visual material is used (videos) for raising awareness as well broadcasts rooms (whatsapp groups) and community meetings. These efforts have contributed significantly to overcoming of vaccination reluctance and in some of the Sites the majority of the population is vaccinated. There are no huge discrepancies in the percentage of people wishing to vaccinate among Sites; however, it is observed that in Sites closer to city centers (like Kavala and Serres) asylum seekers are also addressing Vaccination centers outside the camps in order to get vaccinated. There are steadily positive trends both regarding the willingness of people to vaccinate as well as regarding the capacity of EODY to respond to the needs. Finally, in December an event will take place presenting short stories and videos with the theme “Living in times of COVID”.</p>	<p>campaign for children.</p>
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<p>UNHCR’s Cash Programme Closure</p>	<p>Magdalena Tosheva, IOM SMS Deputy Coordinator, shared with participants important updates regarding the Sites. As of 1 October, the provision of catering has started in all sites. According to an announcement by the Ministry of Migration (available here) eligible asylum seekers will receive cash assistance at the end of October, when the Cash assistance programme will be re-initiated (following the handover of the programme from UNHCR to the MMA). At the same time, IOM is advocating for the coverage of other basic needs of asylum seekers (apart from food) however this issue is still pending with the MMA.</p> <p>Contrary to the Sites, no similar modality (catering) has been put in place for asylum seekers staying in ESTIA apartments.</p> <p>Lydia Bolani, UNHCR Senior Protection Associate, noted that a new Ministerial Decision on cash assistance was issued on 29.9.2021. According to the MD, beneficiaries of the cash assistance program are: a) adults asylum seekers residing in formal accommodation facilities (and the family members), and b) beneficiaries of international protection who when they reach adulthood they reside in accommodation facilities for UACS and they are placed in state accommodation facilities for three months post placement. The cash assistance is provided at the end of each month for the previous month.</p> <p>Beneficiaries must present themselves for certification purposes according the instructions of the RIS, which is the Implementor of the cash program. The implementor is informed monthly for the legal status of the beneficiaries by the Asylum Service. For asylum seekers who are not accommodated in formal facilities, the application for cash assistance also constitutes an application for accommodation. In this case RIS will refer the asylum seeker to an accommodation facility and cash assistance is initiated post-placement. The amounts remain the same (75/150 euros for one person in catered/not catered facility, 135/270 euros for two persons, 160/320 for three persons, 210/420 euros for four persons and above).</p> <p>Cash assistance will be discontinued in the following cases: a) when RIS is informed of the issuance (not notification) of a positive or of a final negative decision; b) when RIS is informed of explicit or implicit withdrawal; c) in case beneficiaries have abandoned the accommodation facility without having informed the managers or without prior permission; d) after 12 consecutive monthly payments; if beneficiaries are still eligible for cash assistance they need to re-apply; e) in case of a serious violation of the internal regulation of a site or ESTIA accommodation; f) in case beneficiaries have concealed own financial means; g) in case the beneficiaries are employed and their income is equal or above 50% of the minimum</p>	
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	<p>guaranteed income. The cash assistance will be discontinued partially, if a) the beneficiaries are employed, and their income is below 50% of the minimum guaranteed income; b) in case of damages or overconsumption of utilities in the accommodation facility. Beneficiaries of international protection whose accommodation has been extended on vulnerability grounds will also benefit from cash assistance for the same period.</p>	
<p>CwC WG members' update</p>	<p>The CwC Group discussed also about ways to disseminate more effectively, among NGOs and refugee communities, information about educational and vocational programmes as well as other opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>Marina Tomara from ACCMR and CNI noted that ACCMR uploads all relevant information on their Facebook page and invited all participants to ensure that they are in the ACCMR mailing lists receiving relevant information and invitations.</p> <p>Similarly, GCR Helpdesk Facebook page uploaded on 20 October an invitation for expression of interest for people interested to work in a large supermarket chain and in a large construction company in Attica.</p> <p>Generation 2.0 uploads every Thursday new Job adverts on their website at website both in the humanitarian field as well as in other various fields.</p> <p>The Medecins Sans Frontiere released leaflets regarding their initiative "Covid - 19 Sensitization Project", aiming to facilitate access of vulnerable people residing in the Athens urban area, and regardless of their legal documents, to the vaccine against SARS-Cov-2 (leaflets are attached in the e-mail).</p> <p>The Multifunctional Centre for Refugees of the Hellenic Red Cross in Athens organizes a "Jewelry Making Workshop for teenagers". The meetings will take place once per week and participants will be able to develop their creativity, learn new skills and have fun while making new friends! The group is open to all teenagers (aged 13-18). For more information and in order to register for the program call at +30 210 5140440 & +30 693 4724893 (Whats App), Mon. - Fr., 08:30 - 16:00. The ACCMR announcement is available here.</p>	
	<p>Participants during the Taskforce meeting: Pisti Xanthakou- MFC Athens- HRC; Athina Vrakatseli - KEM; Maro Verli- IRC-Refugee Info; Marco Notarbartolo di Sciarra- UNHCR; Vangelis Tsilis- UNHCR; Ioannis Mameletzis-</p>	

<p>Minutes from the Vaccination Taskforce Meeting, 2 November 2021</p>	<p>WHO; Mara Pagona- Metadrasi; Daphne Basta- Metadrasi; Nizar Amri- DRC; Alexandra Zavvos- Solidarity Now; Valia Gkeka- UNHCR.</p> <p>According to preliminary data shared by the MMA some estimated 9,000 people have been vaccinated in Sites and ESTIA apartments (appr. 4,000+ in Sites and appr. 5,000+ in ESTIA apartments while 1,200 people have been infected by COVID-19. No data on vaccinated recognised beneficiaries of international protection or undocumented migrants is available yet.</p> <p>Participants discussed the need to collect information (through a Survey) regarding the barriers to vaccinations. Dr Mameletzis emphasized the importance of collecting more information on the possible barriers [i.e. health literacy; risk perception (COVID won't kill me); convenience (times/hours/place not helpful for me to get vaccinated); administrative obstacles (e.g. I don't have an AMKA); legal status]. The feedback from partners through CwC working group or other working groups has not been sufficient to identify the main barriers, whether they are predominantly practical or related to fear/hesitancy/misinformation. In addition, the more information (data-driven) we have on the target population [age/gender/ethnicity (actual sample size), location of residence, current coverage, accessibility of people (physically, through social media, through telephone or SMS)] the more targeted and effective the vaccination campaign will be.</p> <p>According to a national Opinion poll referring also to vaccination hesitancy published in the media on 2 November 15 % of respondents answered to the question of whether they would vaccinate “don’t know/won’t answer”; 7% said they have not been vaccinated and will not do so; 5% of respondents said they have not been vaccinated but will eventually do so. According to the article, “of the “anti-vax” bloc of respondents in the poll, 56 % said nothing can change their minds. Eight percent of this same group said they would do so “if proposed by a religious figure they trust”. According to the article in Lifo 14% of those not vaccinated answered that they would get the vaccine if they “had more information from doctors and scientists”.</p> <p>The Hellenic Red Cross is currently carrying out a survey in its Multifunctional Centers for Refugees in Athens and Thessaloniki regarding vaccination hesitancy. By December, colleagues will share the preliminary findings.</p>	
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	<p>In relation to its project on assisting asylum seekers to register their appointment for COVID-19 vaccination through its Helpdesks in Athens and Thessaloniki (see CwC WG Minutes from 2 September 2021), Metadrasi shared that 150 people have been already vaccinated. Main barriers recorded include: (1) Lack of a common line among KEPs regarding required documentation for issuance of PAMKA; (2) long delays in issuance of PAMKA (approximately 20 days; together with arranging an appointment the whole procedure takes approximately two months); (3) racist and xenophobic behavior by KEP staff; (4) eligible UASC cannot vaccinate due to lack of guardians.</p> <p>Agreed action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use data provided by MMA/EODY to better target/tailor vaccination campaign (vaccination data of PoC was not shared to date)• There is messaging fatigue and face to face/online session where questions can be answered and discussions had are more effective in disproving rumours (around vaccinations) and reassuring concerns regarding risks:• To invite NGOs with Medical and COVID- 19 Sensi- tization teams (ex. MSF, MdM, Praksis, Metadrasi, Hellenic Red Cross) to the CwC WG meeting on 9 Nov to share feedback on barriers and perceptions regarding COVID-19 vaccination and progress on vaccination of asylum seekers and refugees.• Discuss ways on how to involve medical staff and religious leaders from the communities in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.• Discuss the possibility of organizing an online session or event with EODY message and wide participation of asylum seekers and refugees.• Can we provide information regarding COVID-19 info sessions in ESTIA apartments or other programmes with wide reach?• Is there any information on recognised BIPs (perhaps through Helios)? <p>Material that could be used during a campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Here are the FAQs for parents regarding vaccination of children already prepared by the Greek Government here	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Babel’s new living in times of Covid platform which Ioanna Kotsioni kindly shared last week, https://covid19refugeesinfo.gr/en, which has a section dedicated to children/parents: https://covid19refugeesinfo.gr/en/as-milhsoyme-gia-ton-covid-19 all in 6 languages• Refugee.Info COVID-19 Campaign material available on Refugee Info Facebook page• MSF Covid - 19 Sensitization Project Info letters & flyers (attached material)• MdM Informative flyer in several languages available here https://mdmgreece.gr/emvoliasmos-covid19-enimerotiko-iliko/• COVID-19 vaccination- An NHS guide for children and young people here• Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine for children aged 12 to 15- Information on the NHS website• Questions and answers on COVID-19: Children aged 1 – 18 years and the role of school settings from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control• A WHO video on Vaccines and children is available here• Some Q&As on children’s vaccination for COVID-19 by John Hopkins Medicine• Pre COVID-19 vaccination booking checklist for parents of children aged 12 to 15 years from the UK Health Security Agency here• Here you can find some COVID-19: Frequently asked questions prepared by UNICEF together with a video of Dr Warschavski talking to a child and a parent about COVID-19 vaccine.	
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