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**SPECIAL REPORT ON THE SIXTY-SIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**
31/05/2013 from Hayatee Hasan, WHO HQ

World Health Assembly opens to discuss major health issues

WHO’s Health Assembly, the world’s largest health policy-making body, opened its 66th Session on 20 May in Geneva with around 3000 participants from around the world. Major health issues on the agenda included protecting more children from vaccine-preventable diseases, intensifying efforts to eradicate polio, and monitoring of progress countries are making towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In her opening address to the Health Assembly, Dr Margaret Chan reiterated the importance of the integrated global action plan for the prevention and control of pneumonia and diarrhoea released by WHO and UNICEF last month which focuses on the use of 15 highly effective interventions. “Each one can save lives”, said Dr Chan. “When the 15 are put to work together, this is powerhouse that can revolutionize child survival.”

Dr Chan also spoke of her attendance at the Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi last month where participants explored how the Global Vaccine Action Plan can be used as a roadmap to save more than 20 million lives by 2020 by expanding access to ten existing vaccines. Polio eradication was given special attention as a milestone in this visionary roadmap. A comprehensive eradication and endgame strategy was issued last month and discussed during the summit. Participants appreciated the strategy’s many innovations and expressed the view that it has a very good chance of success.

![Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO speaking at the plenary session of the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly. Credit: WHO/Pierre Albouy.](image)

In his message, which was read by Mr Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon drew attention to the positive effect the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have had on the global health agenda.

He noted that the Health Assembly will discuss a number of MDG-related issues, such as implementation of the Global Vaccine Action Plan and recommendations from the UN Commission on life-saving commodities for women and children. He also highlighted the role of universal health coverage in ensuring equitable access to health services and emphasized the continuing need for WHO to handle unforeseen global health events, such as newly emerging viruses.

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![Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO speaking at the plenary session of the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly. Credit: WHO/Pierre Albouy.](image)

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Improving people’s health through immunization

The World Health Assembly provides an opportune moment to communicate and interact with Member States on WHO’s current areas of work. This year, the exhibits reflected the Organization’s shift to the areas of work as defined in the 12th General Programme of Work, thus showing Member States that their vision is moving ahead under our programme of reform.

As such, vaccine-preventable diseases falls under WHO’s priority area of work in Category 1: communicable diseases which includes HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Neglected Tropical Diseases and Tuberculosis.

Delegates visiting the communicable diseases were able to get more information on WHO’s work in improving people’s health by extending the full benefits of immunization to all people.

Immunization is one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions and prevents between 2 and 3 million deaths every year. From infants to senior citizens, immunization protects against diseases such as diphtheria, measles, pertussis (whooping cough), pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhoea, rubella and tetanus. The benefits of immunization are increasingly being extended to adolescents and adults, providing protection against life-threatening diseases such as influenza, meningitis, and cancers (cervical and liver cancers).

However, even now, an estimated 22 million infants are not fully immunized with routine vaccines, and more than 1.5 million children under-five die from diseases that could be prevented by existing vaccines.

WHO is working with countries and partners to improve global vaccination coverage through the implementation of the Global Vaccine Action Plan which is a framework to prevent millions of deaths through more equitable access to vaccines and the annual World Immunization Week which aims to raise public awareness of how immunization saves lives.

World Health Assembly supports Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Framework

A year after the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP), Member States expressed support for the proposed Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Framework, which is linked to the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health.

Delegates acknowledged the importance of this first-ever Monitoring, Evaluation and Framework, noting that such a framework has never before been applied for immunization activities.

Delegates supported the independent review process to assess and report progress and acknowledged the leadership demonstrated by the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunization in this process. Speakers highlighted the need to mobilize greater resources to support low- and middle-income countries to implement the Plan and monitor impact; ensure that support to countries to implement the GVAP includes a strong focus on strengthening routine immunization and to facilitate vaccine technology transfer.

Read the GVAP report by Secretariat.
More information on GVAP.
More information on the 66th World Health Assembly.

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**IMPROVING IMMUNIZATION DATA MANAGEMENT THROUGH A MOBILE PHONE APPLICATION**

31/05/2013 from Arbnor Hasani and Agron Gashi, UNICEF Kosovo

The immunization programme in Kosovo is one of the most successful programmes in the health sector. The National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) reports sustained coverage above 95 percent with major antigens.

Nonetheless, challenges remain in reaching every child. With its equity agenda at the forefront, UNICEF Kosovo has stepped in to support the central and local authorities in improving immunization data management to identify the remaining children in a timely and efficient manner.

Immunization reporting is mainly manual in Kosovo through monthly hard-copy forms. Reports by health facilities are aggregated by the Main Family Medicine Center at the municipal level, then sent to the central level. During this process, delays happen when health workers are not able to travel to the upper level on time, and mistakes take place during the manual aggregation and submission of the data.

UNICEF Kosovo, through its Innovations Lab, proposed a solution to overcome such obstacles through the use of mobile phones with a custom-built application, where the reporting form is available to users in a view similar to the paper-based one. Health facilities will be able to complete the digital form and send it off to their respective municipal coordinator instantly. The application uses the mobile operator’s Internet access to send the data. If mobile Internet is not available, the report is then automatically converted into an SMS.

With this application, immunization managers will be able to receive timely data and automatically generate municipal and national aggregated reports. If a health worker delays or fails to send a report, the system sends an automatic SMS reminder.

The application was presented during the Immunization Week to the Ministry of Health, NIPH and WHO Kosovo. It will be tentatively tested in June 2013, in the municipality of Gjilan. Follow us for updates on this and other projects.

**HOUSEHOLD MATERIALS OFFERED FOR AWARENESS CREATION IN THE GAMBIA DURING AFRICAN VACCINATION WEEK**

31/06/2013 from Crépin Hilaire Dadjo, WHO Inter-Country Support Team for West Africa, Momodou Gassama and Kebba Gibba, WHO The Gambia

An innovative social mobilization approach was used during the observance by The Gambia of the Third edition of the Vaccination Week. Across the seven health regions of the country, emphasis was laid on synchronized community-based health education sessions, commonly known as “Open Field Days” to raise awareness on the value and importance of immunization services, increasing vaccination coverage and uptake of new and traditional vaccines.

Held at strategic locations, these sessions were attended by mothers, fathers, care givers, community leaders, government authorities and many other stakeholders.

By accounts, the awareness creation was realized through a local competition with materials offered to all good answers to questions asked by health agents on key areas of vaccination. For instance, in Sohm Village, members of the community were asked the following, among others: “What are the benefits of child immunization?” – “Name three vaccine preventable diseases?” – “Name the vaccine given to pregnant women and its benefits”, etc.

Presents offered included metal basins, mats, soap, baskets, drinking cups, kettles, buckets and radios. “We chose these gifts because they are valued by communities”, said the Regional Public Health Officer of Western Health Region 2, satisfied with the number of people mobilized.

The Third African Vaccination Week was commemorated in The Gambia for the first time in May 2013. The Week had been launched during a media briefing by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Mrs Matilda Bouy, on 16 May 2013 at the Headquarters of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Banjul, the capital city. The WHO Representative to The Gambia, Dr Thomas Sukwa, made a presentation at the ceremony which was chaired by the Director of Health Services.
YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION BOOSTER NOT NEEDED
31/05/2013 from Hayatee Hasan, WHO HQ

The yellow fever ‘booster’ vaccination given ten years after the initial vaccination is no longer necessary, according to WHO. An article published in WHO’s Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER) reveals that the Organization’s Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization (SAGE) has reviewed the latest evidence and concluded that a single dose of vaccination is sufficient to confer lifelong immunity against yellow fever disease.

The conventional guidance has been that the yellow fever vaccination has had to be boosted after ten years,” says Dr Helen Rees, chair of SAGE. “Looking at really very good evidence, it was quite clear to SAGE that in fact a single dose of yellow fever vaccine is effective. This is extremely important for countries where yellow fever is endemic, because it will allow them to reconsider their vaccine scheduling. It is also important for travelers.”

Read the yellow fever vaccine news release

THIRTY-ONE PRIORITY COUNTRIES ELIMINATED MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS (MNT)
31/05/2013 from Hayatee Hasan, WHO HQ

Tetanus, one of the most deadly diseases a mother and her newborn can face, has been eliminated in over half of the 59 priority countries. The announcement came during the annual MNT Elimination Initiative stakeholders’ meeting.

The countries that have eliminated MNT are: Bangladesh; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; China; Comoros; Congo; Cote d’Ivoire; Egypt; Eritrea; Ghana; Guinea Bissau; Iraq; Liberia; Malawi; Mozambique; Myanmar; Namibia; Nepal; Rwanda; Senegal; South Africa; Tanzania (United Republic of); Timor Leste; Togo; Turkey; Uganda; Viet Nam; Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Tetanus kills one newborn baby every nine minutes and almost all of these babies are born in poor families living in the most disadvantaged areas and communities.

Despite the progress, 28 priority countries have not yet reached the elimination goal. This is a formidable challenge in the quest to achieve the global target of elimination of MNT in all priority countries by 2015.

More information on progress to eliminate MNT

MILLIONS OF GIRLS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER THANKS TO NEW HPV VACCINE DEALS
31/05/2013 from Hayatee Hasan, WHO HQ

A new record low price for human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines will help ensure millions of girls in developing countries can be protected against cervical cancer. Thanks to the GAVI Alliance, the poorest countries will now have access to a sustainable supply of HPV vaccines for as low as US$ 4.50 per dose. The same vaccines can cost more than $100 in developed countries and the previous lowest public sector price was $13 per dose.

GAVI will begin support for HPV vaccines in Kenya as early as this month followed by Ghana, Lao PDR, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania. GAVI will also support HPV vaccines for nationwide use in Rwanda next year.

“In Africa, where facilities to diagnose and treat cervical cancer are few and far between, HPV vaccines will mean the difference between life and death for so many women in the prime of their lives” said Dr Richard Sezibera, Secretary General of the East African Community.

Read the HPV vaccine price news release
VACCINATION WEEK IN THE AMERICAS 2013
31/05/2013 from Alba Maria Ropero, Hannah Kurtis and Liz Thrush, WHO PAHO

In conjunction with the second World Immunization Week, the 11th annual Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA) was celebrated from 20-27 April 2013. The theme for this year’s initiative was “Vaccination: a shared responsibility.” This theme highlights the importance of each person’s role in fighting vaccine-preventable diseases. Governments, national immunization programmes, healthcare workers, and communities and families all contribute to their population’s health by ensuring their children are vaccinated.

Forty-four countries and territories carried out vaccination campaigns under the framework of VWA 2013, targeting more than 44 million people across the age spectrum for vaccination against a wide range of diseases, including poliomyelitis, rubella, and congenital rubella syndrome, measles, diphtheria, mumps, whooping cough, neonatal tetanus, influenza, yellow fever, diarrhea caused by rotavirus, bacterial pneumonia, and human papilloma virus (HPV), among others.

In addition to the Regional Launching events that took place at the Adjacency Zone between Belize and Guatemala on 24 April 2013 and in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on 27 April 2013, local, national and international launching events were held across the region. Antigua and Barbuda, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, and Puerto Rico many more countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean held national events to celebrate the initiative. Additionally, international launches took place between the borders of Honduras and Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama, Panama and Colombia, and Guyana and Suriname among others. Country Action Plans for VWA 2013 can be found on the VWA website.

For more information on VWA and to view photos of these events, please refer to the initiative’s Website, Facebook, and Twitter.

SHARING LESSONS LEARNED ON ROTAVIRUS VACCINE INTRODUCTION – HAITI VISITS THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
31/05/2013 from Irene Leal and Jennifer Sanwogou, AMRO/PAHO

From 20-24 May 2013, a Haitian team from the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) joined the EPI team of neighboring Dominican Republic (DR) in Santo Domingo for the DR to share its experiences in introducing the rotavirus vaccine into their National Immunization Programme last year.

The Haitian delegation included the EPI Assistant Director, the national head of logistics and cold chain, the national head of communication and a PAHO consultant; the Dominican Republic delegation included the national EPI technical team and PAHO.

The visit focused on sharing all the management aspects of the planning and organization for each EPI component down to the operational level. The Dominican team shared major activities that took place, major challenges, achievements, and constraints that had arisen in the different stages of the process. The exchange between the two countries included meetings, discussions, review of documentation, visits to health facilities, and logistics risk analyses.

Aspects that were repeatedly emphasized included: 1) the importance of having enough cold chain equipment before the introduction of the vaccine, as the presentation of the rotavirus vaccine is bulky; 2) using adult training methodologies for training that consider different forms of learning; 3) the importance of vaccinating children early in vaccination posts closest to their homes; and 4) the mechanisms to adequately monitor compliance with the recommended rotavirus vaccination schedule.

Within the managerial aspects, monitoring mechanisms were socialized through indicators of consistency, including monitoring the reception of all vaccinations at the time of contact with the service, the dropout rates to assess compliance with the service when the quality of health care is good, in addition to the second dose coverage, the implementation of monitoring tools and tools for logistics management.

This experience opened the possibility for other meetings to take place between the two countries that would allow the analysis of other issues in order to strengthen various EPI components.
UNICEF UZBEKISTAN PILOTS AN ‘EDUTAINMENT’ SERIES TO STEP UP IMMUNIZATION
31/05/2013 from Savita Varde-Naqvi and Tamara Kummer, UNICEF Uzbekistan

UNICEF Uzbekistan teamed up with the Ministry of Health and national Uzbek TV channels to create an innovative ‘edutainment’ television series on immunization, launched during World Immunization Week 2013. The series features young amateur actors and seasoned local stars, using real-life and fictional scenarios to explain the benefits of vaccination.

The 15-episode serial covers a range of issues in health, hygiene, nutrition, education and child protection and depicts immunization as the most cost-effective way to protect children against preventable diseases.

The production of the edutainment serial, funded in part by the UN Foundation, was officially launched during World Immunization Week. The show will be ready for broadcast in the last quarter of 2013, with national TV channels already expressing a strong interest in airing it.

“This TV serial is a fresh and inspiring way to educate Uzbekistan’s youth on the importance of immunization and to dispel fears about vaccination which have increased recently,” explains UNICEF-Uzbekistan Representative, Jean-Michel Delmotte.

The edutainment serial was one of many outreach efforts led by UNICEF-Uzbekistan during the week. Several public service announcements featuring local sports, music and movie stars were aired on television networks with support from UNICEF. A series of TV interviews with immunization experts was produced and will be broadcast throughout the year to create demand for immunization in remote and under-served areas. UNICEF also helped the Ministry of Health to re-launch a more user-friendly version of its immunization website, with special features for parents and a focus on vaccine safety. Through outreach on TV, the web and in the press, the aim is to turn immunization into a necessary choice for children’s wellbeing.

During World Immunization Week the Ministry of Health, supported by the Russian Federation, held polio campaigns in areas bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

THE MEASLES AND RUBELLA INITIATIVE OUTBREAK RESPONSE FUND
31/05/2013 from Kaushik Banerjee, WHO HQ

In June 2012, the GAVI Alliance Board approved US$55 million for measles outbreak response and other emerging measles needs in GAVI eligible countries for the period 2012-2017. These funds will be administered by the Measles-Rubella Initiative (MRI) which is responsible for the management and decision-making on the allocation of the outbreak response funds.

It is important to note that these funds are intended to be used as a strategic tool available for rapid outbreak response in discrete, well-defined geographic areas, as quickly as possible after the detection, confirmation and reporting of an outbreak of measles. The purpose is to stop the spread of the outbreak before it engulfs large geographic areas. It is not intended to be used for large-scale supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) in an entire country or large parts of a country.

The details of the procedure to access this fund is available in the standard operating procedure (SOP).
Meetings/Workshops

GLOBAL MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS ELIMINATION (MNT) INITIATIVE STAKEHOLDERS’ MEETING IN THE CONTEXT OF MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH
31/05/2013 from Rownak Khan, Azhar Abid Raza and Flint Zulu, UNICEF New York; Ahmadu Yakubu and Tracey Goodman, WHO HQ

Location: New York, USA Dates: 15 May 2013
Purpose: To jointly review the MNT Elimination (MNTE) progress, key technical and programmatic challenges and the way forward, identify opportunities to strengthen service delivery through existing platforms (Ante Natal Care and Expanded Programme on Immunization), discuss innovative approaches to get access to the most difficult areas and review funding needs to reach the goal of MNTE by 2015.

Details: UNICEF Headquarters convened a stakeholders’ meeting on the Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) programme on 15 May 2013 in New York. The meeting came at a critical juncture in the history of the MNTE programme amid celebrations on reaching a milestone as over half of the 59 countries at risk of MNT since 1999 have achieved elimination.

The participants were apprised of the global progress on MNTE, validation process, funding needs, exploring new technologies such as use of UNIJECT and sustaining elimination through system strengthening and accelerated collaboration with maternal and newborn programmes. This was later followed by a panel discussion by partners who renewed their commitment to the MNTE agenda and acknowledged the sense of urgency in meeting the $100 million funding gap to reach the global elimination goal by 2015. All partners fully committed to support the initiative until the goal is fully achieved.

PHILIPPINES GEARING UP ACTIVITIES FOR MEASLES ELIMINATION
31/05/2013 from Maricel de Quiroz Castro and Sigrun Roesel, WHO Philippines

The Philippines remain highly committed to the goal of measles elimination; despite challenges faced and persistence of measles transmission in several areas in the country.

The situation was carefully analyzed at the EPI National Consultative Meeting held 16-18 April 2013 and attended by National EPI officers of the Department of Health (DOH), EPI Medical and Nurse Coordinators from the 17 Regions in the country, UNICEF and WHO. National and regional situations and risk analysis were presented, followed by a workshop on how to identify high risk communities and develop strategies to eliminate the risk for measles transmission.

Many local government units (LGUs) are responding to outbreaks by conducting either intensive follow-up of defaulters or targeted outbreak response immunization. However, these approaches are not always effective in stopping measles transmission until routine coverage improves significantly and universally among the most at risk population, e.g. the under-five children. It was determined that a well-planned and implemented measles-rubella supplemental immunization activity has to be implemented in 2014 to stop remaining indigenous measles virus transmission. While planning for the national campaign, the ‘Reaching Every Purok’ strategy, carrying the ‘Reaching Every District / RED’ approach to the communities, will be institutionalized to ensure that every new birth cohort and all under-five children will receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine. Well-coordinated outbreak response approaches will continue; with all activities based on the ‘Philippines Measles Elimination Field Guide’ which has been adapted and localized from the respective WHO WPRO document at a national workshop conducted 6-10 May 2013 by the DOH National Epidemiology Center (NEC) and its Vaccine Preventable Disease Surveillance Team.
THE REGIONAL IMMUNIZATION LOGISTICS ORIENTATION AND PLANNING WORKSHOP
31/05/2013 from Hailu Makonnen Kenea, WHO AFRO

Location: Harare, Zimbabwe
Dates: 22-27 April 2013
Participants: 35 participants representing 20 Anglophone countries in the WHO African Region
Purpose: Build capacity of immunization logisticians at country level with the skills to address immunization logistics challenges identified through the Effective Vaccine Management assessments carried out in 33 countries in the WHO African Region.

Details: Supply chains remain weak in many countries. Given the major challenges they are now facing, a "business as usual" attitude no longer works. There is a need for a new and systematic approach, backed up by strengthened human capacities and assured long-term support from partners.

The Planning Workshop was organized by WHO Regional Office for Africa and Inter-Country Support Team for East and South Africa (IST ESA), jointly facilitated and sponsored by WHO and UNICEF. The topics covered included: Orientation on global and regional issues; prioritization and the logistics triple constraints; cold chain equipment inventory and selection; temperature monitoring devices; vaccine forecasting and storage capacity; stock management and vaccination data management indicators; and vaccine wastage monitoring.

During the final day the participants were requested to specify the three most important lessons learned and the three action points they will strive to implement in their respective countries. Prioritization, temperature monitoring devices and stock management indicators were for the majority of participants the three important lessons learned and action points to implement.

It was suggested to continue such workshops on a yearly basis to enable participants to share experiences and gain knowledge in the global and regional development of technology and innovations. The training course ended with remarks and award of certificates to participants by Dr David Okello, WHO Representative for Zimbabwe and acting for IST-ESA Coordinator.

VACCINATION SUPPLY STOCK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP IN HAITI: STRENGTHENING VACCINE MANAGEMENT
31/05/2013 from Nora Lucia Rodriguez, AMRO/PAHO

Location: Haiti
Dates: 6-10 May 2013
Participants: Staff from both central and from five department level stores. Representatives from the Brazilian Tripartite Cooperation, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UNICEF.
Purpose: To train staff on using and implementing a vaccine and supply management Software.

Details: The software installed is the Vaccination Supply Stock Management (VSSM) developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The workshop specifically trained cold chain technicians and the staff responsible for managing the cold stores on how to install and use VSSM. The software is a management tool which targets the operations related to the reception, storage and distribution of vaccine, syringes and other immunization supplies. The reports and information provided by VSSM will also support the shaping of supply chain and logistics operations. VSSM provides specific reports for managers and staff regarding vaccine and immunization supplies which will improve the flow of the products, prevent stocks-outs, and ensure that vaccines with short shelf-life, in particular, are used first; or are recalled if they have passed their expiry date. The ultimate goal of any immunization management inventory software is to ensure that all service providers have the required vaccines doses to support the delivery of immunization services everyday as required. Furthermore, given that Haiti will be introducing newer vaccines that occupy more volume per dose stored when compared to the traditional EPI vaccine, VSSM will assist managers and cold chain technicians with logistic operations according to the given storage capacity available at a service point.

The workshop was conducted by Nora Lucia Rodriguez, PAHO Regional Advisor, and PAHO Consultants Mojtaba Haghgou and Mary Traore.
EXPERTS MEETING OF MEASLES AND RUBELLA LABORATORY NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS
31/05/2013 from Gloria Rey-Benito and Carlos Castillo-Solorzano, AMRO/PAHO

Location: Washington, DC. Unites States of America  Dates: 7 May 2013

Participants: Measles and rubella laboratory experts from FIOCRUZ (Brazil), National Microbiology Laboratory (Canada), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or CDC (U.S.), and the Caribbean Public Health Agency or CARPHA (Trinidad and Tobago); officials from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); and representatives from the national laboratories and the WHO’s global lab coordinator who joined the meeting virtually.

Purpose: To discuss the performance and challenges of the Measles and Rubella Laboratory Network in the Americas, the main findings of members of the International Expert Commissions (IEC) during their visits to countries and laboratories in the Region, and the expected role of the national, sub-regional, and regional laboratories in the post-elimination phase.

Details: Some of the technical discussions included: status of measles and rubella laboratory network in the Americas: achievements and challenges; molecular epidemiologic surveillance of measles and rubella in Canada; experience of a regional reference laboratory (RRL) in maintaining and supporting laboratory surveillance capacity to monitor measles/rubella and CRS; main laboratory findings on measles and rubella elimination related to the documentation and verification process; expected role of the laboratory network during the verification and post-elimination phases; and plan of action to maintain the elimination that includes rapid assessments of surveillance systems. Recommendations about Operations and Quality Control, Case classification and laboratory testing and Sustainability of laboratory surveillance were also addressed.

The purpose of the IEC surveillance assessment visits was also discussed. It was agreed that these visits serve to assess the national surveillance system and to determine if surveillance is adequate to document elimination of measles, rubella and CRS. Laboratory testing should be considered during the visits and the IEC review team should include a laboratory expert. However, these visits should not be used to accredit the laboratory.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL EXPERT COMMITTEE (IEC) MEETING WITH NATIONAL COMMISSIONS TO DOCUMENT AND VERIFY THE ELIMINATION OF ENDEMIC MEASLES, RUBELLA AND CONGENITAL RUBELLA SYNDROME IN THE AMERICAS
31/05/2013 from Carlos Castillo-Solorzano and Katri Kontio, AMRO/PAHO

Location: Washington, DC. Unites States of America  Dates: 8-9 May 2013

Purpose: 1) to review progress on documenting and verifying the regional elimination of measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), including outcomes of the IEC visits to countries; 2) to review approaches for implementing and monitoring the Plan of Action to maintain regional elimination; 3) to discuss measures taken to reduce the impact of virus importations; and 4) to discuss and further work plans for technical cooperation in 2013-2014.

Participants: International Expert Committee (IEC) together with National Commissions to document and verify the elimination of endemic measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome in the Americas.

Details: This was the fourth annual meeting of the IEC, and the 2nd involving the National Commissions, to follow-up on the process of documenting and verifying the elimination of these diseases. To request more information, please contact Katrio Kontio.
TRAINING ON REGIONAL GUIDANCE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED DEWORMING ACTIONS AND INTENSIFYING INTEGRATED EFFORTS FOR CONTROL OF SOIL-TRANSMITTED HELMINTHIASES IN THE AMERICAS: WORKING TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOAL

31/05/2013 from Steven Ault, Hannah Kurtis, Martha Saboya and Martha Velandia, PAHO

Location: Bogotá, Colombia Dates: 13-17 May 2013

Participants: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education delegates from 18 countries, PAHO officers at the country level and from the regional programmes of Neglected Infectious Diseases (NTD), Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and Food and Nutrition, a delegate from the NTD department at WHO, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Children Without Worms, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Sabin Vaccine Institute, the Inter-American Development Bank, McGill University and key drug donors.

Purpose: Intensify integrated efforts to control Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis in the Americas as part of the overarching goals for the control and elimination of Neglected Infectious Diseases.

Details: Participants reviewed the document “Operational guidelines for the implementation of integrated deworming activities”, which aims to facilitate the integration of deworming activities into existing national or subnational programmes (i.e. IMCI, EPI). This document outlines the various factors that should be taken into consideration when integrating deworming activities for children under 15 years of age; for example, how to undertake internal and external advocacy efforts, conduct situation assessments, and identify at-risk populations, as well as existing programmes and initiatives that would be conducive to integration. It also covers the operational, logistical, and monitoring procedures that should be included as part of this process. The participants also completed outlines of operational plans for integrating deworming with other interventions in their own countries, as well as roadmaps for their implementation.

At the second meeting with partners, dialogue was established between NGOs conducting deworming activities in the region, national health authorities, donors and partners, to coordinate deworming efforts, scale-up coverage, implement monitoring and evaluation and other integrated efforts to reach regional goals.

For more information.

PHILIPPINES STRENGTHENS CAPACITY FOR POST-MARKETING PHARMACOVIGILANCE

31/05/2013 from Maricel de Quiroz Castro and Sigrun Roesel, WHO Philippines

Location: Manila, Philippines Dates: 25-28 February 2013

Participants: National and regional staff of the Department of Health (National Epidemiology Center and National Center for Disease Prevention and Control/ Expanded Programme on Immunization), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the members of the national AEFI expert review committee (NAEFIC).

Purpose: To provide an advance training course on Surveillance for Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI)

Details: The training is part of the over-all capacity building activities of the government geared towards achieving a fully functional Vaccine National Regulatory Authority (NRA), that ensures only safe and effective vaccines are used in the country’s national immunization programme. The focus was on the quality of case investigation and causality assessment. It was designed based on the lessons-learned from the National Assessment of AEFI Surveillance System in the Philippines held on 11-14 February 2013.

In the Philippines, the FDA and the Department of Health are jointly responsible for monitoring, investigating and responding to adverse events that occurred after vaccine administration.

The training was made possible through the support of the World Health Organization in the Western Pacific Region and Philippines.
Obituary

DR ALI JAFFER MOHAMED

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Dr Ali Jaffer Mohamed from the Sultanate of Oman who passed away on Tuesday, 14 May 2013. He was in Jakarta, Indonesia where he had been participating in the South-East Asia Regional Polio Certification meeting.

Dr Jaffer is recognized as one of the most efficient promoters of global health and rendered great service to the World Health Organization (WHO), at headquarters and the Eastern Mediterranean as well as other WHO regions.

His pleasant and friendly personality, his dedication, his optimism and his wisdom will remain in our hearts and in our minds.

PROFESSOR PETER MARTINS NDUMBE

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Peter Martins Ndumbe on 14 May 2013. He was born in Mbonge, Meme Division, South west Region. Until his demise, he was a Medical Doctor specialized in Infectious Disease, Immunology and Clinical Epidemiology.

Thanks to research and hard work, Peter Ndumbe, from 1997 became a Professor of Virus Immunology at the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences of the University of Yaoundé I. He did serve as Director of the Centre for the study and control of Communicable Diseases in the same university.

Professor Ndumbe was a member of several national, international professional and academic societies. Since 2003 until his death, he was the chair of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, STAC of the UNICEF, UNDP, WORLD BANK and WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, TDR.

He was a founding member and chair of the Task Force on Immunization for the African Region since 2004, with the responsibility to look out for a new vaccine against tuberculosis, malaria and HIV.

After he was replaced as the Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, UB, May 2011, he joined the WHO AFRO OFFICE in Brazzaville, Congo as the Director of Library, Science and Publication.

His professionalism, calm and unstinted sense of humour were highly appreciated by all.
**Future Events**

**ENERGY & CONNECTIVITY FOR HEALTH**  
30/04/2013 from Keiko Valente, UNICEF NY

**Location:** New York, USA  
**Dates:** 12 June 2013

**Participants:** We are currently inviting expressions of interest to share ideas, innovations, or others suggestions that could help connect ‘off-grid’ communities with power and connectivity. If you have something to contribute, we would like to hear from you. Please write to Osman Mansoor and to Keiko Valente by 10 May 2013.

**Purpose:** A one-day forum to share ideas that can bring energy and connectivity to ‘off-grid’-communities for health needs, including vaccine fridges.

**Details:** The goal is to establish a “marketplace of ideas” around technology and options to provide remote communities with power and connectivity for their health needs. The specific objectives include:

1. Explore the range of options with capacity in different contexts
2. Reach consensus on which ideas, approaches and innovations have the greatest potential for nation-wide implementation
3. Agree on the next steps needed for each of those identified

By the end of the workshop, we hope to have collectively identified a range of solutions to explore a process of technology adoption and adaptation that achieve efficient and effective outcomes for different country contexts. To do so, we expect to cover the following:

- Technical strategic support to countries looking to invest in sustainable energy technologies that alleviate energy poverty and enable connectivity for health needs
- Theft prevention of PV panels through community ownership and other methods
- Community development through setting up micro-businesses to provide energy
- Importance of connectivity.

**New Resources**

**MEASLES & RUBELLA INITIATIVE: 2012 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Measles & Rubella Initiative (M&RI) has launched its 2012 annual report. The report describes the global and regional measles and rubella control and elimination goals and milestones, and summarizes progress against the Measles & Rubella Strategic Plan indicators, including global and regional highlights and challenges in 2012. Following this, the report looks systematically at progress and challenges in each of the five strategic areas including population immunity, disease monitoring, outbreak preparedness and response, communication and engagement, and research and development. Next, it briefly examines progress in adherence to the guiding principles including country ownership and sustainability, routine immunization and health system strengthening, equity and linkages to other health interventions. Finally, the report makes conclusions about the actions required to bring the world closer to achieving the global measles and rubella goals, as reconfirmed in the Global Vaccine Action Plan adopted by 194 WHO Member States in May 2012. Read the full report.

**HPV VACCINE INTRODUCTION CLEARINGHOUSE WEBSITE IS LAUNCHED**

The new HPV Vaccine Introduction Clearinghouse is a one stop shop to find WHO and partner publications, tools and other important resources on the human papillomavirus vaccine. Its goal is to help guide HPV vaccine policy, programme and communications managers develop successful strategies for the introduction and sustained delivery of HPV vaccination at national level.

**CORRELATES OF VACCINE-INDUCED PROTECTION: METHODS AND IMPLICATIONS (WHO/IVB/13.01)**

This IVB document is now online. The document presents an overview of definitions and methods in the area of immune correlates of vaccine-induced protection. This subject has far-reaching implications for the evaluation of vaccine efficacy, for passive protection, e.g. maternal immunity and risk screening, e.g. tuberculin testing or rubella antibody testing of pregnant women, as well as for basic understanding of pathogenesis and immunity.
# Regional Meetings and Key Events Related to Immunization

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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Title of Meeting</th>
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<td><strong>JUNE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>EURO Regional Polio Certification Commission</td>
<td>Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
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<td>4-6</td>
<td>Global Meeting on Implementing New and Under-utilized Vaccines</td>
<td>Bávaro, Dominican Republic</td>
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<td>12-13</td>
<td>Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety Meeting</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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<td>SEAR NUVI Surveillance Meeting</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
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<td>24-26</td>
<td>Global Measles and Rubella Labnet Meeting</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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<td>25-27</td>
<td>WPR Technical Advisory Group</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>26-28</td>
<td>Conference on Routine Immunization and New Vaccines in Africa</td>
<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
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<td><strong>JULY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>PAHO Technical Advisory Group on Vaccine-preventable Diseases</td>
<td>Quito, Ecuador</td>
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<td><strong>SEPTEMBER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Measles Virus Mini-symposium</td>
<td>Annecy, France</td>
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<td>11-14</td>
<td>5th European Congress of Virology 2013</td>
<td>Lyon, France</td>
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<td>16-19</td>
<td>63rd session of the Regional Committee for Europe</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>16-20</td>
<td>Global New and Under-utilized Vaccines Surveillance Management Meeting</td>
<td>Washington D.C, USA</td>
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<td>30-4 Oct</td>
<td>65th session of the Regional Committee for the Americas</td>
<td>Washington D.C, USA</td>
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<td><strong>OCTOBER</strong></td>
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<td>Workshop on the Methodology to Reach the Unvaccinated Child</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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<td>8-10</td>
<td>Immunization Practices Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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<td>10-11</td>
<td>European Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (ETAGE)</td>
<td>Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
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<td>26-31</td>
<td>60th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td><strong>NOVEMBER</strong></td>
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<td>5-6</td>
<td>Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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<td>22-23</td>
<td>EMRO/GAVI Twentieth Regional Working Group Meeting</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td><strong>DECEMBER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>04-05</td>
<td>Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety Meeting</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland</td>
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</tbody>
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# Links Relevant to Immunization

## Global Websites

- Department of Immunization, Vaccines & Biologicals, World Health Organization
- WHO New Vaccines
- Immunization Financing
- Immunization Monitoring
- Agence de Médecine Préventive
- EPIVAC
- GAVI Alliance Website
- IMMUNIZATION basics (JSI)
- International Vaccine Institute
- PATH Vaccine Resource Library
- Dengue Vaccine Initiative
- SABIN Sustainable Immunization Financing
- SIVAC Program Website
- UNICEF Supply Division Website
- Hib Initiative Website
- Japanese Encephalitis Resources
- Malaria Vaccine Initiative
- Measles Initiative
- Meningitis Vaccine Project
- Multinational Influenza Seasonal Mortality Study (MISMS)
- PATH Rotavirus Vaccine Access and Delivery Website
- RHO Cervical Cancer (HPV Vaccine)
- WHO/ICO Information Center on HPV and Cervical Cancer
- SIGN Updates
- Technet

## Regional Websites

- New Vaccines in AFRO
- PAHO’s website for Immunization
- Vaccine Preventable Diseases in EMRO
- Vaccine Preventable Diseases in EURO
- New Vaccines in SEARO
- Immunization in WPRO

## Newsletters

- PAHO/Comprehensive Family Immunization Program-FCH: Immunization Newsletter
- The Civil Society Dose - A quarterly newsletter of the GAVI CSO Constituency
- Optimize Newsletter
- Technet Digest
- PATH’s RotaFlash – breaking news on rotavirus disease and vaccines