

## Report

### Webinar on Immunization and Vaccine Research Area Prioritization for the WHO South-East Asia Region

Tuesday, 3 June 2025 | 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM IST

[Watch the webinar on YouTube](#)

The WHO South-East Asia Regional Office successfully hosted a webinar to present and discuss the 25 newly prioritized immunization and vaccine research areas identified through a robust regional prioritization exercise. This initiative marks a significant step in promoting evidence-informed decision-making and building a stronger research ecosystem in support of immunization programmes across the Region.

The webinar was attended by over 450 participants from 31 countries across the globe, including 10 countries from the WHO South-East Asia Region. These participants were from government agencies, academia, technical institutions, and development partners, reflecting the shared interest in strengthening the immunization research ecosystem.



Dr. Vinod Bura, Coordinator, Immunization and Vaccine Development (IVD), WHO SEARO, opened the session by welcoming participants and highlighting the broader goal of aligning research investments with programmatic needs. He emphasized the strategic role of research in addressing the Region's evolving immunization landscape.

Dr. Nivedita Gupta, Scientist G and Head of Communicable Diseases at ICMR, shared insights on national-level prioritization efforts in India. She underlined the importance of identifying program-relevant research areas, noting that gaps in implementation science must be urgently addressed to meet current challenges and future pandemic preparedness goals.

Prof. Narendra Kumar Arora, Executive Director, INCLIN Trust International, elaborated on the multi-phase methodology adopted for the prioritization exercise. This included desk reviews, stakeholder consultations, a scoring system based on relevance and feasibility, and validation with Member States and technical experts.

Dr. Rahul Srivastava, Technical Officer, WHO SEARO, presented the final list of 25 priority research areas, categorizing them across themes such as vaccine delivery systems, digital innovations, life-course vaccination, equity, and integration of surveillance platforms. He highlighted that over 70% of the priorities are operational in nature—underscoring the urgency of translating these into action for programmatic improvement. The prioritization also highlighted the importance of immunization research for pandemic preparedness, with eight of the identified research areas specifically addressing pandemics, disease outbreaks, and health emergencies. He also noted that the prioritization is not static and that WHO is developing a mechanism to incorporate emerging needs over time.

The webinar featured reflections from leading development partners including Dr Sonalini Khetrapal from ADB, Dr Nina Wressnigg from CEPI, Dr Arindam Ray from the Gates Foundation, Dr Ranjan Kumar from GAVI, and Dr Azhar Abid Raza from UNICEF. Each partner acknowledged the relevance and timeliness of the initiative, and several offered insights on collaborative opportunities to support country-level research aligned with these priorities. They emphasized the importance of joint planning, technical capacity building, and funding alignment to translate this agenda into measurable impact.

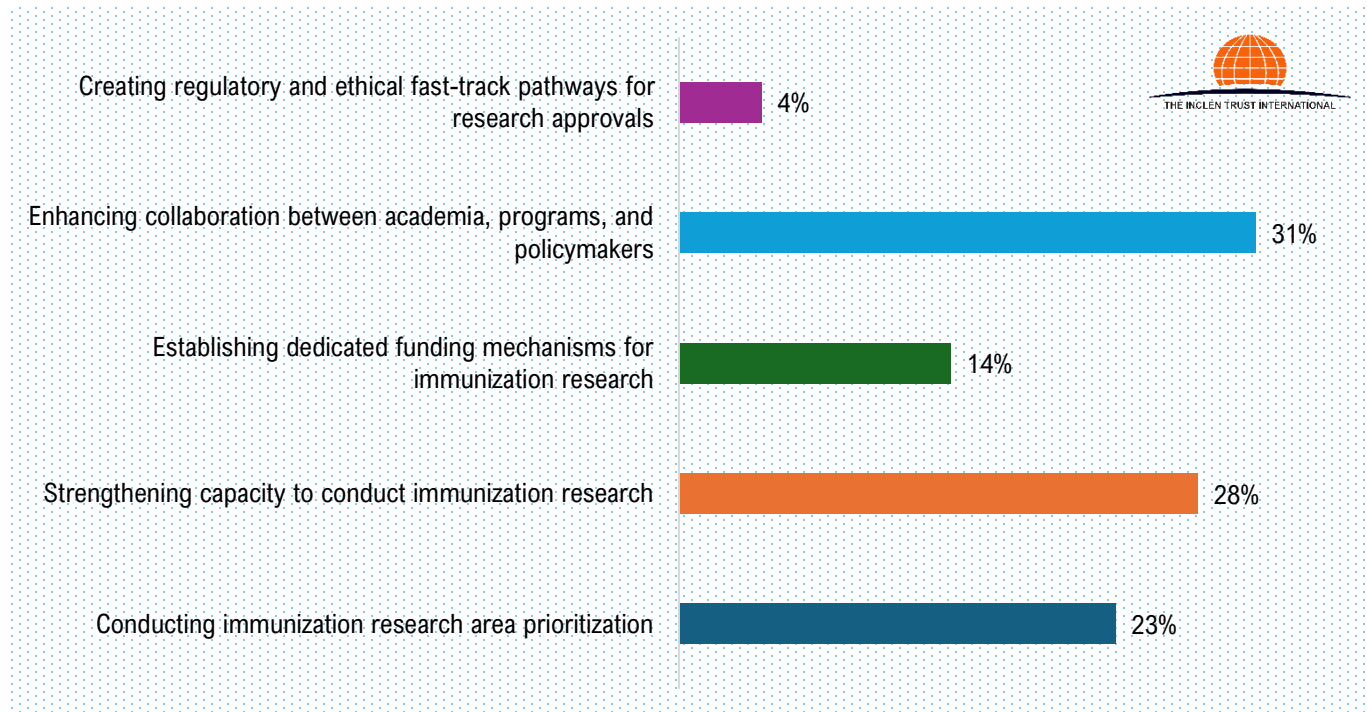
Dr. Naor Bar-Zeev, Unit Head at WHO Headquarters, shared the global perspective and outlined ongoing immunization research initiatives under the Immunization Agenda 2030. He commended SEARO's efforts to contextualize research needs at the regional level and noted that such prioritization frameworks are critical for achieving sustainable immunization coverage and innovation.

There were several queries from the participants which were posted in the Q&A section of the webinar and were answered by colleagues from WHO and INCLIN. The session concluded with the closing remarks from Dr. Vinod Bura. He thanked all speakers, panelists, and participants for their active engagement and reiterated WHO's commitment to facilitating research partnerships, mobilizing resources, and supporting Member States in implementing these priorities.

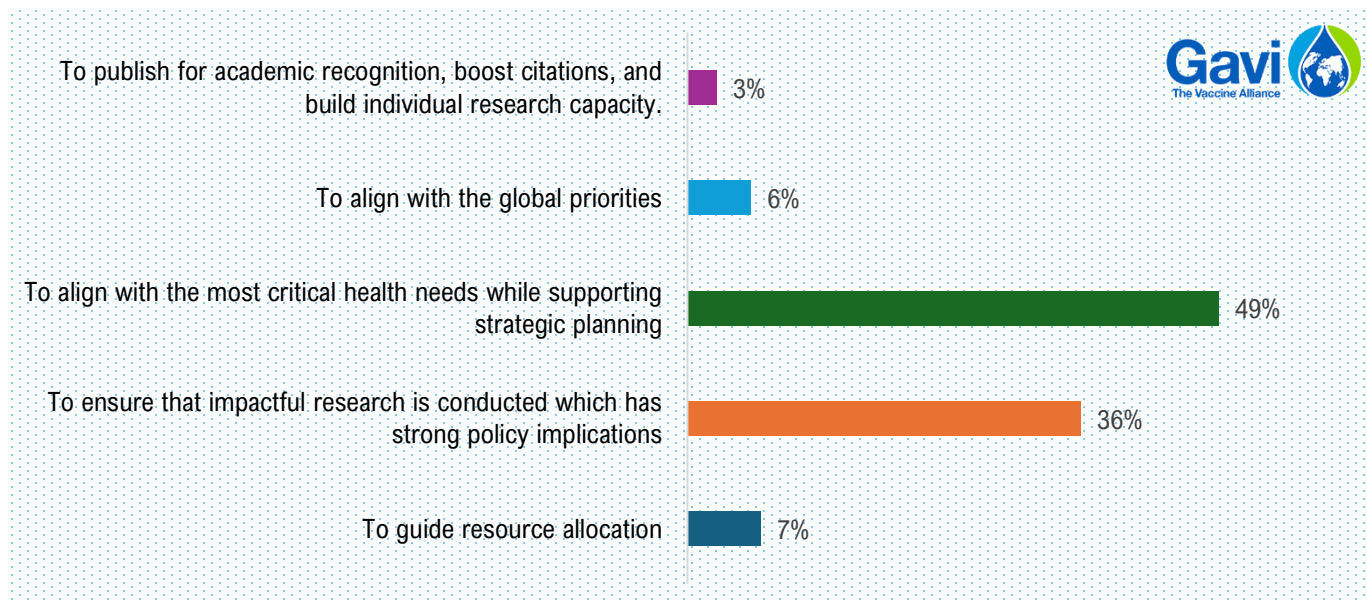
To make the webinar more interactive, short polls were conducted with questions shared by partner organizations. These multiple-choice questions, focused on immunization research priorities, aimed to capture participants' real-world perspectives—there were no right or wrong answers. Each poll allowed 50 seconds for responses, with results displayed instantly. This approach added a dynamic and engaging element to the session, promoting dialogue, reflection, and shared ownership of the research agenda across diverse stakeholders.

## Polling Questions from Partners

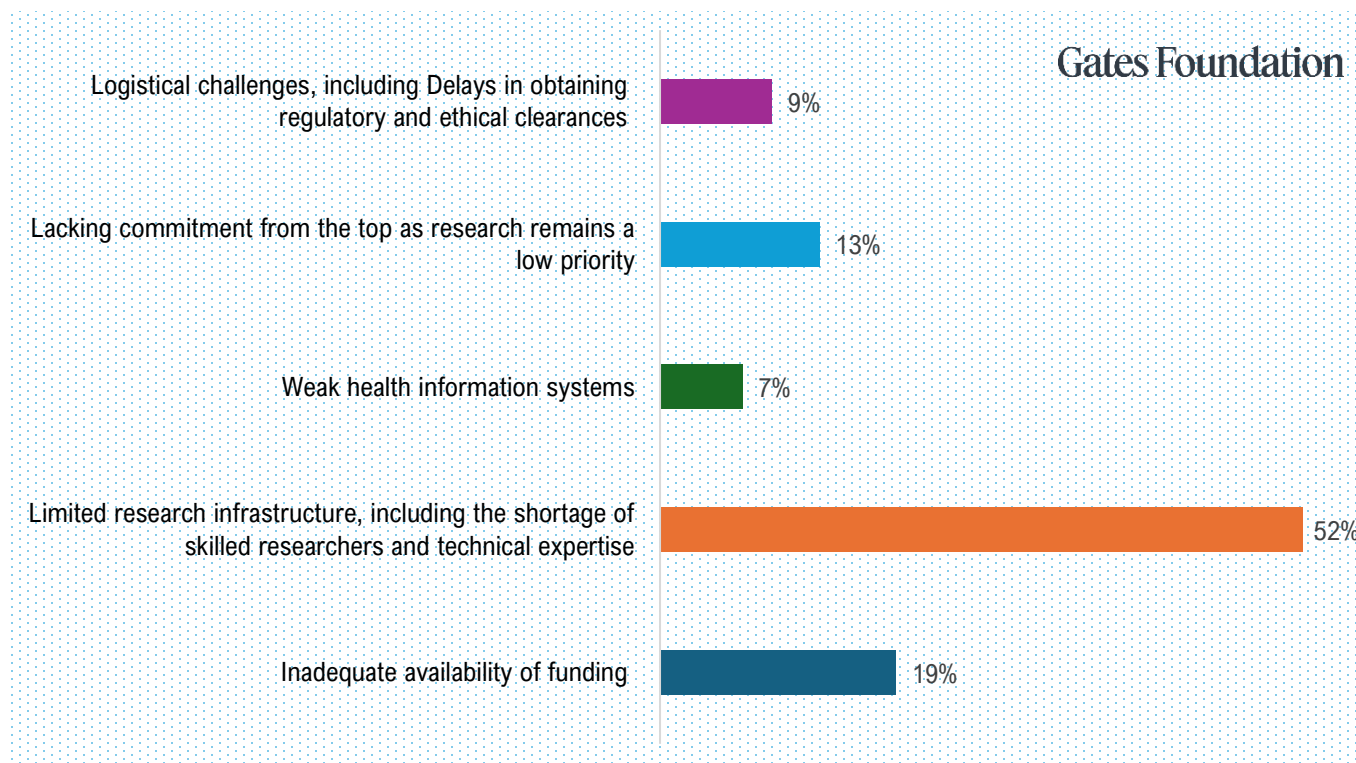
### 1. To strengthen the immunization research ecosystem, what area needs the most urgent and strategic focus? (229 participated)



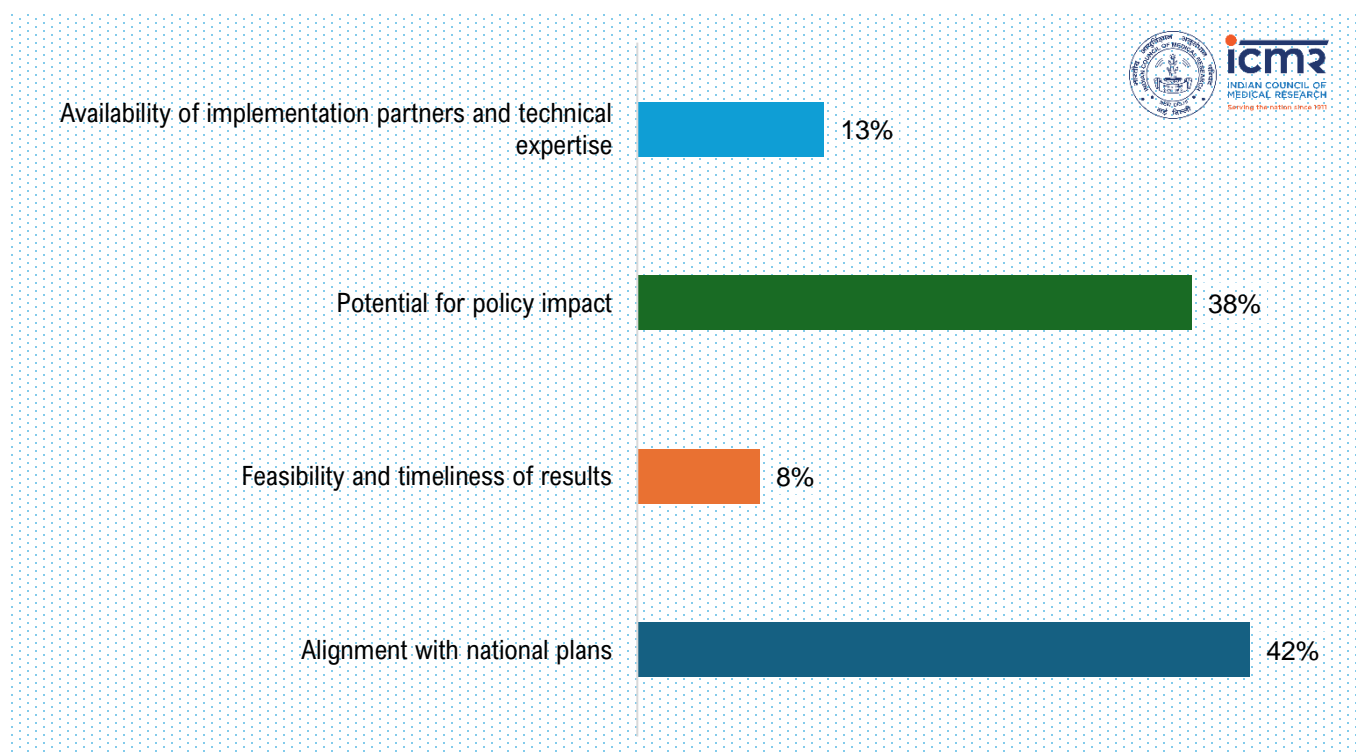
### 2. In the wake of rising challenges in regard to immunization programmes, WHO South-East Asia Member States are seeking innovative solutions to strengthen their expanded programme on immunization expand the breadth of protection offered through immunization. In such a scenario, what would be the most compelling reason for you to prioritize immunization research? (222 participated)



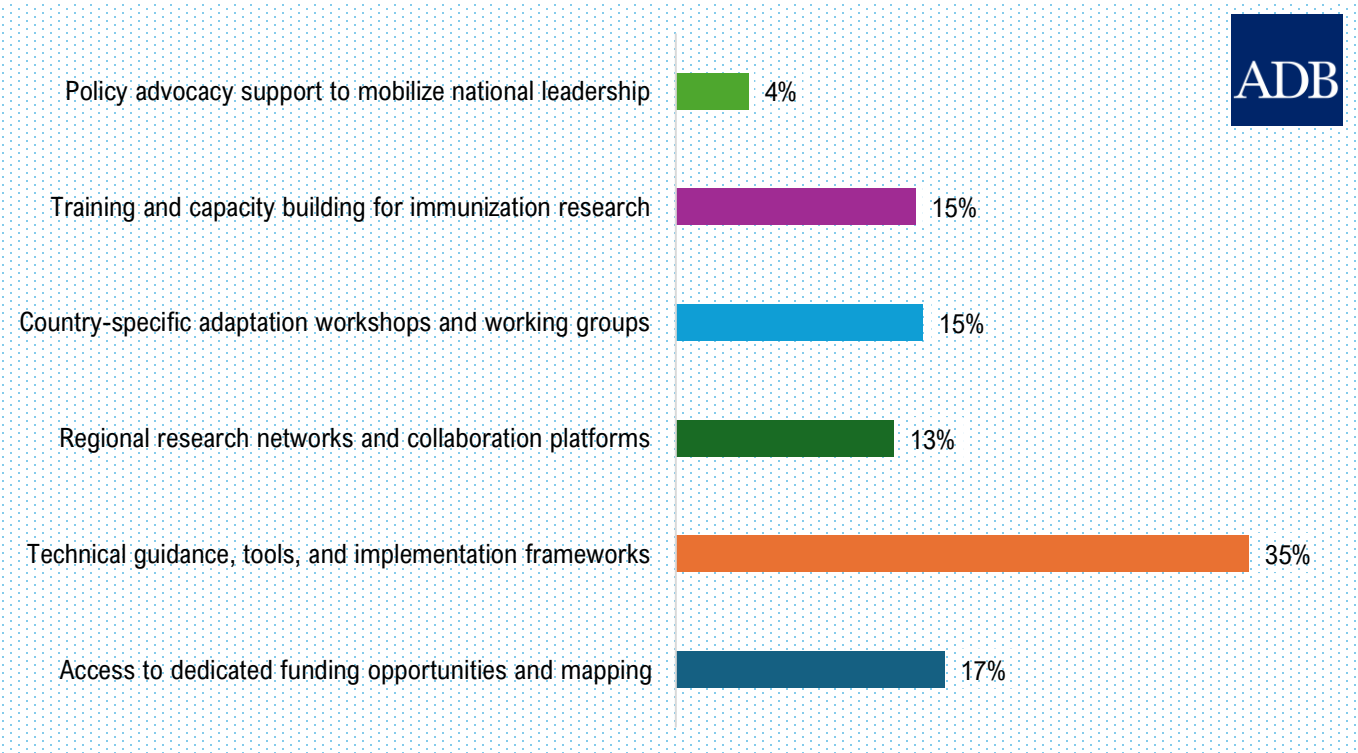
**3. To initiate a priority immunization research activity aimed at addressing programme implementation gaps, what do you consider the biggest barrier to successfully conducting or applying such research in low-resource settings? (209 participated)**



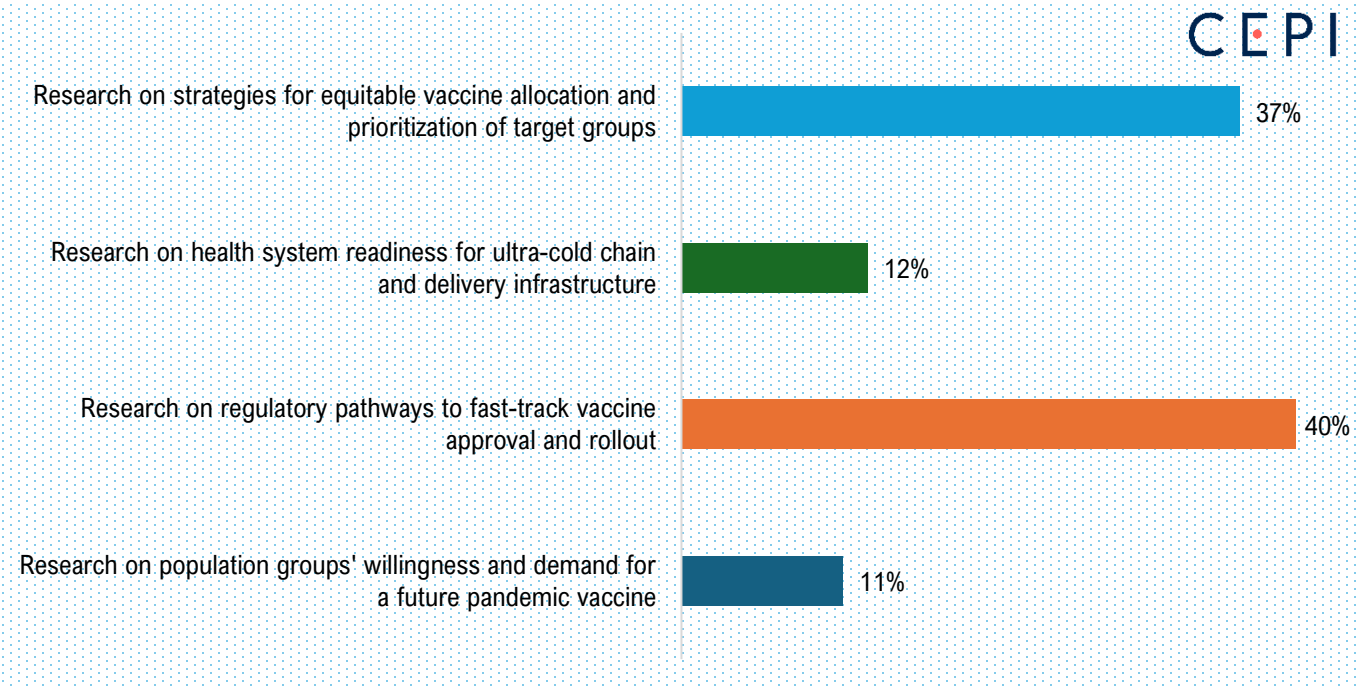
**4. As per your experience, what is the most important criterion for selecting immunization research questions at the country level? (253 participated)**



**5. A new Regional immunization research priorities to strengthen its EPI programme has been adopted by a WHO South-East Asia Member State. Following adoption, translating these priorities into real-world action requires practical next steps. Based on your experience, what would most help you move from prioritization to implementation in your setting? (223 participated)**



**6. In a recently declared pandemic, where vaccines are still under development (as per CEPI's 100-day mission), which area of immunization research should be prioritized immediately to prepare for rapid, effective deployment once the vaccine is ready? (188 participated)**



## 7. Which approach is most effective in accelerating the translation of immunization research into policy and practice? (203 participated)

