Over half a million children under the age of 5 will be immunized against measles in 3 high-risk provinces during Immunization WeekKabul, 26 APRIL 2015 – World Immunization Week was launched today in Afghanistan at an event attended by the Minister of Public Health and key national and international partners supporting immunization activities in the country. Immunization Week seeks to raise people's awareness on the importance of vaccination and ensure people take action to receive all required life-saving vaccines.

"Action must be increased to improve awareness and demand for immunization by communities and improve vaccination delivery services," said H.E. Dr Ferozuddin Feroz, Minister of Public Health.

"We need to close the immunization gap by integrating immunization with other health services and strengthening health systems to improve vaccine delivery so that we reach every child. We must also ensure that vaccines are accessible and affordable to all."

Measles outbreaks are increasing in Afghanistan – 445 laboratory-confirmed cases have been reported in the first quarter of 2015, representing a significant increase from last year's total of 581 cases. As part of this year's Immunization Week, with the support of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department, the Ministry of Public Health, WHO and UNICEF conduct a supplementary measles immunization campaign in Khost, Helmand and Kandahar provinces which are most at risk for measles outbreaks. Over half a million children aged 9-59 months will be immunized against measles and given 2 drops of the polio vaccine during the campaign. A nationwide measles campaign targeting around five million children under-5 will be conducted in two phases in May and July.

Related links

[Immunization Week in the Eastern Mediterranean Region](#)

[Commentary: Together we can close the immunization gap, Dr Jean-Marie Okwo-Bele, Director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals](#)

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