

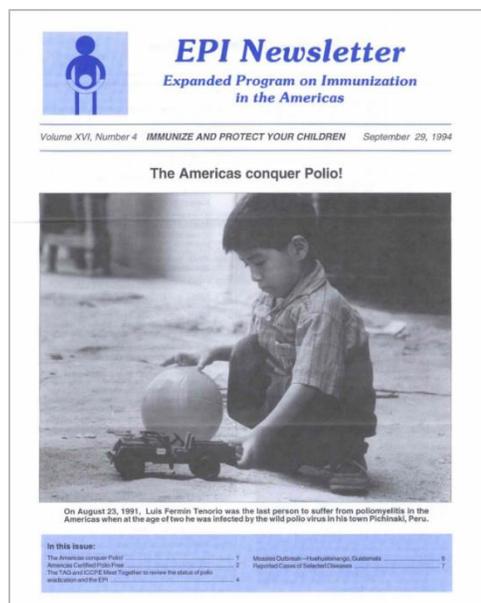


25 Years of the Certification of Polio Elimination in the Americas: An Achievement that Encouraged the Hope of Living in a World Free of Polio

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In 1994, the Region of the Americas was the first in the world to be certified as free from polio. Renowned scientists and independent experts who were part of the International Commission for the Certification of Polio Eradication (ICCPE) officially informed PAHO Director at the time, Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, on 24-25 August 1994 and through him, Member States were informed that the transmission of wild poliovirus had been interrupted.

Hard work done by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization's (PAHO/WHO) immunization team, led at the time by Dr. Ciro de Quadros, political will, and courageous efforts made by each country helped eliminate the ancient disease, and stopped the mourning and disability it was causing. Vaccination coverage among children less than one year old went from 25% in 1978 to more than 80% in 1993.



Cover of PAHO's Immunization Newsletter celebrating the elimination of polio in the Americas, September 1994.

In August 1994, after three years without cases in the Americas, based on data obtained by a comprehensive surveillance system involving more than 20,000 centers reporting weekly cases of acute flaccid paralysis, and thousands of laboratory samples analyzed by the ICCPE considering conclusive evidence submitted by national certification commissions, an announcement was made that polio had been conquered in the Americas!

In August 1991, a child born in the mountains of the Junín Department in Peru became the last victim of wild poliovirus. Thanks to collaborative efforts from countries, agencies committed to vaccination and strong community participation, children today in the Americas are guaranteed access to free, safe and quality vaccines. The combined efforts made the vaccine a social good, with universal and equitable access for all. Today, the legacy of the 1980's and 1990's lives on thanks to the work of the new generations of health care workers.

This has been a shortened version of a longer article on the celebration of 25 years since the certification of polio elimination in the Region of the Americas. If you would like to read the complete article, please click here bit.ly/PolioHL19-33eng.



Fulfilling Dreams with Vaccination – Guatemala Launches Nationwide Campaign

Evelyn López and Marc Rondy, PAHO-Guatemala

Children dream big. They dream of becoming a musician, a doctor, a teacher or an airplane pilot. If children are healthy, they can make their dreams come true. This is the statement of the nationwide MMR/OPV vaccination campaign that the Ministry of Health, along with PAHO/WHO, the Foundation for the Development of Guatemala (FUNDESA), the Nutrition Alliance and UNICEF launched in Guatemala.



The Ministry of Health launched the vaccination campaign with PAHO/WHO and UNICEF representatives, children and their parents. Credit: Edwin Benavente/Ministry of Health.

Fathers, mothers, children, media, international cooperants, representatives from the government and private sectors participated in this event carried out in the Children's Museum in Guatemala City. The indigenous children symphony orchestra *Ri Nab'ey Qach'abal* (our mother tongue in the Mayan language Kaqchiquel) also participated showing their talent and inviting others to believe in children's dreams.

The campaign is involving Guatemalan influencers and celebrities like Harris Witbeck, CNN International reporter and host of the Discovery Channel reality show, the Amazing Race; Diego Gomez, a child journalist and winner of the Eagle Award for Latin journalists, among others.



“We want to encourage people to contribute to the achievement of their children’s dreams by giving them the gift of vaccination,” said Oscar Barreneche, PAHO/WHO Representative in Guatemala.

The campaign “Our children can fulfill their dreams. Protect them with vaccination!” will be broadcast in rural and national television and radio stations. Around 10,000 health professionals will be deployed within the country and five PAHO international consultants will be giving their technical support. The last nationwide campaign in Guatemala was carried out in 2013 achieving 94% vaccination coverage.

Please [click here](#) to read the press release.



Five-year-old Xareni Gómez fulfilled her dream to be a violinist. She showed her talent in the vaccination campaign that Guatemala launched to protect children against measles and polio. Credit: Fernando Castañeda/PAHO/WHO-Guatemala.



Advertising sample of the Guatemala vaccination campaign that aims to reach more than two million children under 7 years old. Credit: PAHO/WHO-Guatemala.