

THE IMPACT OF VACCINES WORLDWIDE AND THE CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION

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This presentation will provide an overview of the current status of the global immunization programme using available published and non-published data from WHO Member States and review the pathways to alleviate the main barriers towards achieving universal immunization during this era of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In 1974, the establishment of the WHO Expanded Programme on Immunization marked a turning point in the large-scale use of vaccines. Today, more children than ever are being reached with immunization; polio is on the verge of being eradicated, the WHO model list of vaccines now includes twenty-two vaccines for all ages that countries can choose from. The health impact is evident with the continued decline of under-five mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases from roughly 4million deaths in 2000 to less than 2million deaths in 2015. Overall, WHO estimates that vaccines prevent 2-3 million deaths each year. The broader benefits of vaccines are also well documented.

In 2011, the Global Vaccine Action Plan for this Decade of Vaccines was produced with the ambitions to close the equity gap in vaccine coverage and to unleash the vaccines vast potentials. An independent assessment of the GVAP implementation was carried out by the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization which expressed strong concerns that most countries were off track to achieving their immunization goals. The SAGE requested strong actions to tackle challenges such as poor data quality and use that hinder understanding and corrective actions; affordability and supply of vaccines that remain problematic; and the basic failures of health systems that repeatedly miss opportunities to offer vaccinations including during the disruptive situations created by civil conflicts and major disease outbreaks.

Looking forward, while taking pride in the progress made, there is need to secure a much stronger leadership and ownership by the countries as well as continued greater international solidarity to harness the full potential of vaccines throughout the life course by 2030.