

Recent Developments

RVF-Supported Mass Immunization Campaign in Armenia a Success

Nearly 924,000 Individuals Vaccinated against Measles and Rubella

A nationwide mass immunization campaign against measles and rubella targeting all individuals aged 6 years to 27 years was launched on October 1, 2007. The campaign was conducted from October 1 – 13, 2007 and was carried out entirely by local health care workers. During the campaign a total of 912,510 individuals – 96% of the targeted cohort – were



Child at clinic in Yerevan is vaccinated against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)

vaccinated against measles and rubella. A “mop-up” campaign conducted in the second half of October increased coverage rates to 98% of the targeted population and brought a total of the actually vaccinated to 923,910 individuals.

The campaign is an essential part of the national strategy of the Armenian Ministry of Health to eliminate measles and prevent congenital rubella syndrome in the country by the year 2010, which in turn is part of the strategy of the World Health Organization (WHO) to eliminate these diseases from the entire European region by the year 2010.

Measles and rubella are highly contagious diseases and are among the main causes of mortality in children. 345,000 individuals died of measles worldwide in 2005. Rubella, a clinically milder disease, continues to be a serious public health threat because of the high risk posed to the health of the fetus of pregnant women who contract the disease. As a consequence of rubella, over 100,000 children with abnormalities such as blindness and deafness are born every year. Measles and rubella are easily prevented by vaccination.

Following the mass immunization campaign, the ongoing routine immunization of young children against measles and rubella - using the triple-valent vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) – will ensure that Armenia remains free of these diseases. With the support of the U.S. State Department, the RVF provides 50% of the annual requirement of the MMR vaccine, along with the necessary

syringes and safety boxes for the routine immunization of all children aged 12 months and 6 years (a total of approximately 70,000 children a year). UNICEF provides the other 50% of the requirement of the MMR vaccine and safe injection supplies. In the years leading up to the mass immunization campaign this partnership of the RVF, UNICEF and the Armenian Ministry of Health to modernize the routine MMR immunization program, which included extensive training of health personnel and a robust public information initiative, created the necessary conditions for the success of the mass immunization campaign against measles and rubella: A well-trained and motivated health care force, a reliable vaccine delivery infrastructure (cold chain) capable of maintaining the vaccines at the required temperature from storage to administration, and an informed public.

The routine MMR immunization program for young children, which is already conducted entirely by Armenian health care personnel, is now transitioning to financial self-sustainability and will be financed 100% by the Armenian Ministry of Health by the year 2010.