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Some 180 nations and territories take part in UN-backed immunization drive



Health workers administer oral polio vaccine

25 April 2011 – Some 180 countries and territories are for the first time carrying out simultaneous United Nations-backed immunization campaigns this week, targeting diseases such as influenza, measles, polio and tetanus.

The [Immunization Week](#), which began on Saturday, is taking place across the five UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) regions of Africa, the Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and the Western Pacific.

“I believe Immunization Week will have a significant impact on emphasizing the need to remain vigilant against vaccine-preventable diseases – even those that we do not see within our communities,” [said](#) WHO Director-General Margaret Chan.

Over the course of the week, outreach teams will visit communities with limited access to regular health services such as those living in remote areas, urban fringes and internally displaced people to administer vaccines.

Vaccinations will be provided to protect against diseases such as diphtheria, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, maternal and neonatal tetanus, polio, rubella, whooping cough and yellow fever.

Other activities include training sessions and workshops for health workers, as well as round-table discussions with political decision-makers, medical professionals, parents, and caregivers.

Dr. Chan noted that even with all the positive cooperation, innovation and collaboration that exist, “we are at risk of losing many of the gains that have been made and forgoing the additional benefits that are within reach.”

The recent outbreaks of measles, pertussis and polio in different parts of the world have highlighted the work that remains to be done, she said.

Last week WHO urged European countries to work more closely together to combat measles – which is entirely preventable – after a surge in the number of cases across the continent since the start of the year.

At least 6,500 cases have been reported already, with significant outbreaks observed in 30 countries, including Belgium, France, Serbia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Spain.

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[As measles cases rise across Europe, UN agency calls for greater cooperation](#)