



There is an urgent need to better communicate the health benefits of vaccination and the dangers of not immunizing children. A ceremony signalling the start of the fourth regional Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean Region was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 22 April 2013, under the patronage of H.E. Dr Mohamed Mostafa Hamed, Minister of Health and Population of Egypt. The ceremony took place in the National Training Institute with more than 300 participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Population, WHO and UNICEF, as well as medical and nursing students and national scouts.

This year, the slogan for regional Vaccination Week is “Stop Measles Now!” in order to increase the visibility of the measles elimination target and draw the attention of policy-makers, partners, the medical community and the public. The event was covered by the national and regional media.

The choice of measles as the theme for the Week is especially important as all countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have set the measles elimination target for 2015.

Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is an initiative led by countries, the WHO Regional Office and partners to celebrate and promote the value of immunization. The week-long event takes place during the last week of April with the participation of nearly all countries in the Region.

The objectives of the Vaccination Week initiative are to increase stakeholder awareness of the value of immunization; promote and maintain immunization as a priority for policy- and decision-makers; advocate for and mobilize human and financial resources; and improve access to immunization for high-risk populations and hard-to-reach areas in the Region.

In 2013, the fourth Vaccination Week in the Region coincides with the second World Immunization Week. As agreed by a resolution during the sixty-fifth World Health Assembly in 2012, the last week of April each year is designated for celebration of Vaccination (Immunization) Week worldwide.

The involvement of key partners, such as UNICEF, nongovernmental organizations and national charity organizations, will continue to ensure the success and sustainability of the Vaccination Week initiative.

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