



23 April 2019, Cairo – World Immunization Week will be celebrated both globally and regionally from 24 to 30 April 2019 using the slogan “Protected Together: Vaccines Work!” to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Immunization saves millions of lives every year and is widely recognized as one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions. Around the world, 162 countries now use vaccines, and the average global rate of vaccination coverage is 85%.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region has seen a remarkable increase in the number of people receiving vaccines in recent years, with more vaccines introduced and more countries eliminating diseases through immunization. More lives are being saved each year in consequence.

National immunization programmes in the Region have achieved remarkable successes over the last decade. In 2017, 13.5 million children received routine immunizations compared to 11.5 million in 2008. New vaccines have been introduced into national immunization programmes, resulting in 69 additions to immunization schedules in the Region. More than 470 million children have been vaccinated against measles through supplementary immunization activities, and several countries are making progress towards eliminating measles.

“In addition to its positive impact on child health, when immunization rates are high, we know the wider community is protected. The theme of this year’s campaign ‘Protected Together: Vaccines Work!’ reminds us of the importance of ensuring that everyone is provided with the life-saving benefits of vaccines to protect them against diseases,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO’s Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Expanding access to immunization is vital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and WHO’s triple-billion goals. Immunization will lay the foundation for progress towards universal health coverage in line with our regional vision of Health For All, By All.”



As part of this year’s campaign, vaccinators who spearhead efforts to reach every child – community health professionals, doctors, nurses, managers and parents will all be celebrated and honoured as immunization heroes. Their roles in keeping children healthy and securing a safer, healthier future for all will be acknowledged.

During World Immunization Week 2019, the WHO Regional Office expresses the Organization’s appreciation of governments in the Region for their commitment to strengthening immunization programmes, and also thanks WHO’s partners for their continued interest in, commitment to and support for immunization programmes.

But a lot of work still needs to be done to fill the immunization gap. As many as 3.1 million children remain unvaccinated or under-vaccinated in the Region, and outbreaks of measles and diphtheria have been reported in some countries.

“In broader partnership with civil society, community and immunization partners, together we can and must drive vaccination progress to reach more children, rolling out newer vaccines and expanding the benefits of vaccination across the life course. I urge you all to celebrate World Immunization Week 2019 with absolute commitment to ensure that everyone is protected from vaccine-preventable diseases and no one is left behind,” Dr Al-Mandhari said.

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