

## A conversation with IRD Global, June 7, 2022

### Participants

- Dr. Subhash Chandir – Senior Epidemiologist and Director, IRD
- Mariam Mehmood – Program Manager, Maternal and Child Health, IRD
- Danya Arif – Assistant Director, Maternal and Child Health, IRD
- Catherine Hollander – Senior Program Associate, GiveWell

**Note:** These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Chandir, Ms. Mehmood, and Ms. Arif.

### Summary

GiveWell spoke with Dr. Chandir, Ms. Mehmood, and Ms. Arif of IRD Global for updates on a [grant GiveWell recommended in October 2021](#) for implementation of a mobile phone-based conditional cash transfer (mCCT) program in seven districts in Sindh province, Pakistan and ongoing support for its Zindagi Mehfooz electronic immunization registry (ZM-EIR).

In brief, conversation topics included:

- **mCCT program rollout progress.** IRD has rolled out the mCCT program in four districts, and is currently rolling out in Jacobabad district. It will have implemented the program in all seven districts by August 2022. Rollout dates were randomized by the University of Chicago team that is conducting an evaluation of the IRD's mCCT program.
  - Of the 126,000 children enrolled in the mCCT program between January 25 and May 31, 2022, 91.5% were successfully immunized and incentivized. The remaining enrollees were flagged for verification to prevent fraudulent enrollees. As of the time of our conversation, 38.7% of flagged enrollees' cases were resolved and they went on to receive incentives, 12.5% of cases were found to be ineligible for incentives, and 48.8% of cases were still being processed. IRD is continuing to update the ZM platform to fix glitches and decrease unnecessary flags, and it expects the flag rate to decrease as a result.
  - The percentage of ZM-EIR enrollees with associated phone numbers has increased from 20-30% to around 70%.
- **Ineligibility for the mCCT program due to the lack of a mobile phone number.** Among children who enrolled in ZM-EIR but were ineligible for the mCCT program, 94% were ineligible because the caregiver could not provide a mobile number. The IRD communications team is revamping its mass and social media strategies to address this issue.
- **Incentive ineligibility due to children not receiving incentivized vaccine(s).** IRD is considering incentivizing vaccination visits rather than specific vaccines, because it doesn't want to penalize caregivers for vaccine stockouts or send the message that certain vaccines are more important than others.
- **Reasons for incentive ineligibility at follow-up visits.** 5.8% of children who received incentives at their enrollment visit were no longer eligible at their

follow-up. Of those children, 65% were ineligible because they did not receive an incentivized vaccine, 30% because no caregiver mobile number was available, and 3.6% because the child was no longer in the incentivized age group.

- **Vaccinators attempting incentive fraud.** Four vaccinators out of 650 have attempted to enroll their own mobile phone numbers in the mCCT program to receive the incentives. To address the issue, all vaccinator mobile phone numbers are automatically flagged and investigated if they are entered into the system. Mobile phone numbers used for more than two children are also flagged and investigated.
  - IRD conducted refresher trainings for vaccinators in Karachi East in May, and plans to do the same in all seven districts. Part of the purpose of these refresher trainings is to deter fraud.
- **A mobile phone malfunction.** The IRD audit team discovered that a glitch in some vaccinators' government-issued mobile phones caused them to automatically send multiple reports of the same child being immunized. To solve the issue, IRD rebooted the phones and set the maximum number of incentives any mobile number can receive at four per month.
- **Cold chain equipment monitoring.** Baseline data has been collected for all seven mCCT districts, and temperature marking data is being routinely collected.
- **Mobile immunization van deployment.** Vans have been deployed to reach children in areas with low vaccination coverage rates; vans are particularly effective at reaching "zero-dose" children who have never been immunized.
- **Stakeholder engagement.** IRD communicates regularly with Pakistan's Federal Directorate of Immunizations (FDI) about the mCCT program and ZM.
- **ZM expansion.** ZM was launched in one district in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) last week with technical and operational support from IRD. There is interest in launching ZM in other KP districts, as well as the province of Balochistan.

*All GiveWell conversations are available at  
<http://www.givewell.org/research/conversations>.*