

2012 Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean: Summary Sheet

□ Protecting all people at risk against vaccine-preventable diseases

1.5 million Infants unimmunized. Despite substantial progress in immunizing more people over the past two decades, the Eastern Mediterranean Region is facing unprecedented challenges.

In 2010, an estimated 1.5 million did not receive their third dose of DTP (DTP3) by their first birthday.

In addition, the region still needs to interrupt polio transmission from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and eliminate measles and maternal and neonatal tetanus.

Moreover, vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) contribute to an estimated 20% of under-five deaths. Majority of these deaths are due to pneumococcal disease and rotavirus diarrhea which can be partially prevented through newly available vaccines.

Introducing these vaccines into national immunization programs and reaching the unimmunized will require innovative solutions in which advocacy, education and communication is central.

WHO's response

In response to the remarkable opportunities and daunting challenges, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and partners are launching the third Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean during the week of 24–30 April 2012, which will coincide with events in five other WHO regions.

Vaccination Week is an annual region-wide initiative celebrating and promoting immunization through advocacy, education and communication activities.

Vaccination Week activities require collaboration among various groups and sectors, including the community, media, private, non-government and government sectors.

Objectives

Increasing stakeholder awareness of the value of immunization

Promoting and maintaining immunization as a priority for policy and decision-makers

Advocating for and mobilizing human and financial resources Improving access to immunization for high-risk populations and hard-to-reach areas in the Region

Strategies

Strategic advocacy and partnership

Targeted education, communication and media activities

Expansion of immunization services

Decade of Vaccines, 2010-2020

The regional vision of "no child should die from vaccine-preventable diseases," the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Decade of Vaccines announcement have set out a unifying response to the challenges of a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world.

They aim is to protect more people against more diseases, invest in research and development, strengthen public private partnerships, introduce new vaccines and link immunization with the delivery of other health interventions.

In particular, these visions and frameworks highlight the importance of achieving equity by reaching every community with vaccination.

This approach is essential if the Millennium Development Goal 4—to reduce under-five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015—is to be equitably met.

□ **The next steps**

The success of prior Vaccination Weeks was largely due to their flexibility, as countries designated their own national objectives and priorities based on evidence. Each year, the Regional Office in consultation with countries suggests overarching themes, assuring both national focus and regional relevance.

For 2012 Vaccination Week, it is suggested that the region and countries adopt the theme of “reaching every community.” This event can be leveraged to bridge immunization gaps, introduce and expand the use of new vaccines, prevent and respond to vaccine-preventable diseases in outbreaks and humanitarian crises, and achieve regional and national goals for accelerated disease control, elimination and eradication.

Partnership and support

The WHO Regional Office will provide technical assistance, in particular through its country offices. The involvement of key partners such as UNICEF, nongovernmental organizations and national charity organizations can ensure success and sustainability of the Vaccination Week initiative. As with 2010 and 2011 Vaccination Weeks the WHO Regional Office anticipates similar country commitment and leadership during the week of 24–30 April 2012.

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