

Updates on National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs)

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An initiative for Africa, by Africans

NISH is a scientific support hub for National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) on the African continent. We assist with training, scientific support and research.

MORE



Disclosures

- Education and/or honorarium or consultancy fee from the pharma:
Biovac, MSD, GSK, Pfizer, & Sanofi
- Research and/or capacity development grants in vaccinology from
BMGF & Wellcome Trust

Presentation outline

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Who and why
NITAGs?

02

Examples of
immunization &
vaccines issues
NITAGs help to
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How can NITAGs
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Future
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for NITAGs and
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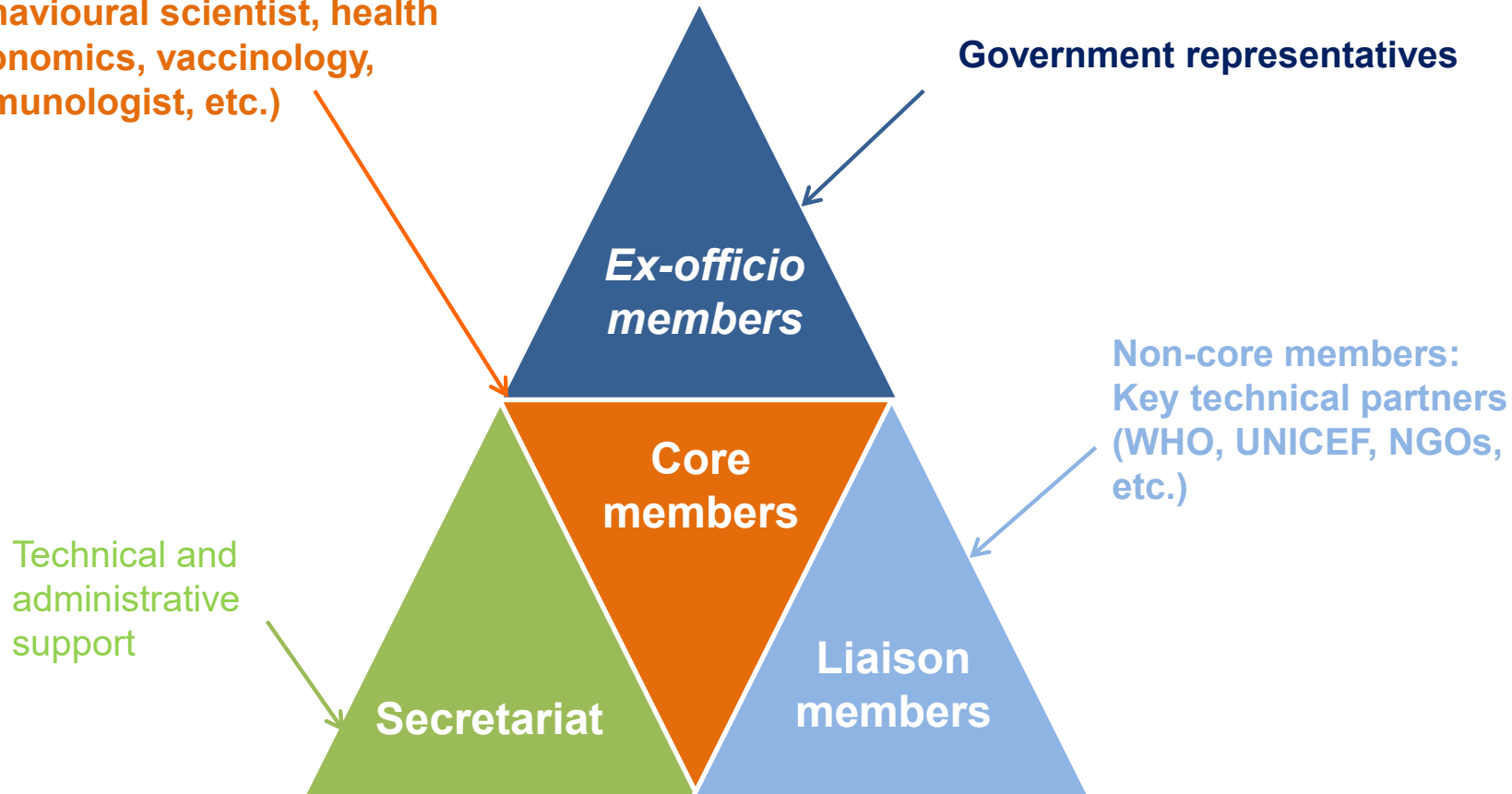
Who are NITAGs?

- **Composition:** National committee comprising of independent multidisciplinary experts
- **Mandate:** Given by the national health authority
- **Purpose:** To **advise** national health authorities on matters related to vaccines & immunization programs
- **Scientific process:** Key to fulfilling their mandate is the use of a rigorous evidence-to-recommendation (EtR) approach

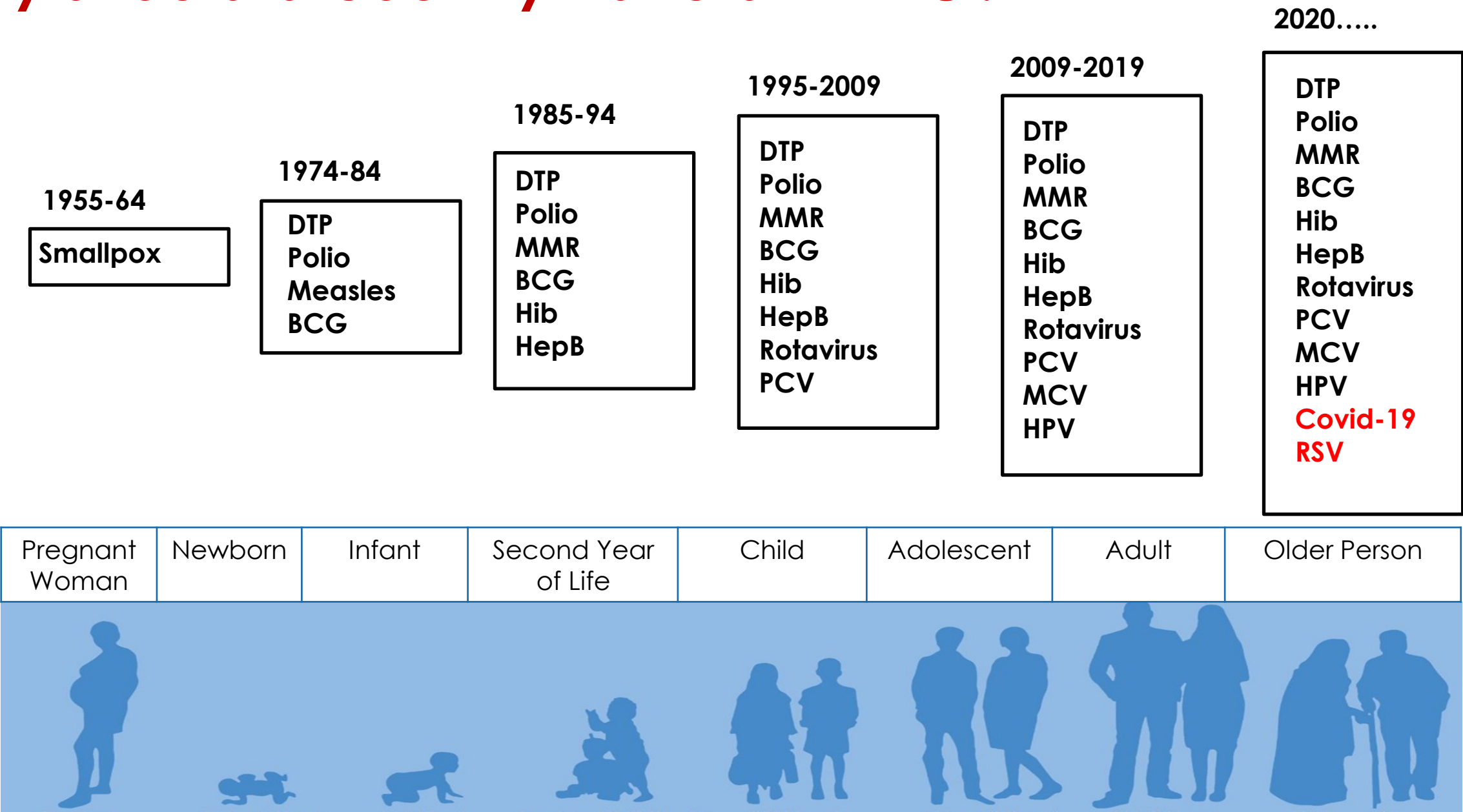
NITAGs membership categories

Only NITAGs Core members are authorised to vote:
10 to 15 national experts recognised in their field of expertise

(paediatrics, epidemiology,
behavioural scientist, health
economics, vaccinology,
immunologist, etc.)



Why should a country have a NITAG?



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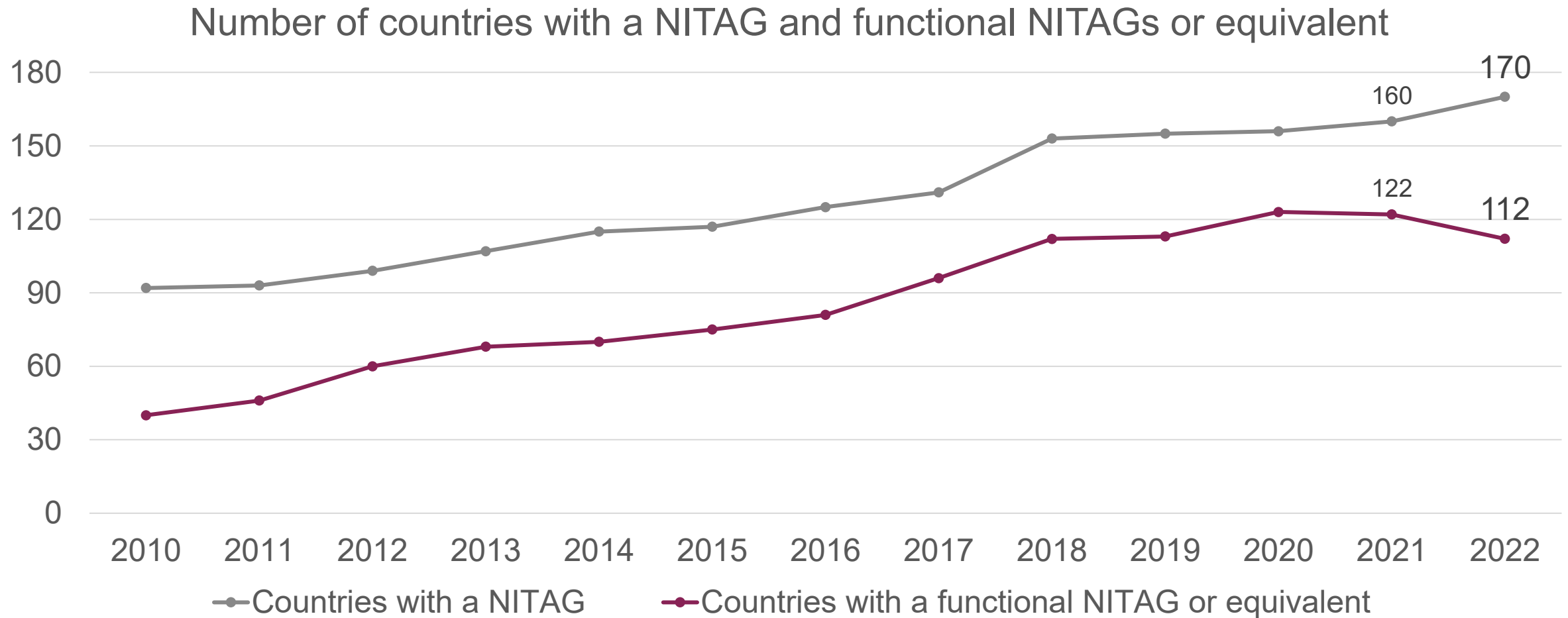
- **Data-driven decisions:** Evidence-based recommendations that considers the local context
- **Credibility:** Through a robust decision-making process, recommendations issued by NITAGs are trustworthy and improves public confidence on vaccines
- **Mitigate global health threat:** Early engagements with NITAGs reinforces national immunization programs and helps address global public health threats at a country level

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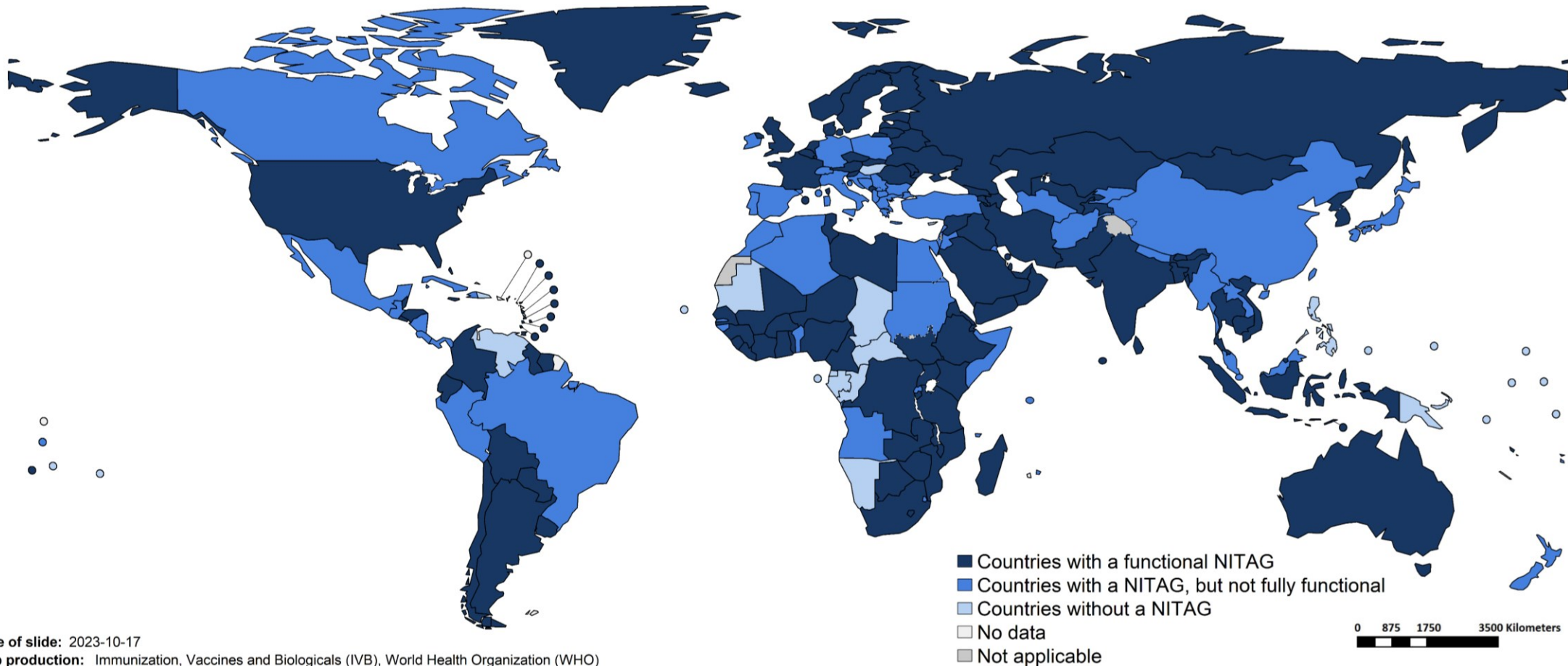
- **SAGE – RITAG – NITAG linkage:** Cascading global recommendations to regional and national levels
- **IA2030 (2021-2030):** Strengthen evidence-based decision-making, with technical input from NITAGs.
- **GVAP (2012-2020):** Country ownership. All countries should establish functional NITAGs by 2020

NITAG is a crucial component of a National Immunization Program (NIP)

of Countries with access to NITAG guidance



A Snapshot of NITAGs functionality



Date of slide: 2023-10-17

Map production: Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals (IVB), World Health Organization (WHO)

Data source: IVB database as at 7th August 2023

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Advisory role of NITAGs include issues such as:

- New vaccine introduction
- Revision of immunization schedule
- Immunization dosing schedule
- Vaccine switches
- Supplemental immunization

Advisory role of NITAGs include issues such as:

- Vaccination during outbreaks and pandemic situations
- Reaching the zero dose and under-immunized communities
- Improving vaccine confidence
- Monitoring the impacts of vaccination programme
- Inputs to the national immunization strategy

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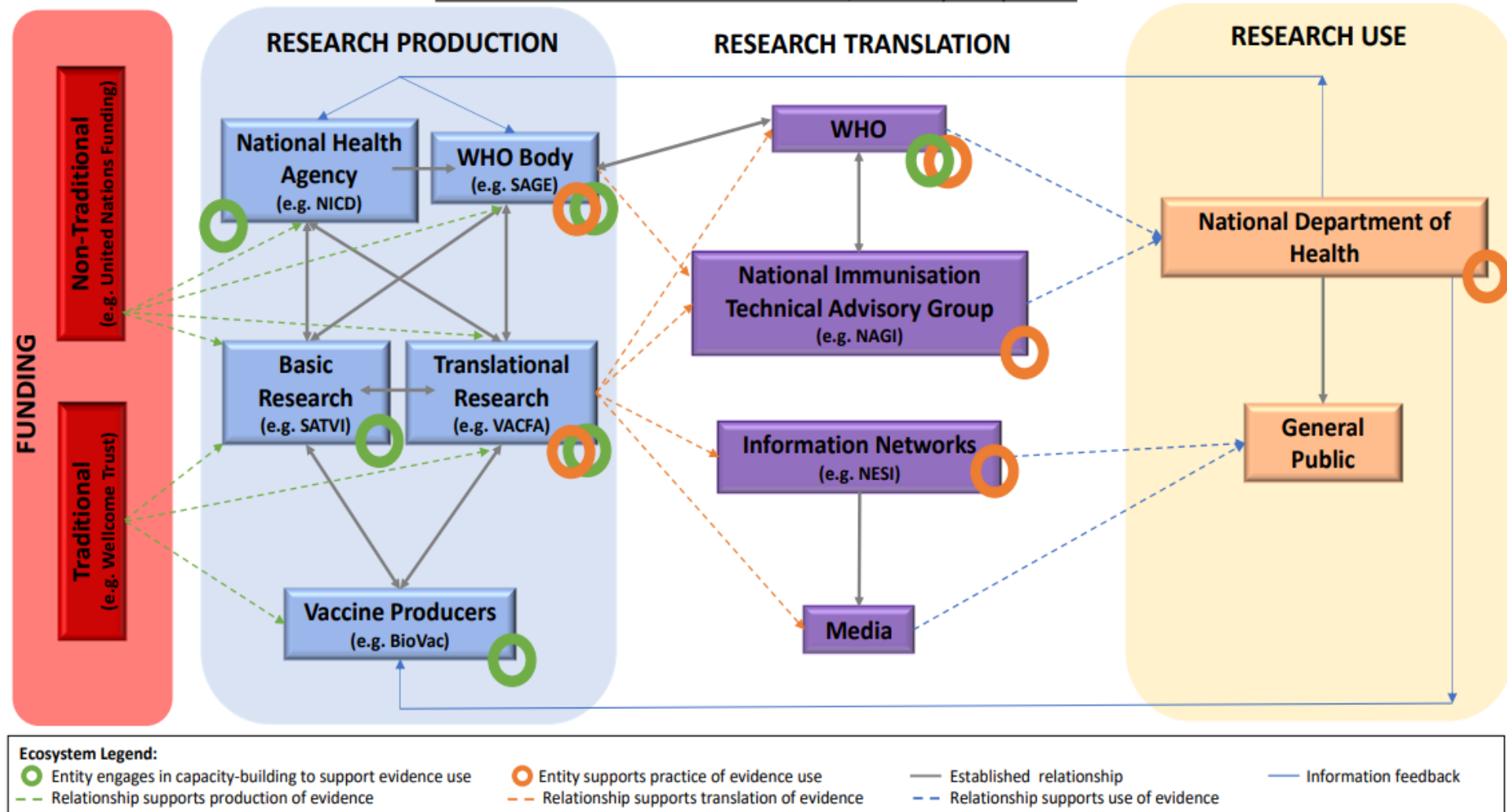
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NITAGs support ecosystem: South Africa

Ecosystem of Evidence-Based Vaccinology in South Africa

Jenna Patterson - Vaccines for Africa Initiative, University of Cape Town



Global NITAGs support ecosystem

- Global NITAG Network (GNN) & WHO
- WHO Regional Offices
- RITAGs & Regional NITAG Networks
- Disease Control entities e.g ECDC and US CDC
- National Surveillance Centres & Local academia
- Technical Partners
- Funding Agencies e.g Wellcome
- Not for Profit Organizations

Global NITAGs Support Partners

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Assessing NITAGs capability: WHO criteria

Country NITAG indicators monitored annually by WHO via the JRF mechanism

Process indicators

- 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

Output indicators

NITAG issued at least one recommendation

MoH adopted at least one NITAG recommendation



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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/vaccine

Development of a maturity assessment tool to evaluate and strengthen National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs)

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ABSTRACT

As dozens of new National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) were established worldwide in the past decade, and as existing NITAGs continued to play an important role in vaccine policy, global NITAG partners recognized a need for a standardized assessment tool to evaluate and strengthen their functions. This article describes the development of the NITAG Maturity Assessment Tool (NMAT), a stepwise evaluation tool that assesses NITAGs on seven key indicators of structure and process. A draft tool was developed through an iterative, consensus-based process with an expert working group before it was piloted with an economically and geographically diverse convenience sample of NITAGs. The final NMAT is a flexible tool that can be used by in-country or external evaluators to understand NITAG maturity, identify priorities for optimization, and measure the impact of strengthening efforts.

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Future considerations on NITAGs

- Embracing complexity of immunization and evolving vaccinology landscape
- End-to-End decision-making approaches
- Innovative approaches to decision-making in the context of limited evidence
- Information Technology (IT): opportunities and threats
- One Health approach
- Sustaining institutional knowledge/experience & resource allocation
- Partnerships and sharing of lessons learnt



Thank you