



## Vaccination Weeks

A global public health dream came true in 2012 with the launch of the first-ever World Immunization Week. Under the theme “Protect your world: Get vaccinated,” more than 180 countries and territories in all six WHO regions focused at the same time on the importance of vaccination against deadly diseases. This global effort was the outgrowth of regional initiatives that have emerged during the past decade, taking inspiration from the first such initiative, Vaccination Week in the Americas. Since its founding in 2003, Vaccination Week in the Americas has become the largest multinational public health effort in the Western Hemisphere. It marks its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

### Key facts

- Since 2003, Vaccination Week in the Americas has reached some 400 million children and adults with vaccines against diseases including diphtheria, measles, mumps, tetanus, whooping cough, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome, hepatitis and influenza.
- Fortyfive countries and territories in the Western Hemisphere participated in Vaccination Week in the Americas and World Immunization Week in 2012, with the goal of reaching 44 million people.
- Immunization prevents an estimated 23 million deaths from vaccinepreventable diseases each year.
- Thanks largely to vaccination, the Americas was the first region to eradicate smallpox (in 1971) and to eliminate polio (in 1991).
- The last endemic case of measles in the Americas was reported in 2002, and the last endemic case of rubella in 2009.
- Nearly all countries in the Americas have eliminated neonatal tetanus as a public health problem.
- Diseases including diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough have been reduced significantly in the Americas thanks to vaccination coverage averaging 93% in children under 1.
- Vaccination coverage is improving globally. In the Americas, Europe and the Western Pacific, immunization coverage is more than 90%.

### Key actions

- Vaccination Week in the Americas helps strengthen national immunization programs and strives to reach groups that otherwise have limited access to regular health services, particularly people living in periurban, rural and border areas and indigenous communities.
- Despite major progress in vaccination, many children in the Americas have not completed their vaccination schedules, and hardto reach populations continue to have lower rates of vaccination coverage. Vaccination Week in the Americas seeks to close these gaps and protect the region’s hardwon achievements.