



April 2019

## Vaccination Week in the Americas 2019 Kicks Off

*FPL, PAHO-Washington, DC CMU, PAHO-Washington, DC*

2019 marks the 17th anniversary of Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA), a regional campaign with active participation from 45 countries and territories aiming to vaccinate 70 million people against vaccine-preventable diseases, like measles, polio, influenza and the human papilloma virus, among others. This year's VWA is being celebrated from 20-27 April.

"Protect your community. Do your part" is this year's theme, with a special focus on ending measles outbreaks and protecting the Region's achievements. Around 22 countries in the Region plan to vaccinate more than 2.25 million children and adults against this disease, which has reported outbreaks in several countries. PAHO Director Carissa F. Etienne stated: "It is the duty of each one of us to do our part in promoting vaccination whatever our role: from health workers to authorities, but also as parents, grandparents, teachers, mayors, and community leaders."

At least 19 countries and territories will intensify national immunization program activities to update or complete vaccination schedules in children. A variety of strategies will be employed, including fixed and mobile vaccination posts, vaccination brigades going house-to-house, communication efforts encouraging parents to bring their children to the nearest health centers, and the administration of school-based vaccination to reach older children and adolescents for booster doses.

"We all benefit from the protection offered by vaccines. However, we must ensure that all populations are vaccinated, as is their right. For that, we must make special efforts to reach people who live in remote areas, more deprived neighborhoods, indigenous communities, migrant populations, and people who do not have regular access to health systems, leaving no one behind," added Etienne.

In the last 17 years, more than 740 million people of all ages have been vaccinated against a wide range of diseases during VWA. In addition to this, within the framework of the initiative, many countries allocate health personnel and economic resources to vaccinate people living in remote areas, indigenous communities, and those with limited access to health services.

The regional launch of Vaccination Week was held on 22 April in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, Brazil, with participation from PAHO Director and the highest health authorities in the country, among others. Other launches are planned this week, both nationally, binationally, and even trinationally throughout the Region.

### Links:

VWA 2019 Website  
[www.paho.org/vwa](http://www.paho.org/vwa)

VWA 2019 Video Message from PAHO's Director  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqj7l0NLPm4>



[www.paho.org/vwa](http://www.paho.org/vwa)



**PAHO**

Poster for Vaccination Week in the Americas 2019.

## Workshop on Immunization Data Quality, Analysis and Use

*Marcela Contreras, Paola Ojeda, Martha Velandia, Robin Mowson, PAHO-Washington, DC; Marc Rondy, PAHO-Guatemala*

<b>Location</b>	Guatemala City, Guatemala
<b>Dates</b>	11-15 March 2019
<b>Participants</b>	Staff responsible for the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) in the 29 health areas of Guatemala, four people from the Integral Health Care System (SIAS for its initials in Spanish) and five from the national immunization program, as well as representatives from PAHO.
<b>Purpose</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Present and discuss updated guidelines from the national immunization program;</li> <li>2. Strengthen the capacities of the EPI teams, through practical training in concepts, methodologies and instruments for the analysis and quality monitoring of vaccination data;</li> <li>3. Understand the functions of the tools for vaccination data quality monitoring and analyses;</li> <li>4. Identify actions to improve the tools used for vaccination data quality monitoring and the electronic immunization information system in Guatemala.</li> </ol>

The first part of the workshop consisted of a conference where methods to monitor the coverage of public health interventions were presented, with a special focus on data quality and rapid coverage monitoring in Guatemala. Participants had the opportunity to discuss and share local experiences.

The second part of the workshop consisted of individuals and small teams working on various immunization scenarios using data in an accurate way. An Excel matrix proposed by PAHO was provided to participants, so they could apply the plan of analyses discussed during the previous theoretical sessions using their own data.



Participants at "Workshop on Immunization Data Quality, Analysis and Use" in Guatemala, March 2019. Credit: PAHO-Guatemala.

Participants had the opportunity to carry out field exercises. A group applied the technique for rapid vaccination coverage monitoring (RCM) and went house-to-house checking children's vaccination status in a neighborhood of Guatemala City. A second group went to a health center to apply the approach for vaccination data quality monitoring taught during the course.

Additionally, the national immunization program team presented the revised vaccination guidelines, guidelines (including micro-planification) for the MMR/OPV follow-up campaign planned for September 2019.

In addition to improving participant's skills, this workshop provided the chance to identify possible improvements in vaccination data flows and establish follow-up agreements to improve its quality analysis and use. Ongoing training is important in all areas including



vaccination coverage and epidemiological surveillance; PAHO is committed to continue providing technical support for the improvement of data quality in the Americas.

## **Improving Childhood Immunity through MMR Mop-up Vaccination in Daycare and Nursery Facilities in Barbados**

*Dr. Karen Broome, National Immunization Manager at the Ministry of Health and Wellness in Barbados,  
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The results of the 2015 National MMR Coverage Survey in Barbados showed an MMR1 coverage at 12 months of 93% and MMR2 coverage at 5 years of 98%. This was due to legislation mandating that all children be immunized against measles before entering school. However, continued decline in the national MMR2 coverage between 2014 and 2018 (91% to 74%) has led to a growing number of susceptible children between the ages of 1 to 4 years.

In order to ensure adequate population immunity and reduce the risk of a measles outbreak, the Ministry of Health and Wellness targeted the 1-4 years cohort, through an Early Childhood Institution (ECI) based MMR mop-up vaccine campaign.

The health team visited all ECIs on the island and inspected the vaccination records of children. Of 4,784 children in ECIs, 84% (4,028) had their vaccine records inspected by the health team. 2.4% of the vaccine records inspected showed no documentation of MMR1 and similarly 6.2% for MMR2.

Parents of children who were found to be missing vaccines were given an appointment for immunization of their child at the polyclinic or private doctor. Public health nurses conducted educational sessions with the owners and operators of private and public ECIs and the staff of the Child Care Board (regulatory body). The sessions trained participants on interpretation of the immunization card and the importance of vaccination. ECIs received updated immunization promotional material.

The importance of ECI staff being fully vaccinated was also emphasized and staff of the ECIs was also offered the MMR vaccine if they had not previously received 2 doses. 60% (29) of the ECI owners and operators attending the education sessions were immunized with MMR.

Mop-up vaccination is ongoing and will be completed in May 2019. Focusing on ECIs is a good strategy to improve coverage.





## PAHO Supports the Training of Thousands of Vaccinators Prior to Vaccination Week in the Americas

*Zacarias Garib, Director of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), Ministry of Public Health in Dominican Republic; Ana Elena Chevez, Yenny Rocio Neira, regional immunization advisors-PAHO; Leonela Medina, communications focal point-PAHO*

<b>Location</b>	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
<b>Dates</b>	1-12 April 2019
<b>Participants</b>	Vaccinators, health promoters, Immunization Program coordinators and epidemiologists at the municipal and provincial levels
<b>Purpose</b>	Train vaccinators to support the national vaccination campaign against polio and pneumococcus in the Dominican Republic

For seventeen years, PAHO/WHO and its partners, have celebrated the annual Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA). Due to this initiative, millions of people have been immunized and six vaccine-preventable diseases have been eliminated from the Region. The Dominican Republic has participated in VWA and this year joins again, having as priority the poliomyelitis vaccine in response to recommendations from the National Certification Committee and the PAHO/WHO Regional Commission for the Certification of poliomyelitis eradication.



Dr. Jamileth Alegria, PAHO/WHO consultant supporting training in a border zone, Dominican Republic, April 2019. Credit: PAHO/WHO.

Prior to the beginning of VWA, four PAHO/WHO international consultants who are experts on vaccination campaigns, have given technical support to the national and subnational level teams that are located in the northeast region of the country and the border zones with Haiti; these areas are considered to be at risk of importing wild poliovirus or at risk of emergences of the circulating vaccine-derived circulating poliovirus. The undertaken activities have concentrated on the planning, organization and social movement that are required prior to a vaccination campaign launch.



Dr. Gladys Ghisays, PAHO/WHO consultant supporting training in a border zone, Dominican Republic, April 2019. Credit: PAHO/WHO

PAHO/WHO also supported the training of 8,000 vaccinators who will be present in more than 1,400 vaccination stations, moving posts and among the teams that will go from house to house in order to reach the least accessible places. Likewise, the active search of acute flaccid paralysis cases it has been implemented in the framework of the plan to strengthen epidemiological



Training of vaccinators in Dominican Republic, April 2019. Credit: PAHO/WHO.



surveillance in the country. The goal is to vaccinate 525,638 children between the ages of 3-35 months against poliomyelitis and 295,985 children against pneumococcus.

VWA will formally initiate on 24 April in the Dajabón province with a formal event headed by the Minister of Public Health, PAHO/WHO Representative in the Dominican Republic, local authorities and strategic partners. This year, VWA has the slogan “Protect your Community. Do your Part. #GetVax,” that calls to create awareness about the responsibility of each individual and sector to keep their communities free from vaccine-preventable diseases.



Training of vaccinators in the Dominican Republic, April 2019.  
Credit: PAHO/WHO.

## PAHO Meets with the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Public Health to Discuss the Situation of the Poliomyelitis Virus

*Zacarias Garib, Director of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), Ministry of Public Health in Dominican Republic; Ana Elena Chevez, Yenny Rocio Neira, regional immunization advisors-PAHO; Leonela Medina, communications focal point-PAHO*

<b>Location</b>	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
<b>Dates</b>	16 April 2019
<b>Participants</b>	Rafael Sanchez Cardenas, Minister of Public Health; Zacarias Garib, EPI Director; Alma Morales, PAHO/WHO Representative in Dominican Republic; Yenny Rocio Neira, PAHO immunization advisor; Jerónimo Canahuir, Gladys Ghisays, Jamileth Alegria and Bertha Capistrán, PAHO/WHO international consultants; and members of the provincial offices
<b>Purpose</b>	To discuss the global and regional situation of the poliomyelitis virus and the level of risk for the Dominican Republic to import wild poliovirus or have an emergence of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus with the Ministry of Public Health's key staff

In the framework of Vaccination Week of the Americas (VWA), PAHO/WHO met with the Ministry of Public Health to discuss the global and regional situation of the poliomyelitis virus and the level of risk for the Dominican Republic to import wild poliovirus or have an emergence of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus.

Additionally, the objective and technical cooperation plan that PAHO's international consultants have provided on the at-risk areas located in the northeast region of the country and border zones with Haiti were presented.



PAHO's international consultants, immunization advisor and PAHO/WHO Representative in the Dominican Republic, along with the Minister of Public Health, the Director of Population Health and the EPI Director in Dominican Republic.  
Credit: PAHO/WHO.



PAHO's international consultants have worked in four regions that comprehend 12 provinces and 88 municipalities to coordinate and create partnerships with regional and local authorities to establish alliances in order to guarantee VWA's goals. They also trained local staff, conducted microplanning activities such as the identification of the target population and the establishment of the vaccination schedule, and they actively sought acute flaccid paralysis cases as part of the plan to strengthen epidemiological surveillance in the country.

During the meeting, the challenges and opportunities to improve the immunization program in the country were also discussed. The Dominican Republic needs to strengthen coordination between health services management and the provincial offices; to improve the cold chain; to extend the schedule for vaccination services and to guarantee the appropriate logistics in order to equitably fulfill the set objectives. Likewise, the country was congratulated for its efforts and achievements in the context of the plan to eradicate the poliomyelitis virus, especially for engagement shown by local staff.