

2011 Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean

Partnership for immunization



Protecting all people at risk against vaccine-preventable diseases

1.9 million infants unimmunized

Despite substantial progress in immunizing more people over the past two decades, the Eastern Mediterranean Region is facing unprecedented challenges. In 2009, an estimated 1.9 million or more than 5000 infants per day did not receive their third dose of DTP (DTP3) by their first birthday.

In addition, the region continues to face daunting challenges such as the interruption of polio transmission from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and elimination of measles and maternal and neonatal tetanus.

Moreover, vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) contribute to 20% of under-five deaths. Majority of the VPD-related deaths are due to pneumococcal disease and rotavirus diarrhea which can be prevented through vaccination with newly available vaccines.

But introducing these vaccines into national immunization programs, as well as reaching the unimmunized will partially require innovative and a combination of advocacy, education and communication solutions which would result in additional technical and financial commitment and resources from countries, donors and partners.

WHO's response

Working together to reach the most vulnerable, finish the unfinished agenda, and sustain the success stories in a diverse and complex region are essential if Millennium Development Goal 4—to reduce under-five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015—is to be equitably met.

In response to the remarkable opportunities and daunting challenges, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and partners are launching the **second Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean during the week of 24–30 April 2011**, which will coincide with the inaugural African Vaccination Week, European Immunization Week and the Vaccination Week in the Americas.

Vaccination Week is an annual Region-wide initiative celebrating and promoting immunization through advocacy, education and communication activities. Vaccination Week activities require collaboration among multiple private, non-government and government sectors such as education, youth, sports, police and culture.

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

WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has progressed significantly in controlling communicable diseases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in order to meet regional and global goals of eradication and elimination. Specifically, the regional vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization programme aims to control and eliminate all vaccine-preventable diseases through the use of quality-assured vaccines and technologies, and safe immunization practices. Our vision is that every child will receive a safe vaccine for each childhood vaccine-preventable disease, and new and improved vaccines of regional importance will be added to the vaccination schedule as soon as they become available. This is the pathway to achieving our ultimate goal: that no child will die from a vaccine-preventable disease in our Region.

The next steps

The success of 2010 Vaccination Week was largely due to its flexibility, as countries designated their own national objectives based on priorities and evidence, and decided on which key activities to implement. Each year, the Regional Office in consultation with countries will suggest overarching themes demonstrating the same level of flexibility which assured both regional relevance and national focus.

For 2011 Vaccination Week, it is suggested that the region and countries adopt the theme of **“partnership for immunization”** which reflects our vision and strategy in addressing the immunization priorities and opportunities.

This event can be leveraged to further expand and formalize partnerships with communities, media, and private sector, explore possibilities for innovative financing, strengthen public support for vaccine use, work across national borders, expand services to high risk populations, and maintain immunization high on the agenda of politicians and decision-makers.

Potential Partners

- Parents and caretakers
- Vaccine recipients
- Faith and community leaders
- Health care providers
- Private sector
- Service, charity, civic organizations
- Academia and scientific community
- Media, celebrities
- Policy and decision makers
- Public sector, government agencies

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. In addition, partners are an invaluable source of knowledge and may assist in reaching vulnerable groups as well as providing financial support.

Launching of the first Vaccination Week in 2010 witnessed the unprecedented participation of all countries in the region.

The WHO Regional Office anticipates similar country commitment and leadership during the week of 24–30 April 2011.

“Immunization is a family and community responsibility. Vaccines have the power not only to save, but to transform lives, giving children a chance to grow up healthy, go to school and improve their life prospects.”

H.E. First Lady of Lebanon,
Mrs Wafaa Michel Sleiman



Financial needs

2010 - 2011	US\$
Assessment and standardization	50,000
Information sharing and technical support	60,000
Advocacy and partnership	175,000
Total	285,000

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