



9-month-old Setayeah received a measles vaccine during the Immunization Week launch event in Kabul. WHO/S.RamoKabul 23 April 2017 – World Immunization Week was launched today in Afghanistan by the Ministry of Public Health, WHO and UNICEF, together with national and international partners supporting immunization services in the country. The yearly Immunization Week campaign seeks to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination and ensure that people take action to receive all required life-saving vaccines.

Immunization is one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions preventing illness, disability and death from vaccine-preventable diseases including tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, pertussis, hepatitis B, haemophilus influenza, pneumonia, tetanus and measles.

"Immunization is the right of every child. We must accelerate our efforts to ensure all children all over the country are vaccinated and protected from diseases. Strengthening Afghanistan's routine immunization system is among our top priorities. Through immunization we can protect children from traditional vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and also pneumonia, a major killer of children under 5 years of age," said H.E. Dr Ferozuddin Feroz, Minister of Public Health.

Afghanistan's overall immunization coverage remains low with disparities throughout the regions. Vaccination can avert more than one third of under-five deaths but based on estimated routine immunization coverage, around 1 in 6 children still lack access to vaccines.

Afghanistan's under-five mortality rate remains among the highest in the world at 55 per 1,000 live births.

"Vaccines work to fight diseases, to protect individuals and communities and to save lives. We must make sure that routine immunization services reach all Afghans, no matter where they live, and that caregivers vaccinate their children during all house-to-house immunization campaigns," said Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Country Representative. "We need to significantly step up our efforts to achieve universal access to immunization in order to improve child health and drive sustainable development in Afghanistan."

"Immunization is one of the most cost-effective public health interventions that saves children's lives and contributes to building a better future for Afghanistan," said Ms Adele Khodr, UNICEF Country Representative. "We must reach all children with quality vaccines and intensify our efforts to reach the unreached children who are in greatest need and most vulnerable."

Mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases has decreased in the past decade due to the Government's immunization efforts supported by local and international partners. In the past year, the number of health centres providing immunization services increased by 12 per cent, now including 1,767 facilities around the country. Currently 10 antigens are included in Afghanistan's routine immunization programme, available free of charge. In recent years, Afghanistan has successfully introduced new vaccines, including the Pentavalent vaccine protecting people from five deadly diseases and the Pneumococcal vaccine to fight pneumonia.

Afghanistan has seen major progress in efforts to eradicate polio in recent years and most of the country remains polio-free. In 2016, 13 polio cases were reported, compared to 20 in 2015. Three polio cases have been reported so far in 2017 from Kandahar, Helmand and Kunduz provinces.

Sunday 18th of May 2025 12:35:36 AM