

In the past three decades, we have made remarkable progress in reaching more people with immunization and reducing illnesses and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Despite that, in 2010, an estimated 1.5 million infants in the Eastern Mediterranean Region did not receive their third dose of DTP by their first birthday.

The Region also faces challenges in reaching its targets of interrupting polio transmission, as well as eliminating measles and maternal and neonatal tetanus.

Additionally, vaccine-preventable diseases contribute to an estimated 20% of under-five deaths. The majority of these deaths are due to pneumococcal disease and rotavirus diarrhoea, some of which can be prevented through newly available vaccines.

Undoubtedly, introducing these vaccines into national immunization programmes and reaching the unimmunized will require innovative solutions in which advocacy, education and communication are central.

Accordingly, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and partners are launching the third Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean during the week of 24 to 30 April 2012.

This year, we will highlight the importance of achieving equity by reaching every community with vaccination, which is essential if the global targets of disease prevention and mortality reduction are to be met.

With one voice and through our collective efforts, we can ensure that all people, young and old, heed the message that “vaccination is the obvious choice.”

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