

HUMANITY COMES TO A PAUSE



4

CHAPTER



HUMANITY COMES TO A PAUSE

- In 2019, the world altered beyond recognition, with COVID-19 pushing healthcare systems to the brink, forcing travel restrictions and lockdowns worldwide, and causing the cancellation or delay of almost all major global events.
- With many of Expo's participants significantly impacted by the pandemic, BIE Member States agreed to postpone Expo 2020 Dubai by one year, allowing everyone to focus their efforts on navigating the impact of COVID-19.
- Expo 2020 Dubai's founding premise — to connect minds and create the future — had been given new purpose and taken on even stronger significance, with the pandemic underscoring the power of cooperation across borders and sectors.
- The safety and wellbeing of everyone involved was always the highest priority, with Expo's agile and responsive approach grounded in science and guided by international best practice, in close collaboration with local health authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The Expo 2020 Dubai COVID-19 Taskforce oversaw the roll-out of a mandatory vaccination programme for staff, opened testing facilities across the site and a 24/7 COVID Helpline, and introduced close contact tracing and other preventative measures — clearly communicating all responses.
- As the most significant global gathering to take place since the emergence of the pandemic, Expo 2020 Dubai became the blueprint for hosting a mega-event during a global health emergency. For many international visitors, including VIPs and dignitaries, it was their first overseas trip since the start of the pandemic, underscoring the UAE's reputation as a leading force in the fight against COVID-19.

THE DECISION TO POSTPONE

No-one could have predicted that in 2019, our world would alter beyond recognition; that the COVID-19 pandemic would push global healthcare systems to the brink and turn lives upside down as people across the planet were forced into isolation.

In this unprecedented climate, with travel restrictions and lockdowns being imposed across the world and almost all other major global events being cancelled or postponed, it was imperative that the journey to Expo 2020 Dubai take a different turn.

With many of Expo's participating countries significantly impacted by COVID-19, they expressed a need to postpone the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai, originally slated for 20 October 2020, by one year. With the full support of the UAE Government and the Expo 2020 Dubai Steering Committee, this request was unanimously put forward by the BIE Executive Committee as an official recommendation. This would be the first postponement in the 170-year history of World Expos.

With the BIE General Assembly impossible to stage in person due to COVID-19 restrictions, the BIE initiated a remote vote in April for Member States to vote on the Executive Committee's recommendation. While five weeks were permitted for the proposal to achieve a two-thirds majority threshold, this was in fact surpassed within a week of voting commencing on 24 April. This resounding display of trust in the UAE's continued ability to host the event reflected international confidence in the leadership's ability to tackle the pandemic, which had been quickly established in the initial, critical months.

Retaining the name Expo 2020 Dubai, the first World Expo to be held in the Arab World would now take place from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.



“
Our path hasn't changed course; it is just a bit longer. The World Expo in Dubai will still be an amazing event that brings out the best of our humanity.”

Sérgio Segóvia, Commissioner General of Brazil at Expo 2020 Dubai (May 2020)

11 March 2020

WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic

30 March 2020

Expo 2020 Dubai Steering Committee agrees to explore a postponement

4 April 2020

In support of the Expo 2020 Dubai Steering Committee recommendation, UAE government formally requests a postponement in letter to BIE

21 April 2020

BIE Executive Committee unanimously agrees to propose to the BIE General Assembly the postponement of Expo 2020 Dubai to 1 October 2021 - 31 March 2022

24 April 2020

BIE Member States begin voting remotely on Executive Committee's recommendation

4 May 2020

BIE officially announces postponement has been approved by more than two thirds of BIE Member States – surpassing the required threshold

29 May 2020

Voting ends

CONTINUING WITH PURPOSE

The one-year delay afforded everyone, including participants, the Expo organisers and the host nation, time to focus their efforts on navigating the impact of the pandemic, prioritise the health and well-being of their people, and adjust their plans for an event that would now take place in a changed world.

Expo 2020 Dubai reaffirmed its commitment to hosting a World Expo that was true to its time and place – an inspirational event to celebrate humanity’s resilience and build on a collective desire for new thinking to solve some of the greatest challenges of our time. By bringing the world together in a spirit of solidarity and optimism for the future, it would catalyse positive change at a time when it would be most needed.

Indeed, its bold ambitions, based on its founding premise to connect minds and create the future, had been given new purpose and taken on even stronger significance. The pandemic emphasised what we knew we must address, reminded us of the power of global cooperation, and underscored the urgency with which we must act.

While the world would continue to tackle the impact of COVID-19, the global community also continued to face other issues, including climate change, equal access to the basic human rights of education, digitalisation and healthcare, and achieving the Global Goals. Seeking inspiring solutions to these challenges remained Expo 2020 Dubai’s focal purpose, and its timing was now even more crucial.

Coinciding with the UAE’s Golden Jubilee in 2021, Expo 2020 offered an exceptional opportunity to look back with pride on the last 50 years, when the nation had achieved things that others felt were impossible. Expo 2020 would seize that spirit and build on the nation’s extraordinary legacy as it looked to the next 50 years, pushing the limits even further as it sought a better, happier, healthier, more sustainable future for everyone.



The power of connection

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact upon global mobility, a core theme of Expo 2020. At its onset, almost every country stopped or severely limited flights and imposed travel restrictions. The breakdown in global mobility not only separated families, it also undermined the interconnectedness achieved through the movement of people – a cornerstone of the global economy.

Expo 2020 Dubai’s eventual opening in October 2021 was an important sign at a global level that normality was returning, assuaging fears the pandemic would force countries to turn back the clock on global mobility and interconnectedness. People were yearning for travel and connection, and businesses were hungry for new opportunities as they sought collaboration, innovation and investment that would catalyse solutions to unprecedented global challenges.

With the UAE leading the way in implementing and sustaining effective COVID-19 preventative measures, Expo 2020 was able to open in October 2021 and will always hold a special place as the first, and certainly the most significant, global event to be held since the start of the pandemic.

Timeliness and relevance of themes

Expo 2020 Dubai's themes of Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability took on even greater relevance as humanity sought to learn lessons from the pandemic and apply them moving forward.

Opportunity celebrated those individuals, communities and organisations helping fight the battle against COVID-19, shining a light on where things were done right, while also harnessing that knowledge to unlock everyone's potential to create a better, healthier future.

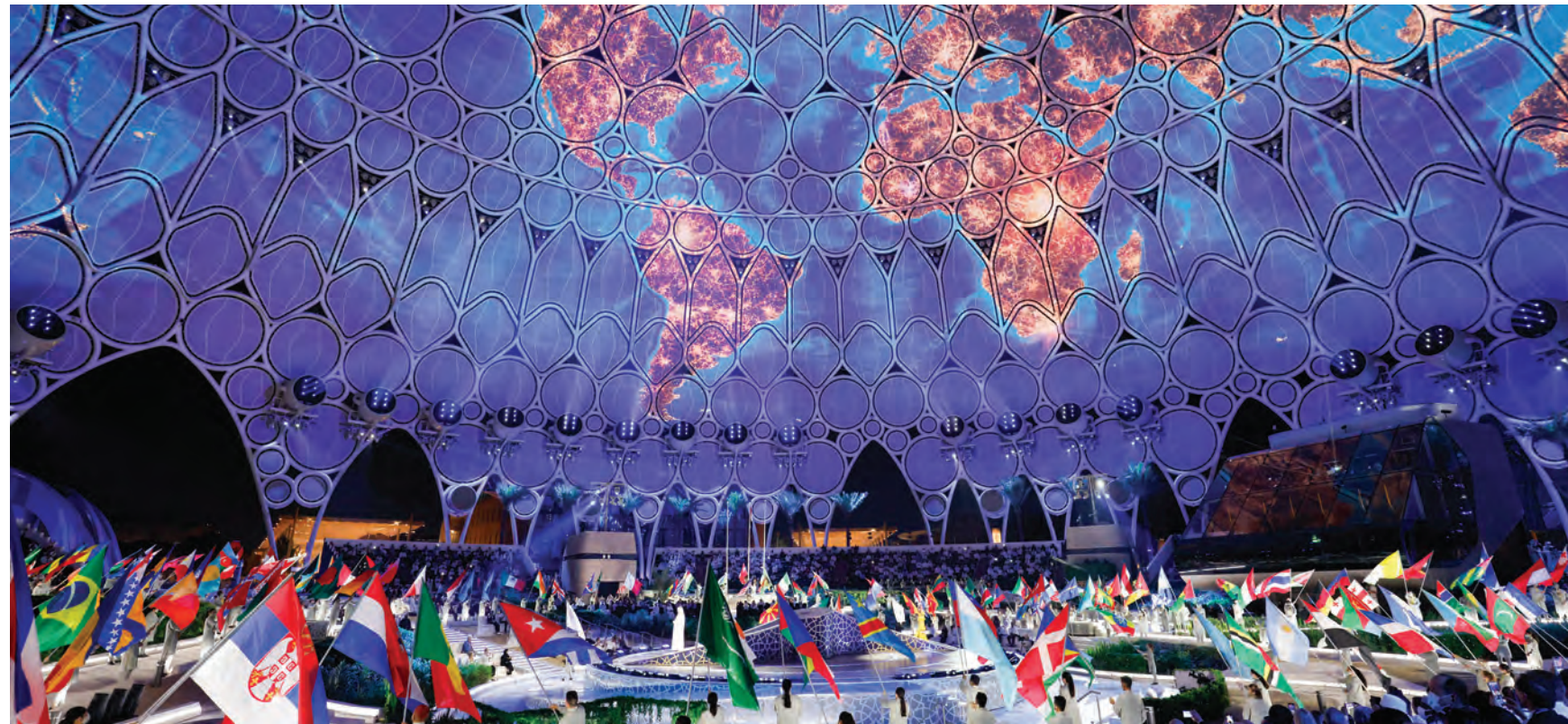
In the field of Mobility, the world had experienced first-hand how mobility solutions helped navigate an unprecedented period of isolation – from programmes that connected friends, families and colleagues, to technology that kept children in the

virtual classroom, to online shopping, telemedicine and an array of internet-based entertainment. Expo 2020's pledge to drive progress through innovation and collaboration around the real and virtual movement of people, data, ideas and cultures, was propelled to the forefront of everyone's minds, with Expo exploring and driving global interconnectivity to the benefit of everyone.

Living with respect for the world we inhabit remained at the heart of Expo 2020 Dubai. Inspiring change, sharing solutions and exploring innovative ideas that encourage collective action to preserve Earth for future generations, Expo's focus on Sustainability included looking to some of the positive environmental signals highlighted by the pandemic.

From countries supporting one another with knowledge and critical supplies, to medical staff fighting on the front line, COVID-19 taught us that by working together and standing shoulder to shoulder, humanity's ability to effect change knows no bounds.

Expo 2020 captured this indomitable human spirit and harnessed the collaborative strength of a global community that stood as one to build back better. Across six exceptional months, Expo 2020 celebrated the power of partnership and made good on a promise to show the best of humanity on a global platform, helping to build a vision of a better world. Post-COVID, such a platform was more relevant, more important and more needed than ever.



The UAE: A leading force in the global fight against COVID-19



The safety and wellbeing of citizens, residents and visitors to the UAE has long been a priority for the nation's leadership, with Dubai regularly ranking as one of the safest cities in the world.

While the pandemic was an unprecedented threat, the country's leadership responded responsibly and rapidly, implementing clear and science-based preventative measures and ensuring testing and vaccination was widely available. No differentiation was made between UAE nationals and expatriates, with vaccines available free of charge to all.

The leadership's agility in responding effectively to the pandemic has made the UAE an even more attractive destination for long-term residents and visitors. In July 2020, the UAE was among the first countries to re-open for tourism, and is consistently identified as a country that managed the pandemic effectively. In January 2022, at the peak of the Omicron wave, the UAE ranked first out of 53 countries in Bloomberg's monthly COVID Resilience Index. The Index was based on 11 indicators, including case growth, health system quality, vaccine administration, mortality rate and progress towards resuming international travel.

Beyond its own borders, the UAE contributes vaccines to COVAX, the global facility to improve vaccine equity, and has provided test kits to the World Health Organization.

The UAE also partnered with the World Food Programme to launch an international air bridge operation that used Emirati aircraft to deliver essential health and humanitarian supplies across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, with warehouses in Dubai International Humanitarian City – one of the world's largest humanitarian hubs – operating uninterrupted and playing a key role in the world's response to the pandemic.

A RESPONSIBLE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSE

The effects of COVID-19 were wide-reaching and impacted every aspect of the organisation. Agility was key in such a fast-moving, unpredictable situation. Reconfiguring construction schedules, advising participants, revising budgets, adjusting headcount, reassuring workforce, and re-doing the entire programming calendar – every Expo 2020 Dubai function was required to be nimble, flexible, diligent and responsible as they adapted to the effects of the postponement and managed new regulations, while also sticking to the aim of hosting a spectacular and safe global gathering.

As many people around the world switched to working from home in light of COVID-19, Expo 2020 Dubai faced the challenge of migrating its workforce to a largely online work environment in a matter of days. With the help of technology solutions from Official Digital Network Partner Cisco, employees seamlessly shifted to remote working. At the heart of Expo’s communications was Cisco’s Webex platform with its file-sharing, videoconferencing and messaging features allowing Expo to achieve a much-needed degree of normality and enabling work on the event to continue at pace. Expo 2020 represented the largest deployment of Cisco’s Webex in the UAE.

Cisco also extended the use of Webex to all employees’ friends and families, ensuring that human connections continued to flourish. Webex continued to serve as a key communication tool during the event.

3,700+ users
202,000 virtual meetings enabled
1 million+ meeting participants connected

(April 2020 - March 2022)

Establishing a dedicated COVID-19 Taskforce

The safety and wellbeing of everyone involved in Expo 2020 – including the workforce, participants and visitors – was always Expo 2020’s first responsibility, both in the lead-up to and throughout the six months of the event.

The Expo 2020 Dubai COVID-19 Taskforce was established very early on in the pandemic to continuously assess the scientific understanding of the virus and available preventative measures, oversee the implementation of these measures to ensure everyone’s safety, while simultaneously enabling the continuation of the planning and delivery of Expo 2020 Dubai.

Led by Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, the Taskforce comprised Chiefs from all critical functional areas of Expo, with an operational team including Expo staff and consultants, including representation from Dubai Health Authority (DHA) and Dubai Police, leading the day-to-day work.

Close collaboration with national and Dubai leadership and health authorities was critical to ensuring Expo 2020 took account of the most up-to-date scientific knowledge in crafting its strategies and approaches. It also ensured that throughout the pandemic, Expo 2020 was able to rely on the expertise and support of key government agencies, building on relationships of trust that became critical during the event. Consultation with major international bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Médecins Sans Frontières, also enabled Expo 2020 to immediately implement best practices learned from past pandemics and demonstrated the seriousness of Expo 2020’s science-based approach, thereby reassuring all stakeholders.

COVID-19 TASKFORCE

AIMS

- Keep all workforce, contractors and participants informed of the latest rules and regulations regarding COVID-19
- Manage Expo 2020 Dubai’s testing and vaccination facilities
- Manage all close contact tracing
- Arrange and manage mass site-wide PCR testing
- Support all staff

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- All decisions must be grounded in scientific understanding and best practices
- All stakeholders, from Expo 2020 employees to participants to workers building the site, must receive the same support and follow the same preventative measures
- Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, including increased support to ensure the wellbeing of workforce, such as access to mental health services

Construction continues

In line with Dubai government policy, construction continued on the Expo 2020 site during the initial phase of the pandemic, with the COVID-19 Taskforce working with teams on the ground to immediately put in place preventative measures [see Chapter 2].



Temperature scans



On-site PCR testing



On-site sanitisation stations



Separate accommodation for vulnerable or at-risk groups



Constant monitoring of suspected and confirmed cases



Quarantine facilities within employer-provided accommodation

The success of these initial measures not only validated the COVID-19 prevention approach of the UAE and Dubai, but also enabled the preparations and construction of Expo 2020 Dubai to continue, preventing any further delay while also lowering the risk to the workers who were critical to its delivery.

Crucially, these initial ethical and scientific principles, decisions and structure put in place through the creation of the Taskforce were the bedrock of Expo 2020’s approach throughout the event.

COVID-19 testing, isolation, contact tracing protocols

Initial PCR testing protocols were focused around testing persons with symptoms, or close contacts of positive cases. When site delivery recommenced, additional testing of key workforce groups ensured a full picture of the COVID-19 situation. With the exceptional support of medical professionals from the Dubai Health Authority and two contracted laboratory partners, Expo 2020 followed measures put in place by the Dubai Health Authority:

- a mandatory isolation period for a person who tested positive for COVID-19
- a quarantine period for close contacts
- direct contact-tracing by Expo’s COVID-19 Taskforce of all close contacts in the workplace

This process was critical to move quickly and understand if there were cases among the workforce, to identify potential clusters and take action to prevent further transmission.

To support the workforce, Expo 2020 launched a 24-hour COVID-19 Helpline, which soon became a trusted point of contact for staff, contractors, and participants. The diversity of Expo 2020’s workforce required different approaches to communication, including different languages. It also required attention to mental health, and the COVID-19 Taskforce regularly made welfare calls to workforce who were in isolation or quarantine and directed them to available mental health resources, including teleconsultations.

COVID-19 prevention measures required consistent enforcement to be effective. An approach that centred around building trust, compassion and support contributed to creating a culture where compliance was strong and workforce across the organisation became champions of the preventative measures, in full understanding that they were critical to the success of Expo 2020.



COVID-19 vaccination campaign

The long-term prevention approach of the UAE centred around vaccinations as a crucial tool to reduce the need for other COVID-19 prevention measures, enabling a large event like Expo 2020 to take place safely.

When COVID-19 vaccinations first became available in early 2021, Expo 2020 launched a voluntary vaccination campaign, working with a respected health care provider to administer the vaccines and respond to any potential adverse reactions (of which there were none). Expo 2020 administered more than 3,000 doses in January and February 2021, with turnout exceeding expectations.

In April 2021, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of

The Executive Council of Dubai, extended the offer of free vaccinations to all Expo's international participants and their staff, and Expo 2020 expanded its COVID-19 Vaccination Centre, opening a full-time vaccine clinic on site that was able to cater to larger numbers of people.

As scientific evidence continued to demonstrate the critical role of vaccines in reducing transmission and preventing severe cases, Expo put in place a COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate, active from 1 October 2021, to ensure all workforce and visitors would be safe at Expo 2020. The mandate required workforce be fully vaccinated with any vaccine approved by the UAE authorities, the World Health Organization or any Expo 2020 participating country.

Verification of vaccination status was included as a requirement in the workforce accreditation process – a process expedited through a partnership with the UAE's Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP), which enabled Expo to validate the vaccine record information for the majority of its workforce automatically via the MoHAP application, or within 24 hours for manual submission. As such, no accreditation was delayed due to vaccine verification requirements.

In total, almost 20,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were provided at Expo 2020 facilities prior to Expo 2020's opening, and more than 150,000 workforce had their vaccine records validated.

COVID-19 vaccine booster campaign

To protect Expo 2020's workforce and visitors as the event entered its busiest months – and at the same time as the new, highly transmissible Omicron variant emerged – Expo 2020 updated its Mandatory Vaccine Policy in December 2021 to include compulsory boosters for all workforce eligible under Dubai Health Authority guidelines.

More than 13,000 boosters were given on site in the three months to the end of the event. At the same time, newly on-boarded workforce continued to receive their first and second doses throughout the event.

As a result, Expo 2020 remained the host of a large and often very busy COVID-19 Vaccination Centre, requiring strong cooperation between the Dubai Health Authority, which administered the centre and the vaccines; the PCR testing partner Unilabs, which managed the physical facility where the vaccine clinic was located; and Expo 2020, which oversaw the entire operation and had a team who served as the daily liaison between all parties to ensure a smooth experience.

In total, 70,000+ doses of the COVID-19 vaccine – first dose, second dose and boosters – were provided at Expo 2020 Dubai facilities.

Responding to the Omicron surge

A new and highly transmissible COVID-19 variant, Omicron, was first reported on 24 November 2021 and posed new challenges to Expo 2020's prevention measures.

While Omicron was responsible for fewer severe cases in vaccinated populations compared to previous variants, it led to large numbers of asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic cases in vaccinated populations. Positive cases soon increased both globally and in the UAE, and Expo 2020 worked quickly to adjust to this new reality.

While high-risk functions, such as unmasked performers, were already required to test, in December 2021, Expo 2020 put in place mandatory, complimentary PCR testing for all workforce – anyone who entered the site with an accreditation pass or who worked at the Expo 2020 Main Office – with the frequency dependent on job function. It announced the provision of complimentary PCR tests at Expo 2020 facilities for all participant staff, as often as required, while also requiring visiting media to present a 48-hour negative test results, with free tests available at Expo 2020 centres on presentation of a valid Expo media accreditation. This allowed Expo 2020 to identify and isolate positive cases, including asymptomatic cases.

The five existing PCR testing facilities expanded and two new centres opened – one at DEC North and a second location at Expo Village – while the COVID-19 Taskforce enlisted additional support, including from the Dubai Police, to ensure all positive cases were contacted and informed of isolation protocols; that close contacts were informed of the need to quarantine; and welfare checks were made on positive cases.

Case monitoring, in conjunction with the DHA, demonstrated that most positive cases were exposed through their private lives rather than at Expo 2020. Many Expo 2020 workforce members lived and/or socialised together outside of work, which meant a single case could result in a large number of close contacts required to quarantine and miss work.

PCR testing was highly successful in identifying cases quickly, but did result in large numbers of workforce in isolation and close contacts in quarantine. Operationally, coordination between the COVID-19 Taskforce and the relevant functional areas was critical to prevent staffing gaps. In some cases, alternate workforce was provided [see Chapter 5].

Recognising that international participants faced additional challenges with many staff living and socialising together at the Expo Village, the COVID-19 Taskforce had, from the beginning of the event, maintained isolation apartments at the Village for quarantine. Close coordination between Expo Village management, the DHA and international participants, ensured the safe movement of people between flats and safe cleaning and waste management, while food deliveries and additional measures such as limitations on the size of gatherings also helped reduce transmission.

Testing facilities

- World Parking (24/7 drive-through)
- World Parking (24/7 walk-through)
- Dubai Exhibition Centre North
- Dubai Exhibition Centre South
- Expo Village
- House of Volunteers



Safe and spectacular

Keeping Expo's vast live events and entertainment (EVE) programme running safely was one of the most critical and challenging aspects of ensuring Expo 2020's success.

Many performers, singers and musicians were necessarily unmasked and many others, even if masked, were in close proximity to visitors and each other. The interaction of EVE workforce in back-of-house areas – including wardrobe and make-up – posed further COVID-19 risks, as did the sharing of equipment, such as microphones, during performances.

Expo required those not singing or playing an instrument to remain masked in advance of the performance, and established daily PCR testing to allow artists to perform without masks, ensuring their own health and guaranteeing the continued exceptional quality of Expo 2020's performances throughout the event.

Thanks to the integrated efforts of all involved, Expo 2020 was able to safely bring in performance groups from around the world, with very few performances cancelled or rescheduled.

DEALING WITH A PANDEMIC: A TIMELINE



Visitor entry requirements

Expo 2020's number one priority was always to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its workforce, participants and visitors.

Questions about whether there should be vaccine or PCR testing requirements for entry and whether masks should be required on site were key considerations in the months leading up to the opening. Expo 2020 elected to follow the Dubai government's mandate, which required masks to be worn indoors and outdoors except while eating, drinking or exercising. This was changed by the Dubai government in March 2022 to make masks optional (but strongly encouraged) outdoors, and mandatory indoors. Expo 2020 adopted the same policy.

The question of vaccinations was a little more complex, as Expo 2020 opened at a time when global vaccine inequity was stark. Requiring visitors to be vaccinated would

have limited visitation to a small subset of countries who were able to secure the vaccine first. It would have also required a mechanism to assess medical exemptions, of which there was no global standard.

Ultimately a balance was found by requiring all visitors to have received a COVID-19 vaccination or a negative PCR test in the preceding 72 hours. Any vaccine approved by any Expo 2020 participating country was valid, and visitors could present physical or electronic copies. Unvaccinated visitors were able to simply present a negative PCR result for entry.

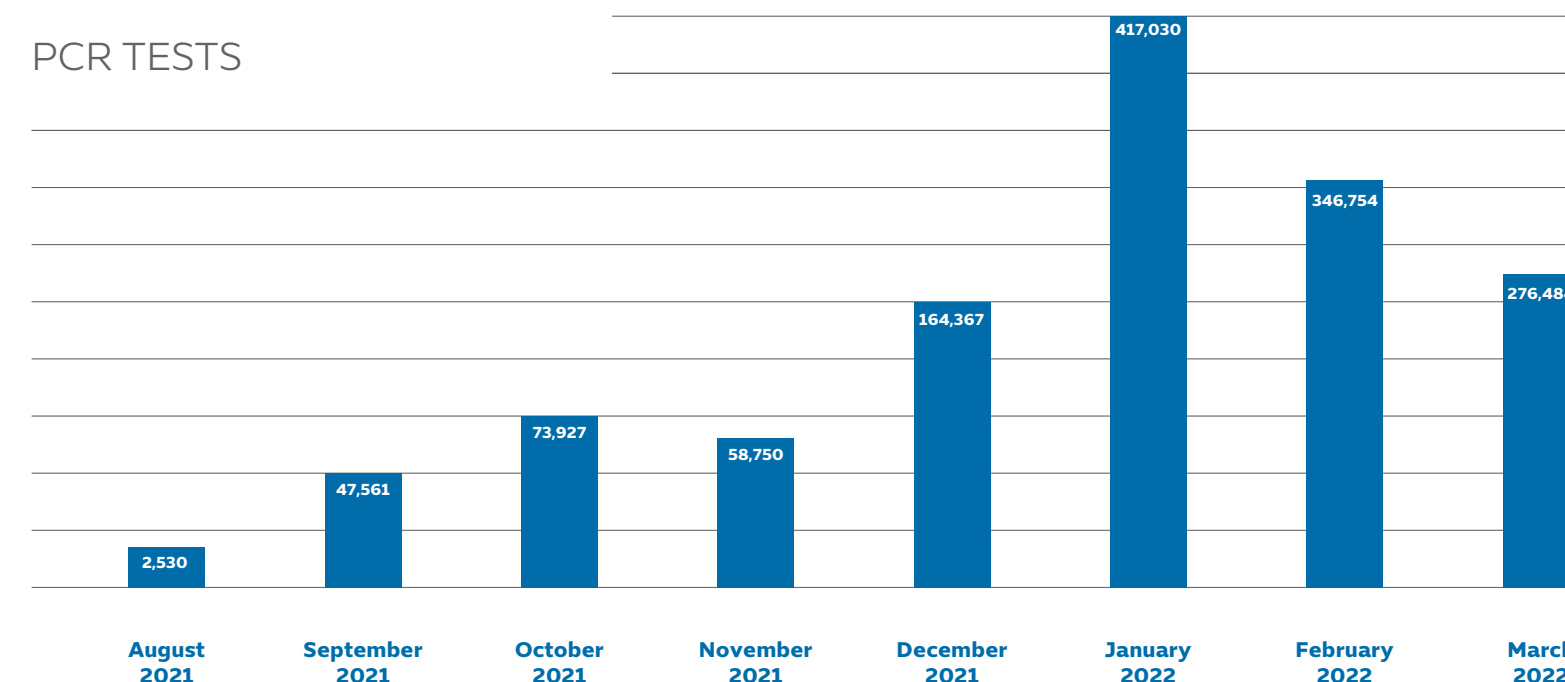
The COVID-19 Taskforce worked with the operations team to ensure any issues at the entry gates were resolved quickly, and that there was minimal interference in the visitor experience. To ensure that COVID-19 prevention measures were not a barrier to visitation, all unvaccinated visitors without

valid PCR test results were directed to Expo 2020's testing facilities, both on site and across the UAE. Visitors could test the day before their planned visit to allow sufficient time to receive their results. This was encouraged through messaging and information on the ticketing website to prevent visitors waiting at Expo 2020 for their results for several hours, or leaving disappointed and having to return the next day once they had received their results.

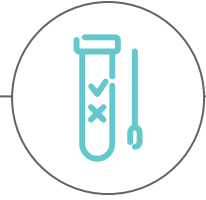
For visitors who did not meet the COVID-19 entry requirements, return transport was available from any of the four entry gates to the PCR testing facility. Visitors with certain ticket types could avail a complimentary test, while testing was available at a discounted rate for others.

Due in part to increased testing during the Omicron surge, more than one million PCR tests were performed across Expo 2020 in support of the event, with workforce accounting for the vast majority.

PCR TESTS



AT A GLANCE: EXPO 2020'S COVID-19 PROTOCOLS, GUIDELINES AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES



PROOF

Visitors required to provide proof of immunisation or a negative PCR test, conducted within the previous 72 hours, before entering Expo 2020



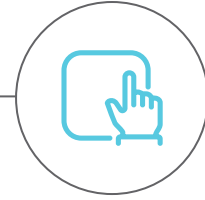
CASHLESS PURCHASES

Pre-purchase of tickets, online ticket purchases and cashless retail and F&B purchases highly encouraged to control capacity and visitor flow and reduce touch points



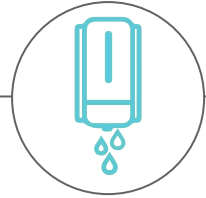
HEALTH DECLARATION

All visitors required to complete a health declaration as part of the ticket purchase process



AL HOSN

The Al Hosn app – the UAE's official digital platform for COVID-19 test results, vaccination certificates and exemptions – included an Expo specific pass, easily highlighting access eligibility for visitors



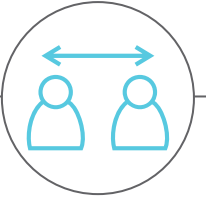
SANITISATION

No-touch sanitisation stations provided hand sanitisers at all entrance and departure gates, pavilions and restaurants



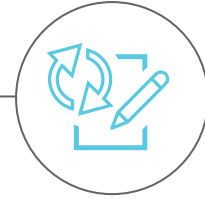
MASKS

Face masks, in line with the latest Dubai guidelines



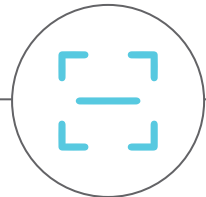
SOCIAL DISTANCING

Floor markings, signage and public address system reminders to ensure social distancing; designated staff responsible for monitoring and regulating in all venues



COMMUNICATION

Regular Expo 2020 COVID-19 Circulars (eight editions across the event) provided clear updates on testing protocols and other requirements for all stakeholders



TECHNOLOGY

Applied technology assisted visitor-facing interactions such as ticketing, queue management, crowd flow and capacity and health monitoring



PLANNING

Robust operational plans, risk assessments and contingency plans developed for all venues and spaces across the site



PARTNERSHIPS

Close liaison with partners and other stakeholders to ensure smooth and safe visitor experience beyond the physical boundaries of the Expo site, including public transport

Making hygiene a top priority

In June 2021, Expo 2020 Dubai and Dettol joined forces to ensure world-class hygiene across the site, with Dettol announced as Expo's Official Hygiene Partner.

Providing top-of-the-line products – including Dettol's no-touch hand-sanitiser stations at all entrance and departure gates, pavilions and restaurants – the partnership supported Expo's commitment to health and wellbeing.



Overcoming challenges

The pandemic environment was highly fluid. COVID-19 itself evolved with the discovery of new variants, the scientific understanding of the virus continued to grow, and the tools available for prevention expanded. It was not enough to make a plan, implement a set of prevention measures and focus only on their implementation. It was necessary to remain constantly aware of the developing science, how different preventative measures functioned, and how to use the knowledge and tools available in the most effective and least obtrusive way possible for workforce and visitors.

In addition, there was a tremendous variation in how countries around the world managed COVID-19, reflected in the expectations of Expo's diverse, multinational workforce, visitor and participant base. However, Expo 2020's COVID-19 prevention policies were the same for all involved and were applied consistently to ensure maximum effect.

The global pandemic generated different emotions in different people – fear, anxiety, defiance – and the COVID-19 Taskforce sometimes had to deliver disappointing news – to a colleague who had worked for years towards Expo 2020's opening day that they could not attend because they were a close contact; to an asymptomatic positive performer who could not perform in a show they had been preparing for months; or to a disappointed visitor who was not allowed to enter until they presented a negative PCR test. A key focus in these engagements was compassion and dialogue. Through this, almost everyone came to understand why they were receiving disappointing news and accepted it.

Utilising this approach, the COVID-19 Taskforce was able to maintain the exacting standards necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, while also showing compassion and respect.



A first for the region

Expo 2020 Dubai was the first global mega-event to be held in the Middle East and the most significant global gathering to take place after the emergence of the pandemic. Within this context, the UAE showed it could successfully manage a global health emergency, adopting a balanced approach that required visitors to the country to take a PCR test before arrival and, in some cases, upon arrival.

This allowed the UAE to continue to safely welcome visitors from around the world, many of whom visited Expo 2020 Dubai, where additional COVID-19 preventative measures ensured they could do so as safely as possible.

Hundreds of heads of state and government, senior government officials, representatives of international organisations and senior businesspeople felt safe to travel to the UAE for Expo 2020 Dubai. For many, it was their first official international trip since the onset of the pandemic.

Visitors were also impressed with the management of the system, with Expo's COVID-19 health and safety precautions consistently awarded high scores in post-visit surveys. They particularly praised the visitor vaccine or PCR entry requirements, including the availability of free testing for ticket-holders, and the mandatory mask policy for creating a safe environment that did not negatively impact their overall enjoyment of the event.

Participants also felt looked after, and particularly appreciated the onsite vaccination centre that enabled them to receive their vaccines and boosters easily and at no cost.

Expo 2020's success was noted and delegations from around the world have visited Dubai to learn more about how organisers managed the pandemic and were able to host the event. Organisations with global expertise, such as the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, sought to take lessons from Expo 2020 and share them with those planning future events. It is a great achievement for the UAE to be a source of expertise in effective pandemic management that it can share with the rest of the world.

“
Thanks to the openness and science-based approach of the UAE, all participants in Expo 2020 Dubai have been able to react quickly and responsibly to the changing situation, allowing us to welcome visitors with confidence, safe in the knowledge they and our staff are safe.
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Bob Clark, Commissioner General of the USA at Expo 2020 Dubai