Global Vaccine Action Plan Assessment Report

Overview

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunization is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines. Since the endorsement of the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) in 2012 by 194 Ministers of Health at the World Health Assembly, SAGE has issued annual assessment reports on progress towards reaching the global immunization goals. This year’s report focuses on the status of immunization today, together with lessons learned from this Decade of Vaccines.

It comes at a crucial time, as the global immunization community looks towards shaping a new post-2020 strategy that will aim to deliver the full benefits of vaccines to all.

General messages on vaccines

Vaccination is one of the world’s greatest medical success stories, saving millions of lives every year.

- From saving lives to preventing poverty, vaccines allow people around the world to lead full and healthy lives.
- Vaccines are good for health, and good for development – they protect against disease and malnutrition, provide a point of contact for health care in the critical early years, and hold up gains in education and economic growth.
- For every $1 spent on childhood immunization, $44 is returned in economic and social benefits.
- Immunization is a cornerstone of global health security in an increasingly interconnected world. By preventing the onset of infection, it is also a frontline defense against antimicrobial resistance – one of the greatest threats to public health today.

2018 SAGE GVAP assessment report – Key messages

In 2017, vaccines continue to protect millions against debilitating, life-threatening diseases, thanks to the strong efforts of communities, health workers, governments, local partners and the international community.

✓ Over 116 million children were vaccinated against major diseases in 2017
✓ 3 additional countries achieved maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination including Haiti, enabling the Region of the Americas to become the 3rd WHO region to achieve elimination.
✓ The Eastern Mediterranean Region maintained coverage for basic vaccines at more than 80%, despite 8 out of 22 countries being affected by humanitarian emergencies.
✓ Government expenditure on immunization in the African region is increasing - by 130% since 2010.
The Western Pacific Region has achieved its lowest ever incidence of measles and its first two countries were verified as having eliminated rubella.

Immunization activities in the South-East Asia region averted an estimated 622,000 measles deaths.

Almost 100 countries now have functional technical advisory bodies to guide decision-making on national immunization policies.

But, without sustained attention, hard-fought gains can easily be lost. Where children are unvaccinated, outbreaks occur.

- Globally, 1 in 10 children still does not receive all their vaccines – mostly in the world’s poorest, most disadvantaged communities.
- Progress towards the eradication of wild poliovirus and the elimination of measles, rubella and maternal and neonatal tetanus is off-track to meet global targets by 2020.
- Because of low coverage nationally or in pockets, multiple regions were hit with large measles and diphtheria outbreaks in 2017, causing many deaths.
- Measles elimination is greatly under threat, with cases increasing from 19-25 cases per million people. With outbreaks occurring in the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and South-East Asia, measles is now once again endemic in all WHO regions.
- Since 2014, the number of countries reporting vaccine hesitancy has steadily increased, reaching 83% in 2017.

Volatilities including mass urbanization and migration, population growth, conflict, natural disasters and environmental disruption are likely to exacerbate challenges to national immunization systems.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that national immunization systems have the political commitment, sustainable investment and public support they need to succeed.

Immunization today and in the next decade - Where to from here? The final years of the Decade of Vaccines provide the global community with an opportunity to shape the post-2020 immunization agenda, and achieve a world free of vaccine-preventable diseases. To cement and expand gains:

- All countries need to see immunization as core to their health systems, and all citizens need to see immunization as a basic human right. This will mean efforts to strengthen national immunization systems, build demand and tackle hesitancy where it exists.
- Equity must continue to be a strong driver, to ensure that everyone enjoys the benefits of immunization, particularly the most disadvantaged, marginalized and hard-to-reach populations – including those affected by conflict, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies.
• The next chapter of immunization must be one of integration, with immunization positioned as a central pillar of universal health coverage, at the heart of primary healthcare, health security and the Sustainable Development Goal agenda.

• Thanks to innovative new research and development, we are closer than ever before to having effective vaccines for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. In addition to the development of new vaccines, research must help deliver and expand innovations that enhance access and acceptability, and continually improve vaccine services to reach the poorest, most marginalized communities.

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