

# Vaccine effort targets 41 million in Americas

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The Pan-American Health Organization said Friday it is aiming to vaccinate 41 million people in 45 Western Hemisphere nations against a variety of diseases in its ninth annual vaccination week.

The effort by the UN agency in the week of April 23-30 coincides with similar vaccination drives in other regions aiming to target polio, [influenza](#) and yellow fever, among other diseases.

Health workers, volunteers, government officials and celebrities throughout the Americas are gearing up to participate in what has become the hemisphere's largest multi-country health effort.

"We have every reason to be proud of vaccination week in the Americas," said PAHO director Mirta Roses.

"It has not only helped spread the benefits of immunization to people throughout our hemisphere, it has provided a model for what can be achieved with vaccines if we all work together. Given the tremendous momentum, I am confident that next year -- on the 10th anniversary of own initiative -- we will see the first truly global vaccination week."

The agency said Europe will celebrate its sixth initiative, the Eastern Mediterranean will celebrate its second and the African and Western Pacific regions will celebrate their first-ever vaccination weeks bringing participation to more than 180 countries and territories worldwide.

The Americas region was the first to eradicate [smallpox](#), in 1971, and

[polio](#) in 1991. The last case of endemic [measles](#) in the Americas was reported in 2002, and the last case of endemic rubella in 2009.

But the agency said many children in the Americas have not completed their [vaccine](#) schedules, and hard-to-reach populations continue to have lower rates of coverage.

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